

THE TOP SELLING BRITISH CRIME MAGAZINE

# Edgar Wallace

## MYSTERY MAGAZINE

**EDGAR WALLACE**

*Duo in Blue*

**SAX ROHMER**

*The Fifth Medallion*

**JOSEPHINE BELL**

*The Commuters*

**JULIAN SYMONS**

*The Dupe*

and other outstanding stories and features

No. 15

Vol. 2

Edgar Wallace

3/-



Edgar Wallace

# EDGAR WALLACE

## *Mystery Magazine*

Vol. II No. 15

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***Mystery, Crime, and Detection for the Aficionado***

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### CONTENTS

#### STORIES

Duo in Blue	EDGAR WALLACE	3
The Dupe	JULIAN SYMONS	16
Winkie and the Forty Thieves	ERIC PARR	30
The Commuters	JOSEPHINE BELL	37
A Long Rest for Rosie	HERBERT HARRIS	61
The Treasure Chests	GEORGE THORNBURY	68
The Fifth Medallion	SAX ROHMER	95
Wreath Without Flowers	DION CLOVELLY	115

#### FEATURES

<i>Editorial</i> : Briefly		2
<i>Relaxation</i> : Crossword No. 9		36
<i>Quotation</i> : An Edgar Wallace Sampler (ii)		66
<i>Crime</i> : Midsummer Night's Murder		
	FRANCIS GRIERSON	84
<i>Autobiography</i> : Echo of a Crime	RICHARD STARR	109
New Books	JOHN DE SOLA	121
Readers Say		126

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A CONSTANT READER and devoted crime fan writes a letter of intrigued inquiry—not the first we have received—seeking to know ‘what goes on’ in the conclaves of the British Crime Writers’ Association and the Mystery Writers of America.

Such questions are inspired perhaps, by the same sort of imaginative scuttlebutt which passes round (*pace* saloon bars), hinting at nameless orgies in Masonic gatherings (and such secret places), and, cinema inspired, the colourful initiation ceremonies of American college fraternities. Boggle is the word to use when placing CWA and MWA in propinquity with gamey doings as were offered at the Hell-Fire Club and such esoteric haunts.

It is stimulating to visualise constant reader brooding on pictures of a CWA stalwart, in some mysterious dungeon meeting place, tapping a colleague on the shoulder and suggesting, with a keen eye on the story possibilities, that there’s nothing like rubbing nicotine sulphate into that sprain instead of embrocation. Or perhaps constant reader thinks vaguely of MWA’s worthy president sidling round in some curious, bat-hung hall on a 92nd floor, persuading a committee-member to sip a noggin of a ghastly potion concocted from a Borgia manuscript—*ars longa*, indeed, but such *vita* seems remarkably *brevis!*

All delicious fantasies, for there is nothing quite like the unknown for stimulating the ingenuous mind. What is more natural than to think of the gods of CWA and MWA—whose sales of written murder and mayhem girdle and re-girdle the earth—as weirdies half-way between poor maligned Count Donatien de Sade and the latest nerve-shaker from Charles Addams?

Constant reader, reality is so different! Ladies and gentlemen conservatively dressed; refreshments served with civilised drinks; quiet conversation on everything from vitious intromission to the qualities of Schweinfurt-green. Guests are made welcome by hosts whose behaviour would pass muster at a vicarage tea-party . . .

If another illusion has been slain let us not sigh, for out of such solid respectability comes the utterly fascinating *creme de la* fictional *crime* which delights us all.

*The Editor*

Edgar Wallace

## DUO IN BLUE

*Two little known short-short  
stories about real London  
policemen and the real  
world of small crooks*

ONE OF THE rummiest fellers I've ever had to do with," said P.C. Lee of D division, "is young Sigeo."

With some caution I inquired which one, for the Sigeo family is well known to me, and I have had occasion before now to refer to this extraordinary clan.

"It's Albert," said P.C. Lee with the faintest of smiles, and his amusement found reflection on my face, for Albert Sigeo I shall always regard as being one of the most interesting characters I have ever met.

Himself as honest as the day—he has a little fur and feather shop off Kensington High Street where you may buy white mice or badgers, ferrets or rabbits—his position in the family is unique, for there is not one of them that has not seen the interior of prison.

I've never quite understood his relations. I know that he regards their peculiar habits with a certain amount of pride; I know, too, that he retails the exploits of his innumerable brothers, cousins and uncles with that modest reserve which may be taken as a sign of approval, yet notwithstanding these indications of his goodwill I have never met, in the little bird and beast shop over which Mr. Sigeo presides, a single member of the family other than Albert himself.

It would seem that ample opportunity exists, should Mr. Sigeo desire to employ an odd man or so.

Were he fired with the reformer's zeal and anxious to

provide honest, if casual, employment for his larcenous relatives, he might set their minds on the dignity of labour at little cost to himself. For there are bird cages to be mended, hutches to be manufactured, aquaria to be tended, dogs to be cleaned, and a thousand and one odd tasks to be performed.

"I often see Albert," said P.C. Lee, "an' whilst he never gives any of his relations away, he's always willin' to tell you the inside story of things when they've given theirselves away.

"I was talkin' to him yesterday on the question of relations an' he told me about his uncle's laggin'."

P.C. Lee has amongst other accomplishments the gift of mimicry, and his voice instantly became Albert's tired, piping voice that I knew so well.

"Relations, Mr. Lee," said Albert, "are best apart."

"I've got an uncle. All this trouble is about my uncle.

"When I say 'uncle' he's a sort of first husband to my Aunt Bella — he's one of them fellers that's all for harmony.

"One of the pleasantest chaps the police have ever had to deal with is my uncle. You know that yourself, Mr. Lee.

"S'pose a couple of splits call at his house one night about twelve, down comes his daughter Em an' opens the door.

"'Hullo, Emma,' says the chief split, 'father in?'

"'Yes, sir,' says Em. 'Want him?'

"'Yes, Emma,' says the split, an' in they go, into the old man's room, sleepin' away as peaceful as a perfec' angel. He wakes up and sees the splits.

"'Good evenin',' he says as polite as can be. 'Do you want me, Mr. Simmons?'

"'A little matter of a pony and cart what was left outside the Blue Lion,' says the split.

"'Oh, that?' says my uncle, gettin' up an' dressin', 'I thought it was something serious.'

"All the time he's dressing he's as polite an' talkative as possible.

"'I'm afraid I've kep' you out of bed,' he says.

"'I wish I'd known, I'd have walked round to the station an' explained matters. Em,' he says, 'send my breakfast round to the station to-morrer, an' if I'm put away see that

I get my tea before the van goes — six o'clock, ain't it, Mr. Simmons ?'

" 'Five,' says the split.

" 'You surprise me,' says my uncle. 'What changes we see goin' on all round, don't we, Mr. Simmons ?'

" 'Hurry up, father,' says Em. 'I'm gettin' cold.'

"It got to be quite a sayin' in D division that a child could take Ropey — that was my uncle's name at the time — an' they used to give the job to a young split who wanted gentle practice.

"He used to go so quietly that some of my cousins thought he wasn't quite right in his head, an' when he came out after doin' six munse for a ladder larceny, they got up a sort of friendly-lead to get him enough to go away into the country.

"They arst me to go an' I went — that's why I say relations are better apart.

"The friendly-lead was held in a little pub called 'The Frozen Artichoke' in Camden Town, an' my brother Ern got some cards printed.

" 'Many can help one, but one can't help many' the card says, an' asked one an' all to rally round George Ropey, better known as 'Ginger,' who had recently suffered a severe bereftment. What they didn't put on the cards, an' what they might have put, was: 'One can't help many, but he can help hisself'.

"For they helped themselves pretty handily to a silver watch an' chain that was give me by a seafarin' man in liquor.

"I won't go as far as to say that any of my relations did the click, but a few days after that my father got run-in for bein' in possession of a silver watch an' chain, an' not bein' able to give an account of where he got it from.

"I was in a manner of speakin' tore between love an' duty, for if I claimed the watch I'd own up to my father bein' a thief an' if I didn't he'd get a month.

" 'Honour thy father,' says I to meself, so I let him do the month. I'd have let him do six munse.

"Well, to go on about my uncle with the gentlemanly manner.

'About a year ago, he come run' to see me about Emma.

She's a nice, perky little girl, an' she knows just about as much as most respectable people know when they get to be a hundred.

"'Bert,' says my uncle, 'I've been thinkin' about Em. She's a good girl.'

"'You've been thinkin' too deep,' says I. 'In fact you've been dreamin'.'

"'She's a good girl,' he says, very firm, 'an' she'll make a good wife.'

"'I dessay,' I says, 'it's not for me to deny miracles.'

"'What do you say?' he says.

"'Nothin',' I says, 'except if I happen to see a likely chap goin' cheap I'll buy him—there's nothin' in the monkey house just now except the baby chimpanzee, an' it struck me he was feelin' lonely.'

"'What do you say to yourself?' he says.

"'My prayers mostly,' I says, 'an' my private opinion of me pore relations.'

"'Plain and plump,' says Uncle Ropey, 'will you marry my girl?'

"'Not,' I says, 'so long as I keep from drink an' am responsible for my actions.'

"'Well, lend us a shillin',' says my Uncle Ropey, an' we parted good friends—me an' the shillin'.

"'I didn't see him again for a week or more, an' then him an' young Ern came in to see me.

"'Thought we'd look you up, Bert,' says my brother. 'I don't think brothers ought to lose touch of each other,' he says.

"'No more do I,' I says, 'but if you've come to touch me, it's me early closin' day an' I've just paid the rent.'

"'Ern said he'd got a chance of makin' a couple of quid honest on a profitable deal, an' all he wanted was half a sovereign for stock money.

"'What race does it run in?' I says. 'I've lent stock money to Ern before now an' seen the profitable deal stop to lick at the wrong side of the winnin' post. But Ern took his oath that this was real toil an' trouble business, buyin' an' sellin' a horse.

"'I can buy it for half a sovereign,' he says. 'It belongs to a butcher who thinks it's got spavins.'

"He was so serious about it, an' told me so much about the butcher, an' the butcher's brother who got married to a girl down in Essex, an' what sort of a house the butcher lived in when he was at home, that I parted with the ten.

"I was a bit surprised the next day when Ern came an' brought the money back in silver, an' offered me a couple of shillin's interest. But I'm not the sort of fellow to take interest from a brother, so I sold 'im a canary for the two bob — it was worth two bob to a man who likes birds that don't sing.

"A few days after that him an' Uncle Ropey came again. It 'appens they'd seen a light kind of cart that they could buy for a pound an' sell for three pounds, an' would I be so kind ?

"I noticed that when they came the second time they stood at the door an' did most of their talkin' an' I had to ask 'em to come in, because I didn't want my shop to get a bad name. Although this place is only a little 'un, I do a big trade, an' it's a poor day when I don't take a couple of pounds, an' so I had the money to hand over. Next day punctual to the minute they brought back the money — eight half-crowns — and asked me to have a drink.

"Three days later I saw Ern walk past the shop very quick, an' I gave him a bit of a nod an' he sort of hesitated.

"He didn't come in, but stood outside.

"'How's business ?' says Ern.

"'So-so,' I says. 'Where's uncle ?'

"'He's round the corner,' says Ern, very eager. 'He's talkin' to a man about a set of 'arness he wants to buy — the chap won't take less than two pounds, but I know where we can sell it for five.'

"'Go an' see how he's got on,' I says, an' away he nipped, an' presently back he come with Uncle Ropey.

"'It's all right, Bert,' says Ern, 'we can get it for two — can you lend us the money ?'

"So I fished out two sovereigns an' Ern had tears in his eyes when he took 'em.

"'You're a true brother, Bert,' he says, 'an' you've helped me to get an honest livin'—ain't he, uncle ?'

"'Yes,' says Uncle Ropey, 'I've always said that Bert was the pick of the bunch.'

"They went away, tellin' me how I'd saved 'em from sinkin' to the level of the rest of the family.

"About eleven o'clock Em come an' knocked me up.

"'Father's pinched,' she says, 'an' so's young Ern.'

"'What for?' I says.

"'For passin' counterfeit gold,' she says, 'two sovereigns.'

"She shook her head, very disgusted.

"'It's father's own fault,' she says, 'an' it comes of not keepin' his word. He said he was goin' to pass all the snide money on to a mug. Borrer a good sov'reign an' return eight snide half-crowns, an' let the mug do the circulatin' act.

"'What surprises me,' she says, 'is their tryin' to pass gold. Dad always works silver — he get it from a man in Middlesex Street. Where d'ye think he got the bad quids from?' she asked.

"'I dunno,' I says, 'probably from the mug'."

(ii)

I WAS WONDERING whether P.C. Lee would say as policemen are popularly supposed to say, 'I arrest you in the name of the law' or whether he would get very angry (as I should have done) and bang the annoying Mr. Jarvis on the head.

Police methods have always interested me, so I waited, and listened to the dialogue that ensued.

Mr. Jarvis (defiantly): 'I've et better men than you, Lee.'

P.C. Lee (suavely): 'I dessay — but you'd better go home now an' eat something that'll agree with you.'

Mr. Jarvis (more defiantly): 'I shall go home when I think.'

P.C. Lee (coaxingly): 'Now be a sensible fellow an' go away.'

Mr. Jarvis (noisily): 'I'll see you . . . !'

P.C. Lee (to crowd): 'Pass along, please — now, Jarvis, off you go!'

Mr. Jarvis (striking a pugilistic attitude) . . .

P.C. Lee (grabbing him by the scruff of his neck and his arm): 'All right — if you won't go home, I'll take you to my home!'

Mr. Jarvis (struggling): 'Leggo!' (Violently) 'Leggo, you perishin' slop!'

P.C. Lee: 'Are you goin' quietly?'

Mr. Jarvis at this point aims a well-intentioned kick, which is skilfully avoided; the next minute there is the sound of a mighty 'smack!' and Mr. Jarvis goes down to the ground.

Voice in crowd: 'Shime! You ought to know better than hit a man, p'liceman!'

P.C. Lee: 'Are you going to be sensible, Jarvis?'

Mr. Jarvis (feebly): 'You hit me unawares.'

P.C. Lee: 'Are you comin' quietly?'

Mr. Jarvis (meekly): 'Certainly, sir.'

I followed the little crowd to the station, and stood by the inspector's desk while Mr. Jarvis was charged in the conventional terminology of the force.

Later in the evening, I was to witness yet another violent assault by P.C. Lee. The incident, commonplace as it was, is worth recording.

It began when a group of loudly-talking men and women assembled outside a little beer-shop in the Portobello Road. When hasty and bitter recriminations followed, a loud, aggressive voice said, "Hit him, Bill!" several times, and then two men detaching themselves from the group took the middle of the road, striking wildly.

At an inopportune moment a woman forced her way between the two men, and was instantly knocked down by one of the combatants, who thoughtfully kicked her as she lay. I did not see P.C. Lee arrive at a run, nor did the kicker. I saw a policeman come from nowhere in particular; I saw his leg of mutton fist dealing punishment indiscriminately, heard somebody yell "Copper!" as he fled, and heard a shrill whistle. Later, in a calmer moment, I came upon P.C. Lee standing at the corner of Elgin Crescent, reflectively chewing a match stalk.

"Did you see that feller I clouted?" he asked reflectively. "Name of Moker, commonly called 'Artful Mo,' although he's not of that religious persuasion, or any other so far as I know."

He paused, as he did before beginning one of his interest-

ing stories, and stared blankly along the deserted length of Ladbroke Grove.

"Artful Mo," he began slowly, "is so called because of his great artfulness in gettin' out of trouble an' gettin' other fellows into it. This is the first time, in a manner of speakin'," said P.C. Lee carefully, "that Mo has properly given himself away, because just at this very particularly minute he's 'inside' wonderin' how it happened.

"Artful Mo's lay is very simple; he's an egger; that is to say, he eggs people on to do things they wouldn't otherwise do. You heard someone say 'hit him, Bill'?—well, that was Mo.

"Mo isn't one of the criminal classes—that would be a bit too high class for him; the only charge you could put against him is the charge of being in suspected company, which is always an unsatisfactory charge to bring against a man, an' may mean anythin' or nothin'. Yet Mo has been in more big cases than you'd imagine, for he's a highly ingenious chap who reads the newspapers, an' is always in touch with all the big jobs goin'.

"I've seen him sittin' on his chair in front of his house on nice sunny mornings with his spectacles perched on his nose, a-readin' the *Mornin' Post* like a gentleman. He used to keep an old exercise book, an' paste little cuttin's in. His great line was weddin's, an' as soon as he saw 'A marriage has been arranged' he read day by day most careful until he found out what day the people were goin' to pull it off. Then, in a way, his work was done, an' he used to pass the information on. He never worried about the big West End weddin's where there would be lashin's of presents an' special detectives to watch 'em day an' night, but what he liked best was the little country weddin's, such as: 'A marriage has been arranged between Muriel, eldest daughter of Major O. Smitter (late Wagshires) and Henry Arthur Somper, youngest son of the late Gabriel Somper of Somper, Custer and Jones, wine merchants.'

"Nice little jobs where the presents would be worth say a couple of hundred pounds, an' they'd be all nicely laid out on a couple of tables, with little cards: 'Fish knives, with Mrs. Smith-Tanker's best wishes.' 'Cruet, with Miss Pipkin's hopes and fears of the future,' an' things like that.

"Every mornin' you'd see Mo goin' carefully through the paper—a penny a day it used to cost him, too—snippin' out a bit here, an' a bit there, an' pastin' it in his little copy book.

"Now you can't charge a man with readin' the *Mornin' Post*! it isn't sense, an' besides the *Mornin' Post* people might object an' have you up for libel, so although we very well knew what the little game was, we couldn't stop him doin' what he was doin'.

"That was his artfulness.

"I remember once he had the impudence to offer the book to me for my inspection.

"'It's a nobby, Mr. Lee,' says he innocently. 'I get my pleasure in life out of doin' a little thing like this.'

"'What did you cut this out for?' I asked, an' pointed to a bit about the Lady Augusta Sharloes, whose father had given her a tiara as a birthday present.

"'I don't know how that crept in,' he says thoughtful. 'As a rule I'm only interested in the unitin' of young 'arts, bless 'em!'

"About a week after that the Lady Augusta's tiara was stolen, taken by means of a ladder larceny whilst the family was at dinner at their country residence, High Meath.

"When I read that I thought it was an excellent chance of connectin' Mo with the robbery; but bless you, you might as well have tried to connect the Archbishop of Canterbury.

"'If you think,' he says, 'that I'd be mean myself by associatin' with low, pinchin' people, you're a bit out of focus, Mr. Lee.'

"Those were his very words, an' I put their classiness down to the fact that he was always readin' the fashionable newspapers.

"I could never be sure who the man was who worked on the information supplied by Mo, but I've got an idea that Nick Moss was one, an' of one thing I'm certain, an' that is that Mo got his full share of the swag without, as you might say, in any way sharin' the danger. Well, he did so well, that he got a lot of people jealous of him, an' one of these was a feller named Len Cox—one of the most conceited criminals I've ever been brought into contact with. Len was a stoutish young feller with a big face an' a tiny moustache,

he always wore his hair parted in the middle, an' what completed his attractiveness, he wrote a beautiful fist. Like print, his writin' was, an' if his spellin' had only been up to sample, he might have made a fine lawyer's clerk.

"Len was always a great man with the ladies, an' he had a way of raisin' his hat to housemaids that always made a job—he was a housebreaker by trade—very easy. To carry the reference to ladies further, I might say that the only two laggin's Len ever got was through his perliteness to women.

"I believe that when the idea of runnin' an opposition show to Mo's occurred to Len, was when he was sharin' out the benefits of a little job at Croydon—a master builder's daughter had recently married, an' the weddin' had been rather lavish.

"'You get your money easy,' says Len to Mo.

"'Think so?' says Mo, clinkin' the gold.

"'I do,' says Len, 'it's the snuggest an' easiest lay I've ever struck. I'm goin' to try it myself.'

"'Do,' says Mo, who's a rare one for eggin' people on to destruction. 'I'll tell you how I do it.'

"But Len didn't want any advice. He'd got an idea of his own, an' I might say like a good many other people who take a lot for granted, he thought because he wrote a copperplate hand he'd got copper-plate brains, an' that was where he fell into all kinds of trouble. In the first place, after he established his education bureau, he decided that readin' the papers took too long, so he wrote off to a press cuttin' agency whose advertisement he'd read ('Cuttin's supplied on every conceivable subject') an' asked to be supplied—but I've got his letter: this is how it runs:

"'Respected Sir, Having seen your bit in the paper about sending cuts from papers, please send about 100 cuts about jobs near London, where mostly silver—Yours respectfully, Len Cox.'

He sent along a postal order for five shillin's, an' by reply he got back about a hundred cuttin's an' a letter. It said:

"'Dear Sir, We have your favour. Although we do not know what you mean by 'mostly silver', we do not doubt that employers would be willing to pay in silver if so desired. 100 jobs herewith.'

"Len looked at the cuttin's.

"Some of 'em began 'Respectable man wanted—used to cows', an' others 'Man wanted for work on farm', an' it began to dawn on Len that his letter didn't quite express all that he had wanted.

"By the aid of a lady friend, Len wrote another letter in another name, an' managed to get the cuttin's he wanted, an' it really looked as though he was goin' to put Mo out of business, for some of the weddin's that Len got to know about Mo had never heard of. There was one about a weddin' that was to take place from the bride's house at Mowbray—'Groot Haus' was the name of the house—an' it seemed snug. So Nick Moss an' a pal went down to Melton Mowbray an' spent two days lookin' for the place, without success. They had a narrow escape of gettin' pinched for bein' suspicious persons in possession of housebreakin' instruments, an' then came back to Len very wild.

"'Hullo,' he says, when he saw 'em at his little house in Ransom Street. 'Got the stuff?'

"'No,' says Nick shortly.

"'Why?'

"'There ain't no such house in Mowbray,' says Nick.

"Len smiled in a superior way an' dug out the cuttin'.

"'Here you are,' he says, 'newspapers can't lie,' an' handed it over to Nick.

"Nick looked at it.

"'Why, you fool!' he roars, 'this is cut from the *Cape Times*—it's Mowbray in South Africa!'

"An' so it was. It nearly broke up Len's business, an' would have too, only Len by a great stroke of luck managed to put the brothers Ely on to a rich crib down in Streatham—an' that sort of revived the industry, an' it wasn't long before Mo began to feel the pinch of competition.

"There was a young woman who was very much gone on Len. She was one of those big-built girls of the gipsy type, an' it so happened that she met Mo one night near Latimer Road Station, an' began chippin' him about how Len was gettin' on.

"Mo was most polite, an' said he wished Len all the luck in the world.

"'The only thing, Mrs. Cox,' says Mo, regretfully, 'the only thing about it is, I'm afraid bein' so interested in

marriages won't do him any good.'

"'What d'ye mean?' she says, quick.

"'Well,' says Mo, carefully, 'so far as I'm concerned, it don't worry me, for I always was a woman hater, an' readin' about marriages don't put ideas into my head—'

"'If you means to say,' she flames, 'you miserable little lob-crawler, that my Len—'

"'I don't mean to say anythin',' says Mo.

"'He's married to me already,' she says.

"'I dessay,' says Mo politely. 'You know your own business best.'

"After that, Mo had a sort of horrible fascination for the girl, an' she used to go out of her way to meet him an' tell him what she thought of him, an' all the time Artful Mo was gettin' in a word here an' there about the danger of readin' too much about marriages. Mo knew women—especially women like her—and it began to leak out that Mr. and Mrs. Cox wasn't as happy as they might have been.

"One night Len was lookin' over his cuttin's an' saw an account that pleased him very much. A little weddin' in Guildford. Soon after that, he got his tools from the coal hole an' began pickin' out his kit.

"'What's the game?' says Mrs. Cox.

"'This one's too good to give away,' says Len. 'I'm goin' to do it myself.'

"She tried to persuade him, but he was a difficult man to persuade, an' off he started.

"Now the curious thing about Len was his sentimental character. He was a great chap for songs about angels, an' orphans, an' when he's been at a friendly-lead he's been so affected after a couple of drinks that he's had to be assisted home.

"Therefore this story of what happened to Len is quite understandable to me. Of course, at the time I knew nothin' whatever about his plans, you may be sure, but by all accounts he was back again in London the evenin' after he started, empty handed. He met Mo an' told him about it, an' Mo, bein' a very artful feller, advised him to tell his missus.

"So home sailed Len, mightily pleased with himself, an' got into his house just as Mrs. Cox was sittin' down to tea.

"'Hullo!' she says. 'Did you get the swag?'"

"'No,' says Len, with a beautiful smile.

"'Didn't you get in?'"

"'I did,' says Len.

"'Wasn't the stuff there?'"

"'It was,' says Len, 'it was in the bride's room, an' I nearly took it when,' he says, almost cryin', 'I saw her lyin' there, like an innercent snowdrop with her childlike face on the pillar, more like a beautiful angel she was! I says to myself: What! rob that fair child, on what I might call the threshold of life! No, I says, Len Cox may be a burglar but he's got an 'art.'

"'I see,' says Mrs. Cox quietly.

"'When I thought,' Len went on dreamily, 'of the happiness of bein' properly married, when I thought of—'

"'She left him thinkin', for she got up an' came to me.

"'Mr. Lee,' she says, 'do you want a cop?'"

"'I do,' says I.

"'There's one at 64 Ransom Street,' she says, bitterly, 'it's time he had a laggin'—he's got some silly ideas in his head'."

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### EDGAR WALLACE EXHIBITION

Great interest has been aroused in the details published about this Exhibition, which is being held in November. Many readers, far from London or living abroad, have asked if a programme is available. A unique souvenir programme is being prepared and will be available to all visitors to the Exhibition. A number of these have been set aside for postal requests *received during October*, accompanied by a 6d. stamp, or one postal reply coupon. Please send your application to: Exhibition, EWMM, 4, Bradmore Road, Oxford. Overseas applicants are urged to send their requests *by air mail* as the supplies of the programme will be limited.

# JULIAN SYMONS

# THE DUPE

*First magazine publication of  
a brilliant short story now  
in active preparation as  
an ABC/TV play*

**T**HERE WAS A good deal of argument about the justice of the verdict when Evelyn Ellis was found guilty but insane. It is not likely, anyway, that she would have been hanged; but, curiously enough, it was the particular person Evelyn chose to kill, and the first words she spoke to the police afterwards, that influenced the jury most strongly in reaching their verdict. And so Evelyn Ellis spent the last fifteen years of her life in Broadmoor, where she sang old-fashioned sentimental songs and developed considerable skill in loom-weaving, turning out a quite remarkable variety of scarves and table-runners. It is very likely that, with the exception of the few days to be described in this story, those were the happiest years of her life.

