

THE TOP SELLING BRITISH CRIME MAGAZINE

Edgar Wallace

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
The Miraculous Revenge



EDGAR WALLACE
The Prison Breakers

**TRUE CRIME
RESULT**

**Plus Eight New
Stories.**

No. 30
Vol. 4

Edgar Wallace

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EDGAR WALLACE

Mystery Magazine

Vol. IV No. 30

January, 1967

Mystery, Crime, and Detection for the Aficionado

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Cartoon by MACIEK

Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine is published on the 1st of each month by Edgar Wallace Magazines Ltd. All characters in these stories are entirely fictitious and in no way refer to any person, living or dead. Printed by The Rugby Advertiser Ltd., Albert Street, Rugby. Newsvending Trade Distribution by The Rolls House Publishing Co. Ltd., Rolls House, 2, Breams Buildings, London E.C.4. Sole agents, Australia: Gordon and Gotch (A'sia) Ltd.; New Zealand: Gordon and Gotch (N.Z.) Ltd.; South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.; © 1967 Edgar Wallace Magazines, Ltd., 4, Bradmore Road, Oxford. NIGEL MORLAND, Editor

IT IS a particular rule followed in *EWMM* that neutrality is the best policy because a fiction magazine should not usurp the functions of those publications whose primary aim is criticism.

But the New Year seems a good time to bend the rule a little, and back the views of a reader in our December issue. He asked for help and support for the British policeman, and rightly so, for the copper is getting a great deal of rough treatment which we, dedi-

cated supporters of the goodies against the baddies, deplore. Because sniping at the police force, and maligning it, are so popular *EWMM* is coming down for once on the side

Briefly

of the fence where our voice—and, we are sure, that of every thinking reader—is raised in police defence.

Crime has never been so high as it is today and the obvious target of *all* criminals acts is the criminal's fellow man. The only shield raised in protection is the policeman, and if he feels he is being got at from behind then he cannot be blamed if he feels the job is hardly worth it—to protect he also needs support and encouragement.

Our contemporary, *Crime & Detection*, recently pointed out that there were 2,460 complaints laid by the public against certain members of the 18,000-strong Metropolitan Police Force. *Only* 237 of these complaints were found on investigation to be substantiated and many of these, we believe, were for minor sins; we would add that in our opinion a large number of the 2,460 complaints were probably made by criminals or their friends to gum up the machine in one way or another—an old criminal habit.

Another thing, in November a national Sunday newspaper put this imaginary dialogue into a policeman's mouth: "'Ullo, 'ullo, what's a-going on here, then?" Really, gentlemen! Surely the semi-illiterate, the aspirate-less policeman convention is dead by now? It's bad enough to attack the police for the smallest error without suggesting they are also morons.

The policeman's lot certainly isn't a happy one but that view was expressed a great many years ago and the world has progressed.

It might be a very good resolution to make 1967 the year when the policeman got solid support from the people he is trying to help and protect.

The Editor.

Ear Wallace,

the
PRISON BREAKERS

*The man who could not escape,
did. This story might
have been written
yesterday*

IT WAS the sort of thing one might expect would happen in the Intelligence Service, and it may be briefly related.

Alexander Barnes, who enjoyed a mild fame as a man about town, a regular first nighter at all the new plays, a familiar figure at private views, was arrested on a charge of wilfully shooting Cristoforo P. Supello. With him was also charged an American who gave the name of 'Jones'.

Barnes and Jones had been dining at the Atheneum Imperial and had strolled out into Pall Mall. A few minutes later a police officer at the end of Waterloo Place heard three shots fired in rapid succession. The shots came from the direction of the Duke of York's statue, and the constable ran towards the sound and was joined by two other policemen, who arrived from the other end of the thoroughfare. The man, Supello, was lying on the ground, dead. Barnes and Jones were caught at the top of the Duke of York's steps leading down into St. James's Park, and were secured without difficulty.

The fact that they attempted to escape did not support the story which Barnes told, namely that he had been attacked by Supello and had fired in self-defence. Undoubtedly a revolver was found in the dead man's hand with one chamber discharged. In Barnes's

possession was an automatic from which two shots had been fired—the shells were discovered on the following morning; but no weapons of any kind were found on Jones. Both Jones and Barnes swore they were attacked first, and the fact that three shots were fired and that two of them had been found in Supello's heart proved that the first had been fired by him, since medical evidence demonstrated that he could not have used a revolver subsequent to receiving the wounds which killed him.

With such evidence it seemed humanly impossible that the charge could be persisted in, yet Barnes was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to ten years in prison, while Jones was discharged.

The conviction was secured on the evidence of a homeless man who said he was dozing on the steps of a house when he heard an altercation and saw Barnes draw and flourish his gun in the face of Supello, and by the further evidence of the butler of Mr. Stieglemann, the international financier, who alleged that he, too, was a witness of the affair, and said that he heard angry words between the parties. He corroborated the statement of the night-waif in as far as the flourishing of weapons was concerned. The occurrence created something of a sensation, for Barnes was a fairly well-known man who lived a blameless and—save that he had a trick of disappearing from London at odd intervals, nobody knowing whither—an unsuspecting life.



Alexander Barnes accepted his sentence philosophically, although he had a young wife to whom he was passionately devoted.

He possessed that serene faith in his department which makes up nine-tenths of the moral equipment of the Intelligence man. He did not tell the judge that he and 'Jones' of the Washington Secret Service had intercepted Supello on his way to a certain Embassy with the full text of the Salem-Ponsonby Treaty in his pocket, or that they had followed Supello, a most notorious trafficker in government secrets, from the hotel; or that they had sat watching him at dinner until the lady from the Embassy had passed Supello's table and had dropped a white rose as a sign that his Excellency had agreed to pay the stiff price which the Mexican had asked.

They had shot him and had ripped the treaty from his inside

pocket, and Jones had dropped the document into the nearest street sewer; but, honestly, Supello had fired first. Barnes could not tell this interesting and romantic story, partly because he would not have been believed, and partly because it is the rule of the Higher Intelligence Circle never to bleat. If you are caught you must take your medicine with a smiling face and send no S.O.S. messages to your unknown chiefs for succour.

'Mr. Jones' was informed that his presence in England was no longer an absolute necessity, and he departed for New York by ship and was accompanied to his cabin by police officers.

When the big liner was 50 miles from Southampton, he was visited by a quiet man who talked with him for a long time. This man was Bland, chief of the Intelligence Service. He left the boat at Cherbourg and made his way back to London.

He sought an interview with the Home Secretary, and the result was not particularly successful.

At the end of a very hopeless quarter of an hour, he shrugged his shoulders.

"I quite understand, sir," he said as gently as he could, "my suggestion is very irregular, but then the situation is very extraordinary."

"That is a matter of opinion, sah," said the other gruffly.

He always said 'sah', and as 'Sah' he was known throughout the Services.

He was a thin man with a tousled mop of pure white hair, his face was thin, his mouth was thin, and he looked out on to the world through the narrowest slits of eyes that Bland had ever seen in a man.

Sir George Mergin had been Home Secretary off and on over a period of twenty years in one administration or the other. He was known as narrow, but safe.

He ran his department on rigid regulation lines, wrote with a gold fountain pen, and drank a glass of sherry at 11 in the forenoon.

Small wonder then that he regarded the chief of the Intelligence Bureau and his preposterous schemes with resentment.

"You see, Mr.—er—Bland, you have no—er—official status. You are in no vote and come under the—er—administration of no department."

"In fact, we're nobody's darlings, sir," smiled Bland, "and have no chief to whom we can appeal. Your Home Office loathes us, the P.V. police are jealous of us, the Foreign Office, whom we

serve, pretend that they do not know that there is such an organisation—”

There came a gentle tap at the door and a secretary entered. He crossed to his chief and said something in a low voice.

“Ah yes, ah yes,” said Sir George, “tell the Assistant Commissioner to come in.”

Bland concealed a smile. It was no coincidence that Assistant Commissioner Goldring should make his appearance at that moment. Goldring had control of the Special Branch and ran a secret service of his own. It was little more than a glorified detective force, which was employed in tracing dangerous aliens and keeping an unfriendly eye on the comings and goings of known agitators. It was a department which boasted of its linguistic gifts and was known at the Yard as the ‘P.V. Division’—‘P.V.’ standing for ‘parlez-vous.’

And here it may be said that the regular police force entertained a most profound contempt for the P.V.’s, their prescience and their capacity, and invariably favoured Bland’s department when a decision had to be made for one or the other.



Goldring came in, bowed graciously to the chief, and favoured Bland with a little nod.

“Ah, Assistant Commissioner, I am glad you have come, sah! Now I will put it to you, Mr. Goldring—or perhaps, Mr. Bland, sah, you would like to explain your—er—curious project.”

Bland knew as well as any that Goldring was well aware of the business and that he had already been consulted.

“I suggest that Alexander Barnes should be set at liberty,” he said. “Mr. Goldring knows all that Barnes was doing. He was out to find the man who had bribed a Foreign Office clerk to supply him with a copy of the Salem-Ponsonby Treaty.”

“And shoot him?” suggested Goldring, shaking his head with an assumption of gravity.

“Surely there is a law in the land to deal with such crimes as you suggest that Supello committed; surely he could have been arrested?”

Bland looked at him with a pitying smile which made the other hot and angry.

“No, sah!” said the Home Secretary shortly; “I can do nothing, sah,—nothing. It is absurd to ask such a thing. Bring me a

request from my good friend, the Foreign Secretary, or let the Under-Secretary substantiate your statement, and in the public interest I might bring the appropriate clause of the Defence Act into operation, but otherwise—no!”

Again Bland smiled.

“You know very well, sir, that I cannot do that,” he said.

“Personally,” interrupted Goldring, “I doubt the whole story. I am not exactly without information, Mr. Bland; you don’t suggest that you know any more of what is happening in England than me?” he asked archly.

Bland nodded.

“I know that our friend Stieglemann gives excellent dinners,” he drawled. “I know that after dinner his guests play roulette, and that if Stieglemann wishes he can always win—it is useful.”

“What do you mean?” demanded Goldring, very red.

“By ‘useful’? I’ll tell you. Suppose a police official lost five hundred pounds at a sitting and Stieglemann tore up that police officer’s I.O.U. for that amount, would not this officer be under some obligation to his admirable host? You ask me what I know more than you—I’ll tell you. Stieglemann’s roulette board is faked. You didn’t know that, did you?”

Goldring met Bland’s challenging eyes and dropped his own before them.

“I am going now,” Bland went on, picking up his hat, “but before I go I will say this. The two witnesses against Alexander Barnes were planted. Stieglemann’s butler is an alien agent; the tramp who saw everything is another. But they don’t count, because Alexander would have killed Supello anyway, sooner than allow the Salem-Ponsonby Treaty to go to its purchaser. You refuse me help to release Barnes. I will release him myself and take him through England under the nose of your police.”

Sir George rose in a trembling fury.

“You threaten me, sah!”

Bland nodded.

“I will break you, sah! I will arrest you, sah! Mr. Goldring, take him into custody!”

Goldring hesitated, then stepped forward, and Bland laughed.

He laughed as he accompanied his captor down the stairs, and was chuckling in the locked room at Scotland Yard when they came to him—after an hour’s stay—and told him that he was free.

For there had come to Sir George Mergin a high government personage who had said at the end of an aimless and innocent

conversation:

"Oh, by the way, release Bland."

"Release him—release him, sah!" spluttered Sir George. "Why, sah?"

"Oh, I don't know," said his visitor vaguely, "only I think . . . I should release him if I were you. By the way, all the evening newspapers have a story about your resigning—it's in the stop-press. You aren't thinking of taking that step, are you?"

"Certainly not! Who dare'd put such a thing in the papers?"

"Goodness knows—you know what newspapers are," said the visitor carelessly, and strolled to the door.

He stood for a moment irresolutely playing with the handle of the door. Sir George saw him frown and purse his lips.

"I think I should release Bland," said the visitor thoughtfully, and went out, closing the door behind him.

Sir George wrote the order for release.

"But Barnes shall serve his time," he said viciously, as he flourished his signature to the document.



Bland went back to his office, where he had a little work to do. He recognised that he had put Goldring and his department on their mettle and that the Parlez-Vous Brigade would be watching him like a hawk. Two of them had followed him to the office and were now—ostentatiously innocent—examining the windows of a fruit store on the opposite side of the street.

They followed him to his flat—Goldring had put a car at their disposal—and Bland watched them from his window with great enjoyment for some time. Then he sent for them, and they came sheepishly enough and stood in front of the big desk in his study.

"I don't want you boys to get cold feet watching me," he said kindly; "you can sit up here if you promise not to make a noise. You'll get a much closer view and you can docket my varying emotions."

"Mr. Bland," protested one, "you're quite in error—"

"I am never in error," interrupted Bland. "Just sit where you are. I'm expecting a visitor, and you'll be able to report the whole wicked plot!"

The visitor was Shaun McCallum, a bright young man, wise in the ways of the Intelligence Service.

"Sit down, Shaun. I phoned you to come—oh, by the way,

these are two of Goldring's men, Sergeant Jackman and Sergeant Villars. I have no secrets from them."

The two men grinned uncomfortably.

"Alex Barnes is in Lewes Gaol," Bland went on; "I want you to go down and arrange to get him out. When he is released I want you to bring him to London and take him to Southampton by train. Put him on a boat leaving for the United States—our friends on the other side will arrange for him to join his wife who leaves for the U.S.A. next week."

"How are we to get him out of prison?" asked Shaun.

Bland leant back in his chair and gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling.

"That's fairly simple," he said slowly.

The two men, seated uncomfortably on the edge of their chairs, leant forward a little.

"That's fairly simple," repeated Bland; "on a certain day we will cut all telephone and telegraph wires leading to the prison. Within half an hour our friend will be free. If he is not, then he will be within twenty-four hours."

"Oh," said Shaun blankly.

Bland rose.

"That's as much as I can tell you," he said; "and now, Shaun, you can take these two active and intelligent members of the P.V. Division and lose them."

That evening Commissioner Goldring sought the Home Secretary at his house in Portland Place.

"It is absurd, sah," said Sir George irritably. "The whole thing is absurd and wholly irregular. Confound the fellow! If I had my way—by Jove! The thing is a bluff, sah."

Goldring shook his head. He was a badly scared man, for if Bland's intelligence men knew of private transactions as between himself and Mr. Stieglemann, what else might they know?

"If he says he will do it, he will," he said.

"Let him try," answered Sir George grimly.

This was on the Wednesday evening. On the Thursday morning the Governor of Lewes Gaol received very detailed instructions regarding the care of his prisoner.

On Friday morning, Goldring was in attendance on Sir George when officials brought word that the telephone line between the Home Office and Lewes Gaol had been cut in three places.

"Rush an XX message through to Lewes," said Sir George. "Tell the Governor to hold Barnes in readiness for transfer to

Dartmoor—anything may happen in these little country gaols, sah.”

Bland lunched with Shaun McCallum that day.

“Exactly what is the idea—cutting the wires and all that sort of thing?” asked Shaun.

Bland glanced swiftly round and lowered his voice.

“We can do nothing in these little country prisons,” he said; “our only chance is to scare Sah into transferring Barnes to Dartmoor.”

This was, as I say, on the Friday morning.



On Saturday, those idle folk who lingered about Dartmoor's tiny railway station after the arrival of the 3.7 from London, would have witnessed the coming of a tall, good-looking convict.

He was unshaven, but cheerful, for he had faith in his chief and in the hundreds of gallant men who, as he knew, were working for his salvation. His wrists were enclosed in handcuffs and he was accompanied by the inevitable assistant warder, carrying the inevitable blue envelope containing transfer papers. This was no unusual sight for the townsmen of Princetown. No day passed which did not witness the coming or going of sinister figures in prison uniform.

The warder beckoned a cab, and into this he bundled his prisoner, following and seating himself opposite. There was no need to give the driver instructions. He passed through the little market-place, and breasted the long hill which leads to the dreary moorland, in the very centre of which is situated Dartmoor Convict Establishment.



It was the boast of successive governors that never once in its long and mournful history has Dartmoor Prison lost a convict save by death, discharge or transfer. Escapes there had been, but no man had ever succeeded in getting away from the moor.

This is not to wondered at. Physically, Dartmoor is bleak and bare and save for three definite wood groups named ominously enough, Hiding Wood, M'Greery Wood and Trap Wood. M'Greery, who gave his name to the second of these, was a sometime fugitive from the granite prison and met his end in its bosky

glades. Hiding Wood is so called because it was the clump for which the majority of escaped prisoners made; and Trap Wood has only two outlets, one to the moor and the other to the village of Two Bridges and presents no difficulties of search.

The roads are few, the farms scattered and difficult to come by, the edges of the moor are patrolled by guards, and when to these difficulties is added the fact that the Governor can call for an aerial search, it is not necessary to urge the strenuous character of the problem which Dartmoor offered to the unfortunate wretch who sought freedom over its bare and treacherous waste.

Barnes and his custodian passed under the arch of sorrow, through the black gates, and were taken to the office of the chief warden.

That official was evidently well advised as to the responsibility which his new charge represented.

"You're the prison-breaker, are you?" he said pleasantly. "Well we shall have to give you extra attention, my friend."

It was an extraordinary speech for a chief warden to make—so thought the assistant warden, in charge of the prisoner—for men holding that position are sparing of speech, laconical, and stony. They do not address a prisoner as 'my friend', nor do they volunteer information as to the necessity for keeping him under observation.

"Do you speak any foreign languages?" asked the chief warden.

"Yes sir, several."

"German?"

"Yes, sir."

The chief warden nodded.

"I can find you work here," he said; "let me see how much German you know."

And then he spoke rapidly in a language wholly incomprehensible to the assistant warden, and the prisoner replied, speaking quickly.

All these facts came out at the subsequent enquiry (details of which will be found in the Blue book, *Prison Commissioners' Report No. 764 A*) into the part the chief warden played.

What he said in German, and what Barnes replied, is a matter of conjecture. The chief warden's version was that he merely asked a few questions in the language to test the prisoner's knowledge. The Home Office alleged that he was 'a member of a certain organisation', the character of which did not transpire.

Three days after the admission of Alexander Barnes to Dart-

moor, Goldring came by special train to Princetown, bringing with him twenty of the best men of his special corps, for Alexander Barnes had escaped.

Sir George Mergin had a brief interview with his Assistant Commissioner before he left London, and to say that Sir George was angry is putting the matter with studied moderation.

"The prisoner is on the moor; he escaped an hour ago and there is a cordon round the district."

"But how—how, sir?" demanded the bewildered Goldring.

"He went out with a working party, leapt the stone wall on to a waiting motor-cycle and got away, sah, under the eyes of the warder!"

"But the motor-cycle?"

"Had been put behind the wall by some person unknown—how the devil he knew it was there—"

At Dartmoor, Goldring found a telegram waiting for him from his chief:

Bland has been seen. He says that Barnes is still on the moor, and he will leave for London via Princetown Station.

"Will he!" muttered Goldring between his teeth; "will he!"

No man passed from the moor that day who did not come under the vigorous scrutiny of police and guards. Farmers' trucks were halted and searched—even the sacks of potatoes were emptied before the vehicle was allowed to proceed.

Night brought no relaxation of the watchers' vigilance. A battalion of soldiers was brought from Tiverton to assist the guard, and powerful head-lights flooded every road with light.

A weary-eyed Goldring paced irritably up and down in the lemon yellow sunlight of morning.

"I'm going to have that fellow if I keep awake for a week!" he said, shaking his fist at the unoffending moor. "You know me, Barton. These secret service people, these amateur policemen are not going to get away with it. We'll have Barnes!"

"What sort of man is he in appearance?" asked his subordinate.

"A six-footer and broad—you can't mistake him," said Goldring. "Look at that poor little devil!"

"That poor little devil" sat in a car which was passing down from the moor to the town.

He wore prison garb, but he was a merry little man, with a bullet head and a bright eye, and he hummed a song under the

disapproving eye of a warder who sat on the opposite seat. As he passed Goldring he turned his head and called:

"Catch him, Boss! Don't let him go!"

The warder snarled something and the little man relapsed into silence.

"Going to Wormwood Scrubs for discharge," said Goldring's companion, with a professional glance at the prisoner; "they always get fresh the last week or so."

A car came streaking down the road from the moor and pulled up with a jerk by Goldring's side.

"We've located him, sir," said the occupant, a P.V. man. "We've found the motor-bike and the convict clothes in Hiding Wood, and the warders are beating it."

Goldring rubbed his hands.

"I'll send a wire to the chief," he said and walked back to the station.

He had dispatched his telegram from the telephone kiosk, and had returned to the platform, when the London train drew in, and he stood watching idly.

He saw the diminutive convict—he was well under five feet and so thin that he looked no more than a boy—hustled into a third-class carriage, and saw the blinds pulled down. Then as the train drew slowly out and the carriage with the convict came abreast, the blind was flung up, the window fell and the little prisoner poked out his head, resting his handcuffed fists on the window edge.

"Don't you look for that lad in Hiding Wood, Mister Busy-fellow! He went up in an aeroplane. He's—"

At this point a uniformed sleeve crossed the man's chest and he was flung backwards, the blind was pulled down and the train sped on.

The station-master, a witness of the occurrence, smiled at Goldring.

"That fellow is a bad lot," he said; "the warder told me that he was one of the people who had assisted this convict you are looking for to escape. Name of Jerry Carter."

"The warder had no right to tell you anything," snapped Goldring.

He had more reason for shortness of temper an hour later, when Hiding Wood drew blank.

Throughout the day the search went on and was continued on the morrow and the next day, but without result.

At the end of a week, Goldring returned to London a very sick

man, and sought Sir George.

What happened at that interview has never been revealed, but if he went into the Home Secretary's room sick, he emerged, figuratively speaking, a chronic invalid.

He saw Bland at his office, and after the fashion of men in disgrace, was prepared to accept sympathy even from his most implacable enemy.

"Come to me this day week," said Bland, "and I may be able to tell you something. But you must give me your word that what I tell you doesn't go any further. Otherwise you shall know nothing."

Curiosity and pique induced the promise and took him to the appointment.

Bland was sitting in his big arm-chair smoking a cigar.

"Sit down, Goldring," he invited cheerfully. "Have a cigar—you'll find them in the silver box."

He leant over and pushed a bell, and after a short delay the door opened and a man came in.

Goldring sprang to his feet with an exclamation of surprise, for the newcomer was the little convict he had seen leaving Princetown Station.

"One of us," introduced Bland largely, waving his hand. "Mr. Martin Caxton, of Intelligence."

"How do you do?" said the little man, offering his hand. "I'm afraid I was awfully impertinent to you the other day."

"But what—what?" stammered Goldring.

"I'll explain," said Bland. "Oh, by the way, Barnes has arrived safely in the United States, you'll be sorry to learn. I won't tell you how he actually got away from the gaol or give you the names of the people who helped. Getting away from the prison was child's play. It was leaving the moor that was the difficulty. I knew that every kind of person who attempted to reach the town would be stopped and examined—every kind of person save one."

"And which was the one?" asked Golfring curiously.

"A handcuffed convict," said Bland. "Martin Caxton was the convict—he was waiting in Hiding Wood for two days."

"Letting my horrible whiskers grow," said the little man complacently.

"But Barnes?" said Goldring.

Bland blew a ring of smoke and watched it dissolve.

"Barnes was the warder," he said.

A Question of Graffiti

MIRIAM ALLEN deFORD

*What people write on walls is
sometimes social history and
sometimes kismet in a very
curious disguise*

TRUE it was a mere hole-in-the-wall, with three small and three larger tables, and a counter that seated six; a place where couples and families from near-by apartments could become regular diners, and single roomers could eat their dinner after work in restful surroundings where nobody would hurry them, if they wanted to linger over coffee and a cigarette.

He opened only for the dinner hour, from five to nine. He did all the cooking as well as the waiting so that the profits as well as the expenses were all his.

He was a good cook of simple food, from the days when his name hadn't been Jarvis. He lived in two rooms of the restaurant proper, and he ate his own cooking. It was an ideal solution for a man who wanted nothing more from life than to be let alone.

But he did have a wine and beer licence, and that meant he had to have public rest rooms. And he did have plenty of customers who weren't regulars and whom he didn't know.

So every morning when he did his slow, thorough cleaning he was confronted by those scribbles—graffiti—on the walls of the three booths in the men's room—and sometimes in the women's as well.

"You prig, you prude," his wife used to jeer at him when she was still alive.

Perhaps she was right; he had hoped once to become a minister, but there hadn't been enough money and he had had to go into his father's restaurant business instead. Mella's blatant immodesty was one of the many things that had made his marriage so desperately unhappy.

As he scrubbed away the crude drawings, the obscene invitations, the dirty jokes, he muttered to himself often what pigs people were. He was entirely too busy while the restaurant was open to notice who did or didn't go to the rest rooms. What could he do about it anyway—accuse customers, offend them, and lose them? For months he pondered, and then evolved a way of alleviating the nuisance if not curing it. He painted the walls with a shiny dark blue enamel that wouldn't take pen or pencil.



The next day he found that somebody had used a penknife to scratch a particularly nasty message in one of the booths. He had to scrape it and paint over it.

So he had an inspiration. In each booth, men's and women's, he fastened to the wall a small blackboard, with a piece of chalk attached to it by a string, and at the top of each blackboard he stencilled: 'If You Must Write, Please Write Here.'

The innovation worked. To be sure, a few of the more irresponsible young customers—one of them, to his distaste, a girl—made sniggering comments as they paid their bills to which he responded only with a tight disapproving smile.

Let them consider him a prude, as Mella had done; they were nothing to him. The important thing was that the walls were not disfigured any longer, and a damp rag quickly effaced the evening's contribution to pornographic and scatological art and literature.