In the forty-five years before she went to Broadmoor Evelyn Ellis had had little cause for singing. Her father died when she was six years old; he had been a partner in a shipping agency, and left to his widow a share in this business which was sufficient to keep her and the children in reasonable comfort. It did so for a few years until Ellis's partner, who had been carrying on the agency single-handed, went abroad in a hurry. He had always been perfectly charming to Mrs. Ellis, and the revelation that he had been diverting large sums of money from the agency to his private use profoundly shocked her. She was at first too dazed to appreciate fully the change in her circumstances from prosperity to sharp poverty; when she finally understood that life held for her no prospect but that of finding some kind of job to keep herself and her two daughters, Mrs. Ellis took an overdose of veronal. She left a letter to her sister Lavinia, with whom

she had quarrelled bitterly several years before, begging her to provide for the education of Evelyn and Agnes.



Aunt Lavinia did her best for the children after her fashion, which was that of the hard-headed wife of a hard-headed wholesaler in cotton goods. She paid for their education at a shabby-genteel private school, where they learned very little and were rather poorly fed. They stayed at school during most holidays; for Aunt Lavinia, who had intensely disliked her woolly-minded sister, had no particular desire to see her sister's children. It was at school, during holiday time, that the incident occurred which marked Evelyn's whole life. She was fourteen years old and her sister was twelve when Evelyn playfully pushed Agnes, as they stood at the head of the stairs leading to the school library. Agnes slipped, fell down the dozen stairs to the bottom, and lay there laughing at her sister and saying that she could not get up. Agnes had, in fact, fractured her spine. She lay on her back for many months, seen, probed at and discussed by a variety of doctors who were, as Aunt Lavinia told the sisters more than once, a great expense. The months developed into years, and gradually it was understood and accepted by everybody, including Agnes herself, that she would never walk normally again. She was not completely helpless, for with the aid of sticks she was able to walk a few steps to a chair where she half-sat, half-lay, but anything like a normal life was impossible for her.

Perhaps it seems strange that the effect of the accident was to bind the sisters more closely together. Agnes apparently felt no resentment for the push that had turned her from a healthy, laughing girl into a cripple. Evelyn, on the other hand, felt a burden of guilt about her sister that could never be removed. Her life was dedicated to making Agnes happy. When she took a secretarial job in London Agnes came with her to share the tiny flat in suburban Balham which was all she could afford. Before leaving for work every day Evelyn made her own and Agnes's breakfast, and helped her sister to dress. During the daytime Agnes sat in a chair by the first floor window and watched what went on in the street. She became a well-known figure in the neighbourhood as she waved gaily and called a greeting to children, tradesmen and neighbours. The landlady, Mrs. Norton, who cooked midday dinner every day and brought

it up to Agnes, was full of admiration for her cheerfulness. "Your sister is wonderful, Miss Evelyn," she used to say. "Always merry and bright." And indeed Agnes was always smiling and had a beautiful fresh complexion, in contrast to Evelyn whose face was sallow, and who wore a perpetually harassed look.



When Evelyn was twenty-eight she met an elderly man named Edward Ryan, who worked in the accounts department of the insurance company in which she was a secretary. Ryan took her out half a dozen times, to theatres and dances, and twice to dinner. On these evenings, of course, Agnes was left alone, although Mrs. Norton came up to have a chat with her. Agnes asked her sister quietly whether she had had a nice time, but her high colour was a little higher and her bright eyes a little brighter than usual when Evelyn returned home. On the second occasion when Edward Ryan took Evelyn to dinner, one of the fears about her sister that haunted Evelyn became a reality. In walking, with the aid of sticks, from bed to chair, Agnes had slipped and fallen. She had been badly shaken, although she had managed to get back to bed. All this Agnes told Evelyn, her bright eyes fixed with unwavering intensity upon her sister's face. Afterwards Evelyn whispered a guilty "Yes" to her sister's questions about having a nice time. The next day she told Edward Ryan that she could not go out with him any more, and shortly afterwards she found another job.

In those days Evelyn still had a kind of anxious prettiness of which nothing remained in the gaunt, sallow woman who seventeen years later stood in the dock on a charge of murder. At the time of her trial Evelyn was employed as assistant in Mr. Pettigrew's antiquarian bookshop just off Piccadilly. Mr. Pettigrew was a second cousin of Aunt Lavinia, who had positively cast off the sisters when Evelyn refused to consider the idea that Agnes would be better off in a nursing home. Mr. Pettigrew said that he gave Evelyn a job because he was sorry for her, but he may have kept her on because she typed his letters and kept his books for a smaller salary than he would have had to pay anybody else. She had no specialised knowledge of books, but that was not very important, for she was only left in charge of the shop between four and six o'clock. Just before four o'clock

each day, after drinking his cup of afternoon tea, plump, neat little Mr. Pettigrew went home. He always made the same joke when he left. "Remember you are the guardian of my treasures, Miss Ellis," he said. "If anybody tries to take them from you, just show them Jessie." Jessie was the old revolver, a relic of Mr. Pettigrew's service in the First World War, tucked away in a drawer at the back of the shop. But not many customers came in between four and six o'clock, and although a few of them were rather odd, there was never any need to show them Jessie.

For that matter, although Mr. Pettigrew had some handsome sets of standard authors in finely-tooled bindings, his bookshop did not contain such wonderful treasures as all that—not like the jeweller's next door, with its half-dozen clasps, necklaces and single stones discreetly displayed on velvet behind steel-barred windows. Evelyn always lingered to look at the jeweller's window after shutting the shop and saying good night to Williams, the night watchman of the bank on the other side of Pettigrew's, who also included the jeweller's and the bookshop in his nightly round. Williams came on duty a few minutes before Evelyn left at night, and he used often to watch her looking into the jeweller's window. At such times her lips moved, although no sound could be heard—an uncomfortable habit which had been noticed by Mr. Pettigrew. The little bookseller had also observed that Evelyn had begun to read voraciously the kind of love stories that are generally bought by teenage shop girls. She also appeared at the bookshop one day with some clumsily-applied lipstick on her mouth.



Middle-aged spinsters do tend, however, to curious ideas and habits, as Mr. Pettigrew commented to his wife, and there was nothing wrong with Evelyn's work. Probably she would have gone on working for Mr. Pettigrew and looking after Agnes until the end of her life, if it had not been for Millie Hanslet, who took a room on the ground floor of the house in Balham. Millie Hanslet was a brass-haired, loud-voiced fiftyish woman who said that she lived on a small annuity and a widow's pension for her husband, who had been killed in Africa during the war. Millie came up sometimes in the evening to have a cup of tea with the Ellises, and to bemoan quite frankly the absence

of men in her life. "A woman needs a man," she said. "I mean someone to go about with, take her to the pictures, buy ice-cream. Isn't that so?"

"I don't know," said Agnes coldly, from her chair by the window.

Millie Hanslet gave a great wink at Evelyn, who smiled at her uncertainly. "And *I'm* going to get a man," she added. "You see."

When Millie had gone downstairs Agnes said, "She's vulgar."

"Yes, I suppose so," Evelyn sighed. Then she began to get supper.

Four days later Millie Hanslet came upstairs and produced a small snap of a flashy handsome young man with a moustache, and soft hat worn on one side. "That's my beau."

Agnes hardly looked at it. Evelyn said excitedly, "How did you meet him?"

"Pen Friends Unlimited," Millie said triumphantly. Evelyn merely looked mystified. Millie explained: "It's only five shillings to join and then they give you names of half a dozen gentlemen and give them *your* name and you write to each other and exchange photographs and if you want to meet each other you do. Here's the leaflet." Evelyn took it automatically. Her eyes were still on the photograph in Millie's hand.

Later that evening Agnes said, "My back hurts. I think I'll go to bed now." Evelyn helped her sister into bed. Agnes's face, round and almost youthful by the side of Evelyn's, was anxious. "You're not going to write to those pen friend people, are you?"

"Of course not," Evelyn said, and hoped that she sounded convincing. She wrote next day, using the address of Pettigrew's Bookshop. There was no danger of Mr. Pettigrew seeing the reply, because Evelyn was always there first to open the post. When writing, Evelyn took eight years off her age, calling herself thirty-seven. She described herself as fair-haired and vivacious, said that she was fond of good books, good music and the theatre, and wanted to correspond with a gentleman under forty who had similar interests. She received a reply by return post, which she opened with trembling fingers. It was a short letter which thanked her for her postal order, and said that her name had been put on the register of Pen Friends Unlimited. She would realise that most gentlemen under forty were interested in meeting ladies younger than themselves, but her

name had been passed to two or three possible pen friends who might be interested.



Two days later the letter came. It began 'Dear Pen-Friend Evelyn' and was signed 'Yours very sincerely, Colin (Jameson)'. The writer of the letter said that he was thirty-three years old, and liked the older and more sensible type of woman. 'These modern girls with their painted faces and painted toe-nails drive me to distraction,' the letter said. 'I don't want the woman of my choice to be a frump, but I do want her to have some ideas beyond paint and powder.' He enclosed a photograph which showed a rather ruggedly determined-looking man with thick eyebrows and dark hair growing low over his forehead. He did not look much more than thirty years old.

Evelyn read the letter a dozen times. She had a number of photographs taken in her only recent frock, and selected one from them which, if looked at with a friendly eye, made her look no more than forty. She was hardly prepared, however, for the enthusiasm with which he received it. 'I loved your innocent look,' he wrote in the firm upright hand she looked for now every day in the post. 'And the beautiful spirit that shows in the features. But you must have deceived me about your age. I believe you are younger than I am.' The correspondence flourished. Colin ('You must call me Colin and I shall call you Evelyn', he wrote in his second letter) worked as foreman in a large engineering works in North London, on night shift from seven o'clock in the evening until three a.m. He had been left an orphan at the age of eleven—rather like herself, Evelyn thought—and had then been brought up by a foster-mother. He had worked since he was fourteen. 'I have to admit that I'm not really an educated man,' he wrote, and she loved his frankness. He had married when he was twenty-two, but after three years of unhappy bickering had discovered his wife's unfaithfulness, and divorced her. 'It was foolish of me, dear Evelyn, but this experience turned me against all women for a time. Can you understand that? I think you can, for I believe you have a great knowledge of human nature.' He told her that her letters meant a great deal in the life of a lonely man.

The effect of this correspondence on Evelyn was remarkable. A spirit and gaiety came back into her face that had not been

there for years. At the bookshop Mr. Pettigrew commented on her cheerfulness, and at home Agnes looked at her with an enquiring eye, although she said nothing. When, however, Millie Hanslet asked if Evelyn had written to Pen Friends Unlimited she received a curt negative answer. Evelyn Ellis was bemused by the correspondence, but there remained one small shadow of doubt in the fiery dreams of happiness that occupied her every day. It seemed that with Colin working on night shift all the time they would never meet, and sometimes she feared that he must be unreal, or that some old, old man was playing a cruel joke on her. When Colin wrote that he longed for a meeting, she still felt some doubt of him, for he added that on Saturday and Sunday he always went down to see his foster-mother who was bedridden and lived at an Old Peoples' Home near Dorking. 'The old lady hasn't much longer in this world,' he wrote, 'and you wouldn't want me to neglect her.' Evelyn was not suspicious, but she couldn't help feeling that there was something odd about the fact that they could never meet, and when he daringly suggested that he should come to the bookshop one day after Mr. Pettigrew had gone home she half-expected to get a letter the next morning with an elaborate excuse for his absence.



But he came. The door opened and he stood there, dark, square and robust, his eyes looking quickly round the shop and then settling on her, his mouth smiling. Nobody else was in the shop. She ran forward to him.

'You've come.'

'Did you think I wouldn't?' His voice was deep, and in anyone else it might have appeared to her rather common. 'I'd have known you anywhere,' he said, and added quickly, 'We can't talk here. What about coming out to tea?'

She fairly gaped at him. "But I've told you—you know I can't——"

"Why not? What the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve over, as they say. You told me yourself not many people come in after four."

She hesitated, but only for a moment. Relief at finding that he really existed, that Fate had not played a cruel trick on her, swamped all other feelings. They went to a little teashop that he knew and Evelyn talked as she had not talked for years. She

told him about her childhood and the family misfortunes, and for the first time mentioned her sister vaguely, without saying that she was an invalid. Colin did not say very much, but he was a good listener and occasionally he squeezed her hand. All too soon he looked at his watch and said that he must go to work. He held her hands at parting. "You'll be here tomorrow."

"I can't," she said weakly. "I oughtn't to shut the shop."

He dropped her hands. "I thought you were sincere about wanting to see me, but perhaps you just don't care."

"Oh, I do, I do."

"Well then, if you want to see me like I want to see you——"

"All right," Evelyn said. She felt faint with joy at his eagerness, she would have agreed to anything. "I'll be here."

His face lit up, he smiled charmingly. "That's my girl. Just after four tomorrow." In the public street he kissed her good-bye.

That night Agnes guessed the truth that Evelyn, in her happiness, hardly attempted to hide. "You've met a man," Evelyn, humming a tune under her breath, said nothing. "Is it through that beastly Pen Club?"

"And if it is?"

"Then he's up to no good. There's something he wants from you."

Evelyn laughed and turned round. "Do you think he's after me for my money or my looks?" she asked, but there was no bitterness in her voice. Then the flood of her happiness spilled over. "Oh, Agnes, he's so handsome, so attractive. Not quite—not quite our sort, you know, but what does that matter?"

Agnes stared incredulously at the photograph so proudly displayed by her sister. "He must be years younger than you are. In some way or other he's fooling you, he's duping you."

"What way?"

Agnes shook her head. "I don't know, but there's something. You're a dupe, Evie, a dupe. In some way he's using you for a purpose of his own."

"Agnes! It's just that he likes me. He needn't have met me unless he'd wanted to. He's very lonely, he wants company——"

"Does he want it enough to put up with the two of us?" Agnes's voice was high. "Have you told him about me? Or are you just going to leave me to—look after myself?"

The light in Evelyn's face faded. "You know I should never do that."

"And does *he* know it? Have you told him that you've got a crippled sister dependent on you?" Agnes's smooth face was almost ugly as she said. "You'd see that would soon make him change his tune about marriage."

"For heaven's sake, Agnes, there's no question of marriage. Why, I only met him today for the first time."

"You just tell him about your sister, that's all."



Evelyn and Colin met the next day, and the next, but they did not speak of Agnes. The hands of the watch crawled round each day until they reached four o'clock, Mr. Pettigrew made his little joke about his treasures and Jessie, and within five minutes of his departure she was running—yes, positively running—to the teashop where they met, without sparing so much as a glance for the jeweller's next door. He was always there, waiting for her—one day when she was five minutes late he looked quite anxious—and he always made some comment on her appearance, and told how much her friendship meant to him. They talked, or she talked and he listened, and at a quarter-past six each day he left her to go off to work. He was not a gentleman, there could be no doubt of that, but then he made no pretence to be one, and that she felt counted in his favour. On Wednesday she said to him, "I have my half-day off tomorrow."

He looked quite startled. "Do you?"

She said shyly, "I could meet you early—at one o'clock—if you'd like to."

"Well, I don't know. I never knew you had a half-day off on Thursday." He said this almost in a tone of annoyance. There was a pause. Then came the sudden smile that charmed her, and he said, "We'll go to Richmond. What about that?" And at Richmond on the river next day Colin told her again that he was a lonely man and asked if she would consider marriage.

"Oh, Colin." They kissed. Then she remembered. She must tell him about Agnes. It would be a kind of a test, she told herself was a sinking heart, it would show whether his feeling for her was sincere. "I've got something to tell you. I want you to look away while I'm saying it."

He took her hands. Beneath the thick brows his eyes were

wary. "Here, here, what's all this about?"

"Look away from me." He looked into the water, trailing one hand in it, while she told him the story of her sister, confessed the guilt she had always felt, told him of the terrible dream she had had night after night for years in which Agnes, calm and smiling, floated rather than fell down an endless flight of steps with her dress ballooning out like a parachute, and then lay crumpled like a spider at the bottom. All the while he listened with his face turned away as she had asked, his hand trailing in the water. At the end she said, "So you see I could never leave her," and knew it was a lie, knew that if he asked her to do it she would leave Agnes and go with him.

But he did not ask her. He took his hand out of the water and smiled at her. "Is that all? I thought you had something terrible to tell me."

"You mean it's all right? Agnes can come and live with us?"

"Of course. You don't suppose I'd turn your sister away."

"Oh, Colin." Words were inadequate to express what she felt. It was as though she were living within a beautiful rose coloured bubble where everything that she wished for came true. She told Agnes, who was pleased but still suspicious. "You must bring him round to see me," she said, and Evelyn promised exultantly that she would. She went downstairs to share her happiness with Millie Hanslet, but Millie Hanslet, Mrs. Norton said, had been called away suddenly to her sick mother at Birmingham and had taken all her possessions with her.



That was Thursday. On Friday and Saturday she saw him again, and on the following Monday the inevitable happened. A customer who had come round at five o'clock on Saturday and found the shop closed had telephoned to Mr. Pettigrew about it. Evelyn made stumbling, confused excuses about her sister, and Mr. Pettigrew said sharply that this must not happen again, or else. Or else what he did not say, but Evelyn could imagine. That day she did not get to meet Colin, and at half-past four he came to the shop. A customer was there and Colin glowered at the books until the man had gone. Then he turned on her, and she felt the blast of his anger, withering her precious happiness. She appealed to him. What would happen if she lost her job? He snarled at her then—really there was no other word for it—

that he had already promised to look after her and her precious sister. What more did she want? Then his tone changed suddenly and he talked to her gently, earnestly, persuasively. There was no other time at which they could meet, he said. Didn't she want to see him, as much as he wanted to see her? His dark head was very close to hers, his lips whispered the reassuring words she had always wanted to hear.

Evelyn met him on Tuesday, and again on Wednesday, when she took him home to meet Agnes. Evelyn had made scones and a jam sponge in advance, and she was a little distressed because Colin did not eat very much. She and Agnes made most of the conversation. Colin was pleasant enough, but he seemed to find the occasion a strain.

"Did you like Agnes?" she asked when she was seeing him on to the bus.

"Eh? Yes, she's all right. Bad luck for her, being an invalid like that."

"You won't mind living with her?"

"No," he said as if with an effort. "No, I shan't mind."

"Tomorrow's my half-day."

Again he seemed to be making an effort. "So it is. What would you like to do, eh?"

"You'll think I'm foolish, but—I've never seen the Tower of London."

"Tower of London?" He stared at her incredulously. "I thought only kids went there."

Something in his manner upset her, and she almost gabbled. "Oh, we won't go if you don't want to, of course, we'll do anything you like, perhaps it's foolish, it was just that I hadn't seen it——"

"Here, here." He stopped her with a laugh. "Of course we can go there if you want to. I was just a bit surprised, that's all."

Evelyn was almost in tears. "But you said only kids——"

"Now then," he said. "Don't pick me up on everything I say. You're beginning to think you're the wife already."

The bus came. He kissed her, looked at her for a fraction of a second longer than usual, and then jumped on it quickly.

When Evelyn got back home she asked eagerly, "Did you like him?"

Agnes said hesitantly, "I think you ought to be careful, Evie. You don't know anything about him really, do you?"

"I know he's in love with me." Agnes remained silent. Evelyn's voice had a hysterical note in it. "He loves me enough to be prepared to live with you. What more do you want?"

"Nothing, Evie," her sister answered with quite unaccustomed meekness. "I want you to be happy."



The first blow fell on Thursday morning. Mr. Pettigrew reached the shop early for once, and confronted her with an expression of extraordinary grimness. Evelyn had been unlucky. The persistent man who had paid a visit before when the shop was shut had come three times between half-past four and six on Wednesday afternoon. Evelyn had no chance to invent a story, even had she been capable of it. Mr. Pettigrew spoke of vipers in his bosom, of deceit and idleness and the modern worker. She was to leave at the end of the week.

The second blow fell at lunch-time. She was to meet Colin at one o'clock at their teashop, and it was half-past before Evelyn began to understand that he might not be coming. She stayed in the teashop until two o'clock and then wandered out, looking so pale that the woman in charge of it asked if she would like some brandy. All sorts of wild thoughts moved through her mind. Perhaps they had agreed to meet at the Tower itself, perhaps he had been called suddenly to do a day-time shift, perhaps he was ill or hurt. Never for a moment did she admit that he might have broken their appointment deliberately. At last she took a bus to Holloway and found 133 Bossom Street, the address from which he had written the letters that she cherished. It was a small tobacconist's shop, an accommodation address for receiving letters, and they had not seen Mr. Jameson for the past two or three days. At half-past five Evelyn returned to the flat in Balham, hoping that there might be news of him. There was none. Agnes tried to comfort her. "We still have each other," she said. Evelyn shuddered.

When Evelyn left on Friday morning to go to work she met the postman and asked, without hope, if there were any letters for her. There *was* a letter, in the familiar firm, upright hand. Her heart leapt. She tore the letter open on the bus with eager, fumbling fingers, and while she read the words seemed to jump before her eyes. The words said that they could not meet again for reasons which she would soon understand, and that she

should not take the affair too much to heart. The letter ended, "I am very sorry it has to be this way, but when I saw you with your sister I realised that your place is really with her and that, even if the right man turns up, you could never marry and leave her. *I hope you can forget that you ever saw me.*" It was signed simply 'Colin'.

At the bookshop a grave Mr. Pettigrew awaited her, and with him a lean, kindly man named Inspector Ballard. Evelyn felt like someone walking through a thick mist as the inspector explained that last night the jeweller's shop next door had been robbed, and thirty thousand pounds' worth of stones stolen, and that the night watchman had been stunned and gagged. Nor did she understand in the least what was being implied when the inspector told her of the ingenious method employed, of how down in the basement sufficient of the brickwork in the wall separating the bookseller's store-room from the disused basement below the jeweller's shop had been removed to allow the thieves to go through, and how from this basement they had avoided the jeweller's burglar alarm system by knocking away the basement ceiling, cutting through the floorboards and going through into the shop upstairs.

It was a neat job, the inspector said almost admiringly, and of course it needed some sort of co-operation. Or deception, he added with his kindly gaze on Evelyn, or deception. Because it took a good many hours' work to go through that wall, and they wouldn't have dared to do it while she was above them because she would have heard, and they couldn't have done it at night because of the watchman making his rounds. It seemed a fair puzzle, the inspector said, until they discovered from one of the jeweller's assistants that Mr. Pettigrew's shop had been shut from four o'clock onwards during the last few days. A few minutes after four a van had been noticed on at least two occasions drawing up, two men had got out with armfuls of books, opened the door of Mr. Pettigrew's shop and gone in. The books were a blind, of course, although they would have been useful in case of questioning. The men had put in a couple of hours' work on the basement brickwork and then left before the night watchman came on duty, no doubt roughly replacing the brickwork and covering it with a screen of books. It was simple, the inspector said, when you knew how.

All this time Evelyn said nothing, but simply twisted her

hands together around the bag that contained the letter in the firm upright handwriting. When the inspector put his questions about where she had been on those days, gently at first, then sharply and finally with downright anger, she simply said that she had gone out each day, she did not know where.

It is doubtful, indeed, if any of his questions touched the simple conviction occupying her mind, that she must keep faith with the man who had shown her a glimpse of what life might be like, and had then left her because he thought her place was really with Agnes. She did not flinch when he showed her the book of photographs, turning the pages slowly and telling her something of the villainous history of this man or that one before asking if she had ever seen them. Not by a flicker of one of her red-rimmed eyelids did she show recognition when he turned to a photograph that showed Colin and Millie Hanslet together and explained that this one's real name was James Johnson, that he called himself Jones or Johns or James or Jameson, that he had been imprisoned more than once for running, with the help of the woman, friendship clubs that were a cloak for blackmail, and that he was often used as a contact man by crooks more important than himself.

She remembered the last words of the letter, *I hope you can forget that you ever saw me*, and she let the inspector turn the page. When the inspector at last abandoned his questioning for the time being, in desperation at his inability to break down the barrier of her indifference or ignorance, Evelyn Ellis knew what she must do to preserve her soul alive, as she put it at the trial. She went to the back of the shop to wash her hands, she slipped Jessie out of the drawer into her handbag, she said good-bye calmly to Mr. Pettigrew, and then she went home and shot her sleeping sister through the head. When the police came, Evelyn Ellis made a statement, simple and to her quite satisfactory. "I had to do it, you see," she said. "While she was alive I could never get married."

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**GRADUALLY**, if painfully, we should settle down until we had a sort of tariff for murder. It might work out at a year or two for a mercy killing, five years for shooting your wife's lover, and 30 years for murdering a policeman.

— Lord Stoneham, *Home Office*.

# ***Winkie and the Forty Thieves***

**ERIC PARR**

*Another expert, light-  
hearted insight to  
the Fraternity  
(of criminals)*

**A** COUPLE OF nights ago I am sitting in my usual corner seat in Wilmer's Sports and Social Club, known as 'Wilmers' to the Fraternity, and 'that flipping den of iniquity' to the over-worked and long suffering local C.I.D., when the subject of conversation suddenly switched to women in general and Brigitte Bardot in particular.

To my surprise, one of the most inspired of the conversationalists during the session when racing was the topic, a cheery character with a knowing wink, suddenly got to his feet and swept out of the club, like a judge adjourning the court because he can't get his own way with defending counsel.

I looked at Wilmer enquiringly. I didn't open my mouth because if Wilmer wants to tell you something it's no use asking silly questions. I am only here on sufferance, and because this Wilmer is one tough boy who rules his club with a rod of iron, no one asks stupid questions.

This Wilmer is an old smash-and-grab man who has turned up the crooked lark in favour of running a club, and a very good job he makes of it. If Wilmer doesn't reckon you, then you've got more chance of being elected to White's

or Boodle's than of setting your foot through the club door. No one takes any liberties, for Wilmer has friends all over the country. In fact I am of the opinion that if you trod on Wilmer's corns very hard and as a result decided that the best place was the East and the wide deserts, the first geezer you'd come across sitting on a camel at the nearest oasis would be a pal of Wilmer's waiting to give you the old leather treatment.



Wilmer paused in his action of cup polishing, cleared his throat and looked at all and sundry.

"Winkie Taylor doesn't like women," he announced.