Then one morning he found, neatly printed on one of the blackboards, a single sentence. It said: **I SAW A MURDERER IN THIS RESTAURANT TONIGHT.**

Jarvis felt himself turning cold. Who had written it? Whom had the writer seen? On what knowledge or imagination was his indictment based? Did the writer expect somebody to do something about it? Or had the message only been left for a later comer to see?

He tried very hard, the next evening to observe the comings, and goings through the door leading to the rest rooms, but it proved quite impossible.

Two days later there was another sentence on another blackboard. **A MURDERER MAY GET AWAY WITH HIS CRIME, BUT HE HAS TO LIVE WITH HIS CONSCIENCE.**

He washed that one off too.

There was nothing more for a week, though Jarvis took to

inspecting the blackboards as soon as the restaurant closed.

Worry over the messages was keeping him awake.

The third was more specific. **DID YOU THINK NOBODY KNEW WHAT YOU DID TO HER?**

So the victim had been a woman, the murderer a man.

Of the next one he had, so to speak, an advance notice. His last customer of the evening, a retired engineer who ate in the restaurant daily—his name, Jarvis thought, was Robinson or Robertson—went back to the rest-rooms after he had finished his meal. Jarvis watched him sharply, deciding to keep an eye on him henceforth and see if he did that again. But he changed his mind when Robinson or Robertson appeared at the door and beckoned to him.

Jarvis left the sink where he was stacking silverware and followed the customer to one of the booths.

“Look there!” said the man excitedly. “See what somebody wrote on this board.”

I KNOW HOW YOU MURDERED HER. I SUPPOSE I KNOW WHY. BUT WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GET STRAIGHT WITH YOUR CONSCIENCE AND GIVE YOURSELF UP?

“I know,” said Jarvis miserably. “There have been lots of them. I can’t find who does them.”

“Why don’t you tell the police?” said the engineer.

“Tell them what? That somebody unknown keeps writing on these boards, accusing somebody else unknown of murdering a third person also unknown? They’d just say it’s some crazy man, and to stop bothering them. Or perhaps that it’s meant as a bad joke.”

“I see,” said the customer in a tone that meant he didn’t see at all. “But it gives a very bad impression. It gave me quite a start when I saw it.”

“I’m sorry. But what can I do? Can I use a loudspeaker and ask my patrons if they are writing accusations of murder? Can I post a notice here asking them to spy on other people and report to me? Can I watch everyone who goes in here and leave everything to go in after each one leaves and see if he is the writer?”

He cut himself short. He mustn’t let his nervous anxiety get the better of him.

“It’s a shame. I know how hard you work and how nice you’ve kept this place—a real family restaurant. But this sort of thing could drive your best customers away. Who wants to let his young

son discover messages like this?"

"Yes," said Jarvis bitterly, "and talk about them until I'll be driven out of business. But what can I do?"

Robinson's (or Robertson's) eyes lighted up. He was an avid reader of mystery stories.

"You could hire a private eye," he suggested eagerly, "and station him in here all evening. He could note everybody who went in a booth, go in as soon as the person left, and then if there was something like this on the board he'd be able to describe him and you could face him with it."

Jarvis looked harassed. "I couldn't possibly—" he began. The engineer interrupted him.

"I know that would cost a lot. Look, I have plenty of time on my hands—too much of it. Let me take a try at it. I could eat early, as soon as you open, and then go in there for the rest of the evening. Take a chair and a book, and sit and smoke, and as soon as I heard anyone coming I'd be at the basin, washing my hands.

"I'd be glad to do it for a while—my guess is it would only be a few days, maybe less. Let me! It would be a real adventure." The joy of amateur detecting shone in his face.

Jarvis shook his head. "I couldn't let you do that, Mr. Robinson—"

"Robertson."

"The room is too small, for one thing. And suppose this chap comes in legitimately, as it were, and sees you there. The next time, when maybe he means to do one of his scribblings, there you are again. He'd get suspicious at once, and lay off. In fact, my guess is that he never does any writing when there's anyone else around."

Robertson looked crestfallen, but he nodded. "You're probably right," he said. "And that goes for a real detective, too, I suppose. But can't you do *something*?"

"I'll figure something out. Thanks for your interest."

Tom Jarvis watched Robertson go. Perhaps he felt snubbed and wouldn't come back. But Jarvis had his own reasons for not wanting outsiders meddling, and perhaps ending up having the police stick their noses into his business.

Nevertheless, Robertson was right; somehow this lunatic or avenger or whatever he was had to be stopped.

There was no telling which blackboard the man would use next. That night Jarvis lettered neatly at the top of each of them: TELL ME. PERHAPS I CAN HELP. THE OWNER.

It might lead to calamity, but at least he would know where he stood.

But all it got him was a reply, two days later; YES, PERHAPS YOU COULD HELP. BUT I'LL PLAY THIS MY OWN WAY.

Was he being sarcastic?



Worry was cutting into Jarvis's sleep and getting him down. Either he had an insane person eating almost nightly in this little restaurant, or for all his caution the life he had built up for himself here was gravely threatened.

Things had to come to a head, so of course they did.

What happened next Jarvis knew nothing about at first. It was staged in the district police station around the corner.

A fussy, elderly little man marched into the station and up to the counter.

A bored officer looked up from his paperwork.

"Something?" he inquired.

The little man took off his hat, revealing a bald head.

"Whom do I see to report a murder?" he asked.

The policeman sat up straight. Probably a nut, but you never could tell. He directed the man to the homicide office, and watched curiously as the visitor determinedly climbed the worn stairs.

The door was open. He walked in and approached the nearest desk. He took off his hat again, and his bald head gleamed.

"The gentleman downstairs," he announced in a precise voice, "told me to come here to report a murderer at large."

Sergeant Cliff Connolly turned from the typewriter on which he had been laboriously pounding out a statement, and looked the speaker over in a swift practised glance.

"This is the homicide bureau," he said. "Sit down and tell me about it. What is your name?"

"Does that matter? He's a vicious character. I tried to frighten him by private methods, but they didn't work. I'd hoped to make him give himself up, but I guess he's too hardened. I want him punished. So I thought if I told you, you'd take care of it."

"If you have any evidence about a murder," Sergeant Connolly said, "it's your duty to report it immediately to the police."

"I know," the little man said apologetically. "It's just—I

believe we all have consciences, no matter how wicked we may seem. I tried to appeal to his. I don't believe in compulsion unless it's absolutely necessary."

"I suppose you know this may make you an accessory after the fact?"

"Oh, my goodness, no! I wouldn't! I—"

He stood up suddenly.

"Sit down," Connolly ordered. "It's too late to change your mind. If you have information about a crime, I want all the details. And first I want your name and address. We'll protect you if you need protection."

The little man sighed and resigned himself.

"My name is Samuel Mackey," he said meekly. "I live at four twenty-four Belmont Street. I have a room there. I'm an accountant, retired four years ago. I worked thirty-eight years for Weldon Associates."

"I see. And this person you accuse of murder?"

"I don't know his name, but I know him by sight. I don't know his exact address, either, though it must be very near mine. But I know where he can be found."

"Go on."

Mackey drew a long breath.

"Three or four times a week I eat dinner in a little restaurant near here, on Summer Street. It's called the Kookhouse."

"I know it. Run by a man named Jarvis."

"Is that his name? Very nice man, very deserving. He's all alone, does everything himself. It's a blessing to find a place right in the neighbourhood where one can get good plain food at a price that anybody like me, living on a pension and social security, can afford."

"Are you accusing him of killing somebody?"

"Good heavens, no! But that's where I see the man I *am* accusing, practically every time I go there. I was so upset the first time I had to stop eating. I was in two minds whether to walk right out, or to go up to him and accuse him to his face.

"Then this scheme occurred to me. I thought it would work. It would have worked with me, in his place, if I could imagine myself guilty of destroying a life and getting away with it."

"You mean you have actual evidence that this man has committed a murder?"

"Let me tell it just the way it happened, so I won't forget anything. That first night, as I said, I was so upset I felt actually ill.

I hurried back to the rest room.

"I got control of myself in a few minutes and felt able to go back and finish my dinner. But still I couldn't decide what I should do. Then, while I was splashing cold water on my face, I noticed the little blackboards, and this idea came to me."

"What blackboards?"

"Well"—Mackey reddened slightly—"you know how it is. People with dirty minds write things in lavatories, and Mr. Jarvis evidently was just as much disgusted by that kind of thing as I would be. He'd put up a little blackboard in each booth, with a piece of chalk attached to it. Then if any nasty stuff *was* written, either another customer or he himself could wipe it off before anybody else saw it.

"So I thought, 'Maybe this man never comes back here. Maybe he doesn't even eat in this place regularly. But maybe he does.' So I wrote on one of the blackboards, 'I saw a murderer in this restaurant tonight.' Then I went back to my table."

"So?"

"Well, I don't know whether he ever saw that one or not. But, as I said, I've kept seeing him; apparently he eats there every night. I made a point after that of watching him, and sure enough he always goes back to the rest room; lots of people do, if they have an engagement after dinner, to wash up and see their hair is smooth and so on."

By this time Connolly was pretty sure his time was being wasted. He suppressed a smile at the reflection that seeing his hair was smooth was one thing that need never bother Mr. Mackey, and said brusquely: "Get to the point, please."

"The point is that now I've written at least six messages, each one stronger than the last. I'm sure he must have read at least some of them, and known they were meant for him. But he keeps on eating his dinner as calmly as if he hadn't a care in the world. I can't deal with a hardened criminal. So I came to you."

"All right. You should have come as soon as you spotted him, if you really do have any evidence that he has committed a crime."

"Oh, I do!" Mackey said urgently. "I didn't actually see him kill her, but I saw him sneaking away. I was at the window, getting ready to call her to come in from the back garden. And she died, in agony, an hour later. The doctor said she was poisoned. I am certain he gave her whatever she ate that killed her."

"She?" the detective said sharply. His wariness turned to alert-

ness. A child? An imbecile who would accept cake or candy from a stranger? There was no uncertified or suspicious death in his current file.

"She was dearest and closest to me," the little man said simply. Tears shone in his eyes. "I loved her."

"What was her name?"

"Lola."

"Lola what?"

"Why, I never thought—it would be Mackey, of course, the same as mine."

"Your wife? Your sister?"

"I've never been married. I'm an only child."

"Then—"

"If there'd been any good reason!" Mackey was weeping openly now. "If she'd ever harmed him, ever harmed anybody—Oh, I've had complaints; I've had to move twice because of her. I suppose he's one of those intolerant people without understanding or sympathy. Just because sometimes she annoyed people by barking—"

There was a moment of complete silence. Connolly got hold of himself.

"Lola was a dog?" he asked gently.

"A Scottie. I'd had her since she was a baby. She was like a child to me."

"Mr. Mackey," the sergeant said kindly, "I'm sorry, but you've come to the wrong department. Here we deal only with murder."

"If it isn't murder to destroy a beautiful, loving, living being! Mackey exclaimed, blowing his nose in a large clean handkerchief.

"I know how you feel. I had a dog once myself, when I was a kid. Poisoning an animal is a criminal offence, but it isn't homicide. You go back downstairs and tell the man in charge that you want to report a man, whom you can identify, for the killing of your pet dog. You *can* identify him, can't you?"

"I still consider this murder," Mackey said with dignity. "Certainly I can identify him. As I said, I don't know his name, though I think I've heard it. It's something common like Smith or Brown or Robinson. I know he lives near me somewhere, and I think he's retired too. I can point him out any night at the Kookhouse."

Sergeant Connolly watched him go through the door, and he was torn between a desire to laugh and a pity for a lonely old man nursing a silly plot for vengeance on what was probably another

lonely old man who might well have become his friend if only they had both been dog-lovers. But of course that didn't mean that the second man could be allowed to get away with poisoning a dog. Scotch terriers were awful yappers. His own beloved pet had been a collie.

His shift ended at four, and as he walked to his car it occurred to him that the Kookhouse was just around the corner, and it might be a friendly thing to drop in and warn Jarvis that one of his guests might be picked up by a police officer. He'd noticed the place often and it looked pleasant; some evening when he was off duty he must take Ellie out to dinner there.

The restaurant didn't open till five, but when he knocked he heard the proprietor hurrying to the door.

It was opened a crack and Jarvis looked out.

Perhaps he was expecting a delivery. Connolly glanced through the crack and saw with approval that the little place looked clean and inviting; the tables were being set and Jarvis had one full hand of forks and spoons. The detective, used to quick appraisal, noticed that the man was too thin and seemed tense and nervous. No wonder, if he was doing all the work of the restaurant himself.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but we don't open till five."

"I know; I just wanted a word with you," Connolly said amiably. "May I come in?"

Dubiously the proprietor let him in and looked at him inquiringly.

"I'm Detective Sergeant Connolly, from the precinct station around the corner. I thought I'd better warn you that we'll be sending an officer here."

Jarvis started visibly.

"Why?" he asked anxiously. "There's nothing wrong, is there? I follow all the rules, and the health department just inspected the place. I obey all the fire regulations, and I have an on-sale wine and beer licence. Has there been some complaint?"

Suddenly Connolly recollected the sad dignity of the little man who had wanted Homicide to handle a case of dog-killing, and he smiled.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I'm in the homicide bureau, and one of your customers informed me this afternoon that he has been trying to catch a murderer on his own, and having failed he asked us to handle it for him—as he should have done in the beginning."

Jarvis paled.

"A murderer?" he stammered. "Here?"

"Yes," the detective said, his eyes twinkling. "He recognized a man here whom, as he put it, he had good reason to suspect of murdering his—"

And then, to Cliff Connolly's profound astonishment, Tom Jarvis dropped the silverware from his hand and fell into the nearest chair.

"Those—those messages—"

"Uh-huh. He thought they'd break the suspect down, but they didn't. So—"

Jarvis groaned. He clenched his fists and forced himself into self-control. He stood up and looked the detective in the eyes.

"All right," he said quietly. "I did it. My life was unbearable. I couldn't stand any more. I should have known you'd find out!

"I won't make any trouble. I'll take what I have coming to me. Do you want me to go with you now? I'll plead guilty to first degree murder.

"Mella didn't die of a heart attack; she was suffocated. I killed her. I killed my wife."

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THE CARTOONIST AND THE CRIME WRITERS



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JOHN BOLAND

THE MIRACULOUS REVENGE

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Detection and crime are part of this dark and remarkable tale which reveals that George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) wrote short stories as brilliant as his novels and plays

I ARRIVED in Dublin on the evening of the 5th August, and drove to the residence of my uncle, the Cardinal Archbishop. He is, like most of my family, deficient in feeling, and consequently averse to me personally. He lives in a dingy house, with a sidelong view of the portico of his cathedral from the front windows, and of a monster national school from the back. My uncle maintains no retinue. The people believe that he is waited upon by angels. When I knocked at the door, an old woman, his only servant, opened it, and informed me that her master was then officiating in the cathedral, and that he had directed her to prepare dinner for me in his absence. An unpleasant smell of salt fish made me ask her what the dinner consisted of. She assured me that she had cooked all that could be permitted in His Holiness' house on a Friday. On my asking her further why on a Friday, she replied that Friday was a fast day. I bade her tell His Holiness that I had hoped to have the pleasure of calling on him shortly, and drove to a hotel in Sackville Street, where I engaged apartments and dined.

After dinner I resumed my eternal search—I know not for what: it drives me to and fro like another Cain. I sought in the streets without success. I went to the theatre. The music was execrable, the scenery poor. I had seen the play a month before in London, with the same beautiful artiste in the chief part. Two years had

passed since, seeing her for the first time, I had hoped that she, perhaps, might be the long-sought mystery. It had proved otherwise. On this night I looked at her and listened to her for the sake of that bygone hope, and applauded her generously when the curtain fell. But I went out, lonely still.

When I had supped at a restaurant, I returned to my hotel, and tried to read. In vain. The sound of feet in the corridors as the other occupants of the hotel went to bed distracted my attention from my book. Suddenly it occurred to me that I had never quite understood my uncle's character. He, father to a great flock of poor and ignorant Irish; an austere and saintly man, to whom lovers of hopeless lives daily appealed for help heavenward; who was reputed never to have sent away a troubled peasant without relieving him of his burden by sharing it; whose knees were worn less by the altar steps than by the tears and embraces of the guilty and wretched: he had refused to humour my light extravagancies, or to find time to talk with me of books, flowers, and music. Had I not been mad to expect it? Now that I needed sympathy myself, I did him justice. I desired to be with a true-hearted man, and to mingle my tears with his.

I looked at my watch. It was nearly an hour past midnight. In the corridor the lights were out, except one jet at the end. I threw a cloak upon my shoulders, put on a hat, and left my apartment, listening to the echoes of my measured steps retreating through the deserted passages. A strange sight arrested me on the landing of the grand staircase. Through an open door I saw the moonlight shining through the windows of a salon in which some entertainment had recently taken place. I looked at my watch again: It was but one o'clock; and yet the guests had departed. I entered the room, my boots ringing loudly on the waxed boards. On a chair lay a child's cloak and a broken toy. The entertainment had been a children's party. I stood for a time looking at the shadow of my cloaked figure upon the floor, and at the disordered decorations, ghostly in the white light. Then I saw that there was a grand piano still open, in the middle of the room.

My fingers throbbed as I sat down before it, and expressed all that I felt in a grand hymn which seemed to thrill the cold stillness of the shadows into a deep hum of approbation, and to people the radiance of the moon with angels. Soon there was a stir without too, as if the rapture were spreading abroad. I took up the chant triumphantly with my voice, and the empty salon resounded as though to an orchestra.

"Hallo, sir!" "Confound you, sir—" "Do you suppose that this—"

I turned; and silence followed. Six men, partially dressed, and with dishevelled hair, stood regarding me angrily. They all carried candles. One of them had a bootjack, which he held like a truncheon. Another, the foremost, had a pistol. The night porter was behind trembling.

"Sir," said the man with the revolver, "may I ask whether you are mad, that you disturb people at this hour with such a noise?"

"Is it possible that you dislike it?" I replied, courteously.

"Dislike it!" said he, stamping with rage. "Do you suppose we enjoy it?"

"Take care; he's mad," whispered the man with the bootjack.

I began to laugh. Evidently they did think me mad. Unaccustomed to my habits, and ignorant of music as they probably were, the mistake, however absurd, was not unnatural. I rose. They came closer to one another; and the night porter ran away.

"Gentlemen," I said, "I am sorry for you. Had you lain still and listened, we should all have been the better and happier. But what you have done, you cannot undo. Kindly inform the night porter that I am gone to visit my uncle, the Cardinal Archbishop."

I strode past them, and left them whispering among themselves. Some minutes later I knocked at the door of the Cardinal's house. Presently a window on the first floor was opened; and the moonbeams fell on a grey head, with a black cap that seemed ashy pale against the unfathomable gloom of the shadow beneath the stone sill.

"Who are you?"

"I am Zeno Legge."

"What do you want at this hour?"

The question wounded me. "My dear uncle," I exclaimed, "I know you do not intend it, but you make me feel unwelcome. Come down and let me in, I beg."

"Go to your hotel," he said sternly. "I will see you in the morning. Good night." He closed the window.

I felt that if I let this rebuff pass, I should not feel kindly towards my uncle in the morning, nor, indeed, at any future time. I therefore plied the knocker with my right hand, and kept the bell ringing with my left until I heard the door-chain rattle within. The Cardinal's expression was grave as he confronted me on the threshold.

"Uncle," I cried, grasping his hand, "do not reproach me. Your

door is never shut against the wretched. I am wretched. Let us sit up all night and talk."

"You may thank my position and not my charity for your admission, Zeno," he said. "For the sake of the neighbours, I had rather you played the fool in my study than upon my doorstep at this hour. Walk upstairs quietly, if you please. My house-keeper is a hard-working woman: the little sleep she allows herself must not be disturbed."

"You have a noble heart, uncle. I shall creep like a mouse."

"This is my study," he said, as we entered an ill-furnished den on the second floor. "The only refreshment I can offer you, if you desire any, is a bunch of raisins. The doctors have forbidden you to touch stimulants."

"By heaven!" He raised his finger. "Pardon me: I was wrong to swear. But I had totally forgotten the doctors. At dinner I had a bottle of *Graves*."

"Humph! You have no business to be travelling alone. Your mother promised me that Bushy would come over with you."

"Pshaw! Bushy is not a man of feeling. Besides, he is a coward. He refused to come with me because I purchased a revolver."

"He should have taken the revolver from you, and kept to his post."

"Why will you persist in treating me like a child, Uncle? I am very impressionable, I grant you; but I have gone round the world alone, and do not need to be dry-nursed through a tour in Ireland."

"What do you intend to do here?"

I had no plans; and instead of answering I shrugged my shoulders and looked round the apartment. There was a statuette of the Virgin upon my uncle's desk. I looked at its face, as he was wont to look in the midst of his labours. I saw there eternal peace. The air became luminous with an infinite network of the Jewelled rings of Paradise descending in roseate clouds upon us.



"Uncle," I said, bursting into the sweetest tears I had ever shed, "my wanderings are over. I will enter the Church, if you will help me. Let us read together the third part of *Faust*, for I understand it at last."

"Hush, man," he said, half rising with an expression of alarm.

"Do not let my tears mislead you. I am calm and strong.

Quick, let us have Goethe—”

“Come, come. Dry your eyes and be quiet. I have no library here.”

“But I have—in my portmanteau at the hotel,” I said, rising. “Let me go for it. I will return in fifteen minutes.”

“The devil is in you, I believe. Cannot—”

I interrupted him with a shout of laughter. “Cardinal,” I said noisily, “you have become profane; and a profane priest is always the best of good fellows. Let us have some wine; and I will sing you a beer song.”

“Heaven forgive me if I do you wrong,” he said; “but I believe God has laid the expiation of some sin on your unhappy head. Will you favour me with your attention for a while? I have something to say to you, and I have also to get some sleep before my hour for rising at half-past five.”

“My usual hour for retiring—when I retire at all. But proceed. My fault is not inattention, but over susceptibility.”

“Well, then, I want you to go to Wicklow. My reasons—”

“No matter what they may be,” said I, rising again. “It is enough that you desire me to go.”

“Zeno! Will you sit down and listen to me?”

I sank upon my chair reluctantly. “Ardour is a crime in your eyes, even when it is shown in your service,” I said. “May I turn down the light?”

“Why?”

“To bring on my sombre mood, in which I am able to listen with tireless patience.”

“I will turn it down myself.”

I thanked him, and composed myself to listen in the shadow. My eyes, I felt, glittered. I was like Poe’s raven.

“Now for my reasons for sending you to Wicklow. First, for your own sake. If you stay in town, or in any place where excitement can be obtained by any means, you will be in Swift’s Hospital in a week. You must live in the country, under the eye of one on whom I can depend. And you must have something to do to keep you out of mischief and away from your music and painting and poetry, which, Sir John Richards writes to me, are dangerous for you in your present morbid state. Second, because I can entrust you with a task which, in the hands of a sensible man, might bring discredit on the Church. In short, I want you to investigate a miracle.”

He looked attentively at me. I sat like a statue.

"You understand me?" he said.

"Nevermore," I replied, hoarsely. "Pardon me," I added, amused at the trick my imagination had played me, "I understand you perfectly."

"I hope you do. Well, four miles distant from the town of Wicklow is a village called Four Mile Water. The resident priest is Father Hickey. You have heard of the miracles at Knock?"

I winked.

"I did not ask you what you think of them, but whether you have heard of them. I see you have. I need not tell you that even a miracle may do more harm than good to the Church in this country, unless it can be proved so thoroughly that her powerful and jealous enemies are silenced by the testimony of followers of their heresy. Therefore, when I saw in a Wexford newspaper last week a description of a strange manifestation of the Divine Power which was said to have taken place at Four Mile Water, I was troubled in my mind about it. So I wrote to Father Hickey, bidding him give me an account of the matter if it were true, and, if not, to denounce from the altar the author of the report, and to contradict it in the paper at once. This is his reply. He says—well, the first part is about Church matters: I need not trouble you with it. He goes on to say—"

"One moment. Is that his own handwriting? It does not look like a man's."

"He suffers from rheumatism in the fingers of his right hand; and his niece, who is an orphan, and lives with him, acts as his amanuensis."

"Stay. What is her name?"

"Her name? Kate Hickey."

"How old is she?"

"Tush, man, she is only a little girl. If she were old enough to concern you, I should not send you into her way. Have you any more questions to ask about her?"

"None. I can fancy her in a white veil at the rite of confirmation, a type of faith and innocence. Enough of her. What says the Reverend Hickey of the apparitions?"

"They are not apparitions. I will read you what he says. Ahem! 'In reply to your enquiries concerning the late miraculous event in this parish, I have to inform you that I can vouch for its truth, and that it can be confirmed not only by the inhabitants of the place, but by every person acquainted with the former situation of the graveyard referred to, including the Protestant Archdeacon

of Baltinglass, who spends six weeks annually in the neighbourhood. The newspaper account is incomplete and inaccurate. The following are the facts: About four years ago, a man named Wolfe Tone Fitzgerald settled in this village as a farrier. His antecedents did not become known, and he had no family. He lived by himself, was very careless of his person, and when in his cups, as he often was, regarded the honour neither of God nor man in his conversation. Indeed, if it were not speaking ill of the dead, one might say that he was a dirty, drunken, blasphemous blackguard. Worse again, he was, I fear, an atheist; for he never attended Mass, and gave His Holiness worse language even than he gave the Queen. I should have mentioned that he was a bitter rebel, and boasted that his grandfather had been out in '98, and his father with Smith O'Brien. In the end, he went by the name of Brimstone Billy, and was held up in the village as the type of all wickedness.

“You are aware that our graveyard, situated on the north side of the water, is famous throughout the country as the burial place of the nuns of St. Ursula, the hermit of Four Mile Water, and many other holy people. No Protestant has ever ventured to enforce his legal right of interment there, though two have died in the parish within my own recollection. Three weeks ago, this Fitzgerald died in a fit brought on by drink, and great hullabaloo was raised in the village when it became known that he would be buried in the graveyard. The body had to be watched to prevent its being stolen and buried at the cross-roads. My people were greatly disappointed when they were told I could do nothing to stop the burial, particularly as I of course refused to read any service on the occasion. However, I bade them not interfere, and the interment was effected on the 14th of July, late in the evening, and long after the legal hour. There was no disturbance. Next morning, the *entire* graveyard was found moved to the south side of the water, with only one newly-filled grave left behind on the north side: and thus they both remain. The departed saints would not lie with the reprobate. I can testify to it on the oath of a Christian priest; and if this will not satisfy those outside the Church, everyone, as I said before, who remembers where the graveyard was two months ago, can confirm me.

“I respectfully suggest that a thorough investigation into the truth of this miracle be proposed to a committee of Protestant gentlemen. They shall not be asked to accept a single fact on hearsay from my people. The ordinance maps show where the

graveyard was, and anyone can see for himself where it is. I need not tell your Eminence what a rebuke this would be to those enemies of the Holy Church that have sought to put a stain on her by discrediting the late wonderful manifestations at Knock Chapel. If they come to Four Mile Water they need cross-examine no one. They will be asked to believe nothing but their own senses.

"Awaiting your Eminence's counsel to guide me further in the matter, I am, etc."

"Well, Zeno," said my uncle, "what do you think of Father Hickey now?"

"Uncle, do not ask me. Beneath this roof I desire to believe everything. The Reverend Hickey has appealed strongly to my love of legend. Let us admire the poetry of his narrative, and ignore the balance of probability between a tale told by a Christian priest and a whole graveyard swimming across a river in the middle of the night and forgetting to return."

"Tom Hickey is telling no lie, sir. But he may be mistaken."

"Such a mistake amounts to insanity. It is true that I myself, awaking suddenly in the depth of the night, have found myself convinced that the position of my bed had been reversed. But on opening my eyes the illusion ceased. I fear Mr. Hickey is mad. Your best course is this: send down to Four Mile Water a perfectly sane investigator; an acute observer; one whose perceptive faculties, at once healthy and subtle, are absolutely unclouded by religious prejudice. In a word, send me. I will report to you the true state of affairs in a few days, and you can then make arrangements for transferring Hickey to the asylum."

"Yes, I had intended to send you. You are wonderfully sharp; and you would make a capital detective if you could only keep your mind to one point. But your chief qualification for this business is that you are too crazy to excite the suspicion of those whom you may have to watch. For the affair may be a trick. If so, I hope and believe that Hickey has no hand in it. Still, it is my duty to take every precaution."

"Cardinal, may I ask whether traces of insanity have ever appeared in our family?"

"Except in you and in my grandmother, no; and you resemble her personally. Why do you ask?"

"Because it has often occurred to me that you are, perhaps, a little cracked. Excuse my candour; but a man who has devoted his life to the pursuit of a red hat; who accuses everyone else besides himself of being mad; and who is disposed to listen

seriously to a tale of a peripatetic graveyard, can hardly be quite sane. Depend upon it, Uncle, you want rest and change. The blood of your grandmother is in your veins."

"I hope I may not be committing a sin in sending a ribald on the Church's affairs," he replied, fervently. "However, we must use the instruments put into our hands. Is it agreed that you go?"

"Had you not delayed me with this story, which I might as well have learned on the spot, I should have been there already."

"There is no occasion for impatience, Zeno. I must first send to Hickey to find a place for you. I shall tell him that you are going to recover your health, as, in fact, you are. And, Zeno, in Heaven's name be discreet. Try to act like a man of sense. Do not dispute with Hickey on matters of religion. Since you are my nephew, you had better not disgrace me."

"I shall do you infinite credit."

"I wish you would, although you would hardly be an acquisition to the Church. And now I must turn you out. It is nearly three o'clock, and I need some sleep. Do you know your way back to your hotel?"

"I need not stir. I can sleep in this chair. Go to bed, and never mind me."

"I shall not close my eyes until you are safely out of the house. Come, rouse yourself, and say good night."



The following is a copy of my first report to the Cardinal:
My dear Uncle,

The miracle is genuine. I have affected perfect credulity in order to throw the Hickeys and the countryfolk off their guard with me. I have listened to their method of convincing sceptical strangers. I have examined the ordinance maps, and cross-examined the neighbouring Protestant gentlefolk. I have spent a day upon the ground on each side of the water, and have visited it at midnight. I have considered the upheaval theories, subsidence theories, volcanic theories, and tidal wave theories which the provincial *savants* have suggested. They are all untenable. There is only one scoffer in the district, an Orangeman; and he admits the removal of the cemetery, but says it was dug up and transplanted in the night by a body of men under the command of Father Tom. This also is out of the question. The interment of Brimstone Billy was the first which

had taken place in four years, and his is the only grave which bears a trace of recent digging. It is alone on the north bank, and the inhabitants shun it after nightfall. As each passerby during the day throws a stone upon it, it will soon be marked by a large cairn. The original graveyard, with a ruined stone chapel still standing in its midst, is now all on the south side—except the single grave of Brimstone Billy. You may send down a committee to investigate the matter as soon as you please. There can be no doubt as to the miracle having actually taken place, as recorded by Hickey. As for me, I have grown so accustomed to it that if the county Wicklow were to waltz off with me to Middlesex, I should be quite impatient of any expressions of surprise from my friends in London.

Is not the above a business-like statement? Away, then, with this stale miracle. If you would see for yourself a miracle which can never pall, a vision of youth and health to be crowned with garlands forever, come down and see Kate Hickey, whom you suppose to be a little girl. Illusion, my lord cardinal, illusion! She is seventeen, with a bloom and a brogue that would lay your asceticism in ashes at a flash. To her I am an object of wonder, a strange man bred in wicked cities. She is courted by six feet of farming material, chopped off a spare length of coarse humanity by the Almighty, and flung into Wicklow to plow the fields. His name is Phil Langan; and he hates me. I have to consort with him for the sake of Father Tom, whom I entertain vastly by stories of your wild oats sown at Salamanca. I exhausted all my authentic anecdotes the first day, and now I invent gallant escapades with Spanish donnas, in which you figure as a youth of unstable morals. This delights Father Tom infinitely. I feel that I have done you a service by thus casting on the cold sacerdotal abstraction which formerly represented you in Katie's imagination a ray of vivifying passion.

What a country this is! A Hesperidean garden: such skies! Adieu uncle, adieu.

Zeno Legge

Behold me, then, at Four Mile Water, in love. I have been in love frequently, but not oftener than once a year had I encountered a woman who affected me as seriously as Katie Hickey. She was so shrewd, and yet so flippant! When I spoke of art she yawned. When I deplored the sordidness of the world she laughed and called me 'poor fellow!' When I told her what a treasure of beauty and

freshness she had she ridiculed me. When I reproached her with her brutality she became angry, and sneered at me for being what she called a fine gentleman. One sunny afternoon we were standing at the gate of her uncle's house, she looking down the dusty road for the detestable Langan, when she said:

"How soon are you going back to London?"

"I am not going back to London, Miss Hickey. I am not yet tired of Four Mile Water."

"I'm sure Four Mile Water ought to be proud of your approbation."

"You disapprove of my liking it, then? Or is that you grudge me the happiness I have found here? I think Irish ladies grudge a man a moment's peace."

"I wonder you have ever prevailed on yourself to associate with Irish ladies, since they are so far beneath you."

"Did I say they were beneath me, Miss Hickey? I feel that I have made a deep impression on you."

"Indeed! Yes, you're quite right. I assure you I can't sleep at night for thinkin' of you, Mr. Legge. It's the best a Christian can do, seein' you think so mighty little of yourself."

"You are triply wrong, Miss Hickey: wrong to be sarcastic with me, wrong to pretend that there is anything unreasonable in my belief that you think of me sometimes, and wrong to discourage the candour with which I always avow that I think constantly of myself."

"Then you had better not speak to me, since you say I have no manners."

"Again! Did I say you had no manners? The warmest expressions of regard from my mouth seem to reach your ears transformed into insults. Were I to repeat the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, you would retort as though I had been reproaching you. This is because you hate me. You never misunderstand Langan, whom you love."

"I don't know what London manners are, Mr. Legge, but in Ireland gentlemen are expected to mind their own business. How dare you say I love Mr. Langan?"

"Then you do not love him?"

"It is nothing to you whether I love him or not."

"Nothing to me that you hate me and love another?"

"I didn't say I hated you. You're not so very clever yourself at understandin' what people say, though you make such a fuss because they don't understand you." Here, as she glanced down

the road again, she suddenly looked glad.

"Aha!" I said.

"What do you mean by 'Aha!' "

"No matter. I will now show you what a man's sympathy is. As you perceived just then, Langan—who is too tall for his age, by the way—is coming to pay you a visit. Well, instead of staying with you, as a jealous woman would, I will withdraw."

"I don't care whether you go or stay, I'm sure. I wonder what you would give to be as fine a man as Mr. Langan."

"All I possess: I swear it! But solely because you admire tall men more than broad views. Mr. Langan may be defined geometrically as length without breadth; altitude without position; a line on the landscape, not a point in it."

"How very clever you are!"

"You do not understand me, I see. Here comes your lover, stepping over the wall like a camel. And here go I, out through the gate like a Christian. Good afternoon, Mr. Langan. I am going because Miss Hickey has something to say to you about me which she would rather not say in my presence. You will excuse me?"

"Oh, I'll excuse you," said he boorishly. I smiled, and went out. Before I was quite out of hearing, Kate whispered vehemently to him, "I *hate* that fellow."

I smiled again, but I had scarcely done so when my spirits fell. I walked hastily away with a coarse threatening sound in my ears like that of the clarinets whose sustained low notes darken the woodland in *Der Freischutz*. I found myself presently at the graveyard, now on the south side of the water. It was a barren place, enclosed by a mud wall with a gate to admit funerals, and numerous gaps to admit the peasantry, who made short cuts across it as they went to and fro between Four Mile Water and the market town. The graves were mounds overgrown with grass; there was no keeper; nor were there flowers, railings, or any of the conventionalities that make an English graveyard repulsive. A great thornbush, near what was called the Grave of the Holy Sisters, was covered with scraps of cloth and flannel, attached by peasant women who had prayed before it. There were three kneeling there as I entered, for the reputation of the place had been revived of late by the miracle; and a ferry had been established close by, to conduct visitors over the route taken by the graveyard. From where I stood I could see on the opposite bank the heap of stones perceptibly increased since my last visit, marking the deserted grave

of Brimstone Billy. I strained my eyes broodingly at it for some minutes, and then descended the river bank and entered the boat.

"Good evenin' t'your honour," said the ferryman, and set to work to draw the boat hand over hand by a rope stretched across the water.

"Good evening. Is your business beginning to fall off yet?"

"Faith, it never was as good as it mightabeen. The people that comes from the south side can see Billy's grave—Lord have mercy on him!—across the wather; and they think bad of payin' a penny to put a stone over him. It's them that lives towrst Dublin that makes the journey. Your honour is the third I've brought from south to north this blessed day."

"When do most people come? In the afternoon, I suppose?"

"All hours, sur, except afther dusk. There isn't a sowl in the counthry ud come withing sight of that grave wanst the sun goes down."

"And you, do you stay here all night by yourself?"

"The holy heavens forbid! Is it me stay here all night? No, your honour: I tether the boat at siven o'clock, and lave Brimstone Billy—God forgimme!—to take care of it t'll mornin'."

"It will be stolen some night, I'm afraid."

"Arra, who'd dare come next or near it, let alone stale it? Faith, I'd think twice before lookin' at it meself in the dark. God bless your honour, and gran'che long life."

I had given him sixpence. I went to the reprobate's grave and stood at the foot of it, looking at the sky, gorgeous with the descent of the sun. To my English eyes, accustomed to giant trees, broad lawns, and stately mansions, the landscape was wild and inhospitable. The ferryman was already tugging at the rope on his way back (I had told him I did not intend to return that way), and presently I saw him make the painter fast to the south bank, put on his coat, and trudge homeward. I turned towards the grave at my feet. Those who had interred Brimstone Billy, working hastily at an unlawful hour and in fear of molestation by the people, had hardly dug a grave. They had scooped out earth enough to hide their burden, and no more. A stray goat had kicked away a corner of the mound and exposed the coffin. It occurred to me, as I took some of the stones from the cairn and heaped them so as to repair the breach, that had the miracle been the work of a body of men, they would have moved the one grave instead of the many. Even from a supernatural point of view, it seemed strange that the sinner should have banished the elect, when, by their superior

numbers, they might so much more easily have banished him.



It was almost dark when I left the spot. After a walk of half a mile, I recrossed the water by a bridge, and returned to the farmhouse in which I lodged. Here, finding that I had had enough of solitude, I only stayed to take a cup of tea. Then I went to Father Hickey's cottage.

Kate was alone when I entered. She looked up quickly as I opened the door, and turned away disappointed when she recognized me.

"Be generous for once," I said. "I have walked about aimlessly for hours in order to avoid spoiling the beautiful afternoon for you by my presence. When the sun was up I withdrew my shadow from your path. Now that darkness has fallen, shed some light on mine. May I stay half an hour?"

"You may stay as long as you like, of course. My uncle will soon be home. He is clever enough to talk to you."

"What! More sarcasms! Come, Miss Hickey, help me to spend a pleasant evening. It will only cost you a smile. I am somewhat cast down. Four Mile Water is a paradise, but without you it would be a little lonely."

"It must be very lonely for you. I wonder why you came here."

"Because I heard that the women here were all Zerlinas, like you, and the men Masettos, like Mr. Phil—where are you going to?"

"Let me pass, Mr. Legge. I had intended never speaking to you again after the way you went on about Mr. Langan today; and I wouldn't either, only my uncle made me promise not to take any notice of you, because you were—no matter. But I won't listen to you any more on the subject."

"Do not go. I swear never to mention his name again. I beg your pardon for what I said; you shall have no further cause for complaint."

She sat down, evidently disappointed by my submission. I took a chair, and placed myself near her. She tapped the floor impatiently with her foot. I saw that there was not a movement I could make, not a look, which did not irritate her.

"You were remarking," I said, "that your uncle desired you to take no notice of me because—"

She did not answer.

"I fear I have offended you again by my curiosity. But, indeed,

I had no idea that he had forbidden you to tell me the reason."

"He did not forbid me. Since you are so determined to find out—"

"No, excuse me. I do not wish to know, I am sorry I asked."

"Indeed! Perhaps you would be sorrier still to be told. I only made a secret of it out of consideration for you."

"Then your uncle has spoken ill of me behind my back. If that be so, there is no such thing as a true man in Ireland. I would not have believed it on the word of any woman alive save yourself."

"I never said my uncle was a backbiter. Just to show you what he thinks of you, I will tell you, whether you want to know it or not, that he bid me not mind you because you were only a poor mad creature, sent down here to be out of harm's way."

"Oh, Miss Hickey!"

"There now, you have got it out of me!—and I wish I had bit my tongue out first. I sometimes think that you have a bad angel in you."

"I am glad you told me this," I said gently. "Do not reproach yourself for having done so, I beg. Your uncle has been misled by what he has heard of my family, who are all more or less insane. Far from being mad, I am actually the only rational man named Legge in the three kingdoms. I will prove this to you, and at the same time keep your indiscretion in countenance by telling you something I ought not to tell you. It is this. I am not here as an invalid or a chance tourist. The Cardinal, a shrewd if somewhat erratic man, selected mine from all the long heads at his disposal to come down here and find out the truth of Father Hickey's story. Would he have entrusted such a task to a madman, think you?"

"The truth of—who dared to doubt my uncle's word? And so you are a spy, a dirty informer!"

I started. The adjective she had used, though probably the commonest expression of contempt in Ireland, is revolting to an Englishman.

"Miss Hickey," I said, "there is in me, as you have said, a bad angel. Do not shock my good angel—who is a person of taste—quite away from my heart, lest the other be left undisputed monarch of it. Hark! The chapel bell is ringing the angelus. Can you, with that sound softening the darkness of the village night, cherish a feeling of spite against one who admires you?"

"You come between me and my prayers," she said hysterically, and began to sob. She had scarcely done so when I heard voices without. Then Langan and the priest entered.

"Oh, Phil," she cried running to him, "take me away from him! I can't bear—" I turned towards him, and showed him my dog-tooth in a false smile. He felled me at one stroke.

"Murder!" exclaimed the priest.

"He's an informer," sobbed Kate. "He came down here to spy on you, Uncle, and to try and show that the blessed miracle was a make-up. I knew it long before he told me, by his insulting ways. He wanted to make love to me."

I rose with difficulty from beneath the table, where I had lain motionless for a moment.

"Sir," I said, "I am somewhat dazed by the recent action of Mr. Langan, whom I beg, the next time he converts himself into a fulling-mill to do so at the expense of a man more nearly his equal in strength than I. What your niece has told you is partly true. I am indeed the Cardinal's spy, and I have already reported to him that the miracle is a genuine one. A committee of gentlemen will wait on you tomorrow to verify it, at my suggestion. I have thought that the proof might be regarded by them as more complete if you were taken by surprise. Miss Hickey: that I admire all that is admirable in you is but to say that I have a sense of the beautiful. To say that I love you would be more profanity. Mr. Langan: I have in my pocket a loaded pistol, which I carry from a silly English prejudice against your countrymen. Had I been the Hercules of the plowtail and you in my place, I should have been a dead man now. Do not redden: you are safe as far as I am concerned."

"Let me tell you before you leave my house for good," said Father Hickey, who seemed to have become unreasonably angry, "that you should never have crossed my threshold if I had known you were a spy—no, not if your uncle were the Pope himself."

Here a frightful thing happened to me. I felt giddy, and put my hand to my head. Three warm drops trickled over it. Instantly I became murderous. My mouth filled with blood; my eyes were blinded with it; I seemed to drown it in. My hand went involuntarily to the pistol. It is my habit to obey my impulses instantaneously. Fortunately, the impulse to kill vanished before a sudden perception of how I might miraculously humble the mad vanity in which these foolish people had turned upon me.

"And let *me* tell you," Langan was saying, "that if you think yourself handier with cold lead than you are with your fists, I'll exchange shots with you, and welcome, whenever you please. Father Tom's credit is the same to me as my own; and if you say a

word against it, you lie."

"His credit is in my hands," I said. "I am the Cardinal's witness."

"There is the door," said the priest, holding it open before me. "Until you can undo the visible work of God's hand your testimony can do no harm to me."

I bowed to Kate and walked out. It was so dark that I could not at first see the garden gate. Before I found it, I heard through the window Father Hickey's voice saying, "I wouldn't for ten pounds that this had happened, Phil. He's as mad as a march hare. The Cardinal told me so."

I returned to my lodging and took a cold bath to cleanse the blood from my neck and shoulder. The effect of the blow I had received was so severe that even after the bath and a light meal I felt giddy and languid. There was an alarm clock on the mantelpiece: I wound it, set the alarm for half-past twelve, muffled it so that it should not disturb the people in the adjoining room, and went to bed, where I slept soundly for an hour and a quarter. Then the alarm roused me, and I sprang up before I was thoroughly awake. Had I hesitated, the desire to relapse into perfect sleep would have overpowered me. Although the muscles of my neck were painfully stiff, and my hands unsteady from my nervous disturbance, produced by the interruption of my first slumber, I dressed myself resolutely, and, after taking a draught of cold water, stole out of the house. It was exceedingly dark; and I had some difficulty in finding the cowhouse, whence I borrowed a spade, and a truck with wheels, ordinarily used for moving sacks of potatoes. These I carried in my hands until I was beyond ear-shot of the house, where I put the spade on the truck and wheeled it along the road to the cemetery.



When I approached the water, knowing that no one would dare to come thereabout at such an hour, I made greater haste, no longer concerning myself about the rattling of the wheels. Looking across to the opposite bank, I could see a phosphorescent glow, marking the lonely grave of Brimstone Billy. This helped me to find the ferry station, where, after wandering a little and stumbling often, I found the boat, and embarked with my implements. Guided by the rope, I crossed the water without difficulty, landed, made fast the boat, dragged the truck up the bank, and sat down to

rest on Billy's grave.

For nearly a quarter of an hour I sat watching the patches of jack-o'-lantern fire, and collecting my strength for the work before me. Then the distant bell of the chapel clock tolled one. I rose, took the spade, and in about ten minutes uncovered the coffin, which smelt horribly. Keeping to hindward of it, and using the spade as a lever, I contrived with great labour to place it on track. I wheeled it without accident to the landing place, where, by placing the shafts of the truck upon the stern of the boat and lifting the foot by main strength, I succeeded in embarking my load after twenty minutes' toil, during which I got covered with clay and perspiration, and several times all but upset the boat. At the southern bank I had less difficulty in getting truck and coffin ashore, and dragging them up to the graveyard.



It was now past two o'clock, and the dawn had begun — so that I had no further trouble from want of light. I wheeled the coffin to a patch of loamy soil which I had noticed in the afternoon near the Grave of the Holy Sisters. I had warmed to my work; my neck no longer pained me; and I began to dig vigorously, soon making a shallow trench, deep enough to hide the coffin with the addition of a mound. The chill pearl-coloured morning had by this time quite dissipated the darkness. I could see, and was myself visible, for miles around. This alarmed me, and made me impatient to finish my task. Nevertheless, I was forced to rest for a moment before placing the coffin in the trench. I wiped my brow and wrists and again looked about me. The tomb of the holy women, a massive slab supported on four stone spheres, was gray and wet with dew. Near it was the thornbush covered with rags, the newest of which were growing gaudy in the radiance which was stretching up from the coast on the east. It was time to finish my work. I seized the truck, laid it alongside the grave, and gradually prized the coffin off with the spade until it rolled over into the trench with a hollow sound like a drunken remonstrance from the sleeper within. I shovelled the earth round and over it, working as fast as possible. In less than a quarter of an hour it was buried. Ten minutes more sufficed to make the mound symmetrical, and to clear the traces of my work from the adjacent sward. Then I flung down the spade and sighed with relief.

But I recoiled as I saw that I was standing on a barren common,

covered with furze. No product of man's handiwork was near me except my truck and spade and the grave of Brimstone Billy, now as lonely as before. I turned toward the water. *On the opposite bank was the cemetery*—with the tomb of the holy women, the thornbush with its rags stirring in the morning breeze, and the broken mud wall. The ruined chapel was there too, not a stone shaken from its crumbling walls, not a sign to show that it and its precinct were less rooted in their place than the eternal hills around!

I looked down at the grave with a pang of compassion for the unfortunate Wolfe Tone Fitzgerald, with whom the blessed would not rest. I was even astonished, though I had worked expressly to this end. But the birds were astir, and the cocks crowing. My landlord was an early riser. I put the spade on the truck again and hastened back to the farm, where I replaced them in the cowhouse. Then I stole into the house, and took a clean pair of boots, an overcoat, and a hat. These, with a change of linen, were sufficient to make my appearance respectable. I went out again, bathed in the Four Mile Water, took a last look at the cemetery back in its original site, and walked to Wicklow, whence I travelled by the first train to Dublin.



Some months later, at Cairo, I received a packet of Irish newspapers, and a leading article, cut from *The Times*, on the subject of the miracle. Father Hickey had suffered the meed of his inhospitable conduct. The committee, arriving at Four Mile Water the day after I left, had found the graveyard exactly where it had formerly stood. Father Hickey, taken by surprise, had attempted to defend himself by a confused statement, which led the committee to declare finally that the miracle was a gross imposture. *The Times*, commenting on this after adducing a number of examples of priestly craft, remarked, 'we are glad to learn that the Rev. Mr. Hickey has been permanently relieved of his duties as the parish priest of Four Mile Water by his ecclesiastical superior. It is less gratifying to have to record that it has been found possible to obtain two hundred signatures to a memorial embodying the absurd defence offered to the committee, and expressing unabated confidence in the integrity of Mr. Hickey.'

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GLIMPSE of the OBVIOUS

NIGEL MORLAND

*When you want to solve
a mystery, it never
hurts to ask a
policeman*

CONSTABLE GILL loomed up in the darkness, pausing under a street lamp. He glared mournfully across the waste of slush and snow which covered Curzon Street, his large body shivering a little under his heavy winter uniform. His mild blue eyes were expressive of a man with a grievance, though he did not look particularly sad about it—policemen, like soldiers, are men who are happy when they have a sound and legitimate reason to grumble.

It was nearly eleven o'clock, and the January night had all the bitter, penetrating chill of a London snowfall which had now become almost a thaw with fog to increase its basic evil. What made it worse from Gill's point of view was that he should have been at home with Mrs. Gill in their small Beak Street flat, comfortably settled in front of the television set. The influenza outbreak, which coincided with the weather, had inflicted heavy losses on the Metropolitan divisions, and all men on reserve had been called out to fill absent-on-illness gaps in the uniform branch.

Gill brushed his heavy moustache and sighed. His grievance was not against the sick man whose duty he had taken over but against the raw misery of the street. London might as well have been a dead city, and the old houses of Curzon Street—those still in private hands—were uniformly dark, which suggested either

excellent curtains, or householders safely in bed. "Or whooping it up in perishing swinging London," Gill told a miserable-seeming cat in a doorway.

He resumed his beat with the slow, audible tread of the old-fashioned constable, with that omnipotence belonging to a six foot man in a tall helmet.

He paused when a door opened on his left, light making a bright patch on the melting snow. A solemn man in a dark suit came to the top of the three steps, gesturing with an air of authority.

"Ah, there you are, Constable."

"Here I am where I perishingly well shouldn't be." Gill's voice lacked its usual authority—there was no need for it with that rare thing in London, a man-servant.

"What's that?" The man bent forward to whisper, conspiringly: "I'm in Sir Gerald Quarles' service." He seemed disappointed that Gill's bovine face registered no surprise at a name which was synonymous with banking and great wealth. "You're wanted inside."