"Why?" asked Walker the Talker, who is not reckoned a lot among the Fraternity on account of he gets his name from conning old trouts out of bits of silver for 'deserving causes.' As Walker the Talker is a great believer in the maxim that charity begins at home, you will appreciate that these old trouts might just as well sling their half-crowns down the nearest drain. 'Is he the other way?' he added with a silly giggle, and Wilmer glares at him.

"I don't know how you got in here," he says, "but as far as I can remember I barred you a month ago on account of a little stroke you pulled." With that Wilmer nods to Big Harry, the club minder, but Walker the Talker is out of his seat and through the door before Big Harry is within three yards of him.

"Now where was I?" says Wilmer. "Oh, yes. You shouldn't mention women in front of Winkie, and I'll tell you for why."

He goes on to tell us that Winkie Taylor, who has quite a lot of form behind him, decides to turn it up when the 1948 Criminal Justice Act became law. The act was aimed at the recidivist, and Winkie had no desire to end up with five to fourteen years preventative detention. He gets himself a job driving a van for a geezer in the Rag Trade. Then, one day, he meets three birds who are members of the hoisting team known to all and sundry as 'The Forty Thieves.'

Of course they don't number forty; actually their total tally is twelve, but they are such persistent and expert shoplifters, who get about all over the place, that they are given

the name of the Forty Thieves — they are active enough to be forty in all.

Winky, at that time of his life, was always willing to buy a good-looking bird a drink, chatted them up and finds they are short of a driver. Their regular, a steady old geezer of forty-five, has gone down with a dodgy appendix. After a few beers they put the proposition to Winky. All he has to do is to hire a large shooting-brake with a duff driving licence, which they can supply. The rest of the job consisted of driving the team around the main towns in the provinces. He wasn't expected to do any hoisting. Instead, he had to wait outside the shop they had selected and from time to time each member of the team would come out of the shop, get into the shooting-brake where she would deposit the gear she has hoisted.

A tenner a week it paid, all expenses and a percentage of the profit. As I listen to Wilmer, I am of the opinion that Winky would have done this job just for expenses only, especially as the rest of the team turn out to be just as good-looking as the three who propositioned him.



So, on the following Tuesday morning—the Forty Thieves looked upon Monday as an unlucky day for hoisting—Winky pointed the shooting-brake in the direction of the south coast.

A few miles outside the first town they tell him to pull up. The girls get out and change into their hoisting knickers. These are enormous bloomers with elastic tops and legs, into which, via elastic banded skirts, they stuffed the swag.

The girls worked to a set routine. They entered each shop separately, acting as strangers to each other. They would congregate together at a rack of dresses and take it in turns for two to smother the movements of the third.

Winkie was amazed at the amount of gear each girl was able to stow about her person. On her first trip, Grace, the eldest of the team, brought out four afternoon frocks, plus the hangers which she hadn't had time to extract. Connie, a blonde dish, produced an ocelot coat, while Mavis (who looked like a Sunday school teacher until she opened her mouth), with an apologetic air, requested Winkie's aid in

removing from the depths of her bloomers a vast roll of silk coat linings.

By the end of the week the car was loaded up to the roof, in addition to which a large wicker hamper had been sent off to London by rail.

Winkie seemed to bring them luck, for their hauls had never been so large and Winkie lapped it all up. Their overnight stays are at good class hotels, and there is plenty of money in the way of extra bonuses.

At first the team kept him at arm's length when it came to the social side, but Winkie, like most successful Don Juans, had when necessary a limitless amount of patience. He had decided at the start that he was going to make one of them sooner or later. It was all a matter of time and opportunity.

He proceeded, characteristically though rashly, to make them all, one after the other.

First to fall was Connie, the blonde.



It happened one evening when she was feeling bored and found herself alone with Winkie in the lounge of a hotel in Worthing. Winkie, ever an opportunist, took the cash in hand and heeded not the rumble of the distant drum.

In the next fortnight, similar situations occurred with Grace and Mavis. By the end of the month Winkie was conducting separate, discreet affairs with all three, and crowing to himself like a little bantam cock.

Despite their professional toughness, hoisters have hearts which obey the same sentimental conventions as duchesses or debutantes. All three proceeded to fall head over heels in love with their chauffeur.

Winkie never did know how he came a tumble. It was, in fact, a significant remark by Mavis made in the ladies' cloakroom of a hotel in Bognor Regis, where they had stopped for lunch after a successful hoist. She said, "Lucky I wasn't lumbered this morning. I was that dreamy I kept wondering what I'd hoist for my wedding dress. Winkie says he likes me best in blue."

A few minutes later the cat was out of the bag—all three of them.

The atmosphere at lunch may have been strained, but not one of them let on. Winkie drove them off to the afternoon's target without suspecting a thing, and they bundled out with smiles and little waves, and, "Ta, ta, Winkie boy, be good."

Winkie snuggled back into the driving seat and got down to a little nap. He was awakened by two beefy geezers tapping on the window and five minutes after that he was standing in the charge room of the local nick, listening to the station officer intoning something about 'receiving various articles of wearing apparel knowing them to have been stolen or otherwise unlawfully obtained.'

He had no out. He eventually went up the steps and came down with five of the best.



"So," conclude Wilmer, "you can see why Winkie Taylor is not too keen on the subject of birds."

We all made the usual murmur and then Bishop Carter, who is called Bishop on account of he always wears a clerical garb when he drops a forged kite, pipes up:

"You can never go wrong when the subject of conversation is religion."

With that, Wilmer gives a scornful laugh.

"You'd qualify for a right-hander there," he says and the Bishop raises his eyebrows at this one. Wilmer explains.

"Winkie got religion while he was doing that five stretch. Chapel orderly, Bible classes, the lot. He really swallowed the anchor. Woudn't even carry an ounce of contraband snout. When he came out he decided to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil. I'm using his own words, by the way. He caught a train to Somerset and headed for a monastery where, he had heard, they were prepared to accept lay brothers. He walks up the drive and decides to take a gander at the small chapel just inside the grounds before he steamed in to the governor of this private nick. He wandered around the chapel taking in everything, and decided that he might just as well stick a few bob in the offertory box.

He had his hand on the box when a big geezer steps out from behind a pillar and puts a grip on his collar. The long

and the short of it is that there has been an epidemic of larceny from offertory boxes in the district and the law is keeping a special watch on churches and chapels.

So Winkie Taylor gets a carpet for sus. Which, translated for the benefit of visitors, and here Wilmer looks straight at me, means that he was sentenced to three months for being a suspected person loitering with intent to steal from offertory boxes, which is just about the dodgiest charge charge in the book.

I ventured to remark that this was a gross miscarriage of justice.

Wilmer grins. "That's what the three hoisters thought when they heard about it."

I smiled understandingly — "They still had a soft spot for him then."

Wilmer shook his head.

"They reckoned he should have got another five years."

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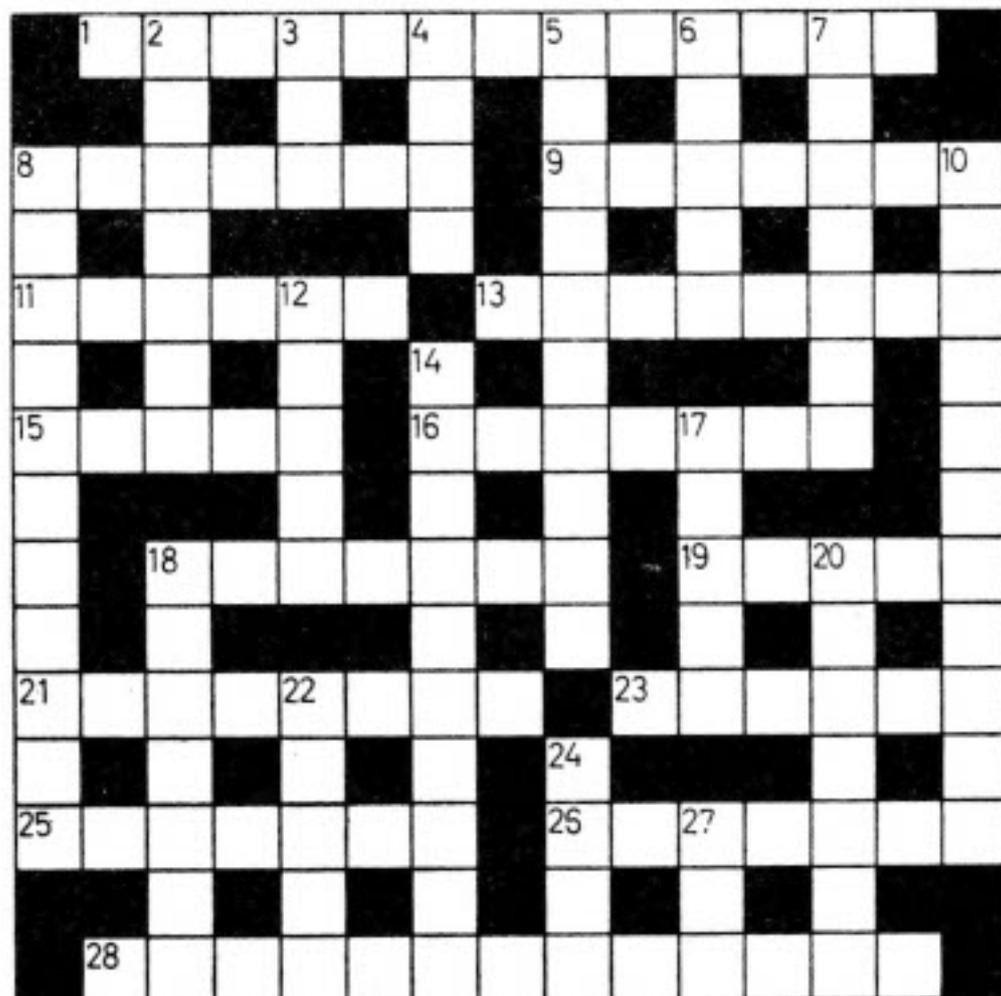
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## EWMM Crossword No. 9



### ACROSS

- 1 EW character who had all the answers? (3, 3, 3, 4)
- 8 Fiery stimulant for Percy (7)
- 9 Abrupt way in which police take fingerprints? (7)
- 11 Obviously no description for the injured party (6)
- 13 Dramatic end of the Japanese (4-4)
- 15 It's usually up the pole! (5)
- 16 Doreen's turn to sign on the back (7)
- 18 Liar! Yet, it's the truth! (7)
- 19 Poison for some — they live no more (5)
- 21 Antiquated stole, perhaps, in a decoration (8)
- 23 Deadly trouble in which an old convict is found (6)
- 25 Namby-pamby dairyman? (7)
- 26 Radio family taking their bows? (7)
- 28 Last work of note written by EW? (6, 2, 5)

### DOWN

- 2 Does a man bury it in peacetime? (7)
- 3 Perhaps, the motorist's plan (3)
- 4 Rank of an informer (4)
- 5 Pirate and detective get together to fix something! (4, 3, 3)
- 6 Dr. in a novel trial (5)
- 7 Visa Eve gets in a dodgy way (7)
- 8 Did EW book it for a ghost? (7, 4)
- 10 The last smouldering remains (5, 6)
- 12 Strange graduate dance (5)
- 14 Serious trouble ahead if you cannot give him his due? (5, 2, 3)
- 17 One of EW's competitors (5)
- 18 Decide to do this crossword again? (7)
- 20 Crime of omission, presumably (7)
- 22 Catch a girl with nothing on! (5)
- 24 Blow it and give the game away (4)
- 27 Signal for a man to act? (3)

(Solution will appear  
in our November issue.)

Josephine Bell

THE

COMMUTERS

*A solid, expert tale in the  
very best traditions of  
the finest British  
whodunits*

THE RAILWAY TERMINUS was thronged with travellers, running, walking, breaking off to snatch evening papers or gazing up at the suburban departure board, where an inconspicuous notice told the observant that their train might be delayed. The rest poured by, following their usual routine.

Jean Williams, totally abstracted, was one of these. She hurried along, and waved her season ticket in its case at the barrier. The platform clock told her it was 5.15 p.m. and the train, still filling rapidly, was due to leave at that time. After passing an open coach and a first-class one, Jean pulled open the door of the first carriage of the next coach. It was full, but she was in.

Philip Manners, who had been trying to catch up with her ever since he saw her on the elevator of the underground, paused for a moment at the still open door of the carriage. He had stopped to check this train, for, unlike Jean, he had noticed the warning. Having discovered that it did not affect him, he had hurried on, but she was too far ahead and had stopped to climb into the train just before he reached her.

He saw by her now averted face that she had noticed him just behind her. Her determined rejection of him was more than annoying, it was upsetting. He paused, but a whistle blew and he stepped into the next compartment and forced two stout occupants to move apart by sitting down between them. Right was on his side, even if it meant total discomfort for all three.

The whistle was followed almost at once by the closing of the gates on to the platform. But not before Derek Field, clutching his brief case and waving his season ticket, rushed through them and pelted along the platform, staring wildly into the carriages as he went, finding them packed so tightly that if he had opened a door, he thought, half a dozen bodies would fall out at his feet.

The second whistle blew, the train jerked. Derek snatched at a handle, dragged a door open and flung himself in. A porter on the platform slammed it shut.

When he had regained his balance and soothed the local agitation at his violent entry with boyishly cheerful regrets and excuses, he became aware of Jean, standing near him. He reached out a hand to touch her arm, but at that moment a tall man rose from a corner seat at the far end of the carriage and Jean, with murmured thanks, dropped into it. She had begun to wonder if she could possibly reach home without collapsing. She had seen Derek get in; she knew the majority of the passengers would leave before she reached her home station—and Derek's. She stared out of the window into the darkness, cold, miserable, afraid.

Derek felt a hot glow of anger at her very obvious rejection. Added to the warmth engendered by his dash along the platform, the heating was on in the carriage. He found it unbearable. He unbuttoned his mackintosh and pulled off the round fur hat he had bought for the cold weather, looking at the luggage racks for a place to park it, together with his brief case. But the racks were full. He put the fur hat on again and resigned himself to wait.



At Fulton all of the other standing passengers got out, together with most of those sitting. Only one elderly man and one middle-aged woman were left. There were now empty seats and empty racks. Derek moved towards Jean, put his possessions on the rack above her and took the seat opposite. Leaning forward, distressed by the pallor of her averted cheek and the miserable droop of her shoulders, he touched her knee, offering her his evening newspaper.

"No, thanks," she said, glancing round. "I'm all right."

"Sure?"

"Of course I'm sure."

She returned her gaze to the darkness, the lighted roads and houses. Derek, more disturbed than ever, could do nothing while the other passengers were in the carriage. He turned to another page of his newspaper and tried to read. He did not see the tears that began to trickle down Jean's cheeks. But when she got out a handkerchief he saw her, put away the paper and leaned forward again.

The train was slowing to the next stop. The elderly man got up and began to fumble with the door handle. The train stopped. The woman followed as the door swung open.

The whistle blew. Derek got up to pull the door shut. The train started. He went back to his seat and sat down.

"Now," he said, "you've got to tell me what's up, why you avoid me. What's happened?"

She could not postpone her answer. They were alone now, for one station at least. Probably all the rest of the way. Besides, it wasn't fair. It had to be some time. So it might as well be now. But she still hedged, twisting her damp handkerchief in her hands, refusing to meet his eyes.

"Nothing. Nothing's happened. I've told you. Nothing."

He crossed the carriage to sit beside her and tried to put an arm across her shoulders, but she shrank away.

"I don't *have* to explain to you. Anyway, there's nothing to explain."

"Nothing, hell!" He was exasperated. "We've been going steady nearly two years, and weeks ago you suddenly pass up our fixed date and since then never any explanation at all. You avoided me from then on."

"I feel different. That's all. We're older. We've grown apart."

He swore suddenly and when she shrank still farther away, apologised.

"I'll say you're different," he went on, gloomily. "I want to know why. I want to know who the new bloke is."

She pulled herself together. She had to face it; she saw that now.

"Whoever said there was one?" she asked, coldly.

"Jenie, be your age! You've been dodging me for nearly three months and you want to deny it's not on account of anyone else . . .?"

That finished her resistance. She broke down, covering her

face and sobbing. Derek put an arm round her and she did not move.

"You're not exactly on top of the world with the new outfit, are you?" he remarked, drily.

She had no answer to this. But she stopped crying, looked up and said, wanly, "I've been mad, Derek! I don't know what came over me."

"I can guess," he said, savagely. "Expensive guy—good restaurants—luxury flat. Little presents of jewellery——"

"Oh, Derek," she cried, laughing in spite of her tears. "Do stop it! You sound like the flicks! He isn't rich—just, just well-off. He hasn't got a London flat——"

"Where's he live, then? Tileham?"

"No. And I'm not going to tell you. Not ever."

"So," he said, bitterly, "you've thrown me over for a smooth operator who can afford to give you just what I can't. Yet. How old is he?"

"Thirty-six," she answered and immediately covered her mouth, regretting this indiscretion. "Oh," she went on, her fear and confusion increasing, "I hadn't ought to have said——"

But he was not listening. He was riding high on his anger, his disgust.

"I always knew you wouldn't wait," he lied, knowing he had trusted her completely. "You said you would, but that wasn't true, was it? You said I was making my way as fast as you expected and you'd wait. *Wait!* What were you waiting for? What did you really want?"

His increasing rage found an echo in her, found the excuses she had been making to herself whenever her conscience refused to be put down.

"You've no right to speak to me like that. I meant what I said. I meant it. A girl has every right to expect—I mean, look at Edna."

"Edna Carey?"

"Edna Lloyd, now."

"Yes," he said, grinning. "Yes, Lloyd. Colin Lloyd, with no hair on the top of his head and a fat behind like a woman."

Jean protested. "She's got a lovely home."

"You want a lovely home?" His anger was reaching a pitch he had never before experienced. He felt drunk with it. His voice rose. He knew he was shouting, but could not stop him-

self. "You want a lovely home, but the man doesn't matter? He can be bald, fat, impotent—"

"Derek!"

"Don't pretend to be shocked. We all know about old Colin and what he got in that car smash."

"Edna's very happy."

"Good luck to her! A proper spinster, I always thought. Got the best of two worlds, hasn't she?" He was goading himself on, trying to hurt her. "So what about you? Something to match, your new admirer? Bald, fat, impotent?"

Her last shreds of control snapped. She screamed, "No! No! Damn you! No!" and broke again into loud sobs, her face in her hands, rocking herself to and fro.

Enlightenment struck Derek's anger flat. He said, very tense and serious, "Care to tell me?"

Between her sobs, her face still hidden, she answered, "I never meant—— I wasn't prepared—— He said he'd do the necessary——"

"The dirty bastard! How far?"

"Three months."

"Going to marry you?"

"He can't. He's married. She wouldn't think of it."

"Wouldn't divorce him, you mean?"

She nodded her head, miserably.

"Going to keep it?"

"I don't know what I'm going to do." There was despair in her voice. "I wish I was dead!"

Derek said desperately, "You're in love with him, aren't you?"

"Yes," she whispered. "Oh, yes. I love him."

"As you never did me?"

"I was always fond of you, Derek. We've always known one another. I still am. It wasn't the real thing, though. Not for me, it wasn't."

"But this is, I suppose?"

He had risen, gripping the rack above her head, standing over her, eyes glaring down from an enraged face.

She moved into the corner by the window, more terrified than she had ever been in her life.

"This—louse, that's married and likes to have a good-time girl on the side and if she gets pregnant, well, to hell with it,

it wasn't his fault. This is the great lover, I suppose? This is the real thing for you? Isn't it? Answer me. *Isn't it?*"

The train stopped. Neither of them had noticed their arrival until this moment.

Derek pushed himself away from the rack. He was trembling, his mouth was dry. He flung open the carriage door.

"It's only Buckstead," Jean said, mechanically. "We don't get out here."

"I do," he answered, violently. "To-day, I most certainly do!"

He got out. He had completely forgotten his hat and his brief case. He walked away from the train without looking back. Jean watched him go, the tears once more trickling down her wan cheeks.



A number of people got out at Buckstead. It included Philip Manners. He was carrying his felt hat and his brief case. He saw Derek leave the carriage next door and, as he drew level with it, he saw Jean sitting there by the window, crying. He looked again at Derek, watching him.

Derek saw no one, thought of no one but Jean until a girl bumped into him, when he apologised from habit. He saw then that it was Vera Burns.

"Derek!" she exclaimed in surprise.

"Hullo, Vera."

"Did you really mean to get off here? Buckstead?"

"I know it's Buckstead." Derek made a great effort to behave normally. He forced himself to smile and add, "I thought a bit of exercise might be a good idea. It's not a bad evening for the time of year."

"But Jean?" Vera said, hesitating. "She's crying! I saw her. Isn't she getting off, too?"

He said, savagely, "*Has* she been in the habit of getting out here, lately?"

Vera was uncomfortable, but she had to answer Derek. He was glaring at her.

"I—I have run across her once or twice," she stammered. "She has friends in Buckstead, hasn't she?"

"Yes. Friends. Lovely friends!"

She thought he must be drunk. She turned back towards the

train, wondering if Jean needed help, if Derek had upset her. But again she stopped. Derek and Jean were going steady and they might have had some ordinary little quarrel. Better not to interfere.

She looked round again for Derek, but he had disappeared. And at that moment the train began to leave the station. Vera heard a voice at her side, saying, "Why, Vera, where are you off to?"

She swung round. Stout Mrs. Garrod stood beside her, a shopping basket on one arm and an umbrella on the other. Vera laughed, took the basket and described her encounter with Derek Field and her anxiety about Jean.

"He was furious," she said, soberly. "I thought I'd go back to her."

"Not too furious to change his mind," Mrs. Garrod told her. "I thought it was Derek. Getting back on the train. Just before it started."

"They'll make it up, then," said Vera in a relieved voice.



The train was punctual that evening. It had left Buckstead at its scheduled time, 5.50 p.m., and drew into Tileham exactly on the hour. Most of the passengers left by the main exit, where the porter collected tickets from the few passengers who did not show seasons. The rest, three only, the train's guard noticed, went up over the bridge to the exit on the up line. No one got on the train at Tileham. The terminus of this loop line lay only a few miles ahead at the other end of the town of Middlebury.

A short distance from Tileham station Mrs. Field, Derek's mother, heard the train go out. She usually waited for this moment before switching on the light in the porch and putting on the radio in the sitting room. But time went by and Derek did not arrive.

Twenty minutes later, when Mrs. Field was beginning to wonder what could possibly have happened to him, she heard him come in. She went out into the hall.

"No," said Derek, anticipating the questions he knew were rushing to the surface of his mother's mind. "I didn't miss the five-fifteen and I didn't fall out of the carriage. I got out at Buckstead and walked up through the woods."

"Whatever for? In February! Just look at those shoes! Off with them and to the fire with you."

He obeyed her. He was curiously meek, his mother thought. As if his mind was far away.

He moved stiffly to a chair in the sitting room and sat down. Mrs. Field, having put his shoes in the kitchen, came back carrying his slippers.

The music from the radio stopped. A voice said, abruptly, "Here is a police message. The body of a young woman, apparently very recently dead, has been discovered in an empty carriage at Middlebury railway station, the terminus for trains from London on the loop line. The train concerned was the five-fifteen from London, reaching Middlebury at five-past six. The victim has been identified as a Miss Jean Williams——"

Derek was on his feet, crying his alarm.

"——anyone who travelled on this train tonight," the announcer's voice continued, "please communicate with their nearest police station. Miss Williams was twenty years of age . . ."

Derek snapped off the radio, caught at a chair back and collapsed. His mother, his slippers still in her hand, now dropped them beside him, shocked and terrified.

"Jeanie!" she whispered. "Your Jeanie?"

"No! No! No! It can't be—— it can't ——"

They were startled by the shrill sound of the front door bell.

"I'd better see who that is," Mrs. Field said, in something like her normal voice.

She came back, followed by a tall man.

"This gentleman wants to have a word with you, Derek," she began, but the stranger, advancing, asked, "Are you Derek Field?"

Still apparently bewildered, Derek managed to get to his feet.

"I am. Who are you? I don't know you. Bursting in like this——"

Calmly watching the young man's obvious agitation, the stranger pushed the door shut behind him and stood back against it. Mrs. Field tried to excuse her son.

"It was the radio message," she said, "About Jeanie. No wonder he's upset. You see, he and Jeanie . . . It's enough to drive anyone——"

"What happened to her?" Derek broke it. "She didn't throw herself out——" He could not go on.

"She was strangled," the man said.

Derek stood, frozen. It was a nightmare. It couldn't be true. So soon. This man. He said, trying to control his voice, "Who are you? Who the devil are you?"

"I am Detective Chief-Inspector Holden, of Middlebury C.I.D. I should like to ask you a few questions, Mr. Field."

Derek pulled himself together. He understood now what had happened. Jean's parents had given his name. They would obviously think of him at once. As obviously, they knew nothing about the last three months. Jean had told them nothing.

He answered the inspector's questions clearly, mechanically. He *had* been as good as engaged to her until three months ago. Then she had avoided him. To-day they had quarrelled. He did not attempt to make light of that.

"When did you have the carriage to yourselves? Just you and Miss Williams?"

"After Kettleston. As far as Buckstead. Look. Are you suggesting——?"

"You were alone with Miss Williams, then, for two stations as far as Buckstead. Why do you say Buckstead, not Tileham?"

"Because I got out at Buckstead."

Mrs. Field intervened.

"That's right, Inspector. Derek was over twenty minutes late home. I mean, we're less than five minutes' walk from the station here, so I expect him off the six-five train at a few minutes past the hour. He wasn't in today till quite twenty-past."

"That's right," Derek added, wearily. "I got off at Buckstead and walked through the woods. It's a short cut."

"Why did you leave the train at Buckstead?" Holden asked.

"I wanted the walk."

"Why?"

"Why not——? All right. Because of what Jean—— Because she was upset—and so was I."

"Because of something Miss Williams told you?" Derek nodded miserably. "What did she tell you?"

"That's her business. *Was* her business. Oh, God, why must you go on like this? She was crying—I couldn't stand it!"

He swung round, away from the inquisitor. He wanted only to be alone with his grief. But the inexorable voice said, "You

killed her. Is that it, Mr. Field?" and he heard his mother scream, "No, not my Derek!"

He turned again. He said, heavily, "I never killed her. I got out at Buckstead. There was a girl on the platform who knows me, Vera Burns."

Holden said, "I will certainly contact Miss Burns. But you got off the train at Tileham, Mr. Field. We have two witnesses to that."

Derek was stunned. He could only deny it again and demand to know how he had been identified.