"Ah. You're asking me to come in on behalf of the householder?"

"I am. Been a robbery. I'm the butler—Bellamy. Come on inside. But you'll have to be tactful; the boss has a party on . . . look, I could send to Savile Row for a higher rank, if it bothers you."

"Higher rank, nothing!" Gill glared at the street cold again. "Let's have some warmth and action."

He was taken along a bright and pleasant hall to a well furnished room where an old, thin man with a malignant expression was waiting.

"Here is the constable, sir," the butler held open the door, and then left, closing it behind him.

"H'm. Know your face, don't I?"

"Been in this division a matter of years, sir," Gill said in a non-committal voice. "Trouble, sir?"

"Trouble, as you say. This is a new experience for me. My name's Quarles." The thin man sniffed. "Wonder if this is the sort of thing I ought to drag a man off the beat for?"

"I am a police officer, sir. If I can help . . . and," Gill's voice held a ghost of irritation, "half the station is down with 'flu, sir. Perhaps I can save bringing a man from the station, when they're overwhelmed with work."

"Very commendable. Know of Lady Quarles' necklace?"

Gill sighed. "Yes, sir."

"Thought you might; the newspapers never leave it alone. Something very serious has happened."

Gill was perfectly well aware of the diamond, a large and remarkable antique stone recently re-cut according to modern taste and therefore valuable. He sighed again to himself; it looked like trouble, for Quarles had the impatience of the very rich and a natural shortness of temper which was a byword in Mayfair.

"Tell you what happened," Quarles said. "We'd not long finished dinner. My younger son, John, wanted us to play a game. Being the end of his Christmas holiday and therefore a treat for him, we agreed."

"What was the game, sir?"

"Eh? Ah, yes, after atmosphere—that it?" Quarles smiled for the first time; he liked the stolid air of commonsense about the constable—it was reassuring and comforting, and Quarles, like any good Londoner with a policeman in charge, suddenly felt that all would be well. "A knowledge quiz—one of those things where you read the questions from a book. Obvious things. Kids enjoy 'em. Prize was a box of chocolates."

"And then, sir?"

"We were half way through—wait a moment, though." Quarles rubbed his chin. "'We' eh? There was my wife and myself; my sons, John and Michael. Lady Thameshire, up from Henley to stay with us. Kaune—Fritz Kaune, from Switzerland, Geneva. A banker." Quarles grinned mischievously. "Nice fellow, a six footer. Not a gnome by any means!" He chuckled contentedly at the bewilderment on Gill's face. "Forgive me; rudeness, that was. Kaune rang up this morning, unexpectedly. In London, at a loose end. Naturally we asked him to dinner. Finally, the Reverend Mr. Thomas Wellbeloved, the new vicar of Whitehill, where we used to live. Paying a visit to his sister so he came to make his respects." Quarles nodded wisely. "After a cheque for the organ fund, I daresay."

"Yes, sir. You haven't told me what happened."

"Nor have I, dammit! Well, now, Lady Quarles was wearing her diamond—to impress Kaune, no doubt. Suddenly she missed it. I always said that idiotic chain would break one day."

"We searched the room. Fine-toothed comb and all that. Then we began to get short-tempered. In the end we agreed, so I searched the men while Lady Quarles searched Lady Thameshire, and her companion—forgot her. Mousey little creature, a Miss

Templeton. Nothing, of course.

"I wasn't standing for any nonsense. Said I'd send for the police if the diamond didn't appear instanter. It didn't, and here you are. Now come along, come along. Solve this tactfully, Constable, and I'll send a cheque for a thousand to the police charities."

Gill was immediately expressionless. He was perfectly aware that he was exceeding his duty in what he was doing, but there were times when he could use his own judgment . . . and, in any case, he might save some time for his overworked, undermanned Station.

He followed Quarles down a long passage and into a splendid room where the great windows were curtained in dark velvet and a centre table shone with ancient beauty under an electric chandelier. The other furniture was dark with that glow given by long years of faithful attention. On the table was the usual assortment of cigarette and cigar boxes, a sweetmeat dish and a small silver epergne containing walnuts. Scattered on the table surface were pencils and note-pads, bearing names and what were apparently answers to the quiz game.

The gathering gave a sort of shocked attention to the big, solemn policeman in the doorway, his helmet under his arm and his round, balding head possessing a sort of commonplace courtesy as if a god had come to the aid of mortals but was not prepared to play any favourites.

"I apologise for being here," Gill spoke before Quarles could say anything. "I was invited in by the householder to—um—sort out a small problem, which, as a police officer, is a matter for my personal decision. I'm sure, if anyone is playing a little joke, then everybody's enjoyed it by now."

Gill's eyes moved slowly round the gathering, past Lady Quarles standing with her children, beside a tight-lipped Lady Thameshire and the insignificant little woman at her side, the mousey Miss Templeton, past the obviously irate Kaune and the plump gentleman in clerical grey whose expression was of Christian resignation, to Quarles.

"I think we might stretch a point, ladies and gentlemen," Gill said, playing the odd situation by ear and with native good sense. "I am told you, and this room, have been searched. Suppose you were to sit the way you were when this diamond vanished?"

"Really, I must protest," the Rev. Mr. Wellbeloved spoke with some warmth. "I am embarrassed, *most* embarrassed."

"We all are," Quarles told him with growing cheerfulness. "But I'm the really embarrassed one—it was my diamond, hang it!"

They sat down in what apparently were their original positions. The younger Quarles boy, with typical teenage insouciance, gave the note-pads and pencils to the various players with a disarmingly gay smile on his face. Lady Quarles was sitting with her back to the fireplace; on her left, next to the table, was the Vicar and, facing him, Kaune sat in a low chair. Lady Thameshire was on the far side of the table with Miss Templeton a polite chair's width behind her. Quarles was standing with his back to the door. The two boys were on the sofa which stood at right angles to the fireplace.

Lady Thameshire suddenly spoke: "I really cannot go on with this horrible farce a moment longer; I feel like a criminal with that policeman standing there!"

Gill waited a moment, and as he anticipated, Sir Quarles dealt with the rebellion.

"Shocking, I agree, Mary. But I want my diamond back, and I am trying to avoid a beastly scandal. The constable has already gone far beyond what he's supposed to do, but he's being very helpful. Now let's co-operate with him, for pity's sake, and get this business over!"

Slightly pink-faced, Gill walked slowly round the room. He read the list of questions in the book held by the younger Quarles boy, then walked round the guests, reading the answers they had written on their note-pads. He stood by Sir Osgood Quarles and rubbed his nose thoughtfully. The diamond was in the room—it had to be found. The thief was no problem at all, but Gill knew if he went in for some form of dramatic unveiling before the stone was discovered, it might well remain lost, for the thief would certainly keep a closed mouth out of pure spite, if nothing else.



"Found nothing, eh?" Quarles nodded. "Didn't expect miracles, really. I can't keep my guests here any longer."

Kaune's face was dark with anger by now.

"Sir Osgood! This is not the sort of hospitality I am expecting from you. Please, I shall wish to go back to my hotel at once."

"My dear Herr Kaune, of course. Constable!"

"Sir?"

"I sent for you because I hoped you would be able to sort this

business out and avoid a beastly scandal. You've done everything possible, but behaving like a sleuth out of a thriller doesn't help us at all."

"I've done my best, sir," Gill's voice was neutral.

"Not blaming you, man." Quarles turned to his wife. "My dear, will you take our guests to the study? I'll deal with this constable, and then I shall come and apologise to you all in the best way I can . . ." he followed them and returned almost immediately, calling out: "Wait for me, please; I won't be a few minutes." He closed the door and turned to Gill, his eyes chill with anger. "You did your best, of course. Old-timer, aren't you?"

"Pension coming up in two years, sir."

"Yes." Quarles nodded. "Recognised the genuine London bobby soon as I saw you—well, there we are. They'll all be cursing you to themselves. Sorry about it. I'll go and apologise . . . but I'm getting in the C.I.D."

Gill looked round.

"Pity I can't find it, sir."

"Want the credit, eh?" Quarles chuckled. "I'm an ill-humoured old devil, aren't I, calling in a policeman like this! Drink before you go?"

"No, sir, thank you, not on duty. I'm over-due to make my point, but I must stay a bit longer." Gill's face was wooden. "I found the thief easily, sir."

"What!"

"That was fairly simple—your son's game answered it. But if I go throwing my weight about too soon, the thief will keep a closed mouth and the stone might stay wherever it's hidden for years. The guest are—well . . .?"

"Safe? I told Bellamy to hover outside the study and gently ease back anybody who wanted to go home." Quarles looked at Gill admiringly. "I always said there's nothing so damned stupid-looking and so damned smart as a London copper! Well?"

"Thank you, sir. The stone couldn't have been swallowed, I suppose?"

"I doubt it. Lumpy thing, and most people are scared of swallowing anything as big. Besides, it has a sort of gold fitment where it's pierced for the chain. It'd scare anybody into thinking it would rip their throat, or something."

"It's big, sir."

"Size of the proverbial walnut. What do—"

Gill's hand came out with a cutting motion.

"I'm the stupid one, sir. Here I am, glooming round like a peri—stupid rookie, and it's probably right there in front of my nose!" He pointed to the epergne of walnuts.

Neither of them spoke but worked quickly through the walnuts until Quarles suddenly held out his hand. A walnut in two halves was in the palm and, with them, a brilliant stone that flashed in the light.

Gill nodded.

"Thief came here intending to steal, I daresay, sir. The diamond was either snatched light-handedly when no one was looking, or the chain broke and there was the chance. Easy enough to use empty walnut shells as a hiding place, pop the thing, held together, into the dish until it could be picked up. Any sharp thief would anticipate a bit of a search, sir."

"Who's the thief then?"

"The clergyman, sir—Mr. Wellbeloved. It's a guess but the answer's obvious." Gill held up a large hand at Quarles' startled cry. "New vicar, you said, sir; you don't know him. And from where you used to live. You're a public man, sir. A smart thief could find out all about you, and there's a man we know about. Very fond of dressing up as a parson for his tricks. Disarms a lot of people, 'specially with him acting the part after the manner born." Gill nodded at Quarles expression of shock. "I mean, sir, you don't usually question a parson, now, do you, sir?"

"Dammit, you're right! But what did he do wrong?"

"Your guests have their names on their note-pads, sir. Here's Wellbeloved's. Question two, sir: 'Who is the Primate of England?'"

"And what's wrong with that?" Quarle pointed to the note-pad. "Any half-wit knows it's the Archbishop of Canterbury. You've made a mistake, haven't you?"

"My old father made us children go to Sunday school pretty regular sir." Gill was faintly uneasy, as if he were confessing an unusual idiosyncrasy. "It sticks, sir. The Archbishop of York is the Primate of England—the Archbishop of Canterbury is the Primate of *All* England, sir.

"Tricky, I suppose, sir, but a parson should know the difference if anyone should!"

RACING COMPETITION

EWMM thought you might like a day at the races, the prize in this fascinating competition.

The prize is for the winner, and a friend, to spend a day at a race-meeting at a course under the authority of The Jockey Club or the National Hunt Committee on a date to be mutually arranged. The winner and companion will get V.I.P. treatment, and an excellent lunch—plus a £5 note towards their fares to the chosen course.

The competition is simple. Below will be found five captions for the cartoon opposite. Put them in the order you think most popular. The winner will be the entrant whose choice duplicates or most closely approximates general voting order. In event of a tie, the earliest received card will be judged the winner.

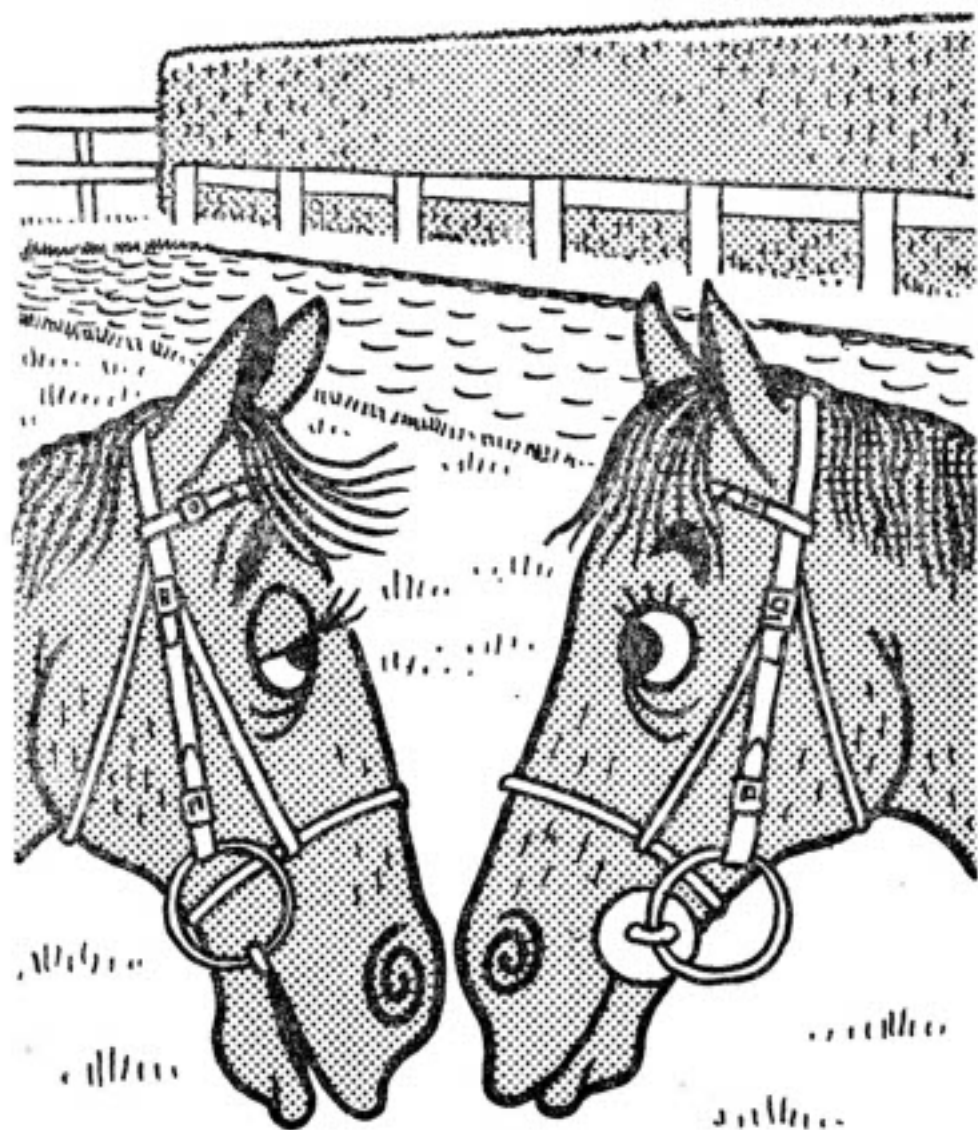
Send in a postcard bearing the caption numbers in the order preferred; add name and address, and post it no later than 1 February, 1967. The winner's name and winning voting order will be published in *EWMM*, March, 1967, issue.

Address your card: Racing, *EWMM*, 4, Bradmore Road, Oxford.

captions

1. 'Shall we take the plunge?'
2. 'Are you leading me up the bridle path?'
3. 'Let's have a fall-down strike!'
4. 'Anything you can jump I can jump better.'
5. 'Jumped any good brooks lately?'

The winner and his guest will be able to spend a day at a race-meeting at one of the following courses: Alexandra Park; Catterick; Cheltenham; Chepstow; Chester; Fakenham; Haydock Park; Hereford; Leicester; Ludlow; Market Rasen; Newmarket; Nottingham; Southwell; Stratford; Towcester; Warwick; Windsor; Wolverhampton; Worcester or Yarmouth on a date to be arranged between April and July, 1967, a wide choice of place and time which should appeal to the winner.



Will Spencer

period piece

THE DOCTOR'S GHOST

NORMAN MACLEOD

This artfully contrived tale was published over 100 years ago. Both in atmosphere and background it is well done; the ending offers a strong view of the author's at a time when 'mediums' were all the rage

A FRIEND of mine, a medical man, once went on a fishing expedition with an old college acquaintance, an army surgeon, whom he had not met for many years, from his having been in India with his regiment. M'Donald, the army surgeon, was a thorough Highlander, and slightly tinged with what is called the superstition of his countrymen, and at the time I speak of was liable to rather depressed spirits from an unsound liver. His native air was, however, rapidly renewing his youth; and when he and his old friend paced along the banks of the fishing stream in a lonely part of Argyleshire, and sent their lines like airy gossamers over the pools, and touched the water over a salmon's nose, so temptingly that the best principled and wisest fish could not resist the bite, M'Donald had apparently regained all his buoyancy of spirit.

They had been fishing together for about a week with great success, when M'Donald proposed to pay a visit to a family with

which he was acquainted, that would separate him from his friend for some days. But whenever he spoke of their intended separation, he sank down into his old gloomy state, at one time declaring that he felt as if they were never to meet again. My friend tried to rally him, but in vain. They parted at the trout stream, M'Donald's route being across a mountain pass, with which, however, he had been well acquainted in his youth, though the road was lonely and wild in the extreme.

The doctor returned early in the evening to his resting-place, which was a shepherd's house lying on the very outskirts of the 'settlements,' and beside a foaming mountain stream. The shepherd's only attendants at the time were two herd lads and three dogs. Attached to the hut, and communicating with it by a short passage, was rather a comfortable room which 'The Laird' had fitted up to serve as a sort of lodge for himself in the midst of his shooting-ground, and which he had put for a fortnight at the disposal of my friend.

Shortly after sunset on the day I mention the wind began to rise suddenly to a gale, the rain descended in torrents, and the night became extremely dark. The shepherd seemed uneasy, and several times went to the door to inspect the weather. At last he roused the fears of the doctor for M'Donald's safety, by expressing the *hope* that by this time he was "owre that awfu' black moss, and across the red burn."

Every traveller in the Highlands knows how rapidly these mountain streams rise, and how confusing the moor becomes in a dark night. The confusion of memory once a doubt is suggested, the utter mystery of places, becomes, as I know from experience, quite indescribable.



'The black moss and red burn' were words that were never after forgot by the doctor, from the strange feelings they produced when first heard that night; for there came into his mind terrible thoughts and forebodings about poor M'Donald, and reproaches for never having considered his possible danger in attempting such a journey alone. In vain the shepherd assured him that he must have reached a place of safety before the darkness and the storm came on. A presentiment which he could not cast off made him so miserable that he could hardly refrain from tears. But nothing could be done to relieve the anxiety now become so painful.

The doctor at last retired to bed about midnight. For a long time he could not sleep. The raging of the stream below the small window, and the *thuds* of the storm, made him feverish and restless. But at last he fell into a sound and dreamless sleep. Out of this he was suddenly roused by a peculiar noise in his room, not very loud, but utterly indescribable. He heard tap, tap, tap at the window and he knew, from the relation which the wall of the room bore to the rock that the glass could not be touched by human hand.

After listening for a moment, and forcing himself to smile at his nervousness, he turned round, and began again to seek repose. But now a noise began, too near and loud to make sleep possible. Starting and sitting up in bed, he heard repeated in rapid succession, as if some one was spitting in anger, and close to his bed,—‘Fit! fit! fit!’ and then a prolonged ‘whir-r-r’ from another part of the room, while every chair began to move, and the table to jerk!

The doctor remained in breathless silence, with every faculty intensely acute. He frankly confessed that he heard his heart beating, for the sound was so unearthly, so horrible, and something seemed to come so near him, that he began seriously to consider whether or not he had some attack of fever which affected his brain—for, remember, he had not tasted a drop of the shepherd’s small store of whisky! He felt his pulse, composed his spirits, and compelled himself to exercise calm judgment. Straining his eyes to discover anything he plainly saw at last a white object moving, but without sound, before him. He knew that the door was shut and the window also.

An overpowering conviction then seized him, which he could not resist, that his friend M’Donald was dead. By an effort he seized a match-box on a chair beside him, and struck a light. No white object could be seen. The room appeared to be as when he went to bed. The door was shut. He looked at his watch, and particularly marked that the hour was twenty-two minutes past three. But the match was hardly extinguished when, louder than ever, the same unearthly cry of “Fit! fit! fit!” was heard, followed by the same horrible whir-r-r-r, which made his teeth chatter. Then the movement of the table, and every chair in the room was resumed with increased violence, while the tapping on the window was heard above the storm. There was no bell in the room, but the doctor, on hearing all this frightful confusion of sounds again repeated, and beholding the white object moving towards him in terrible silence, began to thump the wooden partition and to shout

at the top of his voice for the shepherd, and having done so, he dived his head under the blankets.



The shepherd soon made his appearance, in his night-shirt, with a small oil-lamp held over his head, anxiously enquiring as he entered the room:

"What is't Doctor? What's wrang? Pity me, are ye ill?"

"Very!" cried the doctor. But before he could give any explanation a loud whir-r-r was heard, with the old cry of "Fit!" close to the shepherd, while two chairs fell at his feet! The shepherd sprang back, with a half scream of terror. The lamp was dashed to the ground, and the door violently shut.

"Come back!" shouted the doctor. "Come back, Duncan, instantly, I command you!"

The shepherd opened the door partially, and said, in terrified accents:

"Gude be aboot us, that was awfu'! What under heaven is't?"

"Heaven knows, Duncan," ejaculated the doctor with agitated voice, "but do pick up the lamp, and I shall strike a light."

Duncan did so in no small fear; but as he made his way to the bed in the darkness, to get a match from the doctor, something caught his foot; he fell; and then, amidst the same noises and tumults of chairs, which immediately filled the apartment, the "Fit! fit! fit! fit!" was prolonged with more vehemence than ever!

The doctor sprang up, and made his way out of the room, but his feet were several times tripped by some unknown power, so that he had the greatest difficulty in reaching the door without a fall. He was followed by Duncan, and both rushed out of the room, shutting the door after them. A new light having been obtained, they returned with extreme caution, and, it must be added, real fear, in the hope of finding some cause or other for all those terrifying signs.

Would it surprise our readers to hear that they searched the room in vain?—that, after minutely examining under the table, chairs, bed, everywhere, and with the door shut, not a trace could be found of anything? Would they believe that they heard during the day how poor M'Donald had staggered, half-dead from fatigue, into his friend's house, and falling into a fit, had died at *twenty-two minutes past three* that morning? We do not ask any one to accept of all this as true. But we pledge our honour to the

following facts:

The doctor, after the day's fishing was over, had packed his rod so as to take it into his bedroom; but he had left a minnow attached to the hook. A white cat left in the room swallowed the minnow and was hooked. The unfortunate gourmand had vehemently protested against this intrusion into its upper lip by the violent "Fit! fit! fit!" with which she tried to spit the hook out; the reel added the mysterious whir-r-r-r; and the disengaged line, getting entangled in the legs of the chairs and table, as the hooked cat attempted to flee from her tormentor, set the furniture in motion, and tripped up both shepherd and doctor; while an ivy-branch kept tapping at the window! Will any one doubt the existence of ghosts and a spirit-world after this?

I have only to add that the doctor's skill was employed during the night in cutting the hook out of the cat's lip, while his poor patient, yet most impatient, was held by the shepherd in a bag, the head alone of puss, with hook and minnow, being visible. M'Donald made his appearance in a day or two, rejoicing once more to see his friend, and greatly enjoying the ghost story. As the doctor finished the history of his night's horror, he could not help laying down a proposition very dogmatically to his half-superstitious friends, and as some amends for his own terror.

"Depend upon it," said he, "if we could thoroughly examine into all the stories of ghosts and apparitions, spirit-rapping, *et hoc genus omne*, they would turn out to be every bit as true as my own visit from the world of spirits: that all that sort of thing is—*great humbug and nonsense*."

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Assignment: MARRIAGE

C. M. MacLEOD

*The fifth Mrs. Beardsley had a
remarkable devotion to duty
. . . and a highly
personal morality*

"THAT'S THE MAN," said the superintendent.
"Man?" the inspector's usually cool voice held a spark of anger. "Swine, don't you mean?"

"He's a nasty one, all right. Four wives dead that we know of, and Lord knows how many more we don't. And we can't lay a finger on him."

"It's appalling!"

Detective-Inspector Fanshawe's slender, white fingers clenched so tightly around the photograph of the handsome young man with the wavy black hair, that she came near to cracking it. It was almost the only sign of emotion her superior officer had ever seen her display.

"Men who prey on women," she went on in her beautifully articulated tones, "deserve to be exterminated."

"Privately and personally, I couldn't agree with you more," sighed Superintendent Pearsall. "Our job would be a lot easier if we could do just that. Unfortunately, we can't. We have to muddle along, poking about on the off-chance of getting some sort of lead on him, while he sails blithely on, selecting his next victim."

"It's absolutely certain he does kill them, I suppose?"

"Four rich wives in five years, and a handsome inheritance from each, not to mention the insurance settlements? Oh, yes, I should say so. The problem is, how does he manage it?"

"They all died in automobile accidents, I understand."

"That's correct, and in not one of the crashes have we been able to turn up the slightest clue that the vehicle or the woman driving it had been tampered with in any way. In each case, the husband

was away from home with an iron-clad alibi for every minute of his time."

"Which in itself is suspicious."

"Exactly, but they're all genuine. We haven't been able to put so much as a dent in any one of them. There couldn't have been any flummoxing of detour signs, or anything of that sort. On the books, Clayton Beardsley is innocent as a babe. Possibly more so," he added with an attempt at humour, "if one subscribes to the doctrine of original sin."

"But that's nonsense, of course," said Inspector Fanshawe crisply. "Wasn't there even some point of similarity in the four accidents?"

"Well, it was a real smash-up in each case. Bits and pieces of the car scattered all over everywhere. In one instance, another motorist seems to have been technically at fault. That was a rear end collision at high speed. The Mrs. Beardsley of the moment was impaled on the steering-wheel. Very messy. Both people in the other car were killed, so it was impossible to be sure what really happened. Our assumption is that she stopped short for some reason in the fast lane; and that the other driver was coming at too high a speed to swerve in time."

"Surely she wouldn't have done such an idiotic thing as to stop on purpose in a spot like that? Isn't there any possible clue as to why she did?"

"None whatever. It was most probably a sudden mechanical failure; though we can't imagine what it could have been. Or she may have been given a delayed-action drug; but there again, nothing showed up in the post mortem."

"Weird," Inspector Fanshawe frowned. "What happened to the others?"

"One simply went off the road at a bad curve and hit a tree and the other two both crashed over cliffs. The last wife had been drinking, as it appeared; but that had nothing to do with Beardsley. She'd had a history of alcoholism long before the marriage. Beautiful woman, though."

He handed Inspector Fanshawe another photograph. She studied it in silence for a moment, then laid it on the desk.

"Anything else?"

"Yes, the most curious part of all. In each instance, the car had been in the garage for check-up and repairs just before it was wrecked. Two of the smashes happened when the then Mrs. Beardsley was actually on her way back home after having picked

up the machine from the mechanic."

"Dear me," said Inspector Fanshawe. "That does pose a problem."

"Indeed it does. We questioned the mechanics, of course; but it was the same story every time. Reputable people, known for sound work, had handled the automobile before and knew its quirks. Everything presumably in fine shape when the vehicle left the garage. Hadn't taken it down bit by bit, naturally; but couldn't understand anything going so drastically wrong in such a short space of time. Four different places. Might have been negligence in one case; but hardly in four. One of the mechanics might perhaps have been bribed to lie; but they could hardly all have been. Anyway, a bribe would have meant Beardsley's putting himself in another man's power, which would have been stupid. Whatever he is, he can't be that. No, he must have managed it by himself. But—"

"Exactly," said Inspector Fanshawe. "What do you want me to do?"

"Quite frankly," said her superintendent, "I don't know. That's why I called you in. I was hoping you might have some suggestions."

He had got into the habit of turning over the really impossible assignments to Inspector Fanshawe. Somehow, she always managed to pull them off. Not for the first time he studied the slim figure before him with bewilderment and a vague uneasiness. Fragile as she looked she was as tough as any man on the Force. She seemed to have no nerves and no emotions; only a cool intelligence and lightning reactions. She was invaluable to him; and he secretly sometimes wished she would be transferred to another division. Frankly, she scared him.

As always, she was attacking the problem directly.

"Beardsley is between wives at the moment, I gather."

"Yes, it's been three months since his latest bereavement. That's why we're so concerned at this point. It's about time for him to start looking for his next victim."

"Then I suppose what you really want is for me to see that he finds her. Where would be the best place for me to get picked up?"

It was, in truth, exactly what he wanted; but he recoiled from sending a woman on such an assignment. Hearing her state the idea so calmly appalled him.

"Good heavens! You don't mean you'd be willing to marry a

man, just to put him behind bars?"

"Why not?" Inspector Fanshawe raised her shapely eyebrows. "Many women have married for less worth-while reasons, I assure you. I shall need rather substantial expense money, I'm afraid, if I'm to be a rich wife."



It was not at all difficult for a single, beautiful, and evidently affluent young woman to become acquainted with Clayton Beardsley. From there, it was just a step to the registry office.

The scoundrel had charm, there was no denying the fact. Had Inspector Fanshawe been a susceptible woman, she could have been swept off her feet with no trouble whatsoever. But there was no danger of that in her case.

Her superintendent thought she was completely devoid of emotions, but it was not quite so. She had two: an ice-cold devotion to her duty as she conceived it, and a burning-hot ambition to get ahead in the profession for which she knew herself to be admirably suited. She meant to be Chief Superintendent Fanshawe some day. If she could pull off, single-handed, the capture and conviction of a four-time murderer, it would certainly mean another step up toward her goal. Her superior's reluctance to let her undertake the assignment had been incomprehensible to her. If it meant promotion, of course she would do it.

At the end of a month, all she had accomplished was to learn what it felt like to be a rich man's pampered darling. Clayton Beardsley had done well out of his four previous wives, and been lucky in Canadian oil. He had no immediate need of her hypothetical wealth, and was being monotonously slow about making any move to obtain it.

Another woman—almost any other woman—would have revelled in the attention she got. Her husband obviously took sincere pleasure in showing off his beautiful new wife. He took her everywhere. He lavished furs and jewels on her, urged her to patronise the most fashionable *couturières*, and never even winced when the bills came in. One would have thought he was as genuinely in love with her as he professed to be.

Before taking up her assignment, Inspector Fanshawe had done her homework, as she did everything, with painstaking thoroughness. She had pored over police reports of the accidents, studied photographs, learned all she could of her future husband's four

previous *menages*. She had also taken a brief but intensive course in automobile mechanics.

In going over the tedious reports and the gruesome pictures, she had hit on a couple of points that impressed themselves on her. Beardsley had a penchant for selecting love nests which were either on top of high hills with steep winding roads, or near the sort of trunk road where every motorist who gets on it is immediately impelled to drive much faster than he ought, speed limit or not. And in every one of the four accidents, whatever other damage had been done to the car, invariably at least one wheel had come off. A sure cause of a wreck under the existing road conditions. Both logic and intuition told her to focus on the wheels as the direct means of murder.

The only question, as Superintendent Pearsall had stated at the beginning, was how did Beardsley manage it?" She puzzled over that problem all through the honeymoon, and during the first six weeks her palatial new home.

Clayton, as she now found herself forced to call him, had always been far from the scene when his wife was killed. The first time, he had been driving a rented car, having left his own in the garage. After that, the Beardsleys had always been two-car families. Sometimes it had been his wife's that was wrecked, sometimes his own. Invariably, the vehicle had just been thoroughly overhauled, and had left the garage in what appeared to be mint condition. Tyres had been replaced or rotated, axles had been greased, brakes relined. Surely any tampering with the wheels would have been spotted by the mechanics. Yet the wheels had come off.

The simplest way to make it happen, of course, would have been to loosen the cotter-pin which held the wheel on to the axle so that it would fall out at an opportune moment. But could one depend on it to fall out exactly at the spot where the driver was most likely to crash? What if it fell out prematurely, and went rattling around in the hub cap? Anyway, wouldn't the mechanic have noticed even if it hadn't actually come out, but appeared to be starting from its socket?

But suppose one removed the pin entirely, and replaced it with one that was too thin to hold under strain? There again, wouldn't the garage people see that it was loose?

It was the candles on the dinner table that suggested to the new bride how her husband planned to kill her. Candles were built up by dipping the wicks into layer upon layer of melted paraffin. What if one dipped the cotter-pin in the same way? The wax

would harden and keep the pin snugly in place. A little extra axle grease smeared around the hub would camouflage the fact that the pin was smaller than it ought to be, even if a sharp-eyed mechanic should ever happen to notice such an insignificant detail.

The pin could probably be depended on to hold all right, until the friction of high-speed driving or violent braking generated enough heat to melt the wax. Once it loosened, the working of the joint would quickly snap off the ends, especially if one had given them a couple of flips back and forth with a pair of pliers to weaken the metal even further.

'Really,' said the fifth Mrs. Beardsley to herself, 'It's brilliant.' She looked down the polished mahogany at her handsome husband with an admiration that, this once, was real.

From that evening on, she included the pins in her thorough safety check every time she took the car out. She had her own, of course; a sleek yellow Alfa-Romeo. She had to enjoy it, along with the other luxuries she was constantly having showered upon her. But the life of elegant inaction was boring her to desperation. She did wish Clayton would get on with the murder, so that she could make her arrest and move to a more exciting case.

But her husband perversely refused to kill her. Far from tampering with her Alfa-Romeo, he never went near it. He was constantly cautioning her against driving too fast. His devotion showed no sign of slackening, but rather seemed to grow. He waited on her hand and foot. His love-making became even more sickeningly mawkish.

"You're so completely unlike anyone I've ever known, Pamela my darling. So exquisitely detached, so serenely aloof, so infinitely above the silly emotional scenes with which other women always want to clutter up one's life. You're like the most beautiful statue ever carved. I could look at you forever."

And as the weeks rolled on and on, it began to appear as though Clayton Beardsley intended to do just that. It became horribly clear to the fifth Mrs. Beardsley that her husband was in love with her.

She was furious.

'I came here to be murdered,' she stormed to herself, 'not idolised and pawed over and trapped into a lifetime of being dressed up and dragged around to night clubs and fancy restaurants. If he doesn't get on with it soon, I'll—'

She would what? Divorce a devoted husband simply because he wouldn't try to kill her? Small chance she'd ever have of getting

a judge to swallow that one! Run away from him, and ruin her career on the Force? Not likely. Stay with him and die of boredom?

"What a ghastly mess I've got myself into!" Her emotion was deep and heartfelt.

That evening, Clayton found his lovely bride in an unusually pettish mood. He outdid himself in trying to please her.

The following morning, she spent half an hour tinkering with the yellow Alfa-Romeo. Then she drove it, very carefully, to the nearest garage.

"Something is making a queer noise down inside," she told the mechanic. "I do wish you'd see what you can do about it."

"Have it right in no time, Mrs. Beardsley," he told her cheerfully.

Actually, it should take him a couple of hours to locate the screw she had dropped strategically inside the machinery. She enjoyed the walk back to the house. She cut across the fields, or course. It was much too dangerous for pedestrians on the main road.

Clayton called from town later that afternoon. "I'm catching the two minutes past five train, dearest. Is there anything I can bring you?"

"How good of you to ask, darling. Yes, would you mind terribly stopping at the garage on your way back, and picking up my car? No, just a funny noise in it. The mechanic said he'd have it ready by evening. Hurry home, sweet. I'll have a cocktail waiting."



"I suppose now that you're a rich widow, you'll be resigning from the Force," said Superintendent Pearsall, trying not to sound hopeful.

"On the contrary, I can't wait to get back to work." The relict of the wife-murderer flicked a kid-gloved finger at the sable cuff of her black Balenciaga coat. "Soft living doesn't suit me at all. I do regret not having been able to pull off the arrest. I must confess that I was rather hoping to get a promotion out of it."

"You have it anyway," he assured her, "for devotion over and beyond the call of duty." There was bewilderment in his smile. "It was ironic, his getting caught in his own trap like that."

"Yes, wasn't it. When he told me to take my car into the garage, I immediately became suspicious, of course; especially

after I'd checked it over and found nothing wrong but a screw dropped where it had no business to be. I did as he said, but pretended I wasn't feeling well so that he'd have to pick it up himself. Naturally I assumed he'd be extra careful driving home, and that I'd then have a chance to confront him with the evidence. But apparently he couldn't resist the temptation to speed on the bypass. It's positively hypnotic, you know, watching everybody else whiz by. Clayton always drove much too fast, anyway."

"The car was demolished, as usual," sighed Superintendent Pearsall. "I don't suppose we'll ever know how he managed the murders."

"No," said Chief Inspector Fanshawe.

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EW BOOK MART

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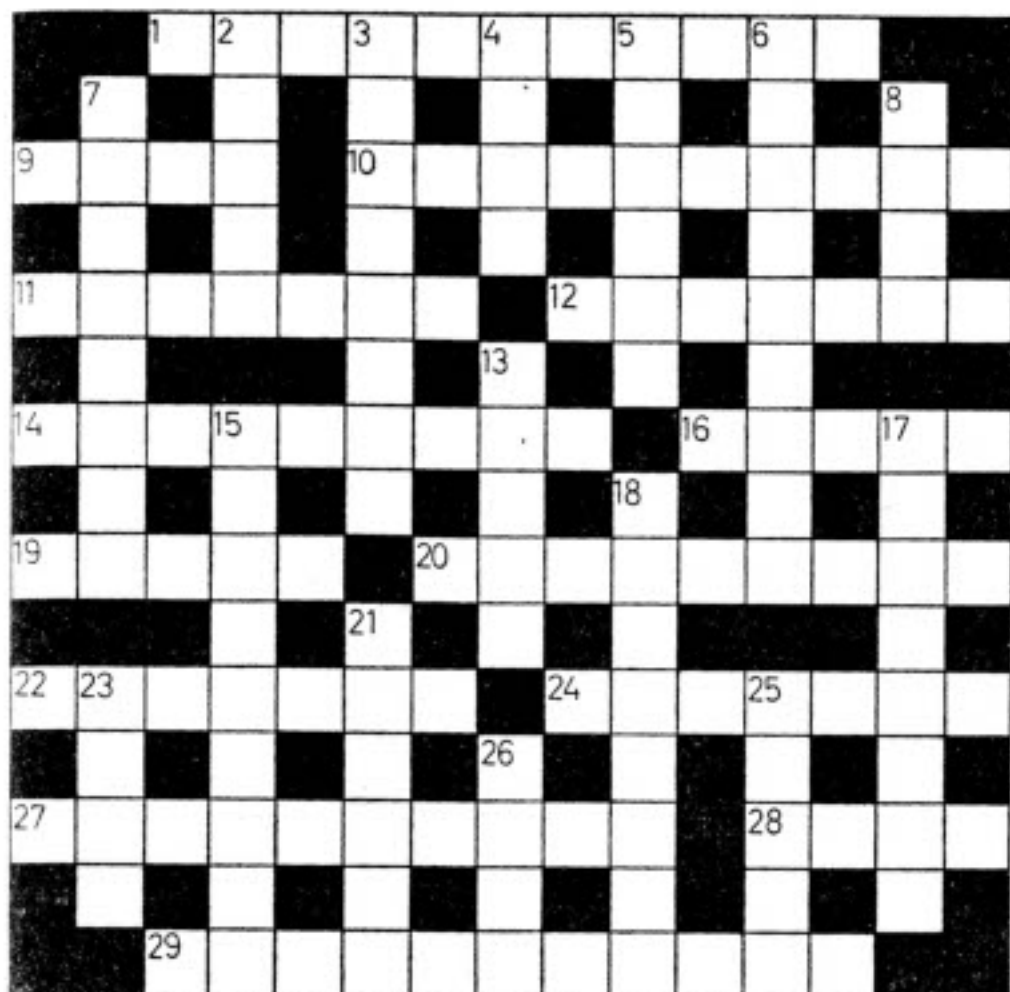
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EWMM Crossword No. 24.



ACROSS

- 1 The title for an air force of police? (6, 5)
- 9 This jug is not a prison (4) —
- 10 Joint undertaking to observe from EW (2, 5, 3)
- 11 Grooms without brides maybe (7)
- 12 Stone squared by Edgar (7)
- 14 Produced whisky — or some water? (9)
- 16 Fists of sorts! (5)
- 19 '12', for example (5)
- 20 Taken with the way men were forced to serve? (9)
- 22 He was entitled to his own gate . . . (7)
- 24 . . . and he his own door! (7)
- 27 Hang on by them and you may leave your prints behind (10)
- 28 The top of the eternal triangle? (4)
- 29 Inexperienced bowman in a book? (5, 6)

DOWN

- 2 Not emulating '22' (5)
- 3 How the hospital patient feels things? (8)
- 4 Be open-mouthed in astonishment? (4)
- 5 Conscientious scruples (6)
- 6 Reactions some suffer from (9)
- 7 Work out some wicked plot (8)
- 8 Where all the bad men go? (4)
- 13 What a burglar may have in hand (5)
- 15 But EW's wasn't a regular churchgoer! (3, 6)
- 17 Funny fellow in a title role (3, 5)
- 18 Like certain rocks — but not diamonds! (8)
- 21 Only able to croak? (6)
- 23 Try to catch 'em in the act? (4)
- 25 In a wicked temper (5)
- 26 Here the Tower is neither White nor Bloody (4)

(Solution will appear in our February issue.)

TRUE CRIME COMPETITION

RESULT

The entry to the competition was both large and of high quality. It was finally decided that the winning entry was submitted by:

S. T. Allen,
10 St. Vincent's Parade,
Hotwell Road,
Bristol, 8

to whom the prize of ten guineas is awarded.

The runners-up were also of very high standard, and to the chosen six a year's subscription to *EWMM* is awarded, beginning with this issue. The runners-up are:

Rev. Ronald Adkins,
The Rectory,
South Pool,
Kingsbridge, S. Devon.

N. P. Hastings,
3, The Soke,
Alresford,
Hants.

Rev. T. J. Booth,
5, Elder Gardens,
Liverpool, 19.

Mrs. Irene Jackson,
Bourne Farm,
Upper Dicker,
Hailsham, Sussex.

Mrs. M. Broadbent,
5, Wrenbrook Road,
Bishop's Stortford,
Herts.

Mrs. A. Thompson,
3, Camden Road,
London, N.W.1.

Mr. Allen's entry is both human and appealing; it is the sort of thing that could happen to anyone, and its conclusion has the curtain-line surprise which is usually found in crime action but seldom in real life!

Mr. Allen's winning entry:

As a 14-year-old during the last war, I was involved in a case of blackmail. It seemed terribly exciting at the time, but looking back my part in it appears pretty shabby, except for the fact that I cleared-up the whole thing in the end.

My young boss, Mr. Curry (that wasn't his real name), had got involved with one of the women in the factory. Soon after the affair started, she left. It was then that Mr. Curry took me into his confidence and asked me to carry letters between them. There was one every day, and I was always rewarded for my services.

Doubly rewarded, because he gave me money, and the woman allowed me to bask in her glamour.

Dorothy was probably twice my age, and spectacularly female. Her husband was in the army overseas, and at her house she would give me some tea while she read the letter from her lover. She was my heroine, and I saw their sordid affair as a great romantic love. Dorothy knew it, of course, and helped build the picture for me.

There was a change in routine very soon. For several days there were no letters between the two. Mr. Curry looked pale and hardly spoke to me. Then, once again, I was handed the familiar envelope and a couple of half-crowns. But he didn't smile as he gave them to me.

Dorothy was pleased to see me, though, and made the usual pot of tea. While I drank it she opened the letter; and I couldn't help seeing it contained a fiver.

She said she wouldn't write an answer, but I was to say thanks to Mr. Curry for her.

I made several more of these one-way deliveries before Mr. Curry asked me to stay on one evening at the factory and told me what had happened. Dorothy had threatened to show his letters to his father—it came as a bit of a blow to learn that Mr. Curry himself was only twenty, and was paying her price for silence. I was still naïve enough to wonder what he could have written to that lovely creature that was so important! Perhaps he sensed my wonder; anyhow, he stopped trying to unburden himself to me, poor chap.

At Dorothy's house next day I was still uneasy about the whole thing. I just couldn't see anything but beauty in the woman. Clumsily, I tried to encourage her to talk about him. She didn't need much encouragement, either. But now he was a long way from being the centre of her affection.

She got out a box, full of those letters that I'd delivered, and showed me bits of them. It was like my first sight of a corpse, knowing the reality of that 'romance' I'd aided and abetted.

I was shattered. I hadn't really imagined *anyone* could do the things he'd written about. And Dorothy had done them. I got up in anger and embarrassment, and literally ran down the garden path to the street.

It was only when I got onto a bus that I realised I was still holding the cardboard box of letters. I burned them when I got home, and told Mr. Curry what I'd done next morning. I told him over the phone, because I never returned to work for him.

Frontier Station

PAUL TABORI

*In a world at peace petty
tyrants still govern
so many lives*

THE HEAT quivered in the motionless carriage and John Marius felt the sweat running down his back, gathering into small patches. He wiped his forehead and closed his eyes for a moment, blotting out the view of the man in the crumpled white suit who sat in the opposite corner. There were only the two of them in the first class compartment; for six hours they had travelled in silence. Marius was tired and his companion pre-occupied with some thoughts of his own which could not be shared.

He was a thin man with a brown face, brown eyes; a face that was noble because it was simple and ugly in a friendly way. His two hands were scarred and a bruise disfigured his left cheek. He sat silent and watchful at the window and achieved the impression of coolness and wariness without a special effort. Marius was grateful for the silence; speech would have been too much in the heat which the motion of the train only intensified. The *khamsin* had lasted now three days and the blasts of the red-hot furnace with mixed with gritty sand that penetrated everywhere.

Marius thought of a cold shower, a bottle of iced *Liebfraumilch*, and of the chalet he wanted to buy in Switzerland. He loved the sun and was unhappy if he missed the warmth for a long time but this was too much. He stretched his legs and felt the sticky heat run up his calves.

The small station was empty and silent. The customs and passport people had passed a few minutes ago; he had seen them walk across the permanent way and disappear into the yellow building on the left. And still they waited. Two more days of this, he thought, and again: I can't stand it. But he knew he would. He could have flown but planes were transportation not travel, and he wanted to see more of the country before he went west again.

The paper he held in his lap had left a black smudge on his fingers; the ink was melting in the heat. He wiped his hands on the upholstery of the seat and then got up. There was only a trickle of water in the W.C. at the end of the corridor but perhaps he could wash off a little of the stickiness.

As he bent over the fly-specked and cracked wash-basin, a wave of nausea came over him. He straightened quickly and leant against the hot metal of the wall. It would pass, it always passed; though he wasn't getting any younger. Perhaps he really ought to settle down; regular hours, a little exercise, healthy food, cut out smoking; 38 wasn't old but he had lived at too swift a pace during the last seven or eight years. And the books he had written, the articles he had composed were too hurried and breathless. Take it easy, he told himself, rinsed his hands in the lukewarm water, wiped them on the paper towel and opened the door.

When he stepped into the corridor, two policemen in their black fur caps, their Sam Brownes gleaming, their puttees smooth and shiny, appeared at the far end of the carriage. They walked purposefully quickly towards him and for a moment an unreasoning panic got hold of him. He remembered an analysis of his hand-writing which an amateur graphologist had made some years ago. There was a sentence in the rather common-place summary that stuck in his mind. 'There is some fear in this man,' the handwriting expert had said—he had never met Marius, it was just a silly idea one of his woman friends had—'deep-rooted; going back a long way. Now it is less pronounced, he has more security and self-possession but the fear is there, mainly a fear of ridicule'. Marius had laughed when the woman had shown him the piece of paper; but the words had stuck.

Then he noticed the two policemen had stopped in front of his compartment. It was very quiet; through the open window the triumphant crowing of a distant cock sounded like a trumpet.

He hurried down the corridor. The policemen had stepped inside. The thin man in the crumpled white suit was standing at bay in the corner next to the window, his brown eyes expressionless. He was holding out his passport—the same passport that had been inspected and stamped without a word of comment. One of the policemen said something in a harsh, guttural voice but the thin man did not speak. The second policeman whose olive-skinned face was disfigured by a large scalded patch, grabbed the passport and flicked through its untidy pages contemptuously. Then the first one reached out suddenly and caught the thin man's

right hand. There was a brief scuffle; the policeman pushed up the sleeve of the crumpled white coat, unbuttoned the cheap cotton shirt. A long, narrow scar ran up the thin man's arm pointing like an arrow to the elbow. The next minute he had free his arm. He half-turned towards the window, realised that it was hopeless, shrugged and submitted.

"I am sorry, monsieur," he said in French to John Marius who stood awkwardly in the corridor, not knowing what to do. "These gentlemen are too efficient."

The policeman with the burnt face shut him up with a leisurely and almost indifferent slap. The thin man stood suddenly erect, his whole body protesting against the indignity.

"I can assure you I am not a criminal," he told Marius as the two policemen roughly pushed him into the corridor. Marius had to step aside; the policeman had taken no notice of his presence. "I am perhaps a fool." continued the thin man, raising his voice a little. "But others may call me a martyr. I do not know."

He was already half-way to the end of the corridor when one of the policemen came back and collected a battered suitcase.

"An anarchist," he said in badly accented French. "A dangerous type. You are fortunate, monsieur, that we caught him. He might have murdered you in a tunnel."

Marius did not speak. He watched the thin man being frog-marched across the platform, towards the yellow building on the left. Things like that happened all the time in the world, he told himself. Perhaps if he described the man to his friends in Ankara, they would tell him who it was. But it did not seem important.

The heat sent its shock-troops against the train, against the silent carriage in which a cough echoed like a pistol-shot, against the dusty compartment in which Marius sat. The two policemen and the prisoner had disappeared in the yellow building. The stationmaster, his coat unbuttoned, his cap well back on his bald head, shuffled from his office and looked at the train, incuriously. Behind the yellow building the tall corrugated iron silos stood like watchtowers, rejecting the sun.

Someone blew a whistle but the train did not move. They always blew whistles in this country and nothing happened. Marius hesitated. If he went into the yellow building and asked questions—but what was the use? So he only sat, numb and unhappy longing for the breeze that the motion of the train would bring, longing for the small comfort of hot air that moved and was therefore a fraction cooler.

There was a jerk, a quiver and they were off. But very slowly and reluctantly. And as they passed the yellow building, its door with the flaking paint opened and the thin man in the white suit—only it was no longer white—half-stepped and half-fell through it. Marius stared, fascinated, into his face which was battered and bloody, blind with dazed pain and yet somehow serene. It was little more than a glimpse for the train suddenly gathered speed and when he leant out of the window, he could only see the thin figure, lying in the dust in front of the door, he could barely glimpse the two men who came out and started to drag the prisoner back. Then the train whistled again, in derision, and a bend hid the station, the building, the figures.



The train was six hours late; instead of the evening they arrived long past midnight. Marius stared through the window of the taxi that carried him along straight and empty streets. He did not speak more than a dozen words before he was installed in his hotel room, a vast chamber with four beds standing wastefully along the far wall. He opened the window and the cool air rushed in. The desert and the heat seemed very far behind. He took a bath, ate a light meal and got into bed. His belongings were around him, the battered aero-bag, the new shiny suit-case he got in Cairo, the brief-case with his papers and documents. He made a quick inventory with his eyes as if he wished to reassure himself that everything was there. He touched his wrist-watch, his cigarette case and his wallet, which he had placed on the small night table. Then he put out the light and lay back.