"Chiefly by the guard on the train. He noticed your fur hat and mackintosh, both of which, incidentally, I have seen hanging up in your hall."

Derek stood incapable of thought, incapable of any emotion, now, but fear.

Then he began a rapid explanation. He had been too upset by the quarrel, he insisted, to remember to take his hat and brief case from Jean's carriage. He was astonished, when he reached home, to find them pushed, almost out of sight, under the rose-bush at the side of the porch. He thought Jean must have left them there, perhaps as a move towards reconciliation, perhaps in order to avoid speaking to his mother, who had not seen her for several weeks.

"Is that what you wish me to believe?" Holden asked. "You saw the things in the dark?"

"The porch light was on," Mrs. Field explained. "I always put it on at six."

Derek said nothing. He listened to his mother agreeing that he had not said anything to her about the strange reappearance of his belongings. He heard her explain that he came in pale, tired, tensed up, and very muddy from his walk through the woods.

He roused himself at that.

"*Muddy!*" he cried. "That's true. Show him my shoes! That'll convince him."

Mrs. Field began to sniff.

"I washed them off," she said. "When I went for your slippers. I did it for——"

"The best," said Derek. "I know. You're a great help, Mother. A great help."

"Thank you, Mr. Field," Inspector Holden's voice cut into

the dispute. "You could have walked in the woods *after* you got off the train at Tileham. But I'll take the mackintosh and hat, if you agree. And you can show me exactly where you say you found them."



Marjorie Manners stubbed out her fourth cigarette in line. She had heard the car at last. Philip was back, an hour late. As so often before. She met him in the hall. He was hatless and looked tired. He dropped his brief case and began to pull off his mackintosh. She took it from him.

"Hat?" she inquired. "You're very late.

"Sorry about that, old girl. Hat? In the car still, I expect. You don't do running repairs to the car in city headgear, my child. Or I don't, for one."

"Were you on the five-fifteen as usual?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I thought you might have been kept over this accident. But it was the car, was it?"

"What accident? Where?"

"On the radio," she told him. "A police message. I didn't get the beginning of it. A girl seems to have been killed. They want to hear from everyone who was on that train."

"They?"

"The Police. You don't seem very interested."

"I'm not," he said, with a faint smile. "I told you. I was not aware of any accident. What was it?"

"I didn't hear. Look, you've torn the sleeve of your mac."

"Shouldn't wonder. The bonnet stuck when I was lifting it to see why the darned thing wouldn't start.

She turned the mackintosh over and as she did so a watch fell to the ground from one of the pockets. She picked it up and looked at it, then he snatched it from her.

"Your watch!" she cried. "It can't have happened just falling on the carpet this minute. The glass is smashed. It's stopped, hasn't it?"

"Yes. I bashed it on the car, when I tore my sleeve. Just before I phoned you."

"But you told me the time. You said your watch—Where did you phone from?"

"The station, of course. Look, I must wash. I'm filthy."

He moved past her to open the door of the hall lavatory.

"I don't see how you knew the time," Marjorie protested, as he disappeared.

He put his head out again.

"Clock at the station," he said and disappeared.

She went to the sitting-room. When Philip joined her again she repeated her concern about the accident that had happened on the train from London.

"Why all this interest?" Philip asked. He was pouring out a drink for himself. He offered her one, but she refused.

"The message asked all the passengers to report to the police. I think you ought to phone them."

He answered in a furious voice, "I've nothing to tell. Why the hell should I?"

"I don't think that matters. No need to fly off the handle, is there?"

That pulled him up. He knew what she was thinking.

"Oh, all right," he said, controlling his annoyance. "Middlebury police station?"

He turned his back on her and dialled. She heard him say, "Middlebury police station? My name is Manners. Philip Manners. I was on the five-fifteen train, but I don't think I can help you. No, my wife heard the announcement . . . I was late home. Car trouble . . . in the car park . . . I don't recollect anyone of the name of Williams. Sorry." He put down the receiver.

Marjorie said, "Williams? Is that her name?"

"Apparently," he answered. "D'you know any girl called Jean Williams?"

Marjorie shook her head. Then, with a cutting edge to her voice, "Oh, well, if she turned up dead at Middlebury, poor kid, she can't have spent an hour with you to-night."

Philip groaned.

"Oh, for Pete's sake! Not all *that* again!"

"It's your own fault," she answered, her voice rising. "Why the car breakdown? Why bother to phone me at all? Why not just *arrive* late? Lies. I don't want anything—any more."

"I was working on the car," he insisted. "I don't care what you believe. The Buckstead porter came out to see if he could help me."

"But you didn't really need him? Or a garage. There was

nothing wrong with the car. Don't tell me. It's the same story every time."

"Have it your own way." He went to pour himself another drink. "Are we going to eat . . .?"

She was gone before he had finished the sentence. He smiled a little as he lifted his glass. But the smile vanished when the telephone rang again. Marjorie appeared in the doorway as he put the receiver back.

"What was that?" he asked, anxiously.

"That was Detective Chief-Inspector Holden. He is coming round to see me. Now, to check one or two things with me. You'd better suspend operations in the kitchen."

"To check——? Will that be very awkward for you, my poor Don Juan?" She smiled.



Inspector Holden rang very shortly afterwards. Marjorie opened the front door and brought him into the sitting-room. Philip, playing the host with easy cordiality, offered a drink and cigarettes, both of which Holden refused. Marjorie explained how she heard part of a broadcast about half-past six, before Philip came in. Philip explained his lateness. He did not hear any broadcast but his wife gave him the end of the police message, which was why he had rung up to report that he had travelled on that particular train.

When he finished speaking Holden turned to Marjorie.

"You didn't hear the whole message, you said? Well, Miss Williams was strangled. Very shortly, we think, before the train reached Middlebury. The body was quite warm. In fact, the station staff tried artificial respiration and sent for a doctor. Did you speak, sir?"

"Ghastly thing!" Philip's voice shook. "Quite ghastly! She was alone in the carriage, of course?"

"Naturally. We have some evidence to show she was alive when the train stopped at Buckstead. If this is true, it suggests her murderer got out at Tileham. She lived at Tileham and would normally have got out there herself."

"Couldn't the murderer have got off at Middlebury before she was found?" Marjorie asked.

"Well," Holden told her, "very few passengers get off at the terminus. They are all accounted for. He could have got out

on to the track, but there is no way to the road outside the station from there. Besides, the lighting is good and I doubt if he could have got anywhere without being spotted."

"I see," Marjorie said. "Then she must have been killed between Buckstead and Tileham."

"I got off at Buckstead," Philip said, firmly.

Holden turned back to him. Had Philip noticed any of the passengers still on the train? Any quarrelling in any of the carriages? No, he had not. He had gone straight to the exit, to his car, which failed to start.

"So," asked Holden, but looking at Marjorie. "so you arrived home at——?"

"Seven, Inspector," she answered. "He says his car——"

"My car wouldn't start," Philip broke in, angrily. "As I told you. I leave it in the station car park every day. My berth is on the extension, a small side-road off the station front sweep.

"I knew my service garage would be shut by six. I phoned my wife I'd be late and got on with the job myself."

"That's right," Marjorie agreed. "He phoned just after six. At least he said—I was in the kitchen—I hadn't got my watch on . . ."

"She wanted to know why I couldn't get a garage or the A.A. or something and wanted to know the time. I told her——"

"You said your watch had slipped round on your wrist," she interrupted. "But actually, you'd broken it, or did that happen after——?"

"Broken it?" Holden asked.

Philip took it out of his pocket.

"Yes," he said. "I bashed it on the car getting the bonnet open."

Holden held out his hand.

"May I see? Pity. Quite severe damage. How did you know the time, then?"

"The station clock, he said," Marjorie answered, before Philip could speak: "He was ringing up from the call-box."

"At Buckstead?" suggested Holden. "Yes, Mr. Manners?"

"Yes."

"He really had a pretty ghastly time with the car, one way and another," Marjorie went on. "Didn't you, darling? Tearing your mac. And your poor hat——"

"My hat has nothing to do with the car," Philip said, in a voice of suppressed fury.

"It was *in* the car," Marjorie insisted. "You said so and I got it out just now, when I went to look at the dinner."

"I told her I'd thrown my brief case in on top of it," Philip explained to the inspector. "And then, I forgot all about it."

Holden nodded, amiably.

"May I see the hat and mac, please?"

Philip was beginning, "Why on earth——?" but Marjorie said, briskly, "I'll get them," and went out of the room.

Philip shrugged his shoulders.

"Do we *have* to go off on irrelevant sidelines?" he asked. "If you want to check my delay getting home, ask the porter at Buckstead. He knows me and he came out to ask me what the trouble was."

"When was that?"

"Just before I got going again."

Marjorie reappeared in the doorway, carrying a mackintosh and a battered brown felt hat.

"May I take these away with me, Mr. Manners? You should have them back in a couple of hours."

"Please yourself," Philip answered. "I can't think what you want them for, but I've no objection. I think you've still got my watch, though."

He held out his hand, but the inspector dropped the watch into his own pocket. "I'd like to keep that too for a bit, if I may."

Philip and Marjorie stood looking at him. Neither spoke nor moved. Holden went on, in the same quiet pleasant tone, "I may want you to make a formal statement, Mr. Manners. I'll ring you."

Philip shrugged.

"Just as you like. I hope you'll let us have our meal in peace. What's left of it by this time."

Marjorie showed the inspector out. When she came back Philip was pouring himself yet another drink.

"He's gone into the garage," she told him. "I had to give him the key."

Philip was not quite steady now.

"What's the big idea, my girl? Trying to fix this thing on your old man, eh?"

"Of course not."

"She says, of course not! You did your best."

"Then why don't you tell the inspector where you *really* were? Why don't you give him her name and the address where you meet?"

He lunged towards her, but she slipped past him. He shouted after her, "Why don't you hold your tongue, you jealous bitch?"



Four hours later Chief-Inspector Holden sat at the table in his room at Middlebury police station. A plain-clothes sergeant sat beside him, taking notes. A uniformed constable stood on guard at the door.

The Buckstead porter, a small nervous man, still in his working uniform, sat opposite Holden. He had, with much reluctance, described how he had gone out to the front of the station, seen a faint light among the trees in the annexe car park and gone up to investigate. He had found Mr. Manners working inside the bonnet of his car by the light of a hand torch. He had offered to help, or to get help, but Mr. Manners had said he thought he had dealt with the fault. He had put down the bonnet, got into the driving seat, switched on the ignition and the engine started. He had then put on the car lights and drove away.

"You actually saw Mr. Manners leave the station car park at six forty-five?" Holden asked.

"That was the time on the platform clock when I got back in the station, sir. Directly after he left. I saw him go."

Holden signalled to the constable at the door, who opened it to admit Derek and Mrs. Field; she spoke before she was through the door.

"There's no objection to my coming in, Inspector, I hope? Seeing that Derek has come here by his own wish?"

"None, Mrs. Field. As long as you don't interrupt."

He pointed to a corner of the room and Mrs. Field, rather awed by his manner, sat down there. Holden lifted Derek's fur hat and muddy mackintosh from the table and asked him to put them on. Derek complied, not understanding the inspector's motive.

Holden turned to the Buckstead porter and asked "Did you

see this gentleman pass the barrier at Buckstead from the train getting in from London at five-fifty this evening?"

"No," the man answered. "But they crowd through. I takes tickets from them that has tickets. But the commuters—well, they just wave them at me or like as not just go through."

Derek interrupted, pulling his hat off as he did so.

"I wasn't wearing this at Buckstead. I told you. I left it on the train."

But this did not help. The porter still did not recognise him, even without the hat. Holden sent the porter away. The constable at the door ushered in Vera Burns, who, on seeing Derek, began to look very unhappy indeed.

She described her encounter with him in terms very similar to those he had used himself. She confirmed that he was not wearing a hat. She was, she volunteered, startled by his appearance, because he looked so upset. She concluded that this was on account of Jean.

"Why?" Holden asked her.

"Well," Vera said, "because I've seen her leave the train at Buckstead quite often this last month or two. I—I asked Derek if she was staying on the train. He looked worse than ever. I was sorry I'd spoken. I mean—if he didn't know . . ."

"Know what, Miss Burns?" Holden asked as she hesitated.

"It was only a rumour," she said reluctantly. "Among friends. She—well, she had a— friend at Buckstead. That she'd stood Derek up."

"I was the last to know!" Derek broke out. "Isn't it always the way? If you love someone——" He could not go on.

Holden said, quietly, "So it came as a shock to you, then, Mr. Field, when Miss Burns hinted at this other attachment?"

"No," Derek raised his eyes. "She'd told me herself. In the train. Just before."

Holden turned back to Vera.

"Miss Burns, did you see Mr. Field get back on the train?"

"No, I didn't," she answered. "I met Mrs. Garrod and took her parcel and went with her to the exit. I didn't see Derek again."

The inspector released her with a nod to the constable. Vera went out and Mrs. Garrod came in. Holden went on, immediately.

"Mrs. Garrod, you have told me already about seeing Jean

Williams crying in the train and about meeting Miss Burns on the platform and remarking on Jean's condition. You knew her?"

"Slightly," Mrs. Garrod answered. "I know her mother."

"After exchanging a few words with Miss Burns, she took your parcel?"

"Yes, and I looked back at the train and I saw Derek Field get back in the carriage."

Derek stared at her, white-faced and furious.

"You were some distance away, Mrs. Garrod, as I understand you. Did you see his face?" Holden said.

"No. He had his back turned. He was stepping up into the carriage where Jeanie was crying. It was him all right. He'd heard what Vera said about her."

Derek protested again that Jean had told him herself. The constable led Mrs. Garrod away and silence descended on the room, until two new arrivals broke it. These were the porter from Tileham and the guard from the train.

Asked to look round the room, the porter immediately recognised Derek. The gentleman was a regular commuter, he said. Only about a dozen of them ever got off that train and to-night Derek was not one of them. No, he had not watched the man who went up over the bridge. But Mr. Field would never go over the bridge. He lived not above five minutes' walk from the station on the down side.

It was then the turn of the guard. He was positive he'd seen a man of the description given going over the bridge.

Holden asked Derek to step forward, put on the fur hat and turn round with his back to them. Encouraged by the porter who had so positively supported him, Derek did so.

"Well?" Holden asked.

"It could be him," the guard said, doubtfully. "It's the hat all right. That was what caught my eye going towards the bridge. And he's about the height. But I was at the rear of the train, mind. I wouldn't like to commit myself."

Holden thanked him. The two men were shown out, warned that they might be needed again.

"Now, Mr. Field," Holden said. "Before I get in my next volunteer——"

"Volunteer?" Derek was puzzled.

"All the people you've seen have answered the S O S. I'd

like you to understand that." Holden told Derek that a post-mortem had already been performed. Would Mr. Field now say what exactly Miss Williams had told him?

"All right," Derek said. "I can't shield her now, can I? She said she'd been going with another man and was three months' pregnant."

"But she didn't tell you who this man was?"

"No. Except he was thirty-six, married and wouldn't get a divorce. And that she—she was in love with him."

"So you knew this when you got off the train at Buckstead?"

"It was *why* I got off the train there."

"And then Miss Burns made it clear to you that the man in question probably lived at Buckstead?"

"Yes."

Holden leaned forward, watching closely, speaking in a detached voice:

"So you got back in the train to force her to tell you his name and when she wouldn't do so you strangled her."

Derek shouted wildly, "No! No! I walked home through the woods. I left my hat and case on the train."

"And found them under that rose-bush near your porch?"

"It's *true!* I don't expect you to believe it. I don't expect anyone to believe it. But it's the truth."

Mrs. Field was at her son's side. She no longer had any doubts. She appealed to the inspector. She demanded a solicitor. She forbade Derek to speak another word.

Holden said patiently, "I shan't keep you much longer, Mrs. Field".

He signalled to the constable, who now admitted Philip and Marjorie Manners. To everyone's surprise, Holden had stooped to bring up a second mackintosh from under his own chair. He held it out towards Philip.

"Mr. Manners," he began. "I want you to help me. Will you put on your mackintosh here. And stand over against that wall with your back to me. And you too, Mr. Field. Side by side. Thank you."

Turning to the constable he said briefly, "Mrs. Garrod".

Nobody moved as she came in. She was not in the best of tempers. She went up close to Holden's table, saying angrily, "I'd like to be getting home. It's late. I've told you what I saw. I can't do more than that, can I?"

Holden said, apologetically, "Just one thing more Mrs. Garrod. You see those two men over there with their backs to us?"

She turned, startled, and exclaimed, "Oh lor! What's this? Identification parade?" Then looking round the room she said, shrewdly, "One of them's Derek, isn't it?"

Holden said, "Don't you know? I could have sent him away and got in two more men, couldn't I?"

She accused him of muddling her. She said she was sure one of them was Derek. But when the inspector asked her which one, she pointed at the man on the left of the pair. At Holden's command they turned. The one on the left was Philip Manners.

"I know what I saw on that station platform," she insisted, "I saw Derek Field get into the carriage where that poor girl——"

But Holden checked her.

"Looking back," he said, "you believe that is what you saw. A man of similar build, with very similar hair, dressed in a mackintosh of similar colour but not at all identical material, got into that carriage. I appreciate your help, Mrs. Garrod. I won't detain you any longer."

Puzzled, subdued, unconvinced, Mrs. Garrod left the room. As the door closed behind her Holden said, "You two gentlemen understand, I hope, that Mrs. Garrod saw a man in a mackintosh get into the carriage with Jean Williams just before the train left Buckstead. That is all she can say. It might have been either of you, or a third party unknown."

Marjorie Manners said, sharply, "How long is this business going to take? Do you realise it's nearly midnight?"

"Time doesn't come into it, madam," Holden said, "when we're dealing with murder."



So the enquiry continued, patiently, methodically. The guard was recalled. Philip, wearing the fur hat this time, stood where Derek had done. The guard agreed that this figure, too, might have been the one he saw. Except for one thing, he said. He remembered that the man who crossed the bridge at the station had his brief case under his arm, not hanging down from his hand. An uncommonly bulky case. It was that and the fur hat had caught his eye.

Holden got up and, taking a second brief case from his table, carried it to Philip.

"Would you mind adding that to the other and holding them both under your arm?" he said.

But Philip had had enough. He wheeled round, angrily exclaiming, "Yes, I would mind. I refuse to go any further with this farce!"

"All right," Holden said. The guard was shown to the door. Philip moved to follow.

But the constable stood barring the way now and Holden was shuffling some reports on his desk. He said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Manners. There are some questions I must put to you and I must warn you that anything you may say . . ."

Derek straightened with a jerk. It was the first time that evening he had heard these words. He gripped his mother's arm.

Marjorie Manners had heard the warning, too. She said, angrily, "Tell him to go to hell, Phil. Tell him you must have your solicitor present. Tell him where you *really* were this evening!"

Philip seemed to be the calmest man in the room.

"My wife has a one-track mind, Inspector," he said, taking out a cigarette and lighting it. "A one-track, sordid, jealous mind."

Holden said, in an official voice, "Do you wish to summon your solicitor?"

"At this hour?" Philip laughed. "The poor brute must be in bed by now."

"Very well. You understand that you have been warned. I think you should know that Miss Williams's handbag has been found beside the track between Buckstead and Tileham. There is a letter in it, unposted, written to Philip. No envelope. No address."

"Some other Philip," Manners answered. "Not me. I didn't know the girl."

"Fragments of watch glass have been found on the floor of the dead girl's carriage."

"Obviously another coincidence."

Holden picked up one of the reports on his desk.

"Threads of material have been found on a rose-bush beside the porch of Mr. Field's house. Those threads correspond with your mackintosh."

"I suggest that you took Mr. Field's brief case and fur hat and pushed them under that rose-bush, where he would see them on his return and think, as he did, that a friend, perhaps Miss Williams, had rescued them for him."

"A real fairy tale," Philip sneered. "Is that what he told you?"

Holden picked up another report.

"There are traces on the inside of the fur hat of a hair oil identical with that on the inside of your felt hat. Mr. Field does not use hair oil."

Philip was still unmoved.

"But a lot of other chaps do. So what?"

"You told me you phoned your wife——"

"She told you that."

"——from Buckstead station. That call-box has been out of order since early this morning. There is a notice on it that says so. You did not even approach it, did you?"

Now, all at once, Philip was confused.

"I said I was ringing from Buckstead. Actually——"

"You told your wife the time when you rang, but your watch was already smashed. Smashed in the train. You said you saw the station clock from the call-box. But you were not in that call-box, were you?"

"I saw a clock," Philip panted. "Lit up. From the call-box. Near the station. I started for a garage but remembered they'd be shut."

Holden said, picking up another report. "I have this information. The only call-box from which a lit clock-face can be seen is situated at the corner of Station Road in Tileham. The clock is on the tower of St. Andrew's Church about a quarter of a mile away.



"Was that the clock you saw, Mr. Manners? The clock at Tileham, where you got off the train, your watch smashed in a struggle with a dying girl, your mackintosh torn, wearing Mr. Field's hat with your own crumpled up in your pocket and his brief case held under your arm with your own, having thrown her handbag out of the window. You strangled Jean Williams, didn't you?"

Philip was immobile, but Marjorie, white-faced and urgent, cried, "He wasn't with this girl! Tell them, you idiot! Tell them about the real one, the one you've been seeing all these weeks!"

Holden said, "Thank you, Mrs. Manners. You corroborate what we already know." Turning to Philip, he went on, "We have evidence that you were seen with Jean Williams by someone who knew her, entering a house for sale in Garden Road, in Buckstead. The witness, who also knows Mr. Field, thought she was inspecting the house with an agent, with a view to living there when she married."

Derek groaned, "Oh God, why did Vera never tell me that?"

But Philip said, "*That* girl! I remember now. Bob—the agent for the house—is a friend of mine. I said I'd show her over for him."

It was boldly done, but it was no use. Holden had the case wide open now. He said, "This agent states you have borrowed the keys on several subsequent occasions to show possible clients over his empty houses. He seems to have had no objection to your curious interest in his business."

Marjorie understood at last.

"So that's it! It was this girl all the time! Bob never told me. I suppose you made it worth his while——"

Philip sprang at her, his hands closing round her throat. The sergeant and the constable pulled him away. Philip shouted, "It was Jean's fault! She drove me to it! Crying. I had to stop her. She said she'd told her boy-friend. I had to stop her, on account of that jealous bitch there——"

Derek went close to Philip, collapsed now on a chair, his head bowed on his arms on the inspector's table.

"She refused to give me your name," Derek said. "She would never have given it. I loved her. I'd have kept your bastard for her sake. You——"

He pulled up Philip's head by the hair and hit him across the face with the back of his hand. The constable took Derek's arm and turned him away to the door.

Marjorie stood frozen, repeating over and over, "What have I done? Oh, God, what have I done?"

Chief-Inspector Holden pushed back his chair and stood up, preparing to speak the formal words he must use to make his arrest.

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# ***A LONG REST FOR ROSIE***

**HERBERT HARRIS**

**S**TEPHEN CAWDELL stood on Elm Tree Hill watching the lorries spewing their tons of yellow clay into the great basin which had been gouged out of the ground.

It had been going on for several days now, and would continue for many days more. The gaping hole in the field had been left behind after the clay-quarrying, but the brick-works had closed down. The land had been sold to developers, and the cavity was being stopped like a hollow tooth with tons of clay carted from a neighbouring excavation.

As he watched the lorries backing up to the open wound in the ground and tipping their loads into it, Stephen Cawdell saw it as a giant grave. A grave many feet deep. A place sent by Providence, you might say, for the rest he had planned for Rosie.

He had been rather too optimistic when he married the wealthy invalid. He had expected her to die quite soon. Unfortunately, she had lingered on interminably.

She had told him often enough that she had nothing to live for. Would it not be almost a charity, then, to still that damaged heart of hers forever?

Then, with the considerable sum of money she had bequeathed to him — 'for the years you have had to put up with me, Stevie' — he could go away with Doreen, legalise their illicit relationship, and they could live like aristocrats on the interest from Rosie's money alone.

It was all so simple. All he had to do was to kill Rosie, place her in that disused quarry with a light covering of clay, and the lorries would do the rest for him next day. They would disgorge tons more clay on the top of her shallow grave, and soon she would be buried many feet deep, like some prehistoric creature, too far down for any spade to bring to light.

There would have to be a proper plan, of course — a plan as near foolproof as possible.

He brought his mind to bear on it. And a recent request of Rosie's came rushing back to him. 'I wish that you could take me abroad, Stevie,' she had said in her plaintive voice. 'Some place where there's plenty of sunshine. Perhaps it might help me a little, you never know.'

Slowly the plan took shape. He would agree to take Rosie abroad. Majorca or somewhere like that. Having obtained her passport, he would kill her and leave her in the quarry on Elm Tree Hill for the lorries to finish the job.

He would then remove her photograph from the passport and replace it with one of Doreen. He and Doreen would travel abroad as Stephen and Rose Cawdell. No difficulty there. His wife and Doreen were about the same age, the same build, the same colouring.

Within a short time he would write a letter home to his mother, signed 'Rosie' — carefully copying Rosie's handwriting — saying how very ill she felt and what a strain the travelling had been and how she wished she had never attempted it.

The strain, in fact, would prove altogether too much. She would 'pass away', poor darling. She would be 'buried' abroad, and fairly quickly too, because of the hot climate, you know.

He would then return home as a widower to receive everyone's sympathy. Later, of course, Doreen would return home on her own genuine passport. And a little later still they could go away together — a long way away from that grisly spot on Elm Tree Hill.



Both Cawdell's mother and that friendly old Mrs. Simmons who lived next door to Stephen and Rosie's place thought it was a truly splendid idea for Rosie to go away for a change. To everyone else he knew he pretended that the journey to a warm climate was being undertaken out of solicitude for Rosie's well-being.

But now that he was actually agreeing to his wife's request — and thereby removing one of her excuses to be petulant and plaintive — she became, contrary to his expectations, even more despondent.

She referred constantly to the awful responsibility he

would have to shoulder in travelling abroad with an invalid. Her self-pity became so acute that it merely served to fan the flames of his hate for her. He almost looked forward to destroying her.

He disliked the idea of killing her while she was awake. He put off the unpleasant duty until he found her asleep. Under the influence of her sleeping-draught she looked half-dead already. It made his action seem slightly less homicidal. A mere 'finishing off' process, one might say. She made no sound as he smothered her with a pillow.

In spite of the breeze that tugged gently at the skirts of the curtains, it was hot in Rosie's room. Cawdell realised that the effort had made his face shiny with sweat. He went and stood for a while at the window, which had been thrown open wide, allowing the cool air to caress his face.