Instantly the bruised brown face swam into his consciousness, just the face, disembodied yet sharply definite. He shook his head to chase it away and tried to force himself to think of pleasant things he could remember. The Alpine slopes alive with wild orchids, the little lake in the Matra mountains where the deer came down to drink and the pines stood, familiar and friendly; Charmian with her quick laughter and soft lips. It was no good. Superimposed on the fleeting series of pictures the brown, devastated face came back again and again.

He put on the light and reached for a book. He read a sentence three times and it was still meaningless. He should have got out of that train. He should have asked questions, made protests, bluffed. A journalist and a writer whose name was known in

three continents, he could have achieved something. Why didn't he do it? What was this cowardice, this reluctance? He had fought other battles, hopeless and quixotic and felt the exhilaration of fighting them. Why not this one?

He felt he was straying into absurdity. Probably they wouldn't have understood any of his languages or pretended ignorance. A foreigner and a Christian—how did he dare to interfere with the course of justice? The fellow was a criminal—well, anyhow, an anarchist or whatever they had called him. Dangerous. Why should he get mixed up in politics when he did not know the truth about the parties involved, the loyalties cutting across each other?

He took a couple of sleeping tablets and did not wake until the grey dawn. Then something shook him into consciousness. Or rather, he cleaved through the sticky waves of the nightmare, half-reluctant and half eager. He sat bolt upright and felt his sweat-drenched body. His throat was dry and his heart raced. The lamplight was pale and unreal in the greyness; outside the first faint noises of the city's day echoed along the too-new houses.

In his blind panic, he reached out for his passport and thumbed through its pages, thickly covered with stamps, endorsements, illegible signatures. Yes, everything was in order; how could it be otherwise? He, John Marius, was an international celebrity. Customs officials, passport controllers, hotel clerks knew his name and bowed and smiled; they talked of his last book, his most recent article. Nothing could happen to him—what a stupid childish idea that anything might ever happen . . . anything like . . .

At first he would not follow the idea through its end but then he forced himself to face it. Anything like the things which happened to the thin man with the brown, bruised face. It was ridiculous. He had money, prestige, friends and connections; if a man was ever secure in this post-war world, John Marius could claim that security.

But why this panic? From childhood onwards he had been used to analyse his own thoughts and emotions, patiently unravelling the layers of the unconscious, his own psycho-analyst and doctor of nerves. Sometimes it was bothersome, this habit; but it gave him poise and it saved him from making himself ridiculous. And now, in this bleak and clean hotel room with the three empty beds grinning at him, he could not achieve the detachment and calmness of the past.

He held the passport in his hand, feeling the embossed gold

under his fingers, clutching it with a sudden fierce possessiveness, What would happen—he could not resist the play of imagination—if he lost it, if he was robbed of all his documents, the safeguards and markers of identity? He could easily get another on the strength of his much photographed face . . . but what if it happened at some frontier station, one of those god-forsaken little holes dotted over the globe where suspicion was a professional qualification and where some languages were deliberately barred? Well, it would mean an annoying delay while they telegraphed and checked up and did all the necessary and silly things officialdom loved. But in the end it would be all right. Nothing could touch him, nothing—the very thought was idiocy . . .

When he fell asleep again, the passport was under his pillow like the watch or wallet old peasants keep within reach because they would not trust even their nearest kin.



They sat in Abdullah's and the lobster arrived, a festive and solemn moment, served with the pomp and circumstance it deserved. Ihmet, the head waiter smiled at them with paternal benevolence and Charmian giggled, whispering that it was too big, almost vulgar with its red varnish and gleaming white meat.

John Marius sat at the edge of the plush divan, looking at her. He was used to Charmian turning up at unexpected times and in unlikely places; she had always mysteriously ignored and overcome man-made difficulties. Even during the war she had travelled about—though always within the limits of her own safety. Her red small mouth, the light streak in her dark-brown hair, thinly pencilled eyebrows and her finely chiselled profile seemed to be perpetually and gently sneering at the stupid world of men. She would have made a wonderful spy if she had been able ever to take anything seriously except the physical facts of life—that is, the pleasant facts. On and off, Marius and she had been lovers for the past six years and whenever they met, often after long intervals, they slipped easily and comfortably into their former relationship.

“. . . of course they all swear they were desperately pro-allied during the war,” Charmian was saying in her soft, slightly sing-song voice. She had an elusive, untraceable accent, which she cultivated cleverly, “They all have the most wonderful alibis locked, away—in Spain, in Portugal, in South America, here . . . everywhere. Now look at that man . . .” and she lifted her delicate

eyebrows, "he was the chief of police for almost ten years. Now he is something important and anonymous in the Ministry of the Interior. An out-and-out Fascist, of course—but during the war he did small favours for both sides and now he's the white hope of the embassy people. Look at him," and she shuddered delicately, "Just like an animal . . ."

Marius, a little bored, looked. He saw a small and brown-skinned man, completely bald, with large liquid eyes and flashing white teeth, holding the leg of a turkey with his napkin and picking the bone clear with considerable enjoyment. He looked lazy and inoffensive, the sort of man you bump against in a Pera street, sat next to in the barnlike dining room of the Tokatlian oromet on the ferry between Asia and Europe.

"Are you sure?" he asked, not because he doubted Charmian, for she had the miraculous capacity for picking up the best gossip within a couple of days of arriving in any European capital, but because he wanted to make conversation himself.

"Yes, of course, darling," she smiled, a little surprised at his disbelief. "Would you like to meet him?"

He said, some other time and she immediately acquiesced; she was very good at falling in with his moods and never asking questions. Later, in her suite, she sat on the white rug, naked, painting her toenails while he sprawled on the huge bed, drowsy and comfortable.

He watched the gentle and exciting curve from her shoulders to her breasts, her small intent face—she was even letting the tip of her tongue slip out between her teeth—and felt contented and secure. Until she startled him with a question, for she was no fool:

"What's happened, John?"

It was so unlike her to ask and probe that he sat up in surprise.

"What's happened to whom?" he fenced.

"To you, of course. You are . . . different. As if you were listening to something, someone far away . . . all the time. Now don't be silly and tell me that it's woman's intuition or such bunk. I know. You were different in Lausanne, only six months ago. A girl?"

"No, no girl. Girls, perhaps, Charmian. Always in the plural."

"You are so old-fashioned, darling," she giggled. "A homing pigeon—always back to Solvig. Or am I mixing my metaphors? But something's wrong. Are you brooding over a book—or is it

just the spicy food?"

"Charmian, you are a devil. I don't know why I should tell you—it is so silly. But have you ever thought how narrow and uncertain the margin that divides us, the safe and the secure people, from the hunted, the fugitives, the people of the abyss?"

"Narrow? Uncertain? Really, my sweet . . ."

"Hear me out, please. I mean, not the accident of birth—not even the accident of class but of geography—a few documents and stamps . . . a little money; and we are sheltered and self-possessed. How easy to strip a man or woman of these! How easy to push one off the ledge! How easy to displace the safely established . . ."

"Why, John, you sound almost morbid. Of all the ridiculous—"

"Never mind; I was just playing with the idea," he said, realising it was no use. "I saw a lot of ugly violence in the last eighteen months. More and uglier than during the war. And perhaps it had a sort of cumulative effect on me. Better to go back to Europe, to well-policed streets and the *Wagon Lits* bureaux."

She lifted the tiny brush and inspected her handiwork.

"You need a temperate climate," she said. "Switzerland again or perhaps Sweden. I promised to stay for the November celebrations but if you want me to, I can easily make other arrangements. There is a good plane to—"

"No, no, it will pass. Perhaps it's indigestion, as you say. Forgive me."

He reached out for her and she smiled, proud of the power of her body, secure in her feminine completeness. But he knew that he had been lying to her, for the first time since they had met; lying, because it was impossible to tell the truth.



When the troubles started again in Palestine and the cable came from his syndicate, asking him to do a series of articles, his first instinct was to refuse. There was Henderson in Cairo, they could easily send him up if they did not trust their local man—though even the latter was good enough. But then he looked at Charmian, who was reading the advertisements of the *New Yorker*, commenting now and then acidly on the shade of a lipstick or the line of a frock displayed. She was as charming and desirable as ever but somehow he had the suspicion that she would be less so tomorrow. Their meetings and partings were always informal and unemotion-

al; and when he told her now, acting on the abrupt impulse, that he was going to Jerusalem, she put down her shiny magazine and said:

"You'll be very hot, darling. And you don't like too much heat. But I suppose you'll have to go. You think you can make Stockholm in six weeks?"

"I don't know," he said rubbing his calf meditatively. "But they'll know at the syndicate's office. We'll keep in touch anyhow."

She smiled. "Yes, we always keep in touch."

That was all. Next morning he flew to Ankara. But the weather was bad and the backlog included several general and State Department officials. He tried the usual dodges but after kicking his legs for two days at the Ankara Palas and drinking too much Vodka, he decided to try the Taurus. The airline people could not make any promises and he preferred the three days journey to the uncertainty.

Because he had made his mind up a little late, he had some difficulty in getting a sleeper. Even with the right kind of judicious bribery he could not buy a single compartment and had to be content with a double. All these small snags increased his irritation; he was becoming more and more impatient as if it were of vital importance that he should reach Jerusalem at the earliest possible moment, though he knew very well that for his kind of stuff he would have ample time even if it took him a week.

When he found his compartment, it was empty—but three expensive looking pigskin bags marked the presence of his traveling companions. They were liberally plastered with hotel and airline labels, bold black initials proclaimed that they belonged to someone called E.Y.B. Marius bought a few papers, drank a Lager in the crowded station restaurant and then returned to the sleeping car.

The train started only half-an-hour late, which was pretty good for the Taurus. The seat opposite him was still empty. But as the suburbs of Ankara vanished behind them and the bleak red hills began to rear up in the distance, the door of the compartment opened. Marius looked up. For a second a sudden blackout flooded his brain and his eyes with blood but it passed before he really became conscious of it. His companion was the small, brown, bald man whom he had seen lurching in Istanbul a few weeks ago and of whom Charmian had spoken. An annoying coincidence. Or perhaps he would prove to be amusing. Scoun-

drels often did. John Marius hoped he would not be soulful and philosophical; there was nothing so dull as a villain trying to justify his actions with extracts from Hegel and Gobineau.

But Emin Yamal Bey proved a charming companion. He introduced himself at once, adding that of course he knew Marius by reputation and had read three of his books. His English was as liquid as his eyes, a little sibilant perhaps as if he had become used to whispering and could not forget it even when there was no need for the conspiratorial tone. He was full of little bits of information, interesting and amusing; he produced, as if by magic, iced drinks, a portable electric ventilator, light-hearted gossip and unaffected opinions. It might have been much worse, thought Marius, as he listened to the man's soft voice and sipped his cool drink.

The rather stodgy dinner which the dining-car served was transformed into a gourmet's delicate feast. It appeared that Emin Yamal always carried his own food and had it prepared according to his own recipes. They sat long over their brandies.

"You know," the little man said suddenly, bending forward so that the light gleamed on the top of his bald head, "it is a strange thing. By all the rules we two ought to hate each other's guts. You have written things which I must consider dangerous, foolishly so. I have done things—and intend to go on doing them—which you must abhor. Yes, abhor" he repeated the somewhat theatrical word, rolling it on his tongue. "But here we are, talking and sitting together in perfect amity. Why? Because I think we are both realists. Because we are both high above the things we do or write. Only realists are fit to survive in this world."

He paused and Marius nodded, a little absent-minded. He could have produced a dozen arguments to demolish his companion's reasoning but he knew it was hopeless and he felt tired. A growing pressure round his temples told him that he was beginning to feel the heat again.

Emin Bey went on in his sibilant voice. He spoke of "Jews, Liberals, anarchists, Communists, free thinkers," lumping together the people he disliked under convenient and loose labels. He said that he was visiting a few countries to discuss with his opposite numbers a concerted drive "to stamp out this wicked and vicious discontent, this defiance of established authority". Then he grew reminiscent. He talked of torture and liquidation much like a manufacturer describing new processes of making cars or plastic furniture. Names and dates circled the air, beating against

the skull of John Marius; plots and counter-plots, the clever move, the frustrated revolt, the arrested revolutionary, the execution at dawn, the hopeless protest . . . Emin Bey had a grand stock of stories.

"Realists," he said and poured out another drink for both of them, "realists know perfectly well what is behind the verbiage and the public declarations of statesmen. They all cling to power and resent anyone who might dispute their possession. After all, what is the difference between one statesman and another? What is the moral basis for the Nuremburg trials? Didn't all the belligerents commit crimes? The unsuccessful criminal is sent to prison or the gallows—the successful one dies in bed, full of years and honours. I understand those who want to kill me—and many tried—I would do exactly the same thing in their place. But of course, I have to take my precautions."

He went on and Marius recognised every tone and every inflection of the same voice he had heard pouring from the loudspeakers in Berlin, Rome, Tokyo, Madrid, yes, and in New York and Vienna and Moscow; the voice of the ingenious monster, the voice of authority and Repression, of paternal tyranny and naked hate. There was nothing new in Emin Bey's thoughts, nothing that was more than a sharpened echo, an individual formulation of age-old abomination. At first he just felt a dull resentment, a lazy wonder.

A little later they went to bed. Emin Bey disappeared into the small washroom and made an elaborate *toilette* for the night. It was then that Marius noticed the businesslike revolver that lay on the collapsible shelf next to the sleeping berth. Idly he picked it up and noticed that it was loaded.

That night he slept fitfully but deeply. The day passed in reading, desultory talk—most of it by his companion—and the landscape slid by, interminable, red-hued like the countryside of Mars.

It was dusk when they reached the frontier again. Cooler, now, the desert air whirled little clouds of dust across the platform. Nothing had changed: the yellow building, the stationmaster, the silos; he had seen it all and it made him feel helpless and frustrated.

The passport and the customs officials had passed through; they were humbly apologetic for disturbing them at all. Emin Bey gave them a cigar each; they almost dissolved into tears at such magnanimous condescension.

"A few weeks ago," the little bald-headed man said, lighting a cigar himself, "we caught a very dangerous customer here. Very

dangerous, indeed. He had escaped from Damascus Prison and was coming to our capital with well-prepared plans for starting a subversive group. And he almost got through, too—except that I cabled down a detailed description. Sometimes you can't rely on your underlings at all, can you?"

It was then that the tension snapped in John Marius' brain. The flash and the noise were imperceptible to the world but filled him with the sudden realisation of his salvation. Emin Bey was smiling, his plump, smooth face creased in the lines of amiability. The smile froze as John's hands closed round his fat soft neck. His small hand flew to his pocket but it was too late. The gun was already in the left hand of Marius while the fingers of the right hand stifled the gurgle in the little man's throat. The explosion shattered the silence; yet it was hardly more than a muffled plop. Emin Bey's pursed baby mouth opened in wordless protest, then he slid to the left, his head resting against the small piece of lace on the cushioned fabric. He had gone to sleep, thought Marius, incongruously, the sleep of the just.

The revolver slipped from his fingers. The compartment was near the end of the carriage; in five seconds he was through the door, down the steps, on the side away from the station. There was an embankment down which he scrambled, the cool darkness slapped him with gentle, silken palms. Somewhere behind him he heard voices and the sound of running feet. He filled his lungs with air and laughed.

As he ran across the narrow, fenced-in garden, vaulted the hedge and made for the hills, he felt safe and strong. This was security with a narrow margin of fear and restless guilt. He ran and the world was wide and wonderful, free and full of promise.

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SOLUTION TO EWMM CROSSWORD (No. 23)

ACROSS. 1, Stolen. 4, Detected. 9, Raffle. 10, Policing. 12, Tendered. 13, Genera. 15, Heal. 16, First-class. 19, Master-mind. 20, Tsar. 23, Rogues. 25, Test-tube. 27, Ear-marks. 28, (Little by) Little. 29, Space-man. 30, Geddes.

DOWN. 1, Stretch. 2, Off-enders. 3, Eileen. 5, Eros. 6, Evidence. 7, Twice. 8, Dog-days. 11, Mediums. 14, Usances. 19, Assaulted. 18, Generate. 19, Murders. 21, Reefers. 22, Strike. 24, (Lake) Garda. 26, Skua (rev.).



The Murders at the Moorcock

GEOFFREY WHITELEY

For years speculations by writers and public have been devoted to this old and curious tragedy. But perhaps this study may well give the true solution

THE MIST-SHROUDED Pennine hills which form the broad back of England are still among the loneliest parts of the British Isles. Hundreds of square miles of barren, rolling moorland form a wilderness remote from the bustling industrial regions of Lancashire and Yorkshire that it separates. A century ago, the remoteness was far more pronounced; the lives of people in the Pennine hill-villages were governed by primitive needs and passions; life was very much a battle for survival in a cruel environment.

One of the most rugged parts of the Pennines was Saddleworth Moor which, 134 years ago, was virtually isolated from the rest of England. The first turnpike roads, connecting Oldham in Lancashire with Huddersfield on the far side of the hills, were still under construction; the railway had not reached Saddleworth, and both telegraphs and telephones were things of the future. It was hardly surprising that, in this eerie setting, superstitions and fantasies abounded.

Sometimes the mysteries were real enough, as on the morning of 2 April, 1832, when the moorland mists lifted to reveal a savage crime that has remained unsolved to this day. The double murder at Bill's o' Jack's is as puzzling now as it was shocking then.

'Bill's o' Jack's' was the local name for a lonely moorland inn, The Moorcock, set high on a hillside overlooking Greenfield village, about 13 miles north east of Manchester. Bill 'o Jack's' was, in fact, William Bradbury, the innkeeper. At 84, Bradbury was well-liked and remarkably active for his age. (According to local custom, his name meant: William, son of John; hence, Bradbury's son, Thomas, was known as Tom o' Bills'). Tom was 46, a rugged, outdoor man, described by his contemporaries as 'a good shot and a rare fighter'. He had a wife and children in Greenfield, but had spent most of the winter of 1831-32 at the lonely inn as company for his widowed father.

The one-storey, stone-built inn nestled down a lane, a short distance from the newly-built turnpike road which was now winding its way from Oldham, over the hill-tops to the Yorkshire towns and villages of Meltham, Honley, Holmfirth and Huddersfield. Old Bradbury specialised in a home-brewed ale which was popular with travellers on the 'top road'. Thus father and son lived quiet, uneventful lives in their hillside home until the night of 1 - 2 April, 1832. They then both met their deaths violently and inexplicably.



At about 10 a.m. on the morning of 2 April, Mary Winterbottom, 12-year-old granddaughter of the elder Bradbury, walked up to the Moorcock from Greenfield to borrow yeast for her mother's baking. She found the inn unusually still and quiet.

Inside, she found a scene of appalling horror. The house was splashed with blood. In a room to the right of the entrance-passage, Tom lay dying with terrible head injuries; upstairs his father lay in bed, also badly battered and unconscious. Tom, it was later established, had 15 gashes in the head and a fractured skull; his father's injuries—described by a doctor at the time as 'dreadful mangling of the face, legs and left hand'—appeared to be less severe, but were, nevertheless, very serious in a man of his age.

The nearest neighbour to the Bradburys, James Whitehead, later said that when Mary Winterbottom called him to the inn, he found 'the stairs, window, walls and every part of the house splashed with blood'.

Tom never regained consciousness—the fact that he hung on to life at all could be attributed only to his physical strength and tough constitution—and he died at three p.m. the same day. His

father, however, survived until one a.m. on the following day, and during periods of semi-consciousness, managed to mutter two words which were the only clue to his attackers. The words, uttered in a half-whisper time and again, were: 'Pats, Pats'. It was a clue—but one which turned out to be as puzzling as the crime itself.

The processes of detection in 1832 left a great deal to be desired and little was discovered in the way of useful, circumstantial evidence. Relatives of the dead men established that £7 in cash and several suits of clothing were missing; blood-stained pokers, a horse-pistol, a sword-stick and a spade—all belonging to the Bradburys—were presumed to be the murder weapons.

Such, then, were the circumstances of the 'Bill's o' Jack's' murders on a chill, April morning in 1832. The fact that the law—such as it was—failed to find the answers to most of the main questions, was hardly surprising. The remoteness of the inn virtually ruled out the possibility of witnesses. And there was, of course, no police force as we know it—parish constables, first instituted in Tudor times, maintained law and order until 1858. The result was that the investigation was successful in gathering more conjecture and gossip than actual evidence.

Through the considerable amount of speculation and fiction that has been written about the murders since, however, some salient details emerge which might have pointed the way to a solution had they been weighed with sufficient care at the time.

On the Monday evening—the night before the bodies were found—Tom had left the inn to visit Greenfield village to buy candles because the stock at the inn was running low.

With him went Reuben Platt, an acquaintance of the Bradburys, who had called at the inn and had a drink with the two men a short time before. Platt was then on his way home, Tom heading for the village shop at Greenfield. They left the old man sitting on an oak settle near a blazing fire; the doors of the inn, as always, were unlocked.

According to evidence given by Platt at the inquest later, he and Tom encountered three men a short distance from the inn. Tom identified them as 'three Irishmen', and thought that one looked like a man who had once stolen a pair of socks from him. 'I don't like them and leave my father yonder', he was said to have remarked to Platt; nevertheless, he gave them directions to Holmfirth at their request, then watched the three until they walked well past the inn and out of sight. Platt thought the men

were behaving furtively.

There is also the curious episode of the 'Red Bradburys', a family of the same name as the two dead men, but no relation. The principal members of this nefarious family—who lived at Hoowood, a village near Holmfirth, some miles away—were the father, James ('Jamie'), a powerful, uncouth man, and his son, Joe, similarly uncouth, and easily led into a variety of unlawful activities by his father.

Both were poachers, and Jamie had an undoubted grudge against Tom at the relevant time. He had been accused of poaching on the plantations near to the Moorcock, and Tom was to have been the main witness against him at Pontefract Sessions on 3 April, 1832, *the day on which the bodies were found*.

If this itself were not enough to bring the Red Bradburys under suspicion, Jamie's behaviour on the day of the court hearing put the matter beyond doubt.



Pontefract was about 30 miles from Holmfirth, and Jamie had to make most of the journey on foot. That meant an early start for him. At 8 a.m. on 2 April he was passing through Meltham village where he was heard to make the astonishing prediction that Tom o' Bill's would never appear against him at Pontefract because he was probably 'in hell' by that time. Later in the day Jamie arrived in court at Pontefract and demanded acquittal on the ground that Bradbury would not be appearing to give evidence. This puzzled the court—official news of the murders by then not having reached Pontefract—but when Jamie's prediction proved correct, he was freed.

It was thought to be not without significance that, whereas one might have expected Jamie and his cohorts to have celebrated all the way back in every available inn, they kept clear of the hosteleries and went straight home. Perhaps—some suggested—Jamie was afraid that, under the influence of drink, he might be tempted to talk too freely?

Two other factors are worth considering as interesting background to the murders, both of which have a bearing on the curious use of the word 'Pats' by the dying old man.

Living in log huts in the Saddleworth hills at the time was a group of, what were—to all intents and purposes—brigands known locally as the 'Burnplatters'. They were supposedly of

gypsy origin, a tribe of semi-savage men and women living in crude conditions, making a living from primitive farming, illicit whisky-brewing and highway robbery. It was thought to be more than possible that the whispered word of the dying man was 'Platts'—the shortened term for Burnplatters—and not 'Pats'.

The area was also swarming at the time with large gangs of 'navvies'—the nickname for 'navigators' or construction-workers who were employed on building the new turnpike roads over the Pennines. Many of them were Irish, and were simply referred to by the locals as 'Pats'. It was estimated that, at the time of the crime, about 2,000 such workmen were living in rough huts round the Saddleworth area; they had brought to the quiet little villages some of the atmosphere of frontier towns in the American mid-West.

Against this odd, almost weird, background, the forces of law and order—the parish constable, the coroner and magistrates—had to try to find the murderers. Public feeling in the hill villages ran high because of the viciousness of the crimes. The law, however, appears to have grasped at straws and achieved little except to convince everyone—then and since—that the Bill's o' Jack's murders were unsolvable.

What sort of action was taken? Three days after the bodies were found—and in an atmosphere of near-hysteria when it became known the old Bradbury had whispered 'Pats'—an Irishman named Charles Mullins was arrested in Delph, another of the Saddleworth villages. There appears to have been no justification for this, except that he *was* Irish; apparently he had no difficulty in satisfying the Coroner that he was elsewhere at the time. (The parish constable went so far as to check his alibi and confirmed it).

When no progress had been made, the Secretary of State's office offered a reward of £200 for information leading to the discovery of the killers. As a further incentive, the King's Pardon was promised to anyone (except the actual murderers) who might have been involved, but who could be persuaded to help the authorities. As a result, two men were arrested at Rotherham, and another two in Liverpool. All were subsequently cleared. Far more interesting, however, was the arrest of the two Red Bradburys—Jamie and Joe—on suspicion of murder.

Both were acquitted by magistrates at Huddersfield because—according to contemporary accounts—of the lack of direct evidence. The issue was apparently decided in their favour by evidence given by Jamie's eldest daughter; she provided an alibi

that the authorities were unable to break.

Her story was that, on the night in question, Jamie and Joe had been at the Church Inn, less than two miles from the Moorcock, but that the time at which they arrived home would not have allowed them to call anywhere else on the way. There, was, she said, 'nothing suspicious' about her father and brother when they arrived home.

This evidence, uncorroborated by anyone except the two accused, was obviously questionable, coming as it did from one of Jamie's own stock. Nevertheless, no real efforts seem to have been made to substantiate the charge with any real evidence at all. There was no mention of a search for the clothes and money stolen from Bill o' Jack's, and no reference to any examination of the clothes which Jamie wore on the night in question. In short, there was no proof—other than the word of Jamie's daughter—of his time of arrival home that night, and of his movements between, leaving the Church Inn and being seen at Meltham village next morning.

By any standards—past or present—this highly-important aspect of the case appears to have been treated with an amazing disregard for detail by the authorities.

Thus, the 'Bill's o' Jack's' murders rested. The years that followed brought much speculation and conjecture, both in print and conversation. The incident proved to be a source of fascination for historians and story-tellers.



A short story was written which portrayed Tom o' Bill's as a drunken bully who invited a crime of vengeance; a play, written in 1919 by Alfred Denville, was based on the murders and toured the Northern music-halls with some success. Charles Dickens even visited the lonely inn years afterwards and wrote later of his nervousness at being served with a meal while sitting in the tap-room where Tom's body had been found. The Moorcock—or simply 'Bill's o' Jack's, as it became widely known—gained some fame as a tourist-spot. A tea-room was opened near to the inn to cater for weekend picnickers and Sunday-school parties. In short, a folklore legend grew up around the crimes, which persists even today.

All this was heightened, at the time, by the intense emotion that the killings aroused. About 10,000 people flocked into the

Saddleworth villages to watch the double funeral, as it wound its way along the rough lanes from Greenfield and—ironically—past the Church inn to the graveyard of Saddleworth Church nearby. There, today, in a bleak corner of the churchyard, thick with weeds, a strange tombstone marks the last resting-place of the Bradburys with this inscription:

Here lie interred the dreadfully bruised and lacerated bodies of William Bradbury and Thomas, his son, both of Greenfield, who were together savagely murdered in an unusually horrid manner on Monday night, April 2nd, 1832, William being 84 and Thomas 46 years old.

Throughout the land, wherever news is read
Intelligence of their sad death has spread.
Those who now talk of far-fam'd Greenfield hills
Will think of Bill o'Jack's and Tom o' Bill's.

Such interest did their tragic end excite
That ere they were removed from human sight,
Thousands on thousands daily came to see
The bloody scene of the catastrophe.

One house, one business and one bed
And one most shocking death they had;
One funeral came, one inquest past,
And now one grave they have at last.

Writers who have studied the murders over the last century have advanced no fewer than seven serious explanations for the deaths—or at least they have considered these as feasible answers. These are:

1. Bill and Tom Bradbury died after a fight to the death between them;
2. Tom was attacked by an intruder and Bill ran to help;
3. The mysterious Irishmen seen earlier by Platt and Tom, returned when the old man was alone, attacked him, then bundled him upstairs to await the return of Tom, whom they then attacked.
4. The Burnplatters killed both men;
5. Irish 'navvies' committed the crime;
6. Reuben Platt was the double murderer;
7. The Red Bradburys were responsible for both deaths.

Of all *possible* explanations, the most likely is obviously the last—that Jamie and Joe committed both murders. On closer examination, however, even this theory has its inconsistencies.

Firstly, there was the question of motive. Jamie and Joe certainly wanted to see Tom out of the way, but they had no reason to kill the old man. Therefore, they would have entered the inn only when they could reasonably expect to find Tom at home, since he was the main target for their hatred. But assuming that they *did* attack Tom, downstairs, after his return home, would not the old man have left his bed to assist his son? It hardly seems reasonable that the old man would have remained upstairs while his son was grappling with the intruders and fighting for his life. If the old man did go downstairs to help, it is inconceivable that Jamie and Joe would bother to drag him back upstairs after disposing of him; therefore both bodies would eventually have been found downstairs.

Secondly, there is the question of stolen money and clothes. If Jamie and Joe killed at all, it was to silence Tom, not to rob. Having battered the son, would they have stopped to cast around for any likely loot?

And would they have stolen money and clothes to divert suspicion on to the vagrants and navvies? Looked at in context, this seems far too subtle an explanation; Jamie and Joe were far from subtle, and their reasoning would certainly not have extended so far as to presume what line of deduction the authorities would follow. In any case, the theft might well have rebounded on them. Both the clothes, and the missing money might have been traced and would have pointed to them unmistakably as the killers.

As for the theories, there are too many contradictions and inconsistencies for any of them to fit the circumstances properly. There could hardly have been a 'fight to the death' between father and son; apart from the fact that there was no evidence of a serious quarrel between them, the finding of Tom's body downstairs and the old man's upstairs shows beyond reasonable doubt that a third party (or parties) was involved.

Then again, if an intruder attacked Tom while the old man was in bed, both bodies would, almost certainly have been found downstairs (following the previous contention that Bill would have gone to help his son). Reuben Platt can be dismissed as a serious suspect; for one thing he did not have the physical strength to overcome two powerful men (remember that old Bradbury was still remarkably active for his age). For another, it should also be

borne in mind that it was his word only which told the authorities he had been at the inn earlier that evening.

If he had any guilty secrets, he could have kept quiet about his visit, and no-one would have been any the wiser.

It can be seen, therefore, that two things—the position of the bodies in the inn, and the question of motive—upset most, if not all, previous theories about the double murder. One of the more recent writers on the subject, Vera Winterbottom, hinted at the conflict of motives when she said: 'If robbery was the motive, the inn would probably have been entered at a time when the older, weaker man was known to be alone there; if for the sake of revenge or prevention of legal prosecution, entry would be made when Thomas was thought to be on the premises'.

The weakness of all previous solutions is, simply, that they start from the obvious (though not necessarily correct) assumption that both murders were committed at the same time and by the same intruders. Yet the fact that there *was* a robbery, and the added fact that the bodies were found in different parts of the inn, point to the contrary.

In short, the two murders must have been committed at two separate times and for two separate motives. The only reasonable hypothesis which fits all the known facts is this:

After waiting some time for his son's return, the elder Bradbury went upstairs to retire for the night. Shortly afterwards, the intruders walked in unhindered. It could have been the mysterious Irishmen seen earlier, the Burnplatters, or a gang of navvies on their way home from a night out in one of the Saddleworth inns.

Finding the inn apparently unoccupied, they started to rifle the furniture for valuables. Disturbed by the noise, old Bradbury called out from the bedroom, and one or more of the intruders ran up to silence him with the handiest weapon—probably a poker from the living-room. In a panic, the attacker then battered the old man to stop his cries (the fact that the elder Bradbury had injuries to his left hand and legs as well to his head indicates that he was the victim of a wild attack delivered, in all probability, while he was lying down). Having silenced the old man, the attackers fled, taking with them £7 and some clothing.

The hour by now would be late. Tom may have stopped off at an inn on his way back from the village, or called to see his family in Greenfield. Jamie and Joe, however, heading home from the Church inn along a route that would take them close to the Moorcock, reasonably thought that Tom would be at home. Like the

previous intruders, they entered normally, then found the ground floor unoccupied. Believing Tom to be in bed, they went upstairs, and there found the old man dying from his injuries.

At this crucial moment, Tom returned and heard the intruders in the bedroom. His immediate reaction would be to dash upstairs, to discover his injured father and to accuse the Red Bradburys of being the attackers.

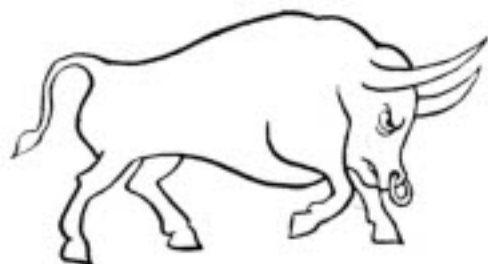
Jamie and Joe were then really cornered. They now faced the risk of not only a prison sentence for poaching, but of being wrongly accused of murder. By killing Tom, however, they stood to clear the risk on both charges. They presumably clubbed Tom where he stood at the top of the staircase, sending him crashing down, and dashing his already-injured head on the walls and steps. This would account for the considerable amount of blood on the staircase, another puzzling aspect of the scene. Then, as he staggered dazedly round at the bottom of the stairs, Jamie and Joe leapt on him and finished him off.

The fact that both murderers battered their victims over the head is actually of small significance. The most popular weapon for any murderer—even today—who kills in the heat of the moment, is the traditional blunt instrument. There were plenty of those around, whereas the knowledge of firearms was probably scanty, and their operation required some skill. On balance, bludgeoning the victim was probably the best method of ensuring firstly his silence, then his death.

The Red Bradburys were obviously implicated to such an extent. That they were implicated further—to the extent of killing both men—is possible, but unlikely, for the reasons given.

Without their implication, Jamie's behaviour on the following day is impossible to explain. Certainly, he knew at 8 a.m. next morning—about two hours before the bodies were found—that Tom was dead; he can only have known this if he committed the crime himself.

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LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY

ALISTAIR ALLEN

*An odd little tale of the '45
which fits well into our
Grand Guignol series*

IT HAD COME by the morning post in a parcel tied with fishing line—a small chanter, battered and discoloured, obviously of some age. There was a letter, too. It ran: 'Glad to hear from you. I trust your experience has had no ill effects and I look forward to seeing you again. I found the chanter a few days ago, entangled in my fishing nets. I think it rightly belongs to you . . .' I had hoped I'd seen the last of that chanter. As I turned it over in my fingers the whole story came back, for it was only last summer I'd been walking in the West Highlands. I'd never been there before, but I knew that my forebears had roots somewhere hereabouts.

I had spent the night at an out-of-the-way inn, and in the morning Dugald McIntyre, the inn-keeper, put me on the road. As we walked along he cocked an eye at the weather. It was gloomy and overcast. He gave me a long look, but maybe that was only my fancy. He waved a hand towards the road, and lowered his voice: "It's wild, sir, that coast road—not a house for miles." He bent towards me. "And when it's dark they say . . . anyway, I wouldn't be stopping on that road myself—not whatever, till I reached the far end". We exchanged some banter about things that go bump in the night; I set off.

Very soon, sure enough, down came the rain, with a blustery wind, and the weather settled into a damp, misty blur. I kept plodding on until evening, looking for a likely place to camp, for I was determined to go no further in such appalling conditions. Then I paused, for ahead, in the far distance, appeared a glimmer of light. A shepherd's cottage, I thought, and as I drew nearer it seemed to shine even more brightly, almost beckoning. In the

half-light in a hollow, *there* was the house. No shepherd's shieling this, however. It was only a ruin, a ruckle of stones with bushes and trees growing everywhere, but it was obvious from the layout that it had been a dwelling of considerable size, at some time long past.

The moon was rising, and this intensified the eeriness of the night. I noticed something. The light which had been shining brightly among the trees had vanished. A trick of the moon, perhaps, but I was concerned only about shelter, and, looking around, saw the very place—a thick, overhanging, bushy tree. I threw off my pack thankfully and settled in my sleeping bag and I drowsed off. I began to feel quite at home with my surroundings, so much so that I imagined I had turned on my own bedside radio; I was pleasantly aware of soft music. I roused slightly; it *was* music. Sleepily I listened.

The sound was quite close—faint and sweet—like a muted flute. The tune was familiar, an old Highland boating song. Propped up on an elbow I listened intently. It was perhaps a wandering tinker, or just my imagination. But the tone was changing; it became insistent, almost compelling. It brought me to my feet, and still from somewhere—it seemed overhead—came that plaintive note, thin and reedy, very clear. I stood rigid and tensed, by now not very sure of myself.

The moon had risen and a slight breeze moving the trees began to distort the shadows into grotesque shapes. Then the sound died and I seemed to be in the midst of a crowd, an invisible, frenzied crowd. Blows raining down from every angle; the air filled with the noise of clashing steel, strangled cries—snarling curses in Gaelic—and then an agonised screech, and dead silence.

I was scared to death. I had only one desire, to get away from this place. I ran blindly out into the open, and fell headlong. I've no idea how long I lay there but it was daylight when I came to. I was lying on a grassy verge, a cliff-top high above the sea.



My ankle was twisted in that helter-skelter rush. I chose to rest there for a while in the morning sun, listening to the wash of the waves. Rummaging in a pocket for my pipe, my fingers encountered something strange. It was a short piece of black bog-oak, holed and bored in a rough kind of way, and fashioned into a chanter, a Highland flute. The events of the night began to seem

like a confused nightmare; the music I heard, had it been played on this chanter, and by whom, for I had seen no single person amongst the ruins of that house. And where had the chanter come from?

I was pondering this when I heard a sound, this time real enough, a tap-tapping at the foot of the cliff. I looked over—and there was a man working on a boat. He was whistling away cheerfully, and I was just going to attract his attention, when I realised with some uneasiness that the tune he was so blithely whistling was the tune I'd heard in the night. I started, and my foot dislodged a stone. The fellow looked up at once,—and he began to climb the cliff. His head and shoulders as they came into view over the top reminded me of some fierce, dark Highland Catheran from the past. I must have seemed pretty bedraggled; his expression changed and he exclaimed, "God preserve us, sir, you will surely not be telling me that you have been out here all night?"

"That—that tune you were whistling," I stammered, "it was the tune I heard in the night—the house with the light."

He clapped me on the shoulder and his face broke into a smile. "What you need, sir, is a rest and some refreshment. I live with Morag—that's my sister—just round yon corner there. So on you come with me. Here, I'll give you a hand."

There was a friendliness about this Highlander, yet he was aloof, almost silent. As I tried to tell him something of the events of the night he made only one remark: "Yes, it was a terrible night, sir—but it's past now." The tone held something of thankfulness, even of relief.

Presently a but-and-ben came into sight, a woman at the door anxiously scanning the rough path. The man called out to her in Gaelic and she ran forward, one hand to her breast: "Oh, Seumas!" Then, recovering herself, "Come away in."

She led the way into the house. I was feeling really groggy, indeed I must have fainted. The next thing I heard was a man's voice: "Just you drink this now, sir, and rest yourself. Rest you there awhile." Then he went into the other room.

As I rested there thankfully on the couch, the strange events of the night began to pass through my mind; I almost persuaded myself that it had all been a dream. I could hear the sound of voices in the other room, through the half-closed door. I could hear Morag's voice, and the deeper tones of her brother. They were speaking excitedly in Gaelic, so I couldn't understand a word. Then their voices sank to a low murmur. At length it was

time for me to be on my way. I had by now recovered and thanked them both. Though they were friendly and courteous, I had a vague, almost disquieting, feeling that I was a stranger, even perhaps an intruder. Then, as if to dispel this unworthy thought, Morag said reassuringly, "Seumas will be convoying you along the road." And so we set off, Seumas and I. Before he left me we stood together for a while on the cliff-top, overlooking the sea. It was smooth and calm, with the quiet and peace you get in the lonely places, the silence broken only by the splash of a wave on the stones and the call of a seabird.



At length I remarked, "So this is the country of the Forty-Five."

"You've never been here before, sir?"

"No, I've never been here before, but I can trace Highland descent on my mother's side. She used to tell me stories of Prince Charlie and the Forty-Five."

"Och, yes!" said Seumas, "there's many a strange tale come down about these days, and, mind you, some of them true. They say that we Highlanders are fey, that we have powers not given to others."

"Then are you one of those who believe that past events may leave their impression—say in the air—and that on certain occasions these may again become visible, or audible to those who are, one might say, in tune?"

For a moment Seumas was silent. Then he said: "I will tell you, yes, for Morag said to me you have a right to know." And I heard the story of the house and the light and the tune, as it had been passed down from father to son, from son to grandchild, as they whiled away the long winter evenings round the peat fires. This is what Seumas told me:

"Well do I remember my grandfather, how he used to tell us of Prince Charlie and the troublous times of the Forty-Five, when Scotland was martyred for an ideal, which, though it seemed to have vanished in failure, will never be forgotten as long as there is a true Highlander alive. It was an uneasy time, when the devotion of even the faithful MacDonalld of Glenaladale was being tested and strained to the very uttermost. Indeed, there seemed to be more against the Prince than for him, when it appeared that fortune had forsaken the cause. Furthermore, there was a price on his head of thirty thousand pounds. Yes, and though they

were few, there were some who would have claimed it if they could. One man in particular was suspect, a notorious informer. Because of his red hair he was known as The Red Murdoch. After the disaster at Culloden—in the summer of seventeen forty-six, it was decided that for his safety the Prince should leave the mainland. He was to embark for Skye, in all secrecy, with the help of Flora Macdonald, and was to be disguised as an Irish serving maid.

“The secret of the escape plan had been well kept, but that sly old fox, the Red Murdoch, had somehow got wind of it, and on the very night there he was, with his accomplices, concealed in the house where the Prince had taken refuge. At a given signal, which was to be the playing of an old Highland tune, they were to force an entrance to the Prince’s chamber, and there they were to take his life. But the Prince had loyal followers who never left his side. At the head of them was the young Seumas MacDonald, a brave and resolute Jacobite. The plot was discovered and in the ensuing struggle, a short but fierce encounter, in that very house the Red Murdoch met his fate by the dirk of Seumas MacDonald, who later died of his wounds. It is said that the scene in all its horror is enacted every year at the same time.”

I glanced at Seumas. He had turned away and was gazing over the water as if in a trance. Sliding a furtive hand into my pocket I pulled out the chanter and hurled it into the sea. It skittered along the waves, then vanished, with a defiant black glint. Seumas turned towards me.

“And you will be a Macdonald?” I asked him.

He drew himself up, stiff and erect: “The name, sir, is MacDonald, Seumas MacDonald, and proud it is that I am to bear it!” And so we shook hands.

“You’ll be hearing from me,” I said, “when I get back.”



Later, everything was becoming clearer to me—I say ‘becoming’ because—well, why had all those sounds been made audible to a mere Sassenach? I’ve never seen Seumas since that day, but one thing is certain—I know I shall be going back. My forbears had their roots up there in the Murdoch Country, and I must find out—for honour’s sake—who it was who played the music on that chanter.

The Goldfish Caper

MORRIS COOPER

*A little matter of a smooth
operator and an equally
smooth private eye*

THE GUY who came through the door had a body belonging to a man of 25 and a face which gave an edge to the shady side of 50.

"My name is Roberts. Lorne K. Roberts." He sounded like he was announcing the Emperor of Moola and waiting for me to bow deeply from the waist.

I nodded toward the client's chair and said, "I'm Steve West."

"I am aware of that fact, Mr. West," he snapped and sat down at the same time. "Your name is plainly painted on the door for all who have the ability to read."

If the guy was trying to get me peeved, he was off to a flying start. But I always figure anyone who is willing to pay for my time must be labouring under a nervous tension, so I kept my dander down. I said, "My secretary mentioned something about fish."

He took a well-packed wallet from the inside pocket of his gabardine jacket, extracted a folded sheet of white paper, and slid it across my desk. I opened it and didn't believe the message I read. It was typewritten in capital letters and had the sound of a schoolboy's gag:

IF YOU WANT YOUR GOLDFISH BACK, HAVE A
THOUSAND DOLLARS READY IN ONE-DOLLAR
BILLS. YOU WILL RECEIVE A PHONE CALL SOME
TIME TOMORROW.

It was typed on an average grade of bond paper and didn't have a signature or date. "This doesn't make sense," I murmured. "Why should anyone want to kidnap a goldfish?"

"It seems perfectly clear to me," he said testily. "Someone has appropriated one of my fish and is holding it for ransom."

All I know about fish is that they are very tasty. But there had to be an angle. I asked, "Just how valuable is this piscatorial treasure?"

"Twenty-five cents. Perhaps half a dollar if you patronise an establishment equipped with a doorman."

"Then what's this all about?" I asked. "A thousand bucks for the return of a two-bit fish is kind of high, even in these days of the vanishing dollar."

Roberts moved to the edge of the chair and slapped the rim of my desk with his wallet. "The sign on your door reads *Steve West, Investigator*. That, I presume, means you are here for the purpose of answering questions, not asking them."

I had a hunch he wasn't destined to be one of my favourite people. "It also means," I said coldly, "that I can toss you out of this office."

"You were recommended by a Lieutenant Clark and—," he began.

"Al Clark?" I interrupted. "Police Headquarters?" When he nodded his head I reached for the phone. While I dialled I could hear Bertha picking up her extension. Besides being Bertha's brother, Al Clark is one of the reasons why homicide isn't a paying proposition.

"Hello." Al's voice sounded like the tag-end of a lazy day in the country.

"This is Steve. Did you send anyone to my office?"

He chuckled. "A character named Roberts. It was a toss-up between you and the booby-hatch. But I finally decided you could use the money, now you've got my sister to support."

"That's sweet of you, dear," Bertha's voice cut in.

"Ain't it though, sis."

"Stop taking bows," I said, "and tell me what it's all about."

"I think he's a little whacked," Al said. "But harmless."

"So?"

"Well, Roberts gave us some pitch about a kidnapped fish. Or maybe I should say fishnapping?" Al thought that was funny and repeated it, but when I kept quiet, he went on. "Roberts figured we ought to drop everything and concentrate on him. So I tact-

fully mentioned your name when he insisted our service wasn't all it's cracked up to be."

"Thanks for the plug. But since when isn't extortion police business?"

"Who said it wasn't? But all Roberts wanted was for us to put an armed guard over his remaining goldfish."

"Oh," I said, which was as good a word as any to cover the subject. "Okay, I'll let you know how it pans out."

"Do that. And think of me snoozing while you're slaving away."

"Why? No more bad boys around town?"

"Not in my department. The robbery detail is in a tizzy over a hundred-grand pearl necklace that did a vanishing act last night. But until someone decides the oysters were foully done in, I can keep on relaxing."

I cradled the phone on his chuckle and looked at Mr. Roberts. He still had the wallet in his hand. "All right," I decided. "Let's have the whole story."

"You're taking the case?"

"Maybe," I said. "First I'd like to know what I'm running into."

"You'll have to promise not to violate my confidence."

"That's what I'm here for. But if you're going to confess to a homicide or a felony—don't. I wouldn't be your boy to cover up for anything like that."

Roberts leaned back in the chair, holding his wallet as though it were a prayer book. "I've a strange story to tell; it may sound incredible, but it's the absolute truth."

"I'm listening."

"About ten years ago I was in South America and went on an exploration trip up the Amazon. I discovered a tribe whose natives worshipped literally hundreds of idols made of pure gold and encrusted with precious stones."

I couldn't help putting an oar in. "And to save them from their heathen ways . . . you relieved them of some of those idols."

"I must confess I did, Mr. West. But I harmed no one."

"Of course."

He gave me a sharp glance. "I'm quite serious when I say no one was harmed. I managed to escape safely. That is, I thought I was safe . . . until last week . . . when the curse began to work."

"The curse?" I asked curiously. "Those idols must have been in the super-duper class."

He twisted the wallet. "Please don't be facetious. The natives had a legend—well, that anyone desecrating their gods would be given five living fish. As long as those fish remain alive, the desecrator is safe. But when the last one dies . . ." Roberts shrugged his eyebrows.

"What happened to convince you the pixies are loose?"

"I found a glass bowl in my hotel room last week. A bowl with five live goldfish in it." He sounded like he was making his last will and testament.

"Look, Mr. Roberts, someone must be pulling your leg. What would a curse want with a thousand bucks?"

"No one knows of the curse. You're the first person I've ever told about it."

"Your companions on that trip into the jungle must know. Could be one of them figured this was a good way to get his hands on some fast cash."

"I was the only white man there. The rest of my party were illiterate native bearers."

I hunched a little lower in my swivel chair. "It's kind of hard for me to swallow something like that."

Mr. Roberts started tapping my desk again—his wallet was beginning to remind me of a hungry woodpecker. "Are you insinuating that I'm a liar?" He got on his high horse again.

"No . . . not at all. But I can't picture curses going around leaving typewritten notes. Seems to me an old-fashioned quill pen dipped in blood would be more their style."

Mr. Roberts opened his wallet, pulled out a piece of lovely green paper. It was a bit dirty and crumpled but that didn't detract from the loveliness, especially after I saw those two nice zeros backing up the one. "I want you to come to my hotel with me and see what you can find."

"Why not," I said. I won't say I clutched greedily at the century note, but the change in ownership was rapid. I dropped the ransom note in one of the desk drawers and got up.

On our way out I stopped at the receptionist's cubicle. I saw an open notebook and I whispered into Bertha's ear, "I presume you had the inter-com switch open?"

"Natch, you wonderful detective."

"In that case, there's a beautiful public library just a couple of blocks away."

"Gotcha," she whispered back, and brushed her lips against mine. I took the folded hundred out of my vest pocket and gave

it to her.

"That's a lovely secretary you have," Roberts told me as the cab pulled away from the curb.

"She is also my wife," I said, which ended that topic of conversation.



The hotel was like fifty others—not too good, not too bad—and just off the main stem. A self-service elevator took us to the third floor. The hallway was a long, dim corridor; you could have set off a string of firecrackers without attracting any attention.

Roberts twisted a key in the lock of room 391 and held the door for me. The room was as dark.

"I like the shades down," he explained as we went in. "Helps keep most of the heat out." He slammed the door shut and I could hear him fumbling for the light switch.

The fumbling grew to a roar but the only light that came on was inside my head. After a while it started to rain and I fought to keep the water out of my nostrils.

I opened my eyes and saw Roberts leaning over me. There was a damp towel in his hand and a thin trickle of blood was drying on his forehead. I got up from the floor and felt my own head. There didn't seem to be anything wrong that half a pint of whisky and a couple of aspirin wouldn't fix.

Roberts waited a minute, and when I didn't keel over, he pointed a finger at the bureau with dramatic gesture number three. The effect was a bit marred by the dripping towel in his hand.

I walked over slowly, trying not to jar my head too much. On the bureau top was a crude cardboard replica of a gallows, maybe eight inches high. It had been propped against a hairbrush to keep from falling.

But what really got me was the miniature cotton noose. Because dangling from that noose was a very dead and a very stiff goldfish.

The typewritten note lying next to the gallows was almost anticlimatic, though it was brief and to the point;

YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE GONE TO THE POLICE.

It seemed the curse had an extremely efficient espionage system. Roberts sat down on the edge of the bed, drooping, and I almost

felt sorry for him.

I said, "Curses put the whammy on you. They just don't go around conking folk on the head and demanding money."

He was still holding the damp towel, juggling it between his fingers like a hot potato. "I can't blame you for being sceptical." Then he nodded toward a table on the other side of the bed. "But there are only three left."