Presently he dragged Rosie's body into the garage, by way of the back door, and placed it in the back of the car alongside a spade. The evening was dark and moonless as he nosed the car out of the drive into the lane and moved off in the direction of Elm Tree Hill.

Behind him he had left the light in Rosie's room full on. The light in the front porch burned too. Little touches, he felt, which pointed to a thorough mind.

He hauled Rosie's body into the bowl of the quarry by the path he had already earmarked, the least precipitous one. Even so, it was not a very easy operation. He worked as swiftly as he could, burying her in her shallow resting-place. To-morrow morning, early, the lorries would come and finish the job for him.

When he got back to the car, he glanced at the dashboard clock. By the time he got back to the house, he would have been gone approximately forty minutes. Not bad going, he reckoned.

Of course, there was no prospect of getting any sleep. That passport-photograph needed attention. He would have to pack the two suitcases — one of them containing all the things which Rosie would normally have required for a holiday abroad.

He had told everybody that he would be leaving very early in the morning. He would depart at dawn, therefore. Nobody should be about at that time. First he would have to go

and pick up Doreen. Then — as Mr. and Mrs. Cawdell — they would go to catch the boat. Carefully, methodically, he checked over a number of points as he travelled back to the house from the quarry.



As he turned the car into his drive, he became conscious of a figure standing on his doorstep, and his heart missed a few beats.

Then, in the light shining down on the porch, he recognised old Mrs. Simmons from the house next door. He silently mouthed a curse. It was pretty late for the old chatterbox to be calling, anyway. He must keep a completely cool head, though, he must say that Rosie was sleeping soundly and that she would have only a short night's rest in view of their early departure, and that she must not be disturbed at any cost.

But before he had finished getting out of the car, Mrs. Simmons had run in her flat slippers feet to the side gate which led through to his rear garden.

"It's all right . . . he's come back . . . he's here!" she called out to somebody who was not at present in sight.

Cawdell's heart began to thud against the cage of his ribs. And he stood staring as a police patrolman appeared out of the shadows.

"Hope you don't mind, sir," the policeman said. "I was looking for an easy entrance to your house. We arrived just a few moments ago."

"I just didn't know what to do, Mr. Cawdell, really I didn't," Mrs. Simmons put in, her voice a shaky cackle. "I knocked and knocked, but you'd obviously gone out, and I had no idea how long you were going to be. So I thought the best thing was to 'phone for the police . . ."

The colour had slowly drained from Cawdell's face, making him look tired and old. Struggling to maintain some semblance of composure, he asked: "But what happened? A burglar, or something like that?"

"No sir," the constable answered. "The window of your wife's room looks out on to this lady's coal-bunker, as you may know. And apparently the window had been left open . . ."

"Well?" The sweat on Cawdell's face seemed to be turning to ice-water.

"I assume, sir — and it's pure assumption — the note was blown off her bedside table by the breeze, was carried out of the window, like, and settled on top of this lady's coal-bunker. She went out for some boiler-fuel about half-an-hour ago, and found the note there."

"Yes, it was dreadful," Mrs. Simmons broke in again tearfully. "I felt that I had to do something to avert the tragedy if it was at all possible, Mr. Cawdell. Naturally the note was meant for you, but I . . ."

She broke off. The patrolman handed Cawdell a sheet of notepaper. By the porch-light, Cawdell read:

My darling Stevie — I feel that I can no longer go on being such a terrible burden to you. I have taken a fatal dose of the sleeping-draught pills. It's the best way out for both of us. Thank you for putting up with me so patiently all this time. Forgive me. Your ever-loving Rosie.

He finished reading the note, but went on staring at it. So she had already been dead when he smothered her. Her good-bye note had been blown out of the window before he had entered her room.

"As a matter of form, sir," the constable said, "I'd be glad if you'd allow me to look at your wife. Though I don't doubt we shall be too late . . ."

Cawdell covered his face with his hands. "Yes, too late," he said, "too late."

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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **COMING**

**a brilliant short story  
(unpublished in this  
country) by**

**Erle Stanley Gardner**

*an*  
**Edgar Wallace**  
**Sampler**

(ii)

'I'm just a poor little bank manager, who hates banking and would gladly pay a fortune, if he had one to pay, for the privilege of taking all the books of the bank and burning them in Regent's Park, making the clerks drunk, throwing open the vault to the petty thieves of London, and turning the whole damn thing into a night-club!'

— THE CLUE OF THE SILVER KEY.

There is no intermediate stage on the big river between darkness and broad daylight. The stars go out all at once, and the inky sky which serves them becomes a delicate blue. The shadows melt deeper and deeper into the forest, clearly revealing the outlines of the straight-stemmed trees. There is just this interregnum of pearl greyness, a sort of hush-light which lasts while a man counts twenty, before the silver lances of the sun are flashing through the leaves, and the grey veil which blurs the islands to shapeless blotches in a river of dull silver is burnt to nothingness, and the islands are living things of vivid green set in waters of gold.

— THE KEEPERS OF THE KING'S PEACE.

'Yes, sir, I've been to a wedding. First wedding there's been in my family since my great-grandfather!'

— SMOKY CELL.

[He] did not like old lags. He steadfastly refused to believe in their penitence, and when they told him that they were going straight and that all they needed was a couple of pounds

to buy a new kit of tools so that they could start work next Monday morning, it was his practice to say things which would have sounded cruel and harsh to the sentimentalist who did not know the peculiar psychology of the professional wrong-doer.

— SERGEANT DUNN, C.I.D.

There ought to be a new set of laws dealing with property—starting with penalties for pinching a million . . . and the jury should be made up of accountants and novelists, who've never seen real money but think in millions.

— THE JOKER.

It's a lawyer's job to make provision for something that couldn't possibly happen. It's generally the first thing that does happen.

— THE MAN WHO CHANGED HIS NAME.

He was the type of Englishman in whom foreign travel creates new standards for disparagement.

— THE DEVIL MAN.

An ordinary intelligent man can always shine in crime because he is in competition with very dull-witted and ignorant fellow-craftsmen.

— THE RIVER OF STARS.

The laws of this country are so framed that the criminal has six chances to every one possessed by his enemy.

— THE NINE BEARS.

We spend all our youth destroying the things we've got to hold on to some day.

— THE GREEN PACK.

'When I'm in prison I only read poetry. The book lasts longer because you can't understand it.'

'Why they call it the workhouse, God knows. I've never known anybody work there except the staff.'

— WHITE FACE.

period piece

# THE TREASURE CHESTS

CHARLES WALTER THORNBURY

*A popular author of topographical and historical works, Thornbury wrote this thriller a hundred years ago when he was regularly contributing to Charles Dickens' magazines*

MINNIE, MY WIFE, and I had been just one month married. We had returned only two days from our honeymoon tour at Killarney. I was a junior partner in the firm of Schwarzmoor and Laddock, Bankers, Lombard Street, and I had four days more of my leave of absence still to enjoy. I was supremely happy in my bright new cottage south-west of London, and was revelling in delicious idleness on that bright October day, watching the yellow leaves fall in the sunshine. Minnie sat by me under the hawthorn-tree; otherwise I should *not* have been supremely happy.

Little Betsy, Minnie's maid, came down the garden with an ominous-looking telegram in her hand.

It was from Mr. Schwarzmoor. It contained only these words:

*We want you to start to the Continent directly with specie. Neapolitan loan. No delay. Transactions of great importance since you left. Sorry to break up holiday. Be at office by 6.30. Start from London Bridge by 9.15 and catch Dover night boat.*

"Is the boy gone?"

"Boy did not leave it, sir. Elderly gentleman, going to Daw-

sons', brought it. The office boy was out, and the gentleman happened to be coming past our house."

"Herbert dear, you won't go, you mustn't go," said Minnie, leaning on my shoulder. "Don't go."

"I must, my dearest. The firm has no one to trust to but me in such a case. It is but a week's absence. I must start in ten minutes and catch the four-twenty on its way up."

"That was a very important telegram," I said sharply to the station-master, "and you ought not to have sent it by any unknown and unauthorised person. Who *was* this old gentleman, pray?"

"Who was it, Harvey?" said the station-master rather sulkily to the porter.

"Old gent, sir, very respectable, as comes to the Dawsons', the training-stables. Has horses there."

"Do not let that sort of thing occur again, Mr. Jennings," I said, "or I shall be obliged to report it. I wouldn't have had that telegram mislaid for a hundred pounds."

Mr. Jennings, the station-master, grumbled something and then boxed the telegraph boy's ears, which seemed to do him—Mr. Jennings—good.



"We were getting very anxious," said Mr. Schwarzmoor as I entered the bank parlour, only three minutes late. "Very anxious, weren't we, Goldrick?"

"Very anxious," said the little head clerk. "Very anxious."

Mr. Schwarzmoor was a full-faced man of about sixty, with thick white eyebrows and a red face—a combination which gave him an expression of choleric old age. He was a severe man of business: a little impetuous and fond of rule, but polite, kind, and considerate.

"I hope your charming wife is quite well. Sorry, indeed, to break up your holiday; but no help for it, my dear fellow. There is the specie in those two iron boxes, enclosed in leather to look like samples. They are fastened with letter-locks and contain a quarter of a million in gold. The Neapolitan king apprehends a rebellion." It was three years before Garibaldi's victories. "You will take the money to Messrs. Pagliavicini and Rossi, one hundred and seventy-two, Toledo, Naples. The names that open the locks are on the one with the white star on the cover,

Massinisa; on the one with the black star, Cotopaxo. Of course you will not forget the talismanic words. Open the boxes at Lyons to make sure that all is safe. Talk to no one. Make no friends on the road. Your commission is of vast importance."

"I shall pass," said I, "for a commercial traveller."

"Pardon me for my repeated cautions, Blamyre, but I am an older man than you and know the danger of travelling with specie. If your purpose was known to-night in Paris, your road to Marseilles would be as dangerous as if all the galley-slaves at Toulon had been let loose in special chase of you. I do not doubt your discretion: I only want you to be careful. Of course, you go armed?"

I opened my coat, and showed a belt under my waistcoat with a revolver in it, at which spectacle the old clerk drew back in alarm.

"Good!" said Mr. Schwarzmoor. "But one grain of prudence is worth five times the five bullets in those five barrels. You will stop in Paris to-morrow to transact business with Lefebvre and Desjeans, and you will go on by the twelve-fifteen, a.m. to Marseilles, catching the boat on Friday. We will telegraph to you at Marseilles. Are the letters for Paris ready, Mr. Hargrave?"

"Yes, sir, nearly ready. Mr. Wilkins is hard at them."



I reached Dover by midnight, and engaged four porters to carry my specie chests down the stone steps leading from the pier to the Calais boat. The first was taken on board quite safely; but while the second was being carried down, one of the men slipped, and would certainly have fallen into the water had he not been caught in the arms of a burly old Indian officer who, laden with various traps and urging forward his good-natured but rather vulgar wife, was preceding me.

"Steady there, my lad," he said. "Why, what have you got there? Hardware?"

"Don't know, sir; I only know it's heavy enough to break any man's back," was the rough answer as the man thanked his questioner in his blunt way.

"These steps, sir, are very troublesome for bringing down heavy goods," said an obliging voice behind me. "I presume, sir, from your luggage that we are of the same profession?"

I looked round as we just then stepped on board. The person who addressed me was a tall thin man, with a long and rather Jewish nose and a narrow elongated face. He wore a greatcoat too short for him, a flowered waistcoat, tight trousers, a high shirt collar and a light sprigged stiff neckcloth.

I replied that I *had* the honour to be a commercial traveller, and that I thought we were going to have a rough night of it.

"Decidedly dirty night," he replied; "and I advise you, sir, to secure a berth at once. The boat, I see, is very crowded."

I went straight to my berth and lay down for an hour; at the end of that time I got up and looked around me. At one of the small tables sat half-a-dozen of the passengers, including the old Indian and my old-fashioned interrogator. They were drinking bottled porter and appeared very sociable. I rose and joined them, and we exchanged some remarks not complimentary to night travelling.

"By Jove, sir, it is simply unbearable!" said the jovial Major Baxter, for he soon told us his name; "it is as stifling as Peshawar when the hot wind is blowing; suppose we three go on deck and take a little air? My wife suffers in these crossings; she's invisible, I know, till the ship stops. Steward, bring up some more bottled porter."

When we got on deck, I saw, to my extreme surprise, made conspicuous by their black and white stars, four other cases exactly similar to mine, except that they had no painted brand upon them. I could hardly believe my eyes; but there they were; leather covers, letter-locks, and all.

"Those are mine, sir," remarked Mr. Levison; I knew my fellow-commercial's name from the captain's having addressed him by it. "I am travelling for the house of Jackintosh. Those cases contain waterproof cloaks, the best made. Our house has used such cases for forty years. It is sometimes inconvenient, this accidental resemblance of luggage—leads to mistakes. Your goods are much heavier than my goods, as I judge? Gas improvements, railway chairs, cutlery, or something else in iron?"

I made some vague reply.

"Sir," said Levison, "I augur well of your future; trade secrets should be kept inviolate. Don't you think so, sir?"

The major thus appealed to replied, "Sir, by Jove, you're

right! One cannot be too careful in these days. Egad, sir, the world is a mass of deceit."

"There's Calais light," said some one at that moment; and there it was, straight ahead, casting sparkles of comfort over the dark water.

I thought no more of my travelling companions. We parted at Paris: I went my way and they went their way. The major was going to pay a visit at Dromont, near Lyons; thence he would go to Marseilles en route for Alexandria. Mr. Levison was bound for Marseilles, like myself and the major, but not by my train—at least he feared not—as he had much to do in Paris.

I had transacted my business in the French capital, and was on my way to the Palais Royal with M. Lefebre *filz*, a great friend of mine. It was about six o'clock, and we were crossing the Rue St. Honoré when there passed us a tall Jewish-looking person in a huge white mackintosh whom I recognised as Mr. Levison. He was in a hired open carriage and his four boxes were by his side. I bowed to him, but he did not seem to notice me.

"*Eh bien!* that *drôle*, who is that?" said my friend with true Parisian superciliousness.

I replied that it was only a fellow-passenger, who had crossed with me the night before.

In the very same street I ran up against the major and his wife, on their way to the railway station.

"Infernal city this," said the major; "smells of onion. I should like, if it was mine, to wash it out, house by house; 'tain't wholesome, 'pon my soul 'tain't wholesome. Julia, my dear, this is my pleasant travelling companion of last night. By the bye, just saw that commercial traveller. Sharp business man that: no sight-seeing about *him*. Bourse and bank all day—senior partner some day."

"And how many more?" said my friend Lefebre when we shook hands and parted with the major. "That is a good boy—he superabounds—he overflows—but he is one of your epicurean lazy officers, I am sure. Your army, it must be reformed, or India will slip from you like a handful of sand—*vous verrez, mon cher.*"

Midnight came, and I was standing at the terminus, watching the transport of my luggage, when a cab drove up, and an Englishman leaping out asked the driver in excellent French

for change for a five-franc piece. It was Levison; but I saw no more of him, for the crowd just then pushed me forward.

I took my seat with only two other persons in the carriage—two masses of travelling cloak—two bears for all I could see to the contrary.



Once away from the lights of Paris and in the pitch dark country, I fell asleep and dreamed of my wife and our home. Then a feeling of anxiety ran across my mind. I dreamed that I had forgotten the words with which to open the letter-locks. I ransacked mythology, history, science, in vain. Then I was in the banking parlour at No. 172 Toledo, Naples, threatened with instant death by a file of soldiers if I did not reveal the words or explain where the boxes had been hid; for I had hidden them for some inscrutable no reason. At that moment an earthquake shook the city, a flood of fire rolled past beneath the window, Vesuvius had broken loose and was upon us. I cried in my agony—"Gracious Heaven, reveal to me those words!" when I awoke.

*"Dromont! Dromont! Dix minutes d'arrête, messieurs."*

Half-blinded with the sudden light, I stumbled to the buffet and asked for a cup of coffee, when three or four noisy young English tourists came hurrying in, surrounding a quiet, imperturbable, elderly commercial traveller. It was actually Levison again. They led him along in triumph and called for champagne.

"Yes! yes!" the leader said. "You must have some, old fellow. We have won three games, you know, and you held such cards, too. Come along, look alive, you fellow with the night-cap—Cliquot—gilt top, you duffer. You shall have your revenge before we get to Lyons, old chap."

Levison chattered good-humouredly about the last game and took the wine. In a few minutes the young men had drunk their champagne and had gone out to smoke. In another moment Levison caught my eye.

"Why, good gracious," he said, "who'd have thought of this! Well, I am glad to see you. Now, my dear sir, you must have some champagne with me. Here, another bottle, monsieur, if you please. I hope, long before we get to Lyons, to join you, my dear sir. I am tired of the noise of those youngsters. Besides,

I object to high stakes, on principle."

The moment the waiter brought the champagne Levison took the bottle.

"No," he said, "I never allow any one to open wine for me." He turned his back from me to remove the wire; removed it, and was filling my glass, when up dashed a burly hearty man to shake hands with me so awkward in his heartiness that he broke the champagne bottle. Not a drop of the wine was saved. It was the major—hot as usual and in a tremendous bustle.

"By Jove, sir; dooced sorry. Let me order another bottle. How are you, gentlemen? Lucky, indeed, to meet you both again. Julia's with the luggage. We can be very cosy together. More champagne here. What's bottle in French? Most shameful thing! Those French friends of Julia's were gone off to Biarritz, pretending to have forgotten that we were coming—after six weeks with us in London, too! Precious shabby, not to put too fine a point upon it. By Jove, sir, there's the bell. We'll all go in the same carriage. They will not bring that champagne."

Levison looked rather annoyed. "I shall not see you," he said, "for a station or two. I must join those boys and let them give me my revenge. Cleared me out of twenty guineas. I have not been so imprudent since I was first on the road. Good-bye, Major Baxter—good-bye, Mr. Blamyre."

I wondered how this respectable old fellow, who so keenly relished his game at whist, had got hold of my name; but I remembered in a moment that he must have seen the direction on my luggage.

Flashes of crimson and green lights, a shout from some pointsman, glimpse of rows of poplars and lines of suburban houses, and we once more plunged into the yielding darkness.

I found the major very droll and pleasant, but evidently ruled by his fussy, good-natured, managing, masculine wife. He was full of stories of bungalows, compounds, and the hills; in all of which narrations he was perpetually interrupted by Mrs. Baxter.

"By Jove, sir!" he said, "I wish I could sell out and go into your line of business. I am almost sick of India—it deranges one's liver so infernally."

"Now, John, how can you go on so! You know you never had a day's illness in all your life, except that week when you smoked out a whole box of Captain Mason's cheroots."

"Well, I pulled through it, Julia," said the major, striking himself a blow on the chest; "but I've been an unlucky devil as to promotion—always bad luck in everything. If I bought a horse, it made a point of going lame next day; never went in a train but it broke down."

"Now don't, John; pray don't go on so," said Mrs. Baxter, "or I shall really be very angry. Such nonsense! You'll get your step in time. Be patient like me, Major; take things more quietly. I hope you put a direction on that hat-box of yours? Where is the sword-case? If it wasn't for me, Major, you'd get to Suez with nothing but the coat on your back."

Just then the train stopped at Charmont, and in came Levison, with his white mackintosh over his arm, and his bundle of umbrellas and sticks.

"No more sovereign points for me!" he said, producing a pack of cards. "But if you and the major and Mrs. Baxter would like a rubber—shilling points—I'm for you. Cut for partners."

We assented with pleasure. We cut for partners. Mrs. Baxter and I against the major and Levison. We won nearly every game. Levison played too cautiously, and the major laughed, talked, and always forgot what cards were out.

Still it killed the time; the red and black turned up, changed, and ran into remarkable sequences; and the major's flukes and extraordinary luck in holding, not in playing, cards amused us; we laughed at Levison's punctilious care and at Mrs. Baxter's avarice for tricks, and were as pleasant a party as the dim lamp of a night-train ever shone on. I could think of little, nevertheless, but my precious boxes.



The game gradually grew more intermittent, the conversation more incessant. Levison, stiff of neckcloth as ever, and imperturbable and punctilious as ever, became chatty. He grew communicative about his business.

"I have at last," he said in his precise and measured voice, "after years of attention to the subject, discovered the great secret which the waterproofers have so long coveted; how to let out the heated air of the body and yet at the same time to exclude the rain. On my return to London, I offer this secret to the firm for ten thousand pounds; if they refuse the offer, I at

once open a shop in Paris, call the new fabric Magentosh, in honour of the Emperor's great Italian victory, and sit down and quietly realise a cool million—that's my way!"

"That's the real business tone," said the major admiringly.

"Ah, Major," cried his wife, "if you had only a little of Mr. Levison's prudence and energy, then, indeed, you'd have been colonel of your regiment before this."

Mr. Levison then turned the conversation to the subject of locks.

"I always use the letter-lock myself," he said. "My two talismanic words are turlurette and papagayo—two names I once heard in an old French farce—who could guess them? It would take the adroitest thief seven hours to decipher even one. You find letter-locks safe, sir?" He turned to me.

I replied dryly that I did, and asked what time our train was due at Lyons.

"We are due at Lyons at four thirty," said the major: "it is now five to four. I don't know how it is, but I have a sort of presentiment to-night of some breakdown. I am always in for it. When I went tiger-hunting, it was always my elephant that the beast pinned. If some of us were ordered up to an unhealthy out-of-the-way fort, it was always my company. It may be superstitious, I own, but I feel we shall have a breakdown before we get to Marseilles."

I unconsciously grew nervous, but I concealed it. Could the major be a rogue, planning some scheme against me? But no: his red bluff face and his clear, good-natured, guileless eyes refuted the suspicion.

"Nonsense, be quiet, Major; that's the way you always make a journey disagreeable," said his wife, arranging herself for sleep. Then Levison began talking about his early life, and how in George the Fourth's time he was travelling for a cravat house in Bond Street. He grew eloquent in favour of the old costume.

"Low Radical fellows," he said, "run down the first gentleman in Europe, as he was justly called. I respect his memory. He was a wit and the friend of wits; he was lavishly generous and disdained poor pitiful economy. He dressed well, sir; he looked well, sir; he was a gentleman of perfect manners. Sir, this is a slovenly and shabby age. When I was young, no gentleman ever travelled without at least two dozen cravats, four whalebone stiffeners, and an iron to smooth the tie and produce a

thin equal edge to the muslin. There were no less, sir, than eighteen modes of putting on the cravat; there was the *cravate à la Diane*, the *cravate à l'Anglaise*, the *cravate au nœud Gordien*, the *cravate*——"

The train jolted, moved on, slackened, stopped.

The major thrust his head out of the window and shouted to a passing guard:

"Where are we?"

"Twenty miles from Lyons—Fort Rouge, monsieur."

"What is the matter? Anything the matter?"

An English voice answered from the next window:

"A wheel broken, they tell us. We shall have to wait two hours and transfer the luggage."

"Good Heaven!" I could not help exclaiming.

Levison put his head out of the window. "It is but too true," he said, drawing it in again; "two hours' delay, the man says. Tire-some, very—but such things will happen on the road; take it coolly. We'll have some coffee and another rubber. We must each look to our own luggage; or, if Mr. Blamyre goes in and orders supper, I'll see to it all. But, good gracious, what is that shining out there by the station lamps? Hey, monsieur, what is going on at the station?" he called to a passing gendarme.

"Monsieur," said the gendarme, saluting, "those are soldiers of the First Chasseurs; they happened to be at the station on their way to Châlons; the station-master has sent them to surround the luggage-van, and see to the transfer of the luggage. No passenger is to go near it, as there are government stores of value in the train."

Levison muttered execrations to himself—I supposed at French railways.

"By Jove, sir, did you ever see such clumsy carts?" said Major Baxter, pointing to two country carts, each with four strong horses, that were drawn up under a hedge close to the station, for we had struggled on as far as the first turn-table, some hundred yards from the first houses of the village of Fort Rouge.

Levison and I tried very hard to get near our luggage, but the soldiers sternly refused our approach. It gave me some comfort, however, to see my chests transferred carefully, with many curses on their weight. I saw no sign of government stores, and I told the major so.

"Oh, they're sharp," he replied, "duced sharp. Maybe the

empress's jewels—one little package only, perhaps; but still not difficult to steal in a night confusion."

Just then there was a shrill piercing whistle, as if a signal. The horses in the two carts tore into a gallop, and flew out of sight.

"Savages, sir; mere barbarians still," exclaimed the major; "unable to use railways even now we've given them to them."

"Major!" said his wife, in a voice of reproof, "spare the feelings of these foreigners, and remember your position as an officer and a gentleman."

The major rubbed his hands, and laughed uproariously.

"A pack of infernal idiots," cried Levison; "they can do nothing without soldiers; soldiers here, soldiers there, soldiers everywhere."

"Well, these precautions are sometimes useful, sir," said Mrs. Baxter; "France is a place full of queer characters."

"I shall have a nap, gentlemen. For my part, I'm tired," said the major, as we took our place in the Marseilles train, after three hours' tedious delay. "The next thing will be the boat breaking down, I suppose."



Levison grew eloquent again about the Prince Regent, his diamond epaulettes, and his inimitable cravats; but Levison's words seemed to lengthen, and gradually became inaudible to me, until I heard only a soothing murmur, and the rattle and jar of the wheels.

Again my dreams were nervous and uneasy. I cried out with great difficulty, "Cotopaxo! Cotopaxo!" A rough shake awoke me. It was the major.

"Why, you're talking in your sleep!" he said; "why the devil do you talk in your sleep? Bad habit. Here we are at the breakfast place."

"What was I talking about?" I asked, with ill-concealed alarm.

"Some foreign gibberish," returned the major.

"Greek, I think," said Levison; "but I was just off too."

We reached Marseilles. I rejoiced to see its almond-trees and its white villas. I should feel safer when I was on board ship, and by treasure with me. I was not of a suspicious temperament, but I had thought it remarkable that during that long journey from

Lyons to the seaboard I had never fallen asleep without waking and finding an eye upon me—either the major's or his wife's. Levison had slept during the last four hours incessantly. Latterly, we had all of us grown silent, and even rather sullen. Now we brightened up.

"*Hôtel de Londres! Hôtel de l'Univers! Hôtel Impérial!*" cried the touts, as we stood round our luggage, agreeing to keep together.

"*Hôtel Impérial*, of course," said the major; "best house."

A one-eyed saturnine half-caste tout came up to us.

"*Hôtel Impérial*, sare. I am *Hôtel Impérial*; all full not a bed; no—*pas de tout*—no use, sare!"

"Hang it, the steamer will be the next thing to fail."

"Steamer, sare—accident with boiler; won't start till half-past midnight, sare."

"Where shall we go?" said I, turning round and smiling at the three blank faces of my companions. "Our journey seems doomed to be unlucky. Let us redeem it by a parting supper. My telegraphing done, I am free till half-past eleven."

"I will take you," said Levison, "to a small but very decent hotel down by the harbour. The *Hôtel des Étrangers*."

"Cursed low nasty crib—gambling place!" said the major, lighting a cheroot, as he got into an open fly.

Mr. Levison drew himself up in his punctilious way. "Sir," he said, "the place is in new hands, or I would not have recommended the house, you may rely upon it."

"Sir," said the major, lifting his broad-brimmed white hat, "I offer you my apologies. I was not aware of that."

"My dear sir, never mention the affair again."

As we entered a bare-looking salon with a dinner-table in the middle and a dingy billiard-table at one end, the major said to me, "I shall go and wash and dress for the theatre, and then take a stroll while you do your telegraphing. Go up first, Julia, and see the rooms."

"What slaves we poor women are!" said Mrs. Baxter, as she sailed out.

"And I," said Levison, laying down his railway rug, "shall go out and try and do some business before the shops shut. We have agents here in the *Canabière*."

"Only two double bedded rooms, sare," said the one-eyed tout, who stood over the luggage.

"That will do," said Levison, promptly, and with natural irritation at our annoyances. "My friend goes by the boat to-night; he does not sleep here. His luggage can be put in my room, and he can take the key, in case he comes in first."

"Then now we are all right," said the major. "So far, so good!"

When I got to the telegraph-office. I found a telegram from London awaiting me. To my surprise and horror it contained only these words:

*You are in great danger. Do not wait a moment on shore.*

*There is a plot against you. Apply to the prefect for a guard.*

It must be the major, and I was in his hands. That rough hearty manner of his was all a trick. Even now he might be carrying off the chests. I telegraphed back:

*Safe at Marseilles. All right up to this.*

Thinking of the ruin of our house if I were robbed, and of Minnie, I flew back to the hotel, which was situated in a narrow street near the harbour. As I turned down the street, a man darted from a doorway and seized my arm. It was one of the waiters. He said hurriedly in French: "Quick, quick, monsieur; Major Baxter is anxious to see you, instantly, in the salon. There is no time to lose."



I ran to the hotel and darted into the salon. There was the major pacing up and down in extraordinary excitement; his wife was looking anxiously out of the window. The manner of both was entirely changed. The major ran up and seized me by the hand. "I am a detective officer, and my name is Arnott," he said. "That man Levison is a notorious thief. He is at this moment in his room, opening one of your specie chests. You must help me to nab him. I knew his game, and have checkmated him. But I wanted to catch him in the act. Julia, finish that brandy-and-water while Mr. Blamyre and myself transact our business. Have you got a revolver, Mr. Blamyre, in case he shows fight? I prefer this." He pulled out a short truncheon.

"I have left my revolver in the bedroom," I breathlessly exclaimed.

"That's bad; never mind, he is not likely to hit us in the flurry. He may not even think of it. You must rush at the door at the

same moment as I do. These foreign locks are never any good. It's number fifteen. Gently."

We came to the door. We listened a moment. We could hear the sound of money clinking in a bag. Then a low dry laugh, as Levison chuckled over the words he had heard me utter in my sleep. "Cotopaxo—ha!"

The major gave the word, and we both rushed at the door. It shook, splintered, was driven in. Levison, revolver in hand, stood over the open box, ankle deep in gold. He had already filled a huge digger's belt that was round his waist, and a couriers' bag that hung at his side. A carpet bag, half full, lay at his feet, and, as he let it fall to open the window bolt, it gushed forth a perfect torrent of gold. He did not utter a word. There were ropes at the window, as if he had been lowering, or preparing to lower, bags into the side alley. He gave a whistle, and some vehicle could be heard to drive furiously off.

"Surrender, you gallows-bird! I know you," cried the major. "Surrender! I've got you now."

Levison's only reply was to pull the trigger of the revolver; fortunately, there was no discharge. I had forgotten to cap it.

"The infernal thing is not capped. One for you, Bobby," he said quietly. Then hurling it at the major with a sudden fury, he threw open the window and leaped out.

I went after him—it was a ground-floor room—raising a shout. Arnott remained to guard the money.

A moment more and a wild rabble of soldiers, sailors, idlers, and porters were pursuing the flying wretch with screams and hoots, as in the dim light; the lamps were just beginning to be kindled. We tore after him, doubling and twisting like a hare, among the obstacles that crowded the quay. Blows were aimed at him; hands were stretched to seize him; he wrested himself from one; he felled another; he leaped over a third; a Zouave's clutch was all but on him, when suddenly his foot caught in a mooring ring, and he fell headlong into the harbour. There was a shout as he splashed and disappeared in the dark water, near which the light of only one lamp moved and glittered. I ran down the nearest steps and waited while the gendarmes took a boat and stolidly dragged with hooks for the body.

"They are foxes, these old thieves. I remember this man here at Toulon. I saw him branded. I knew his face again in a moment. He has dived under the shipping, got into some barge,

and hidden himself. You'll never see him again," said the gendarme who had taken me into the boat.

"Yes we shall, for here he is!" cried a second, stooping down and lifting a body out of the water by the hair.

"Oh, he *was* an artful file," said a man from a boat behind us. It was Arnott. "Just came to see how you were getting on, sir. It's all right with the money; Julia's minding it. I often said that fellow would catch it some day; now he's got it. He all but had you, Mr. Blamyre. He'd have cut your throat when you were asleep, rather than miss the money. But I was on his track. He didn't know me. This was my first cruise for some time against this sort of rogue. Well, his name is off the books; that's one good thing. Come, comrades, bring that body to land. We must strip him of the money he has upon him, which at least did one good thing while in his possession—it sent the scoundrel to the bottom."

Even in death, the long face looked craftily respectable when we turned it to the lamp-light.

Arnott told me all on my return to the hotel, where I loaded him and Mrs. Baxter, another officer, with thanks. On the night I started he had received orders from the London police office to follow me and watch Levison. He had not had time to communicate with my partners. The driver of our train had been bribed to make the engine break down at Fort Rouge, where Levison's accomplices were waiting with carts to carry off the luggage in the confusion and darkness, or even during a sham riot and fight. This plan Arnott had frustrated by getting the police to telegraph from Paris for soldiers to be sent from Lyons, and be kept in readiness at the station. The champagne he spilt had been drugged. Levison, defeated in his first attempt, had then resolved to try other means. My unlucky disclosure of the mystery of the letter-lock had furnished him with the power of opening that one chest. The breakdown of the steamer, which was accidental, as far as could ever be ascertained, gave him a last opportunity.

That night, thanks to Arnott, I left Marseilles with not one single piece of money lost. The journey was prosperous. The loan was effected on very profitable terms. Our house has flourished ever since, and Minnie and I have flourished likewise—and increased.

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# A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S MURDER

**FRANCIS GRIERSON**

*The remarkable Battersea tragedy  
and some previously unpublished  
details which add to the mystery*

**T**HAT PEACEFUL midsummer Saturday evening the residents of Battersea sat at their windows, or strolled and gossiped in the Park which was, and still is, a popular lung of south London. It was 55 years ago, July 16th, 1910—and few people could have foreseen that four years later would begin the First World War.

Fewer still knew on that Saturday night that in their midst murder was being committed, a crime in which, despite official and unofficial theories, the identity of the killer and his motive remain a mystery to this day.

The mystery began when two men finished dinner in a house near the Park. The host was a doctor in local practice whose services were often in demand by the divisional police. The guest, Charles William, was a young freelance journalist anxious to carve for himself a niche in Fleet Street, as a prelude to winning fame and fortune in the wider field of letters.

Host and guest were about to rise from the table when the doctor's telephone rang. He listened, replaced the receiver and turned to Charles.

"Police call," he said. "Sorry I'll have to leave you. Make yourself comfortable in the lounge. I'll be back as soon as I can."

"What's happened?" Charles asked.

"Man shot. The police believe it's a case of attempted murder. They offered to send a motor-car for me, but I told them mine is at the door. I must get my bag and hurry off now; I gather the man is in a bad state."

"Let me come with you," Charles begged. "It would mean a lot to me to get an exclusive like this before the regular crime men get wind of it."

The doctor shook his head. "Sorry," he answered, "but you ought to know I can't do that. This is an official matter —"

"I'm not asking you to take me into the house," Charles cut in. "Drop me outside and I'll pick up what I can. If anyone asks, you were just giving me a lift on my way home."

"Very well," the doctor agreed rather reluctantly. "Come on, then, but remember that the police don't welcome uninvited visitors."

He drove to Clifton Gardens, a block of flats in Prince of Wales Road, stopped at No. 17 and got out, taking his medical bag. A constable on duty outside the building greeted him as he entered.

Charles waited a minute, then picked up a briefcase he had brought with him, got out and shut the car door. Coolly asking the policeman to keep an eye on the car, he followed the doctor to the scene of the crime. The policeman took it that he was the doctor's secretary or technical assistant.

Once inside, Charles made himself as unobtrusive as possible. Divisional Detective-Inspector Badcock was in charge and he and his men had their hands full, so it was some time before Charles was noticed and questioned. He gave his name and admitted his occupation, explaining that he was there without the doctors' knowledge or authority. He was rebuked with considerable pungency, and forbidden to leave or to communicate with any newspaper or news-agency until he received permission to do so. A stern reminder that interfering with or obstructing the police in the performance of their duties was a serious offence made the humbled Charles only too glad to accept the condition imposed, and thankful that he was not prevented from using his eyes, ears and — discreetly — his notebook.

The man at No. 17 who later died from wounds was Thomas Weldon Anderson, an actor in his late forties, known on the stage as Thomas Atherstone. He was reasonably successful though not a star, and despite a rather quick temper he was generally liked in the profession.

Anderson and his wife had long been separated. There were two sons, of whom Anderson was very fond. The elder, 19-year-old Thomas Frederick, was employed in a City warehouse. The younger boy, William Gordon, does not come into this story.

For some years, Anderson senior had shared a flat with Miss Elizabeth Earle, a former actress who had become a teacher of dramatic art. She worked partly to support a consumptive brother, who had previously shared her flat but had since gone to Australia for health reasons.

Miss Earle, despite her *liaison*, enjoyed considerable respect in her circle. She seems to have been a good influence on, and faithful to, Anderson, and very kind to his sons, who regarded her as a second mother. Thomas Frederick, incidentally, asserted that he had not known that his father and Miss Earle were ever more than good friends.

Anderson senior was an almost insanely jealous man, frequently accusing Miss Earle of having another lover. He was jealous of almost every man I knew, Miss Earle told the police, and declared that his allegations were completely unfounded. Enquiries made by the police satisfied them that she was speaking the truth. Inspector Badcock stated that she had helped them in every possible way.

After repeated quarrels, Miss Earle said, Anderson struck her and stormed out of the flat. Later he sent for his belongings; he also sent Miss Earle his key of the flat and the address of his new lodging in Great Percy Street, King's Cross, to which letters for him could be forwarded.

It is important to note here that Miss Earle had occupied the ground floor flat from 1902 to 1906, but in the latter year had moved up to the first floor flat because there had been a number of burglaries in the neighbourhood and she felt safer upstairs. The lower flat, which was untenanted, was in fact broken into after she had vacated it; a key to this lower flat was afterwards found in one of Anderson's pockets.

On the Saturday evening (16th July) young Thomas Frederick Anderson was having supper with Miss Earle and telling her about a recent holiday he had enjoyed. He had, he said, met his father and told him that he was going to visit Miss Earle; his father had approved and had even said he might join them during the evening, which his son took to mean a suggestion of a possible reconciliation.

During the meal Miss Earle and Frederick heard what sounded like two shots fired at the back of the building.

Miss Earle's flat had two entrances: the main one was at the front; the second opened on an iron staircase at the back which went down to the garden and was virtually a fire-escape.

Miss Earle and Frederick hurried to the staircase door and saw a man disappearing over a wall adjoining the next block. The shots were also heard by a cook who was talking in adjacent Rosenau Road, and she saw a man drop from a wall and run away. This wall, about seven feet high, adjoined the Prince of Wales Road flats and connected them with another block called Cambridge House. A tradesman also walking in Rosenau Road said he saw a young man running past him; another eye-witness saw a young man drop from the wall and run away. As is not unusual, all three differed as to what sort of hat the young man was wearing. Later, two more people said they had seen a man drop from the wall and make off.

All five witnesses agreed on three points: the man was young, was below middle height and was running quickly.

About fifteen minutes after the shots had been fired, P.C. Buckley called at Miss Earle's flat. He and Frederick went down the iron stairway and across to the wall, but found nothing significant. On their return Frederick noticed something huddled under the staircase, against the wall of the still unoccupied lower flat.

It was the body of a man. He had been struck by two bullets—one in the face and the other on the left side of the head—and was unconscious. There were scratches on the face which, later, suggested a hand-to-hand struggle preceded the shooting.

It is not altogether surprising that Frederick did not at that time recognise the wounded man, who was in fact his father.

The young fellow, shocked by the sight of the bloodstained face, turned away after a brief glance. He said at first that he did not know the victim, but later when Inspector Geake showed him professional cards found in the shot man's pocket, bearing the name T. W. Atherstone, he identified his father.

The police had called in a local doctor and the divisional police surgeon; the wounded man, Thomas Weldon Anderson, was removed to hospital, where he died at about 10.15 p.m., approximately an hour and a quarter after the shots had been fired.



The police quickly made some significant discoveries. For example :

Anderson had been carrying, looped to his wrist, a piece of insulated electric cable some eighteen inches long; it was covered with brown paper fastened with string, so that it looked like a rolled-up parcel. A dangerous and even deadly weapon in the hand of a determined man.

Anderson was wearing felt slippers, but on a mantelpiece in the ground floor flat (to which it was found he possessed a key) were found his boots, wrapped in brown paper.

A gun expert reported that the bullets which struck Anderson were soft-nosed and had been fired from a .320 calibre pistol.

In 1908 Anderson had been knocked down by a motor-omnibus and suffered concussion. It was said that after the accident his temper deteriorated.

It often happens that the police have to made enquiries about people whom they do not necessarily suspect, but who may be the object of ill-informed or malicious criticism. All the witnesses who had seen a young man drop from the wall and run away declared emphatically that he did not at all look like Frederick Anderson. Miss Earle swore that Frederick was never out of her sight from 8.30 p.m., when he arrived, until they both heard the shots fired.

Footprints believed to have been made by the person who shot Anderson senior did not resemble those of Frederick, nor did they correspond with the boots found in the empty flat.

Another point was that the fatal bullets had been fired on a level with Anderson's face, not down at him from the iron stairway.

In the dead man's diary was found the following entry: *If he had kept away from her, if he had broken from the spell of her fascination and remained out of reach, this would not have happened. He has no one to thank but himself. We all reap as we have sown.*

Inspector Badcock found that this passage had been copied from a magazine called *The Smart Set* and therefore considered it unimportant. But did the source matter? Is it not possible that Anderson had read it and felt that it expressed his own feelings? For what other reason should he have taken the trouble to copy it into his diary?

The diary also indicated that Anderson had been keeping observation on Miss Earle's flat for some time.

The police theory was that Anderson believed he had a rival in Miss Earle's affections and went to the flat to meet that rival and thrash, or even kill, him.

If, on the other hand, the murderer had gone there deliberately to kill Anderson, how did he know that the actor would be there that night?

Again, Anderson knew his son would be visiting Miss Earle at the time and it should have occurred to him that, assuming she really had a lover, she would hardly invite or allow him to come while young Frederick was there.

But people, whether innocent or guilty, who are under the stress of strong emotion take elaborate precautions, and yet often overlook some factor which normally would be obvious to them. As more than one senior police officer has said to me: "If the crooks never made mistakes a lot of us would be out of a job."

Another theory much discussed at the time was that the murderer was a professional burglar who, startled by seeing Anderson suddenly appear and threaten him, had shot the actor, pushed him behind the stairway, and fled in panic. There are strong objections to this theory. Burglary, now practised on a wider and generally more scientific scale, was in those days regarded by the underworld as the preserve of the skilled craftsman, who ranked far above the sneak-thief and only a little below such grandees as the forger and the

coiner. The first care of the experienced burglar was to make sure that the premises he proposed to enter contained money, jewellery or other portable valuables which would reward him for his risk even after the fence (receiver of stolen property) had taken his half, or more often two-thirds, cut of the value. A heavy sentence of penal servitude (now abolished) awaited a convicted burglar, and this could be increased by as much as seven years if a firearm were found in the culprit's possession, whether or not he had used it or threatened to do so. But in that era the carrying and use of firearms, except by the most desperate criminals, was less common than it is today. The burglar's aim was to secure his loot without being seen or heard, and return to his home. The police, whose investigation covered a wide field, rejected the armed burglar theory as being improbable and unsupported by any of the known facts.

This then, is the story of how Thomas Weldon Anderson met his death; but why he was killed, and by whom, are questions still unlikely to be answered satisfactorily.

It is not surprising that the coroner's jury could return only the obvious verdict of Wilful Murder by some person unknown.



Now I come to a secondary mystery which I record, but cannot explain. While I believe that the story, as related to me by Charles William, is true, I must leave the reader to accept its veracity or to dismiss it as the figment of a too fertile imagination. So far as I am aware, the story has never before been told in print.

I first met Charles William during the 1914-18 World War when we were both serving in the Army. We were for a short time in the same section of Military Intelligence, and after the war we maintained a sporadic friendship for some years, until he died unexpectedly of tuberculosis. I learned a great deal about his complex character from mutual friends and from his own frank admissions. He possessed real literary talent; his ability to write, sing and play witty songs, and his gift of mimicry, made him a social success; he could be (when he chose) a competent and accurate newspaper man; but he was erratic and extravagant, could never

keep a job for long, and was guilty of exaggeration — especially about his own doings and projects — which too often overstepped the bounds of truth. On the other hand, he was capable of warm gratitude to those who had helped him in various ways; perhaps it was because of this, and because I knew so much about him, that he never, I think, lied to me. I have said all this to help the reader to form his own judgment of Charles William's astonishing story.

When Charles first gave me his account of the murder of Thomas Weldon Anderson it was evident that what he had seen and heard in the Battersea flat had made so deep an impression on him that he still remembered vividly even minor details.

On that Saturday evening, Charles said, when the police had given him such information as they considered adequate for the Press at that stage, and had allowed him to leave the flat, he found a telephone and rang up the news room of a national weekly newspaper, which he chose because he had happened to meet socially its Night News Editor, who asked him to dictate his main news to a shorthand-writer, and then come to the office, with any other details he could gather, and write a fuller and more dramatic story for the later editions. Meanwhile the news editor would get his own crime reporter on the job. It was not long before news-agency tapes began clicking out early 'flashes' and then additional details of the event, but the news editor had already got a front page story for the first edition, and hoped to keep a good lead over his competitors in later ones.

When Charles arrived at the office and had squeezed out every bit of information and background he could, the editor opened his safe and paid a generous fee for the exclusive, and asked whether Charles had thought of obtaining a photograph of Anderson. Charles replied that he had asked Miss Earle and Frederick, but neither of them possessed one. He had, however, learned that Anderson had been a member of one of the small theatrical, literary and artistic clubs which at that time flourished in the vicinity of Fleet Street. Charles proposed to go to the place, which he had already visited as a guest, and try to contact some of

Anderson's friends. The editor agreed and said he would pay extra for a picture of the dead man.

At the club a Mr. A. (Charles told me the man's name in strict confidence) was shocked to hear of his old friend 'Tommy Atherstone's' death. He, himself, had no photograph, but he knew a Mr. B., an actor and mutual friend, who had a collection of stage people's portraits, including that of Atherstone, on a wall of the sitting-room in his flat. Mr. B. was away on tour, but he (Mr. A.) and Mr. B. had keys of each other's flats, and he was sure that Mr. B. would not mind his borrowing the Atherstone photograph for newspaper reproduction. Mr. A. and Charles cabbied it to the flat and as they entered the sitting-room Mr. A. remarked: 'Here's the little picture gallery. If I remember rightly, Atherstone's photo is the third in the second row.'

But there was no third picture in the second row, only a blank space.

Mr. A. was amazed, but not defeated. He knew the man who had taken the Atherstone picture, a photographer who specialised in theatrical portraits, and Mr. A. proposed that they should go to his place; he had a shop off Oxford Street and lived in rooms above it. They drove there and knocked up the photographer, who had gone to bed and was angry at being disturbed; but when Charles told him of Atherstone's death and offered to pay well for a print of his picture, or even a loan of the negative, the man agreed. He came downstairs, opened the door and took the visitors into an office behind the shop. There was a row of filing-cabinets there; he pulled out a drawer labelled 'A' and rifled through the files. 'Abbott . . . Ashley . . . Aston . . . ah, Atherstone—'

But there was neither print nor negative in the Atherstone file.

He tried, in case of error, the Anderson file, but again drew a blank . . .

The Night News Editor listened to Charles' story in ominous silence. Then he declared that he refused to accept, much less print, an impudent cock-and-bull fabrication which Charles had obviously invented to cover his failure to get hold of a picture of Anderson. He suggested (in the strongest terms that Charles should get out of that office,

and *stay* out, until he found another piece of real news worth selling.

Charles told me that he at once returned to the club and asked Mr. A. to go with him to the newspaper office and confirm his story. Mr. A., however, quickly declined to 'get mixed up in a murder,' or even to allow his name to be used. He warned Charles that if the newspaper so much as hinted at what had happened he (Mr. A.) would deny the whole story, and take whatever legal action his solicitor might advise.



The scent was cold when I tried to pick it up some years later. The club had long since closed its doors and I could find no clues to the whereabouts of Mr. A. or Mr. B. The Night News Editor had died in retirement. There was a photographer's shop at the site Charles had mentioned, but it was under different management and has since vanished in the chaos of air raids and reconstruction.

It was easy enough to verify the facts of the Anderson murder from the daily and weekly newspapers of the time, and from other sources which I was able to tap. But if Charles was lying about the photograph I cannot see why he should have risked losing a valuable connection by trying to sell an experienced newspaperman such a fantastic story; nor why he should afterwards have told it to me when he knew that already I had begun to take his assertions with a grain of salt. I knew many of his friends, but have reason to think that he did not tell them what he told me. Perhaps he feared that he would be regarded either as a clumsy liar or a mental case.

I must admit that I have sometimes wondered whether the mystery man so often mentioned as the murderer of Anderson was a fellow-actor who knew of Mr. B.'s collection, and of the photographer, and stolen the photographs before shooting Anderson, in the mistaken belief that the absence of the pictures might relay identification and pursuit.

A thin theory, certainly, but murderers often do strange and apparently stupid things.

Can you think of a better one?

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ALL CLOCKS AND WATCHES MUST BE PUT BACK TO NIGHT!



# THE FIFTH MEDALLION

*Barabara*

*Second in a series of three, this new and unpublished story introduces a favourite character of the creator of Dr. Fu Manchu*

"I DIDN'T WANT to have you out," said Trenk, our host, "until my new panelling was fixed."

Doolans Farm at which we were spending a week-end with Trevvy's old friends, although thoroughly modernised, bore evidence of its antiquity. It had stood there since far back in American history, dating from days when Indians roamed the nearby woods and Doolans was a white man's outpost. Mrs. Trenk had been an interior decorator employed by one of the big Fifth Avenue firms, and as Trenk had plenty of money she had let herself go on Doolans.

The dining-room, formerly the farmhouse kitchen, still retained its old beams and open hearth. But the walls were panelled from floor to ceiling in magnificently carved weathered oak. I had never seen more beautiful panelling.

Trenk's blue eyes twinkled in the clean shaven, florid face, and he winked at his attractive red-haired wife.

"I seem to have seen it before," I said.

"Sure you've seen it," Trenk chuckled.

Trevvy moved slowly about, surveying the carving, and then:

"You evidently don't recognise it, Digger," he told me,

"but I recall it very well. It's from the smoking-room of the old *Kravonia* which was broken up over in Hoboken only a short time ago. The *Kravonia* panelling was world-famous."

"Of course!" I exclaimed, "I remember it now."

"But you haven't told them, Uncle," came a clear voice. "about our mysterious burglary."

I turned. Greta, Mrs. Trenk's niece, had just come in. Auburn hair was evidently hereditary in the family, as well as greenish-grey eyes. Indeed, suitably dressed, she might have posed for a picture of Mrs. Trenk at eighteen.

"Don't spoil my story!" Trenk roared in mock anger. "Hush, and let me tell it my own way."

"I'm sorry, Uncle," said Greta, with an equally unreal humility; "I thought you might have forgotten."

"Forgotten? How could I forget being burgled, when it was only three nights ago!"

"A burglary?" Trevvy turned. "What was stolen?"

"Nothing." Trenk spoke boisterously, in a tone which suggested disappointment.

"I should have thought," said Trevvy, "that this was a matter for congratulation."

"It would be," said Mrs. Trenk, "if it weren't so mysterious."

"You see, Major," Greta began, "it was on Wednesday night —"

"Quiet!" Trenk roared. "Like all women, you tell a story from the wrong end. Leave it to me. It was this way: the panelling was all fitted up by last Sunday, and on Tuesday night, my wife had the place in apple-pie order. On Wednesday I had luncheon here but dined out that evening. Everything was right when we came back. We are all agreed about that."

"I came in to get some cigarettes before going to bed," Greta interrupted, "and I'm sure all the medallions —"

"Will you stop it?" Trenk demanded. "If you speak again I'll smother you. A slight sound woke me about two o'clock in the morning —"

"You mean it woke *me*, dear," said his wife. "I woke you."

Trenk glared at her, opened his mouth, then shut it again, and chuckled.

"I got up at two o'clock in the morning," he went on in a more reserved voice, "because I thought I heard a sound down here. I stepped very quietly. I didn't turn the light up until I was right inside the door. When I did, the room was empty. I searched around. At first, I thought that nothing had been disturbed; then I saw a funny thing."

He paused dramatically, and upon that pause, neither Greta nor Mrs. Trenk ventured to intrude.

"You see there are four medallions on top of the four big panels—" he pointed. "They represent mermaids biting one another's tails: a harmless amusement. I thought all the carving was solid—but it seems these medallions are separate pieces attached by hidden screws. Well, they are all fixed, now—but that one, just above the buffet, had been removed. It was lying there beside the old punch-bowl. The one next to it just this side of the hearth, had been partially removed, but was still in place.

"Extraordinary!" Trevvy decided.

"Extraordinary?" growled Trenk; "just plain imbecility. What's more, all the windows were locked—and all the doors. Not a soul but ourselves was in Doolans."

"The servants?" I suggested.

"Clancy and his wife were fast asleep. I checked up on it. Tom, the coloured boy lives with his mother, our cook, in a cottage three hundred yards away."



Some neighbours joined us for dinner that perfect summer's evening; and in the subdued lighting, with candles on the table, I thought the room had a distinctive quality which made it in many respects unique.

Trenk was an amusing and boisterous conversationalist, and Bernard de Trville was in good form—he usually was, for as a comfortably placed wanderer, once a major in the British Army, he managed to enjoy life as much as I, his friend and companion.

The company I found delightful. And, later, when the visitors—William Selsdon, a New York lawyer, his wife and grown-up daughter—were leaving, Selsdon warned Trenk:

"I should advise you," Selsdon said in his dry lawyer's voice, "to make sure of your locks, bolts and bars being in order tonight. That burglar of yours might come along and saw the leg off a chair."

When, after a final drink with Trenk, Trevvy and I stood up:

"If the mad carpenter gets in here tonight," said our host, "he won't be a burglar—he'll be a bogey! I am locking up myself, and the key of the dining-room will be in the grandfather clock in the lobby. Any burglar who guesses that deserves top marks."

"Why not take it upstairs?" I suggested.

"Because Clancy and his wife will want it to clear this room up before I'm awake. So I left a note on the kitchen table which says, 'Wind the grandfather, first thing.' The key's on a hook right inside the clock."

"You have no suspicion whatever of Clancy?"

"No, Sir! He and his wife have been with me for fifteen years."

"That settles it."

My room immediately faced the top of the stairs; Trevvy's was next on the right, and the room occupied by the Trenks along a narrow passage. Greta's room opened into this passage also, and there was a service-staircase to the kitchen at the far end. I mention the position of the rooms for the reason that, owing to mine being so near to the hall, and to the fact that I was very restless that night, I heard a sound which doubtless was inaudible to those sleeping further away.

The time I guessed to be about 1 a.m., but I did not switch up the light to confirm this. I lay still, *listening*.

It was a strumming sound, not loud, but of a quality which vibrated queerly, almost as though someone had touched a harp. It was not repeated; yet in view of what I had heard, I remained uneasy.

What could have caused it? Certainly it had come from somewhere at the foot of the stairs—somewhere near the locked dining-room door. I could hear no one stirring, and so assumed that no one had been aroused. This seemed to offer all the more reason why I should investigate.

I got up very quietly, found my slippers and dressing-

gown in the dark, and went on tiptoe to the door, opening it without making any sound.

The landing was in darkness, as was the hall below.

The stairs were broad and well carpeted. Habitually I carry a box of matches in my dressing-gown pocket, so that I could if I wished find the positions of the switches, of which I was uncertain.

I descended very quietly, gratified at the stealth of my movements. A certain amount of light penetrated through a window looking out upon the porch, when I became accustomed to this I could see round me fairly well.

There was no one in the hall, and the dining-room door was closed, but I noticed the one leading to the kitchen was open. My recollection, which I was not prepared to trust, was that Trenk had closed all the doors opening on the hall before retiring.

I continued a quiet progress in the direction of the kitchen. I had been in there before, for Mrs. Trenk had proudly displayed it to us as a model of what a modern kitchen should be. I entered it silently and fortunately without falling over.

There was no moon, and blinds were over the windows. I paused, trying mentally to review the position of the anything.

My purpose was to discover if the kitchen door—which opened into another little porch communicating with a yard—remained locked.

There was no moon, and blinds were over the windows. I paused, trying mentally to review the furniture; for I was unwilling to use any light. I had just determined that my route lay half-left, in fact had taken a step in that direction—when an arm, which appeared to be composed of steel cable, was thrown round my neck from behind, and my right hand wrenched up between my shoulder blades.

"Don't try anything," said a voice close to my ear. "Just move the way I'm pushing you. Switch on the light."

"Trevvy?" I gasped; "what the devil's the game?"



When the light went on in that speckless blue and white kitchen, De Treville was standing there in a black silk dressing gown and well-worn red Persian slippers. His disordered

hair added to the stare of astonishment on his expressive face.

Then he went and softly closed the door, and began to laugh. It was an infectious laugh that always demanded company; I laughed as well. But at last we were done, and:

"What awakened *you*?" I asked.

"The sound of someone unlocking a door."

"What? Not a sort of strumming noise?"

He shook his head.

"Clumsy work, that . . . I made the strumming noise."

"How?"

"Closing the grandfather clock."

"What on earth for?"

He nodded solemnly.

"You see, by the time I got down, and I went very quietly, I had an impression of a figure crossing the hall below, going from the dining-room in the direction of the kitchen. I turned on my torch and run into the kitchen. It was empty. The door leading to the yard and the one leading to the servants' staircase, were locked. I was puzzled. I found this on the table—"

He picked up a sheet of notepaper on which in Trenk's large, firm handwriting these words appeared:—

*Attention of Clancy: Wind the grandfather clock first thing in the morning.*

"I had an idea, Digger. I went into the hall, carefully opened the grandfather clock—and there was the dining-room key hanging on a nail inside."

"Then you were mistaken, all along?"

"No, I don't think so." His expression became grave.

"The dining-room door *was* unlocked —"

"What!"

"Yes. I closed the clock and took a look into the dining-room by the light of my lamp, then quite unmistakably I heard movements above."

"You heard my movements," I said. "I thought I went so silently."

"The slightest movement is audible in the silence of the night when one is keyed up for it. I came out, leaving the door closed, and groping my way in the dark, re-entered the kitchen and waited. The rest you know."

I stared at him dumbly.

"If all this means anything" I said, "what it means is beyond me."

"We don't seem to have disturbed anybody," Trevvy remarked. "Come with me to the dining-room for a moment."

We crossed the lobby, Trevvy opened the door, and switched up the lights.

"Look!"

He pointed.

I looked. A third medallion of the panelling had been unscrewed.



"This is the most darn foolish thing I ever heard of in my life!" roared Trenk. "It's pointless. Maybe the *Kravonia* was haunted and I've bought the ghost?"

He was staring at a round block of carved oak which he held in his hand, and I was staring up at the gap which its absence had created. Mrs. Trenk joined us; and Trenk himself had aroused Clancy and his wife. Last of all, Greta came down—and I realised that she had lingered to adjust her hair.

Trevvy was lighting a cigarette.

"Apart from the fact that these stupid outrages appear to have no purpose," said Mrs. Trenk, "a rather curious thing is the order in which the medallions have been moved."

"The order?" Trenk challenged. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that the first pair to be tampered with were on opposite sides of the room. Now this one, the third, seems to have been selected at random."

"I think," said Trevvy, "I can explain this. All three of the medallions so far touched, are accessible by means of standing on various pieces of furniture. The fourth, which has remained untouched, lacks this advantage. Short of moving a table, a noisy proceeding, or coming provided with a step-ladder, the fourth cannot be reached."

"But what in the name of insanity is the meaning of it all?" Trenk demanded.

"It just doesn't seem to have any meaning," said Greta, staring from face to face. "Do you think so, Major?"

"Everything has a meaning, my dear," he replied sententiously, and smiled at her.

"But it really is incomprehensible."

"It's got me guessing, miss," said Clancy, a capable-looking man. He scratched his head and looked about him. "Of course, our room is a tidy way from here. No sound would be likely to reach us. But all the same this thing is beyond me entirely."

Trenk continued to stare at the detached medallion as though expecting to find there some clue to the mystery.

"The thing puzzles me," said Greta, looking from face to face, "and I am sure it puzzles everybody else, is — how did he get in?"

"I am more particularly interested," Trevvy replied, "in how he got *out* . . ."



Three days had gone by. We were walking along Fifth Avenue where my friend had been doing some shopping preparatory to departure for Europe. We had just come out of a store and he indicated a girl who was hurrying along in front of us.

"Surely," he murmured, "that Titian hair is unmistakable?"

"I agree. Let's overtake her."

We hurried, Trevvy moving to the right and I to the left. We were correct. It was Greta—Mrs. Trenk's niece.

She stopped as we overtook her. Her grey-green eyes opened wide. I thought her astonishment was out of all proportion to the nature of the meeting. Our sudden appearance clearly had confused her.

"Why, this *is* a surprise," she exclaimed.

"A delightful surprise," Trevvy murmured. "Can we hope to lure you to our hotel for tea?"

"I should love to come, Major, but I have to make a dash to get back."

"Most disappointing."

"I just came up to town to see an old friend who is ill in hospital, and as there is a party at Doolans tonight, I have to rush back."

"I am sorry to hear that your friend is ill."

"Oh, he's past the crisis, but for a time"—the catch in

her voice told of deep concern—"everybody was afraid . . ."

"He is greatly to be envied, Greta," Trevvy told her, charmingly. "I think any man would make a fight for life if he knew you were waiting. Am I acquainted with this fortunate fellow?"

"No." She shook her head confusedly. "We met on a cruise."

"Ah! those cruises . . ."

"Yes, nobody thinks I should take it seriously, but, you see . . . that's just how it happens, doesn't it?"

"I suppose it does."

"He was assistant-purser. It seems very queer, almost like Fate—the ship was the *Kravonia*."

Trevvy stared at her with naïve interest.

"Yes. She became a cruise ship at the end of her life, you know. And on her last voyage, Dick—his name is Dick Arkwright—had a crash in a taxi, going from the ship to the Company's offices. Concussion—he was insensible for nearly a week."

"That's terrible!" I said; "but you say he has recovered?"

"Yes, thank goodness. He expects to be out again in a few days."

She smiled wanly and extended her hand to Trevvy, then quickly to me.

"I must dash!" she declared.

"Good-bye," I said. "Give my best wishes to the folks at Doolans . . . By the way, I suppose there has been no further burglary? There's still another medallion, you know."

"No, no more," said the girl, waving her hand as she left us.

De Treville stood quite still for some time, ignoring pedestrians who bumped into him and ignoring the roar of traffic in the Avenue. Then he turned to me. His expression was peculiar.

"It's odd you should think of the fourth medallion, Digger," he said. "I had thought of it, too."

"The association is obvious. If three, why not the fourth?"

"Just my argument. Therefore, later that night, when the household had settled down, I took the liberty of descending again to the dining-room."

"What!"

"You may remember an Arab coffee table and a large covered footstool there. By placing it on the table I was able to reach the medallion."

"How did you remove the screws?"

"I am the possessor of one of those knives which resemble miniature tool chests. A screwdriver is among the collection."

"And what on earth did you do it for?"

"Out of curiosity."

"What did you find?"

"Nothing."

I stared at him, but he had turned aside and had begun to walk back. He was silent until, going up the steps of our hotel:

"I was thinking," he said, "that it might be rather a nice gesture if we invited Greta and her friend to dine with us, just to celebrate his recovery."



Four more days later the dinner party took place. De Treville adjusted the balance in the persons of two amusing and attractive women of his acquaintance. Having dined at a popular restaurant, we went to an equally popular play.

Trevvy, an inveterate playgoer, enjoyed the performance. I found my interest often straying to Dick Arkwright, ex-assistant-purser of the *Kravonia*. Making due allowance for his recent illness, he remained a handsome fellow. He had excellent manners and could talk interestingly—I could understand how Greta had become infatuated with him.

But there was something queerly furtive about Dick Arkwright; he seemed to be ill at ease in our company. Particularly, I noticed him from time to time glancing in an odd way at Trevvy.

It occurred to me that since he wanted to marry a girl financially above his station, he might look upon de Treville as a rival. I forget what the play was about, but then my interest was very much divided. The two ladies had another engagement, and we dropped them at their hotel on Fifth Avenue. Greta and Arkwright accompanied us back to our own hotel.

Perigal, who not only valets de Treville perfectly, but also acts as his chauffeur, brought a tray of light refreshments and an ice-bucket containing a bottle of wine.

"As I understand it," said Trevvy, when we had settled down in our sitting-room, "you, Mr. Arkwright, are to have the happiness of marrying Greta, I drink to your good fortune."

"That's very kind of you," said Arkwright.

"But of course you recognise the fact that there are obstacles?"

Trevvy spoke very gravely, and stared in a curious way at Arkwright.

"I do."

"As a very old friend of Trenk's, I should like to see those obstacles removed. You may not know, Mr. Arkwright, that I am constantly finding myself involved in strange intrigues which don't concern me in any way. My friend will confirm this—"

"I confirm it without hesitation."

"He has shared some of my experiences," Trevvy explained, now more particularly addressing Greta. "For instance—unknown to my old friend, Trenk, I learned that the *Kravonia* was to be broken up in a Hoboken yard and her fittings disposed of at auction. Now, I have a hat and coat cupboard, in the hall of my London flat, the door of which distresses me, and I had always realised that one of the panels of the *Kravonia* smoking room would exactly fit it, and suitably stained, greatly improve the hall. Accordingly, as I chanced to know the auctioneers who were to dispose of the *Kravonia* fittings, I managed to make this small private purchase before the public sale took place."

He paused, and over Arkwright's face I saw the queerest expression stealing.

"This panel," de Treville continued, "has been in the baggage room of the hotel from the time I bought it. Tonight, Perigal, my man, brought it upstairs, and I'm about to show it to you."

One swift glance Greta shot at Arkwright, and then, lowering her lashes, began with unsteady fingers to take a cigarette from a box which Trevvy had placed conveniently near.

He rang the bell.

The door swung open, and Perigal came in carrying a massively carved panel, identical in every way with the four which decorated the dining-room at Doolans. This, with great care and nicety, was set up against the wall. As he turned to go:

"You have not re-screwed the medallion?" de Treville said.

"No, sir." Perigal went out.

I looked at Arkwright. He was staring down at the carpet. I looked at Greta. Very deliberately, she was lighting a cigarette.

"I paid a high price, not knowing that Trenk was bidding for the other set. Later, for certain reasons I decided not to mention the matter. I realise now, however, that the price was not too high. On returning from her last cruise, which included European ports, the *Kravonia* was searched from stem to stern by Customs officers for a consignment of smuggled diamonds. No diamonds were found. Am I right there, Mr. Arkwright?"

"Yes, you are right."

Arkwright glanced up swiftly and then down at the carpet again.

"On my return from the Trenk's I had this panel brought up here and I unscrewed the medallion. I have replaced it, but have not replaced the screws."

He stood upon a chair—he was a tall man and long of arm—reached up, and pulled the medallion from its place. He could just get his fingers into the recess revealed—and from it he drew a wash-leather bag. He stepped down.

He extended the bag towards Arkwright on the palm of his right hand.

"This is what I found."

Greta came hurriedly from her chair and walked to the end of the room, standing with her back towards us. Arkwright stood up and faced de Treville.

"I know now why we are here tonight," he said in a strained voice, "and you know why the panelling at Doolans was tampered with."

"I do."

"There were only five of these particular panels in the

set. They were all alike. As assistant-purser, I learned a long time ago that the medallions could be unscrewed. Now listen—and don't judge me too harshly. On that last voyage, acting on information from Hamburg, I discovered diamonds in the cabin of a certain passenger—this in the course of my duty, although the passenger was not in his cabin at the time. I thought quickly. I needed money . . ." He glanced at the bowed shoulders of the girl at the other end of the room . . . "There's no need to tell you why I needed money. I knew they were smuggled. I fell, I took a chance. I didn't report what I had found."

He paused, smiled uncertainly, and then went on:

"The passenger dared not make any complaint. But I had to get rid of the diamonds. That night, when the smoke-room was empty, I removed one medallion, and slipped the bag behind it. I knew of a dealer in New York who would buy without asking questions—and I couldn't resist the temptation.

"The ship was seized by Customs officers when we docked. No one was allowed ashore. They searched for the diamonds which I had hidden behind the panel—there are two hundred thousand dollars' worth in that bag. I had to go up to the office to report on behalf of the Purser—he was not allowed to leave the ship. I was overhauled on the dock, but I had nothing on me. Going uptown, my taxi had a misunderstanding with a truck driver. I knew nothing more for several days. Do as you please, Major de Treville—you have all the facts."

"Not quite all," Trevvy murmured.

And although her back was turned, Greta knew to whom the remark was addressed.

She twisted about; and after one glance at her face I was sorry for her.

"He told me this in hospital when I went there to see him," she said rapidly, tonelessly, her eyes on Trevvy. "Yes, I was the Doolans' burglar."

"In what way did I betray myself," de Treville asked, "on the night I disturbed you?"

"I heard your movements on the floor above. Your rooms were both directly over the dining-room."

"Foolish of me," Trevvy murmured. "You came down.

of course, by the stair at the other end of the house and entered through the kitchen?"

Greta nodded.

"You escaped the same way, locking the door behind you. I assume that you hadn't time to lock the dining-room door, but merely replaced the key on the hook inside the grandfather clock?"

Greta nodded again.

"Well, I am afraid these diamonds must be handed over to the proper authority. But as the ethics of the case are somewhat peculiar, suppose we have a final drink and sleep on the problem?"

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### Some EWMM Contributors . . .

**Josephine Bell.** Author of many popular crime novels, including the expert, highly authoritative *Murder in Hospital*. Founder-member of the Crime Writers' Association. Lives in Surrey.

**Dion Clovelly.** A new writer. At present living abroad, but hopes to return to England in the early future.

**Francis Grierson.** Many years on *Daily Mail* in editorial positions. Author of over 50 crime novels and technical books, including official volume on organisation of French police.

**Herbert Harris.** Londoner, born 1915. Expert public relations officer. Very prolific short story writer whose published total is approaching 3,000.

**Eric Parr.** Wrote the successful *Grafters All* (due as a paperback shortly). An expert on the Fraternity (of criminals). Wrote (in June EWMM) a frank, startling self-portrait.

**Richard Starr,** real name of *Richard Essex*, creator of the unforgotten 'Slade of the Yard' and 'Lessinger' the crook, was a newspaperman with the 'Nationals'. Author of dozens of whodunits.

**Julian Symons.** His *The Colour of Murder* won the CWA 1957 annual award, *The Progress of a Crime* winning the MWA's 1961 'Edgar'. His book on Gordon of Khartoum, *England's Pride*, soon to be published.

# Echo of a Crime

**RICHARD STARR**

*An eye-witness footnote to  
a cause célèbre that  
once stirred the  
whole country*

I WAS VERY young when I first decided to become a newspaper reporter. I had only a vague idea of what a reporter was, and had never seen a live one. When I made tentative enquiries among my elders and betters, I met with pitying incredulity or ribald amusement. So I shut up about that, but I didn't believe what they said about my chances.

I made my own plans. First I learned shorthand from a sixpenny Pitman text-book. Then I paid my youngest sister twopence an hour to read to me for speed practice; she didn't always get the money.

I was in a good job, a sort of secretary to Sir William Matthews, K.C.M.G., a famous consulting engineer, who built harbours and docks for the British Navy, and other clients over the world. But my sights were set for the newspaper world. No soaring ambitions about Fleet Street; I hardly knew the place. I was thinking of some lowly suburban or provincial weekly, where I could make myself generally useful and perhaps pick up some of the rudiments of my proposed trade.

While waiting I wrote a bunch of short stories, and to my surprise sold most of them to the penny weekly journals, and some of the halfpenny ones. I don't remember that I was surprised at the time, but I am now. Encouraged, I sat down one evening and calmly started on a full length novel.

I think I was a bit under twenty. It took me many

months of hard work. The subject of course was the building of a harbour in the seaway on a rocky coast. A strange mixture of Titan cranes and concrete blocks, and divers working on the ocean bed, seasoned by a love story and a nice bit of villainy to keep the thing moving.

I actually finished it, and thought it pretty good at the time, but I realise now that it was probably the worst book ever written. My youngest sister adored it. Miraculously, incredibly the thing was published. It had more reviews than practically any of the shoal of books I have written and published since. Good reviews, many of them. I think in those days book reviewers were more kindly than they are today, more interested in giving a blundering beginner a leg up, rather than flattening him to show their own cleverness. A few weeks later, before I had time to get my breath back, I found myself in the reporters' room of *The Daily Mail*, a member of the staff.

I am more than a bit shaky about dates—I think it was early 1904. In my first week or so as a reporter there was an event which I should mention, in view of the magazine I am writing this for. It was mid-morning. Three or four men were in *The Daily Mail* reporters' room, writing or smoking or just sitting. A stranger came into the room, looked round and hung his hat up. In those days men wore hats.

One or two of the seated men stirred uneasily, but nobody spoke. The reporters' room of a Fleet Street daily is more or less sacrosanct, at any rate to strangers. This stranger looked us over and said, "I am Edgar Wallace."

Continued silence, until Arthur Brasher, an old and seasoned reporter, said mildly, "Well, that's nice." Which, translated into present day idiom, would be, "So what!"

Nobody knew Edgar Wallace. This was his first appearance on the Fleet Street scene, and I suppose I am the only man left alive who witnessed that historic event. Wallace soon made himself known. He had come from South Africa, and of course had fixed up his job before leaving there.



All this biographical information is nothing to do with my

present story. I am an old man now, and only part of my early life was spent as a newspaper reporter. I have always regarded it as the best life in the world; but stamina you must have. Brains are useful, too.

Over the first three years I passed from the *Mail* to the *Daily Express*. Then I was invited to join the staff of a new daily, *The Tribune*, as the crime expert. I knew no more about crime than any average reporter, but I accepted.

Thereafter for the three years that *The Tribune* endured I went on all the crime jaunts, knocking against Edgar Wallace at most of them. Some here and there were pretty sticky cases, but I was becoming hardened by this time. One morning my news editor called me in.

"Cattle maiming," he said briefly.

"What, that again?" I replied. "I thought that was all washed up long ago."

"It's broken out again. Same place—Great Wyrley. Get going."

Some hours later I was led into a green and peaceful Warwickshire meadow, where I was shown a dead horse lying on its side. Nothing much in a dead horse, it would seem. But this horse had been killed by some insensate fiend with a knife. Its belly was slit open. There was a blood trail from one end of the meadow to the other.

I have seen some grisly sights, as every experienced reporter has, but this one shook me. I am a lover of horses. I have never had one of my own and I am no rider. But if any animal is the friend of man the horse surely is.

Walk across a field at night, as I once did regularly. If there are horses in the field they will come and walk with you. If you stand still in the darkness they will come close and nuzzle. Try it. They are your friends and they like your company. I like theirs, too, so this poor animal, lying dead, made me sick in my stomach. This demented wretch with the knife had only to walk into the field in the darkness, and the horse no doubt came to him like a child to its mother.



Let me go back a bit. There had been a previous outbreak of promiscuous cattle-maiming in 1903. It made a

country-wide sensation and became known as the Edalji case. Great Wyrley is a mining village not a long way from Birmingham. Early one summer morning a young miner going to work found a pit pony, eviscerated and dying, not in the same field but in the same district of Great Wyrley. The animal had been killed in exactly the same way as the horse I was to see some years later. The local police acted swiftly by arresting George Edalji, son of Shapurji Edalji, who had been Vicar of Great Wyrley for thirty years. This trouble had been simmering for a long time. It was probably the first case of colour prejudice to become notorious in this country.

The Rev. Shapurji Edalji was a Parsee married to an English woman. His son was a solicitor, working in nearby Birmingham. He was dark complexioned, brilliant in his profession, a teetotaler and non-smoker. He was of a retiring nature and not a good mixer, in a mining community. There was a good deal of feeling against him and his father.

There had been anonymous letters and postcards full of abuse; stones and rubbish thrown on the vicarage lawn; and a series of mutilations of animals over a long period, culminating in the pit pony outrage. Many of the anonymous letters accused George Edalji of being the slasher.

The police had been watching and waiting for a long time, and they had a mass of evidence. George Edalji was tried at the Quarter Sessions, October 20th, 1903, found guilty and sentenced to seven years penal servitude. He was also struck off the Rolls of the Law Society.

There the matter should have ended, but there was a good deal of dissatisfaction over the verdict and the sentence. Much of the evidence was considered suspect. A petition signed by 10,000 people, including hundreds of lawyers, was ignored. A newspaper campaigned strenuously on the convicted man's behalf; a former Chief Justice of the Bahamas, and other influential people did their best to have the case reopened.

These efforts came to nothing. They went on for a long time, then they gradually died down until they ceased completely. And then, when the whole thing was forgotten, George Edalji, after serving only three years of his sentence, was suddenly and quietly released.

No explanation, no pardon, no offer of compensation. He came out of jail, but he was still a guilty man—a discharged, unpardoned convict under police surveillance, an intolerable situation. And at this point the young man wrote to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, enclosing a batch of newspaper cuttings of his case.



The author of the matchless Sherlock Holmes was interested. For nearly a year he collected and studied every scrap of evidence he could get hold of, interviewed countless people, harried the Warwickshire Police, accusing them of prejudice, deception and incompetence, and hammering at the Home Office until there was a clamour all over the country for an explanation of the scandalous way Edalji had been released without explanation or pardon.

Most reporters accustomed to Government offices will admit that when dealing with the Home Office it is not wise to be haughty. They are a cagey lot. But Sir Arthur hammered away until the Home Secretary, Herbert Gladstone, son of the great Prime Minister, invited him to a private interview, at which he promised that the case should be examined in all its aspects by a special committee.

In the printed report of this official committee the decision was that the jury had been at fault in convicting Edalji of horse-maiming; *but* there was no reason to doubt that Edalji had himself written the anonymous letters, or some of them. He had 'to some extent brought his troubles on himself. Therefore he would be pardoned but granted no compensation.

Conan Doyle battled on for some time and could get no farther. But the Law Society rescinded its ban on Edalji, and he was free to practise his profession again. Also the case resulted in the long awaited setting up of the Court of Criminal Appeal.



But about that horse I went to see in the green meadow. I am 87 now, and I have already said I am shaky on dates. I think it might have been some time in 1908. That is only a guess. I have no means of looking it up, as I have no

access to newspaper files of some 60 years ago. When we newspaper men gathered at Great Wyrley, our first thought was, 'Where is Edalji?'

That was soon settled. We were all notified from our head offices that Edalji was cleared. He was working in London at his profession. Then who killed that horse that we had come to see? Whoever it was had probably perpetrated all the other slashings, and we waited, confident that there would presently be some more.

But there were no more. I saw little police activity—no clues. I thought perhaps Conan Doyle might call in. We had all seen a good deal of him when he was tackling the Home Office and the Warwickshire police. Reporters got on well with him. He was the big, calm, soft-spoken, epitome of the old-time family doctor, which we shall see no more. With the Press, he was of course 'one of us,' and as a man of principles we took off our hats to him. But if he called in at Great Wyrley I don't remember seeing him, and I have no recollection of any pronouncement from him on this startling sequel to the Edalji case.

On my second morning a man strolled into the small hotel where I was staying. He was dressed in tweeds and looked like a prosperous farmer, but I knew him as a detective-inspector from Scotland Yard.

He said he was not there officially, but just happened to be staying a few miles away on a holiday, and thought he would come over just to have a look round and meet some of the Press boys. I pretended to believe him, but had no doubt that it meant Scotland Yard was interested, possibly by instruction from the Home Office.

That was the only police activity I saw. Nothing further happened, and we were all recalled two or three days later. All that was so many years ago, and so far as I know there has been no more cattle-maiming in that district. But from time to time I find myself wondering who killed that horse. And why there was so little fuss about it. It just faded out quietly. We all had an uneasy feeling that something was being covered up. It seemed as if everybody had had enough of the Edalji case and didn't want it started up again.

© Richard Starr, 1965

# WREATH

## *Without Flowers*

DION CLOVELLY

SHE WAS wearing blue the first time I saw her. Blue with a touch of red. It was at the Challoners' party. She came with her husband, Bob Lindstrom, who had joined the teaching staff earlier in the year, leaving Rani to follow later from Singapore. I couldn't have described Bob afterwards, and I doubt if many of the women or *any* of the men could either. But Rani — she was different. She eclipsed. Not eclipsed anything specific . . . just eclipsed. Everybody loved her from the first moment — even me. It wasn't until I had met her half-a-dozen times that I realised I didn't love her any more. She had gone into the same arsenic-scented little secret closet that I kept for poison ivy, prickly heat and senna-pod tea.

I tried to tell myself it was just plain jealousy, and went to the opposite extreme of gushing when we met, just to prove my fair-mindedness. I even defended her against the other wives. But it never deceived Rani. She knew.

It didn't fool Steve, my husband, either.

"The trouble with you, my pet, is that you just don't like competition," he said one morning at breakfast. "You've had it all your own way up to now. But not any more. Rani Lindstrom is a honey by any standards."

"And just as sweet and sickly," I retorted viciously.

"She isn't," he said positively. "Fight tooth and nail by all means — but don't make the mistake of underrating an opponent — ever." But his kiss as he left was just as warm.

Wonderful, satisfactory husband, Steve. It's no particular credit to a man to stay strictly on the straight and narrow in Clapham, but in Malaya it's different. Dear, staid old Steve.

Maybe he was right about Rani. Maybe . . . No harm in her, really. I was just a cat. A fading, jealous cat.

I tried, heaven knows I tried, but as the months went by, my dislike of Rani didn't lessen; instead it increased out of all

proportion until I could hardly bear to be in her company for more than ten minutes at a time without wanting to scratch her eyes out. And it was beginning to show. I played right into her dainty little hands. The more vicious I became the sweeter she was. I could have cut her throat.

But this morning had been the last straw.

I went along to Mary Rosenthal's for our usual Tuesday morning so-called bridge and chatter party. Even though I am not fond of bridge I liked these parties — the more so lately because Rani seldom attended them. Hen conventions were not for her. I liked Mary, too, although I have sometimes wondered about her.

We had finished our coffee and were settling down to some bridge when Rani unexpectedly arrived.

"Well, hello everybody — oh, sorry girls! Am I interrupting something?"

She didn't bother to wait for an answer but went rattling on, "Oh, of course, it's your bridge morning. Well, what do you know, I had clean forgotten it was Tuesday!"

Mary, unlike her usual kindly self, was curt and rude. "I wasn't expecting you. We are about to start playing," she said.

Rani's tone was unruffled. "Don't mind me, honey, you just go right ahead. I can wait."

The atmosphere was so tense that even dear, stupid old Mamie Acheson sensed it. She rose to her feet and fussed around the coffee table.

"Shall I pour some coffee for Rani?" she asked.

For one ghastly second I thought Mary was going to say no. We sat waiting, wondering what would happen next, all of us to varying degrees hating Rani, but dreading a scene.

When Mary did reply, to my surprise her voice was once more controlled but icily formal. "If Rani cares for some . . ."

I felt, rather than heard, the sigh of relief that escaped from the rest of us, as if we had all been holding our breaths for the last minute. But Rani seemed to be enjoying it.

"Well, if you insist — and if you are sure I am not disturbing you?" She smiled sweetly at Mary.

She sat sipping her coffee like a pretty kitten with a saucer of cream, looking fresh and radiant in a new blue silk suit that I knew had cost three-hundred-and-fifty Straits dollars. I knew, because I had spent quite a time gazing at it longingly over

the last week, figuring ways to steer Steve casually past Murgal Singh's window. It looked wonderful on her — and, with her unerring touch, she had added just one piece of jewellery, a wonderful cabuchon brooch that, if it was genuine, must also have cost plenty. It was a mystery to me how she did it, for we were all in the same boat at that time — expenditure just keeping ahead of income — and the Joneses still six jumps in advance of both.

But seeing Rani wearing the suit slipped the camel's disc with a sharp click. I couldn't take any more of her, and since I was dummy, I crept out of the room with a mumbled excuse. The others were so taken up with what they had thought was to be blood on the Aubusson between Mary and Rani that they didn't notice my going. I hurried to the bathroom, almost falling in my eagerness to be alone.

After the cold water had been running over my wrists for some minutes, I felt a little more my own woman. I tried to think of something pleasant — it usually worked with me; but not this time. Rani, in her blue suit, brought the bitter bile to the back of my throat. *She* hadn't forgotten it was Tuesday. She was dragging that damned suit like an Irishman at Kilkenny Cat Fair. It was *meant* to be the apple of Paris in our genteelly poverty-stricken little circle. She hated us all as much as we hated her.

A little recovered, I turned the knob, and was about to push open the door which led into the adjoining bedroom, when Mary's voice reached me. It sounded so near that she must have been standing just the other side, and what she was saying brought me up all standing.

"I will kill you, Rani, if you come to my home again. Do you understand? I will find a way of getting rid of you even if it means destroying myself also."

The words in themselves were sheer corn, but the way Mary was saying them brought the sort of shiver to me that is usually attributed to footsteps over one's grave. Mary meant it all right — but quite obviously Rani didn't think so. She giggled.

"Darling, I did apologise for breaking in on you, but you know how it is. I just couldn't resist the suit. Things are so expensive and this really was a bargain but old Murgal Singh wants cash *today*. Anyway," she went on, "I don't know why you are so het up about it. I am only one day early and it isn't

as if I am asking for more than usual. Under the circumstances, I think I am being very fair."

"Fair? Fair? God, you're driving me out of my mind! How long do you think I can go on paying?"

Mary's cry was one of despair.

"Now, now, Mary," Rani said lightly, "you're loaded with it. Everybody knows that."

"You bitch — you cold-blooded bitch," Mary breathed.

But Rani only laughed softly and I heard a drawer being opened and the crackle of paper money.

When Mary spoke again, her voice was devoid of all emotion, but in some odd way it was even more deadly.

"Take it and go, and if you have any sense you will remember what I said. Don't force me to kill you, and don't attempt to raise the amount again. I feel getting rid of you would be a public duty. And, Rani, stay away from *him*, too. You've pushed him, *and* your luck, far enough. Don't risk it."

But Rani only laughed again. It wasn't pleasant to hear.

"You *will* pay, my dear, and so will he. Neither of you can afford to do otherwise. One little hint in the right quarter and *two* people are going to lose their jobs and pension rights."

I closed the door softly and managed to creep back to the drawing room unnoticed.

What the devil did that amount to, I wondered. Mary of all people! She was the last person I would have thought to have been harbouring a secret that was blackmailable. And 'him'. Who was he? Mary's husband? There had been no hint of scandal since he joined the academic staff of our local college, and in our tight community, no matter how discreet one was, things always leaked.

Steve lunched at the college on Tuesdays. He had taken on some private tutoring to help out, and rather than eat alone I usually had a snack with one or other of the wives at the club. But to-day I just didn't want to talk to anyone, so I walked slowly back home, deep in thought.

The house had never seemed so still and peaceful. But it was no use, I just couldn't unwind. Mary's face kept coming up in front of me. I liked her, she was a friend of mine, and I felt I ought to do something to help — but what, for heaven's sake, what?

I decided to go across to the college to see Steve. I glanced

at my watch — if I hurried I would catch him before he started his afternoon session. Two heads were better than one, especially if the other head was Steve's.

I walked across the compound and took a short cut through the library. The place was deserted. The heat must have driven students and staff down to the beach.

I reached Steve's office, but it was empty. Tears of disappointment filled my eyes. I am not given to crying, and this unexpected display of weakness told me how shaken I must have been by that awful little scene between two women I thought I knew.

I began to retrace my steps. I met nobody along the corridors, and as I stepped out of the deserted main entrance the mid-day sun hit me again like a blow in the face; I decided the longer way home, avoiding the open compound, would be cooler.

I hurried through the college garden to a narrow, tree-lined path that ran behind the main teaching block. It was dark and cool. I shut my eyes for a moment, gratefully relaxing after the glare.

When next I opened them, the long avenue of trees had somehow closed in on me. It was like looking down a dark passage in perspective, and at the bottom of it something blue was twisting and turning in a frenzied dance. It was Rani in her new suit. I heard a faint strangled scream that ended in a repellent gurgle, and a shadow glided into the undergrowth.

I felt my knees buckling beneath me. I closed my eyes again and then had to force myself to reopen them. This time the trees were steady, and Rani's suit no longer filled my vision. It was now a huddled heap on the ground — and I could see her hair, bright in the dimness beneath the trees, and her arms and legs splayed out in an awkward, ungainly attitude.

I don't remember moving forward, but I found myself standing over her, looking down at what struck me even in my paralysis as a crushed but still bright butterfly.

Rani was dead. With a shock, I realised that I sorrowed more for the blue suit, now torn and crumpled, than for her.

Then came panic — sudden and overwhelming — panic that blinded me to everything but the need to get away.

I raced along the path, and didn't stop until I was safely

back in my own house. I bolted the door and leaned against it, gasping and trembling, a loud hammering in my ears.

Five minutes — ten — I don't know how long it took me to muster enough strength to cross to the telephone and call Eric Waldron, the police superintendent.



Soon Eric will arrive to question me. How much should I tell? Should I mention anything about the conversation I had overheard? Good God, *no*. But if I don't, won't Eric, normally so bland and mild but still a very shrewd policeman, divine that I am holding something back? I must leave it to Steve — dear, calm, dependable Steve. *He* will know what to do.

No — there's no need to panic really — and *I don't* tell the police about Mary — after all it could have been anyone. Rani might well have been blackmailing others. Mary had implied as much.

Why doesn't he come? Why *doesn't* he come? I must stop shaking — this is stupid. No — it couldn't have been Mary.

I want a cigarette. There should be some around. Damn it, the box is empty. Perhaps Steve will have some — maybe in one of his jackets. The downstairs cloakroom . . .

How dark the hall is. Of course, I closed the shutters against the sun before I left.

Thank God Steve is back! There's the jacket he wore this morning — I remember the small ink stain on the lapel. He must have gone through while I was upstairs.

Steve! Steve! Where are you, Steve?

There are no cigarettes in the pocket. A notebook — a pen — matches, but only an empty cigarette case — and now my urge to smoke is clamorous. Only the inside pocket left. A handkerchief — some notes — oh, blast this shaking — now I've dropped everything!

Damn Steve, there's something sharp in the handkerchief! What on earth . . . I must be dreaming. But yet it is real enough. A wonderful carbuchon brooch, and still clinging to the pin some torn blue threads.

© Dion Clovelly, 1965.



# NEW BOOKS

## JOHN de SOLA

GREAT TRAITORS, The, Judge Gerald Sparrow (*Long, 25s.*)

This book in the latest in a series containing *Swindlers, Imposters, Forgers* and *Abductors*, and while 'great' may indeed be the operative word, some of the people in this volume are very small beer—John Amery, for example (whom this reviewer knew well), and here was an ass, a *poseur*, and a show-off but never a 'great' traitor; and was Hess a traitor, or a confused and woolly-minded null?

Judge Sparrow is at his best in the Far Eastern scene, where he thoroughly understands the twists and turns of policy which puzzle the untravelled reader. His book is well told, occasionally dogmatic (but about the right things), and at times it is quite outstanding as in the study, far too brief, of 'Tokio Rose' of whom the British know little — a longer treatment would be fascinating.

SPIES WHO NEVER WERE, Colonel Vernon Hinchley (*Harrap, 18s.*)

An expert, outstanding consideration of several so-called spies. Factually, concisely, Colonel Hinchley rips away the mass of legend and nonsense surrounding such figures as Dreyfus, Dorothy O'Grady, Dr. Pontecorvo, Anna Lesser and other people whose exploits are largely those of journalists and newspapers but not of real life. This reviewer was particularly delighted to read a vindication of 'Rutland of Jutland' — the brilliant and brave Fred Rutland who was no more a spy, or a traitor, than I am, for I knew him intimately for years, and set down my admiration of this gallant, honest, *impeccable* gentleman.

CHAIN OF COMMAND, Irwin R. Blacker (*Cassell, 18s.*)

One of those American novels giving the impression it is really documentary non-fiction. Its hero is, perhaps, General Richard Le Grande, the head of General Operations in Washington. From different intelligent sources (the CIA is

in the picture as well), reports seem to confirm that the old bogeyman of the espionage novel, the Soviet, are moving heavy troop formations towards the border. Certain authorities pooh-pooh the whole thing; Le Grande has his own ideas. And out of this unlikely material comes a first-rate, exciting tale that cuts and dashes from country to country with jet-propulsion.

**CUNNING AS A FOX**, Michael Halliday (*Hodder & Stoughton*, 16s.)

Mr. Creasey again, and if he ever has nightmares it must be about his being chased over one of those friable moon-scapes, pursued by all his pseudonyms in the round. From a good, hearty opening page this suspense novel hinges on the teenage son of the leading character, who becomes involved in robbery and murder. Better drawn, psychologically deeper than most thrillers, this one is very good indeed.

**DEAD RECKONING**, Roger Simons (*Bles*, 15s.)

A good thriller about a small journalist-researcher who writes informative booklets concerning businesses, and is murdered. And, even more curiously, how exactly can one get excited about a soap company coming into the mystery? So beguiling and expert is Mr. Simons that the reader is held to the end, as they say. This novel seems to have over-large margins and rather over-spaced type, but it is a pleasure to find that rare thing, a decimal point properly centred.

**FAR SIDE OF THE DOLLAR**, The, Ross Macdonald (*Collins*, 16s.)

That pleasantly cynical private eye, Lew Archer, is in search of a missing boy, whose father has sent him to a tough private school which seems to fit nicely with the American mania for psychiatric treatment. The plot widens to take in murder and extortion; Archer's girl (as she might be called) finds her past history being dragged into things and, all in all, everybody gets smeared. But Archer triumphs in a breathless, adroit yarn.

**GREEK AFFAIR**, The, Frank Gruber (*Boardman*, 13s. 6d.)

Frank Gruber has been a personal favourite ever since he wrote his first Johnny Fletcher novel. This new one, how-

ever, concerns John Ives, who goes to Europe from the States to get away from a broken marriage. In Rome he receives a gold coin from an unknown woman, who is found dead in his room, and from there he goes to Greece, where he becomes involved with the dead woman's sister and a chaos of archaeology, violent Greeks, Communists and general mayhem. Able, fast, and first-rate. (The 500th Bloodhound Mystery, the publishers state, and can congratulate themselves on keeping up the standard.)

GREY FACE, John Cassells (*John Long*, 15s.)

The solid, predictable British whodunit again, featuring Superintendent Flagg in its author's 38th book. This time an apparently ordinary and simple murder takes on angles which gradually involve the worthy superintendent and his assistant in a curious mystery. Personally, this reviewer dislikes the erudite Newall, Flagg's assistant, as too much of a contrived figure. The novel itself is readable and efficient.

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## CASSELL CRIME BOOKS

### **THE HOT SPOT** CHARLES WILLIAMS

Madox's plans to get rich fast did not include a small-town vamp named Dolores—as safe to be mixed up with as a rattlesnake. But she had her own plans, and Madox just didn't know when to duck. 16/-

### **GENTLY WITH THE LADIES** ALAN HUNTER

Chief Superintendent Gently ('probably the best interrogator in the business'—*N.Y. Times Book Review*) probes the murder of a beautiful Lesbian in her own luxury flat designed for the erotic. 16/-

### **THE BLUE MIRROR** JAMES TURNER

A boat carrying a dead girl dressed in white and surrounded by wreaths presents the strangest case Rampion Savage has ever come across. 16/-

### **DEATH IN THE SPRING** MARJORIE J. LAW

Both Detective Sergeant Jeremy Page and the famous and hated gossip columnist Hermione Harrington come to the surgery for the same hay-fever injection—only hers was lethal. 16/-

LADIES IN THE DARK, Margot Neville (*Bles*, 15s.)

An equally solid, predictable Australian whodunit, this time concerning two ladies who have retired from the world to live in a secure house outside Sydney. An apparently harmless young man comes begging for an aspirin and a glass of water, and ends up battered to death. The added problem of whydunit gives zest to this neat puzzle, ably plotted and written.

MISS SILVER DETECTS, Patricia Wentworth (*Hodder & Stoughton*, 25s.)

An omnibus volume comprising three novels — *The Lonesome Road* (1939), *The Brading Collection* (1952), and *The Ivory Dagger* (1953). This reviewer, who had never before read a Miss Maud Silver book, finds her very hard to take — the almost farcical English spinster (in her dyed summer dress, net-controlled hair and black stockings) as a private eye troubles even the most generous feelings of leeway. The whodunits, as such, are absolutely outstanding and gripping — Miss Wentworth is now one of my favourite women crime writers.

MOMENT OF UNTRUTH, Ed Lacy (*Boardman*, 13s. 6d.)

A popular writer with *EWMM* readers, Ed Lacy now offers a sequel to *Room to Swing*, which won him the 1957 MWA 'Edgar'. The same Negro detective, Toussiant Moore, has a real problem when he goes to Meico City to try and pin a murder on somebody who is no less than a national hero. From such unlikely material Mr. Lacy has constructed a thriller both plausible and taut. Incidentally his handling of the Negro hero, without bringing in any mention of 'colour' as such, or 'integration' and such knotty factors, is well done.

NO EVIL ANGEL, Anne Blaisdell (*Gollancz*, 16s.)

The author's *Greenmask!* was excellent; this new novel is better still. When a 13-year-old girl disappears the case seems routine for the Los Angeles Police Department. But the investigation widens to such an extent that the reader has to keep right on the tips of his mental toes to follow the highly complicated twists and turns of at least seven excellent sub-plots. Knitting everything together is that enchanting non-

detective starter, Rodriguez, who never lifts his nose out of crime novels and lets reality and the Police Department go by while he is lost in John Dickson Carr.

PERFECT VICTIM, The, James McKimney (*Boardman*, 13s. 6d.)

An entirely fascinating suspense drama, told with that vivid, graphic American style, about a small Midwest town where two young men (how reminiscent of Leopold and Loeb) are concerned with the death of a waitress. A drunken commercial traveller is picked up for the crime and, with inevitability horrifying to British eyes, the growth of a lynch mob is shown. A small town is held down and dissected, like an insect secured by a pin, and the result outshines the thriller.

POST MORTEM, Harry Carmichael (*Collins*, 15s.)

A carefully plotted, ingeniously contrived whodunit that moves briskly, and is very well told indeed. Quinn, of the *Morning Post*, is more or less the active investigator in this story of apparently motiveless death, and the added death of a TV singing star. Medical verdicts on the dead all include that happy catch-all for ignorance — 'vagal inhibition'. But is it? A very old means of murder pops us at last — one long neglected by crime novelists — and it is both neatly and cleverly incorporated. A fine job from Mr. Carmichael.

WHEN SO MUCH OF OUR READING MATTER COMES FROM THE UNITED STATES, IT IS RARE *flash* FOR A BRITISH MAGAZINE TO FATHER AN AMERICAN EDITION. WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE NEW YORK PUBLICATION OF THE EDGAR WALLACE MYSTERY MAGAZINE. WE SEND OUR GREETINGS AND HOPE IT WILL ACHIEVE THE SAME SUCCESS AS THE PARENT MAGAZINE.

# Readers Say . . .

*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.*

## **The Ringer**

I have just read Margaret Lane's book on Edgar Wallace, and while I find in it much I disagree about, I am struck by one item.

She mentions Edgar Wallace working in conjunction with 'Ringer' Barrie, whose story Mr. Garnett tells in *EWMM* [August]. From my personal knowledge, and using *Edgar Wallace—Each Way*, by Robert Curtis, and other books as guides, I can find *no* support for Mr. Wallace's association with Barrie in a business way, only that his casual knowledge of Barrie, on race-courses, etc., inspired him with the title of *The Ringer*, and the character of Educated Evans.

Perhaps you can enlighten me?

JACK GREENSHIELD.

Chichester.

● *Mr. Roger Garnett is definite that Mr. Wallace's acquaintance with Barrie was wholly casual; Mr. Nigel Morland (an intimate friend of EW), who is working on a definitive EW biography, dismisses the association with Barrie as 'poppycock'.*

## **Smoking Policemen**

As a reader of *EWMM*, and one who derives much pleasure from it, I am interested in a problem you may solve for me.

A friend of mine recently had burglars and when a detective came for information he smoked (without invitation) the whole of his visit. Also I noticed a police-officer in uniform (off-duty, I admit), who was checking over children undergoing bicycle tests, smoking cigarettes. And on television I saw in the 'News'

a group of detectives searching an hotel; every one of them was smoking.

Is there any Scotland Yard ruling about police smoking (on duty), and in the homes or presence of the public? It seems to me both rude to smoke in people's homes, a bad example to children, and not contributory to the image the police wish us to know.

STEPHEN RICHARDSON.

London, W.11.

● *A Scotland Yard spokesman told EWMM: 'As far as the Metropolitan Police Force is concerned, although there is no regulation forbidding police officers to smoke, they are not expected to smoke whilst on duty in uniform and disciplinary action would be taken in event of this happening'.*

### **Bokays and Brickbatz**

Good for John de Sola, who spoke a kind word for poor old Leslie Charteris [August] and, same issue, T. C. H. Jacobs was very good on the Rattenbury case. *The Sirius Man*, by our beloved EW, was a genuine winner.

JOHN SYNOTT.

Westbury, Wilts.

I do think Marten Cumberland [August] has a genius for bringing Paris and the French police to life. You can almost smell the Caporal cigarettes. I see that John de Sola [July] praised Cumberland's last book. I'm glad. Sometimes I could shoot John de Sola, then he says the right thing just in time . . .

(MISS) CONYTH FIELDER.

London, S.W.18.

● *Our unusual heading to these letters is inspired by some American spelling. Thanks for your views; John de Sola's usually in trouble. He seems worth his weight in brickbatz, so we won't get rid of him, yet.*



EW Book Mart      Coupon 15



Thank you for publishing extracts from my letter [April], and a very big 'thank you' for *The Book Mart*; this has been excellent in its results for my collection of EW's, now 130. Top marks for the July issue, and your editorial was really excellent. The Exhibition seems a great idea; it could be a meeting place for collectors, and could we not meet Miss Penelope Wallace, and the Editor of *EWMM*?

HERBERT A. SMITH.

*Diss, Norfolk.*

- *The Edgar Wallace Exhibition will indeed be a meeting place, and we are sure Mr. Smith will get his wish.*

*The Holiday Quiz* was very good; I solved it almost as fast as I could read it (sitting on a hot beach—yes!—in Wales). My wife never managed to complete it, and my brother put down Edgar Allen Poe's first detective story as *The Pit and the Pendulum*. I wonder if other readers fell into the trap? More quizzes some day, please.

JAMES L. JUNE.

*Carlisle.*

### **The Evans Case**

With (at the time of writing) the case of Timothy Evans due for enquiry, this hotly debated verdict is likely to be freshly argued by ordinary men all over the country. Do you think Evans was guilty? And would it not be possible to re-tell the case in your *True Crime Classic* series?

JOHN SATCHELL.

*Rayleigh, Essex.*

- *EWMM not only avoids taking sides, but any comment at this stage would be improper, but the study of the Hanratty case in this magazine last month would, perhaps, suggest another verdict for enquiry? The Evans' case will be widely publicised this winter in other quarters.*

## 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 coupon from page 127 of the current EWMM)*

OFFER two hard-cover fiction books for one Edgar Wallace paper-back (crime only), and three hard-cover for one Edgar Wallace ditto. R. Deacon, 19 Ruthin Road, Blackheath, London, S.E.3.

EDGAR WALLACE books wanted, buy or exchange. H. A. Smith, 20 Ransome Avenue, Scole, Diss, Norfolk.

CANADIAN collector wants Edgar Wallace novels. Has all recent reprints. D. MacDonald, 14322 Ravine Drive, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

ORIGINAL *Readers Library* volumes (cloth) *The Thief in the Night*; *Four-Square Jane*; *Planetoid 127*, and *The Sweizer Pump*. Mint. Offers to: L. S. Elliott, 17 Langdon Crescent, London, E.6.

ABOUT 30 EW's for sale, some scarce. Send your wants to A. J. Willcocks, 51 Headland Park, Plymouth.

WANTED: EW books, including *We Shall See*; *The Last Adventure*; *Smithy*; *Sanctuary Island*; *Elegant Edward*, etc. Lists, please, to: W. H. Bufkin, 2512 Spring Hill Avenue, Mobile 7, Alabama, U.S.A.

WANTED: *The Blue Hand*; *The Book of All Power*; *The Fellowship of the Frog*; *The Man Who Changed his Name* and *Terror Keep*. John F. Chant, Lee Haven, 1 Northfalls Road, Canvey Island, Essex.

WANTED: *Devil Man*; *Bones of the River*; *The Steward* and *The Thief in the Night*. A. R. Kaleel-ur-Rahman, 66 Vivekananda Hill, Colombo, 3, Ceylon.

WANTED: *Barbara on her Own*; *Daughters of the Night*; *Unofficial Dispatches*; *Tomb of T'sin*. R. J. McCarthy, Wetlands, Augathella, Queensland, Australia.

Scene from the latest Edgar  
Wallace film, *Game for  
Three Losers*, presented by  
Anglo-American and star-  
ring Michael Gough, Mark  
Eden and Allan Cuthbert-  
son.