I hadn't noticed them before and stared curiously. It was an ordinary glass fish bowl, a little over half-full of water, and about the size of a honeydew melon. There were a couple inches of ruffled sand on the bottom, a palmful of coloured pebbles, one of those dime-store rock arches . . . and three unconcerned and very bored goldfish. I wouldn't have given a dollar for the whole works.

I asked Roberts, "How *did* you get these fish?"

"Last week—Wednesday—I came back from lunch and there they were." He mopped his forehead with the damp towel.

"And when was the fish . . . kidnapped?" I had to use the word.

"It was gone when I woke this morning. The note was next to the bowl."

"You mean some one came in here during the night?"

"It wasn't missing when I went to bed last night. And I'm an unusually light sleeper."

"What about the staff here—did you question them?"

"This is a resident-type hotel and there aren't any bellboys. When I found the bowl last week, I asked a few questions of the clerk and the chamber-maid. They didn't know a thing."

"And this morning?"

"My door was bolted on the inside and the windows firmly locked all night. I spent most of the morning trying to figure it out, before I finally decided to go to the police."

"Did you tell the police what you told me?"

"No . . . not the entire story. I don't want publicity."

"You should have, you know."

"*What* good could it have possibly done? The newspapers would have had a field day making me out a fool. And if I hold to my story, it's very likely I'll wind up in a mental institution."

I've got a stubborn streak. "I still don't believe in ghosts."

Roberts tossed the towel on a chair. "I didn't either, a week ago. But now one of the fish is missing and one is dead. And I'm absolutely certain my safety depends on keeping the remaining three alive."

He spoke with a tragic air, and maybe it was tragic—if his life depended on those undersized sardines.

"I still insist some *human*"—and I emphasized the word—"is in back of it all."

"For what possible reason?" he asked. And before I could think of an answer to his question, he got off the bed and walked around to the table. "Look, West, why don't you take the bowl and the fish to your office."

I grinned. "Are you figuring spooks are allergic to private detectives?"

"If it is the curse," he said seriously, "*nothing* can prevent these three fish from dying. But if it should be some human agency, as you think, then you'll have a better chance of trapping the guilty party."

"With me as fresh bait," I said. But I'd already made up my mind. "Okay, Roberts. And try not too worry so much. I'll do my best to see these little darlings reach a ripe old age."

I tucked the bowl in the crock of my arm and felt like a father toting his first born. Oh the way out, Roberts handed me a three-quarter-full paper bag.

"Some special food I bought for them. The man at the pet shop told me it was the best on the market."

I stopped at the hotel desk for a couple of minutes and found out Roberts had asked a few cautious questions about the fish. After which I left the hotel and found a cab.

The driver kept swivelling his neck on the ride back to my office. "Triplets," I said finally. I rustled the paper bag. "Food." The driver snorted, but for the rest of the ride he kept his eyes on traffic.

Bertha wasn't around when I got back to the office. So I put the bowl on my desk, took a pinch of food from the paper bag, and tossed the bag behind one of the filing-cabinets.

Then I sat down and watched the fish make like they were hungry. And tried to do some thinking. For my dough—and that included the 100 dollars Roberts had given me—the whole deal was as smelly as a fish market on a hot day. Roberts hadn't struck me as a guy who'd fluster easy, especially over some cat fodder.

I knew darn well, even if I couldn't prove it, that Roberts was the joker who'd slugged me and then creased his forehead just to make it look good. A man doesn't generally go into a darkened room, close the door, and *then* start searching for the light switch.

Not unless he's trying desperately to impress some one—me in this instance—with the fact that his life is in danger.

The fish were the crux of the problem, of that I was certain. And part of whatever plan Roberts had, was my taking the fish away from the hotel.

But no matter how much I thought, I still couldn't see the angle. So I waved good-night to the goldfish, turned out the lights, and went home.



I burrowed my head deeper into the pillow but the ringing wouldn't go away. Then I heard the light click and Bertha's voice answering the phone. "Yes, uh-huh," and a few more grunts. "I understand. I'll tell him." And then I heard her cradle the phone.

She shook my shoulder. "Don't pretend to be asleep. That was Mr. Roberts and he wants to see you right away."

I groaned. "What time is it? And how do you know it was Roberts?"

"Two-thirty. And what d'you mean, how do I know? He told me, that's how."

"Hearsay evidence." I sat up and ran a hand through my touselled hair. I yawned, looked at the clock, and did a double-take. "What," I asked, "is that doing here?"

"I thought they'd be lonely all alone in the office." Bertha smiled at the three goldfish. Their bowl was sharing the stand with the clock.

"Little mother," I said.

She looked at me seriously, then nudged my ribs. "Aw, you're kidding."

I kissed her. "I never kid you, honey."

Bertha called after me as I was leaving the apartment. "You didn't ask and I forgot to tell you. I checked at the library and called the university. Everybody said the fish story sounded just like a fish story."

I got a break and caught a cab fast. On the ride to the hotel I prepared a little speech for Mr. Lorne Roberts. If he wanted to tell me the truth, okay. Otherwise he'd be free to peddle his fish in some other market.

The light in 391 was on and the door was slightly ajar. I stuck my head in cautiously and hit the jackpot again. I had the feeling the whole ceiling was caving in on me, and then I couldn't feel any

more . . .

This time there was no damp towel to help me; I made it on my own. I opened my eyes, then closed them quickly to make the thing go away. But it didn't help any.

When I took another peek, Mr. Roberts was still lying on the bed. I knew that this was once he hadn't slugged me. Not with a bronze letter-opener sticking out of his chest.

He was dressed in pyjamas and the bed was mussed, like maybe he'd been asleep before the arrival of the unexpected visitor. His left hand was stretched out as if it were pointing and I bent down. There was something under one of the nails that looked like a piece of thread.

Then I saw that the tip of the finger was bloodied—and right next to it on the bed sheet were some red markings. There were two parallel lines, with a wavering slanted line between. Almost as if he'd been trying to make an N but hadn't quite succeeded. I couldn't figure it; but it had to be important. It must have taken everything he had to get his finger to his bloodied chest, and then down again to make those wavering lines.

I phoned Al Clark at his apartment; there was no reason for him to sleep if I had to remain awake.

"Your vacation is over," I announced.

"You been drinking?" he demanded suspiciously.

"Uh-uh. But it's not a bad idea. Because the curse has done gone and cursed Mr. Roberts—but permanent."



The medical examiner told his boys, "He's all yours," and then came over to where we were standing. "A vicious, hard stab to the heart. He had some pretty rough treatment before he was killed. Offhand, I'd say he's been dead as much as two hours."

"Thanks," Al said. We were still standing there when the medical examiner left. I was about to call it a night when one of the lab men handed us a jolt.

"Take a look, Lieutenant." He handed Al a fingerprint card.

"These the prints you just took from Roberts?"

"Yeah. And that right index print is a ringer for the one we found on the jewel box."

"You sure?"

"Positive. I worked on the Hava deal, and I looked at that print long enough last night so I won't forget it in a hurry."

"That," said Al, "makes this a different horse-race."

"What's all this Hava business?" I asked.

"He's the fellow who had his pearl necklace stolen. I think I mentioned it when you phoned about Roberts."

"Uh-huh. And do you mean to tell me that stiff over there pulled the job?"

"Looks like it. The safe was opened neat and clean and everything carefully wiped off. Everything except one print on the case."

"So now we find out Roberts was a safe-cracker." I watched as two men lifted the body into a wicker basket. "Y'know, it might not be the worst idea in the world to have a little chat with this Hava guy."

"That's what I was thinking." Al said to the fingerprint man. "Tom, you go get him. I oughta be back at my office in about half an hour."

Charles Hava walked out of the city morgue and waited for us at the foot of the concrete steps. "Sorry I couldn't help, but as I told you inside, I've never seen him before."

"It was worth a chance," Al said. "Anyway, he's definitely the man who left the print on the jewel case."

"About the necklace, so you have any leads on it?" Hava's squat figure seemed shorter as he leaned against the railing.

"We're doing what we can."

"Ah well, it's the insurance company's worry now." Hava nail-picked at a tear on the finger of one of his gloves.

I yawned and said to Al, "I think I'll blow."

"Stick around a couple of minutes. I want to talk to you."

"Not too long. I don't want my pets to get lonely."

"Pets?" Al questioned.

"Yeah," I laughed. "Bertha brought the fish to our apartment."

I watched Al walk Charles Hava to the corner and waited impatiently until he returned.

"All right," I said. "What's so important?"

"That ransom note. I want it."

"Now? Can't it wait?"

"Now." He steered me toward his car.

I slumped in the seat as he wheeled through the dark streets. Finally I said, "I told you I was positive Roberts typed those notes himself."

"I still want a look at the one you've got."

We didn't say anything else until I stood in front of my office door and fumbled through my pockets. "That's funny," I said. "I must have left my key-book at home."

"Bright boy. I'll get the janitor."

The idea came while I was waiting and admiring my name on the door. But it sort of slipped my mind after the janitor used his passkey.

The place looked like the tail-end of a rummage sale. The door leading from the reception room to my office was open and the light was on. Drawers had been opened, papers scattered all over the floor, and even the water cooler was tipped over.

"Who was up here?" I asked the janitor.

"I didn't see nobody, Mr. West. I got lots of work to keep me busy."

It wasn't the toughest thing in the world to get into this building and there was no after hours registry book. Not that my visitor would have been accommodating enough to leave his name.

"One thing's certain," Al offered. "Whoever did it had a key. The lock wasn't forced."

"So he had a key," I said. "And you've got this," I nodded at the mess, "if you want to look for that note. I'm tired and I'm going home to bed."

I felt a little bad about not telling him of the bright idea I'd had while admiring my name on the door. But if the police recovered the necklace, there'd be a polite thank you. On the other hand, if I found it, the insurance company would come across with a nice wad of that green stuff to buy more things for my Bertha.

I waved an airy hand. "The place is yours. Don't forget to lock up when you're through."

"Uh-uh," Al shook his head. "I think I'll run up to your place for a cup of coffee."

"There are plenty of restaurants. If you're short I can let you have the price of a cup."

"Now, Steve, is that any way to talk to your brother-in-law?"

There was nothing else I could say, so I shrugged my shoulders. But it meant I'd have to postpone checking on my bright idea until morning. Maybe longer—if Al came back to search for the note.

I pouted all the way home and Al kept grinning. On the way up the stairs I wondered why I just hadn't brought the bag of fish food along. After all, the dear little things had to eat. Only Al might have begun to wonder at my sudden maternal instinct. I hoped the guy who'd wrecked my office hadn't thought to look

behind the file cases.

I leaned against the buzzer on my apartment door but nothing happened. After a couple of minutes, Al said, "Never knew my sister was such a sound sleeper." But he sounded worried and so was I.

I tried the buzzer again, then I said, "I don't like this, Al. I'm going to bust in."

We went at the door like a two-headed battering ram, and on the third try the lock splintered.

Bertha was in bed, only she wasn't asleep—and there was more adhesive wrapped around her than you'll find in an average drug store. We got the tape off as gently as we could. She smiled when I took the gag from her mouth. I gritted my teeth and asked, "What happened, honey!" Al didn't wait for an answer; instead, he started on a tour of the apartment.

Bertha kissed me a couple of times and then said, "Honest, Steve, I don't know. I heard some one moving in the room and thought it was you. When I said to turn on the lights and not undress in the dark, some thing pounced on me, and *blooie!* I must have passed out because the next thing I remember is hearing the buzzer and you charging to the rescue."

"I'm going to call a doctor." I reached for the phone.

"Don't, Steve. Honest, I'm all right."

I guess I sat there for a couple of seconds with my arm outstretched, before it dawned on me what was wrong.

The fish bowl was missing.

It hit Bertha at the same time and her beautiful eyes widened. "Now why," she asked, "would anyone want to steal those poor fish?"

"No one stole them," Al said, coming back into the bedroom like an actor on cue. "They're in the kitchen, nice and snug in a milk bottle. But the bowl's busted, and the sand and other junk is scattered all over the sink.

"And, it really looks as though someone has an extra set of your keys. I wonder what he was searching for?"

A couple of loose items clicked into place and I looked at Bertha. I kept looking at her, and thought, "To hell with the insurance dough."

I got off the bed. "I've got an idea."

"I know," Al said. "I can spot that gleam in your eyes a mile off. Which is why I came along for a cup of coffee."

The morning sun was streaming through the bedroom window

when they brought Charles Hava in.

Bertha had taken a shower and I had got a can of solvent, and between the two of us we managed to get rid of most of the adhesive-goo plastered on her skin.

Now she was sitting up in bed, wearing the bedjacket I'd bought for her last birthday, and eating the breakfast I'd fixed.

Charles Hava stood at the foot of the bed, wedged neatly between Al Clark and a uniformed policeman.

Al was talking. "You're a cooked goose, Hava. Try and explain how Steve West's key book got in your pocket."

"I've already told you I didn't know who they belonged to. I picked them up after I left you at the morgue. It was a natural thing to put them in my pocket; I'd quite forgotten about them when you burst in on me this morning and began employing gestapo tactics."

"You," I said, "are a cockeyed liar. "You took them from me after you slugged me in Robert's hotel room. Before that you'd forced him to tell where he'd hidden the pearl necklace—and then you murdered him. I don't imagine you enjoyed waiting after you phoned here and said you were Roberts. But you had to take the chance, because—like the average person—the only way you know of getting past a locked door is with a key."

"You're spouting a lot of nonsense!"

"Am I? Roberts told you he'd hidden the necklace in a fish bowl which I'd taken to my office. So you went there, after slugging me for my keys, and ransacked the place. When you couldn't find it, you went home. Don't imagine you got there much before the officer who was sent to bring you to the morgue."

Hava appealed to Al. "Must I listen to this madman?"

"Let him keep on talking," Al said. "It sounds pretty interesting so far."

"Then," I continued, "when we left the morgue, you heard me tell Lieutenant Clark my wife had taken the fish bowl home. So you hustled right over, bound and gagged her, and played buried treasure again. But still without any luck."

Hava sneered, "You seem to forget the necklace is insured. Why should I do anything foolish in order to get it back?"

"This is the way I figure it, Hava. Stop me if I'm wrong."

He stared at me without saying anything, and I went on. "It's all so simple, once I realised there had never actually been a robbery."

"No? You mean the necklace just walked away by itself?"

"Something like that. The whole deal was a put-up job between you and Roberts.

"But you botched it right from the beginning. Because anyone who could crack a safe as neatly as yours was supposed to have been, would never be stupid enough to leave a fingerprint."

"I haven't the vaguest notion what you're talking about," Hava said.

"Keep on listening and it'll come back," Al told him.

My mouth was as dry as a sun-baked blotter, but this was no time to stop.

"You either opened the safe yourself or gave Roberts the combination. Probably the latter, because it would give you a chance to establish an alibi. Anyway, Roberts got the necklace, made certain all his prints were wiped off, and left the safe door open so you could scream for the police.

"But that's where you got a bit too cagey. You had the jewel case ready—Roberts could have handled it while the two of you were discussing the plan—and you put it in the open safe before calling the police."

"Why?" The question came from Bertha. She blinked and took another bite of toast.

"Because," I answered, "he wanted an ace in case Roberts tried to blackmail him later on."

"Nonsense!" Hava snapped.

"Uh-uh. The only trouble was that your booby-trap backfired. When Roberts found out about that print, he began to wonder why. Your original plan had been to defraud the insurance company. But when Roberts began to wonder why you needed an extra club over his head, it didn't take him long to discover he had a joker that topped your ace.

"Which is why he dreamt up that fish yarn to get me—without being aware of the reason—to hold the necklace while he put the squeeze on you."

"That's quite a speech," Hava sneered. "You ought to have your head examined."

"No reason," I said. "I only got beaned twice. Once by Roberts to lend credulity to his story. And once by you to get my keys."

Hava sneered. "You've got a beautiful theory—but it isn't worth a damn without concrete evidence."

"The necklace is evidence," I said.

"You said the necklace wasn't in the fish bowl."

"It wasn't. Roberts simply put it in a paper bag and poured fish food over it. You'd have saved a lot of bother for yourself, if you'd thought to look behind my office file cases."

Hava shrugged his shoulders. "So you've saved the insurance company some money. But you still haven't any motive for my killing Roberts."

"Plenty of motive," I said, "with a necklace as phoney as you are."

"And," Al pointed out, "we'll darn soon find out what you did with the real one."

"All right," Hava began to fold. "I'll admit I tried to swindle the insurance company. But you can't prove I'm a murderer."

"Roberts fingered you himself," I said. "He lived long enough to scrawl your initial with his own blood. Too bad you didn't check the bed sheet while you were waiting for me to show up."

It figured, too. That wavery slanted line could have been meant for the cross-bar on an H as well as an N.

"Besides," Al drove another nail into the coffin, "there's a bit of material under one of Roberts' nails that I'm certain matches a tear in your glove. An examination will probably show dried blood on your clothing. And you'll be surprised at what else we'll discover once we start looking."

Hava played dumb right to the end.

Because he decided this was the time to make a break for the door. Al tucked him to sleep with a punch that made me feel 100 percent better.

After they carted him away, Bertha got out of bed and went to the kitchen to make us some coffee.

"You're quite an orator," Al told me. "Though our friend certainly didn't get any enjoyment from your speech."

"I'll feel a lot better when I get that cheque from the insurance company," Then I grinned. "But I wish I didn't have to use my head so much to earn a buck."

"Steve! Steve!" Bertha's excited shouts rang through the apartment. "We're parents!" She burst into the bedroom, milk bottle in hand, and placed it gently on the night table.

"See?" Bertha pointed at the three goldfish, huddled serenely near the bottom. "They've given birth."

I looked at the newborn fish. I looked at Al.

He held out a hand.

I shook it solemnly and said, "Congratulations, Uncle."

THE Fast Shuffle

JAMES PATTINSON

BLAKE WAS FEELING very far from pleased. He could not for the life of him understand why London had sent a man like Devon on this assignment. Frank Devon was too young; he could not possibly have had the necessary experience. Even his trench coat and green felt hat were new. He looked like some kid fresh from college playing the secret agent part. Beside him Blake felt old and tired. He was cold too; the wind blowing across Templehof airfield had ice in it; it penetrated to the bones.

"Nice day," Devon said.

Blake looked at him sourly. "What's nice about it?"

They climbed into the Volkswagen and Blake drove to his flat in the Kurtstrasse. The flat was on the second floor of a plain concrete building; there was nothing attractive about it; it was just somewhere to live.

"Nice quarters," Devon said. He seemed to be overworking the adjective.

Blake closed the door. "That's not what I'd've called it. They don't come much uglier, but a man needs a place to sleep, a hole to crawl into."

He went into the kitchen and started making coffee, not so much for Devon's benefit as for his own; the cold was still in his bones. He really was getting old.

"You had a good flight?"

He wasn't interested in whether Devon had had a good flight or a bad one. It was the kind of thing you asked automatically.

"Good enough."

"They briefed you of course."

"Don't they always?"

There was something faintly mocking in the way Devon said it, in the smile twitching his lips. Damn him, Blake thought; does he think he knows it all?

He poured coffee, gave Devon a cup. They sat down. Devon took out a packet of English cigarettes and offered one to Blake.

They smoked.

"I'm not what you expected, am I?" Devon said.

Blake let the smoke drift out of his lungs. It soothed him.

"I gave up expecting anything years ago."

"Let us say then that I'm not the type you would have chosen."

"You can say what you like. You're the one they sent."

"And now you're stuck with me."

"Yes, I'm stuck with you. What do you want to know?"

"Everything about Neusel. What he looks like, where he lives, what his likely movements are."

Blake went to a plain wooden desk in the corner of the room, unlocked a drawer and took out a photograph. He handed the photograph to Devon.

"That's Neusel."

The photograph showed a thick-set man of about fifty with blunt features and thinning blond hair.

"Looks harmless," Devon said.

"They usually do."

"Now the rest."

"He lives in a flat on a side street off Stalinallee. Rostockstrasse. Number ninety-five."

"Alone?"

"There's a sister who looks after him, but she's away for a couple of weeks visiting relations in Frankfurt."

"Activities?"

"Varied. He's on several committees. On Friday he'll be one of a bunch of officials welcoming a Russian trade delegation. On Saturday he visits a boot and shoe factory to give the workers a pep talk. On Sunday he'll be on the rostrum at a party rally—Here—" Blake passed a sheet of paper across to Devon. "I've written it all down. You'd better memorise it and then destroy the paper."

"Why does he have to be removed?" Devon asked.

Blake shrugged. "Ours not to reason why."

"You needn't quote the next line," Devon said. "It's not so hopeful."

"How are you planning to get across?"

"I am a British industrialist, touting machinery."

Blake looked at him in disbelief. "Anyone less like a British industrialist I have yet to see. I hope you don't make a muck of it."

Devon grinned. "You don't need to worry about that. I

won't."

"I think London should have sent someone older."

"This is a young man's job. You veterans don't have the monopoly of know-how. I could handle this with my eyes shut."

Devon's conceit was insufferable. Blake felt resentment burning up inside him. "No doubt you think I'm practically senile."

"I didn't say that."

Blake got up from his chair, walked to the window and stared down on the Kurtstrasse. There was a thin sleet falling and the sky was grey. Traffic flowed past endlessly.

"You've decided on the method?"

"I never decide on the method beforehand. I leave room for manoeuvre."

Confound him, Blake thought; he talks as if he'd done this a hundred times. But he can't have. Not at his age.

He said without turning: "How old are you, Devon?"

"Twenty-eight."

"You look younger."

"A girl told me last week I looked older. She was nineteen. Maybe the view depends on where you're standing."

Blake sensed the mockery again. Devon was taunting him. That introduction of the girl was an added twist, an implication that he, Blake, was past that kind of thing also.

Or was he reading too much into Devon's words? Was he allowing his own bitterness and frustration and disillusionment to warp his judgment? Perhaps Devon was just trying to be friendly. Blake made an effort to eliminate the acid from his tone when he spoke again.

"Well, I wish you luck."

"I don't need luck. Luck is for bunglers."

"We all need it," Blake said.



Blake watched from a distance as Devon went through the check-point into East Berlin. There had been no reason for him to be present; it could even have been unwise. In fact Devon himself had hinted as much.

"I'm not a kid going to school for the first time."

Blake had gone all the same. He wanted to be sure that Devon got across safely. Apparently there was no trouble. It would have

been surprising if there had been. Blake felt relieved, nevertheless.

Afterwards he drove back to the flat and made more coffee. He smoked. There was nothing more he could do now; it was just a question of waiting. Waiting for Devon to come back.

Four days passed slowly for Blake. He tried to immerse himself in routine, not to think about Devon. But his nerves were frayed. There was something about this job that he did not like.

He found himself thinking of the victim, of Hermann Neusel, a man of fifty, soon to be eliminated—such a clean, technical term—by a man of twenty-eight. And it was with Neusel that his sympathies lay, with Neusel that he felt a certain kinship. Why? Because he himself was of Neusel's generation and felt a natural antipathy for any younger man who presumed to set himself up as superior? Perhaps. Whatever the reason, there was undoubtedly a sneaking hope that Devon would fail, that he would be killed instead. Yet Blake knew that this would not happen, and he called himself a fool for even entertaining a wish that it might, since for him it would be the worst possible outcome of the affair.

It just showed that he was getting past this sort of work, that he ought to retire, get back to a sane kind of life instead of this constant subterfuge, this lying and cheating and double-crossing which every state seemed to believe was necessary for its preservation. Well, perhaps after this job he would be able to do just that.

Devon turned up again at the end of the four days, looking as young and well-dressed and conceited as ever. Perhaps even a shade more conceited. Blake felt the resentment burning again, but he made himself civil and gave Devon coffee.

"So you managed it."

Devon sprawled in a chair, relaxed, pleased with himself. "It was a piece of cake. You just have to know what you're doing. These Commies, they're pretty thick in the head really."

"And you're not, of course?"

"Do I look as if I am? You heard about it?"

"Could I help it? It's been on the radio, in the papers. Leading Communist of the old guard shot dead in his home. Reactionary plot unmasked. Dozens of arrests. They're really going to town on this one."

"It's as I said. They're dim."

"Maybe," Blake said. "And maybe not."

He took Devon to the airport and was glad to be rid of him. Much more of that young man would have been more than he

could stand. He would have liked to have pricked the bubble of Devon's conceit; and the galling part was that he could have done it so easily but was forced to deny himself the pleasure.

Even Devon's parting words were an added goad. "Don't imagine you old codgers have all the brains. We've got some too. And it's possible that ours are more supple. Our arteries haven't begun to harden."

Wulff arrived soon after Blake got back to his flat. Wulff was a seedy little man with greasy black hair and rimless glasses. He had the martyred look of a sufferer from chronic indigestion. Blake disliked Wulff, but you couldn't pick and choose whom you dealt with. Not in this profession.

Wulff pulled a thick buff envelope from an inner pocket and laid it down on Blake's table.

"I think you will find the money is correct."

"I'm sure I shall," Blake said. "Your people stick to their bargains."

Wulff smiled a rather twisted smile. "How else could mutual trust be maintained? We are all in the same business, Herr Blake, even if we do work on opposite sides of the fence."

"Or wall."

"As you say—wall."

"You're satisfied?"

"Oh, yes. Highly so. Your agent did a very neat job. Such a young man too."

"It was a young man's job."

"And he is no doubt very proficient."

"He thinks so."

And of course Devon had every reason for thinking so. Everything had gone according to plan. He would never know that it had all been made easy for him. For the fact was that the Communists themselves had decided that Hermann Neusel had outlived his usefulness. They wanted him out of the way, but they could not remove him because, however unacceptable Neusel might now be to the upper stratum, to the rank and file of the Party he was still a hero, one of the old guard.

In this situation contact had been made with Blake through the medium of Wulff. And Blake, at a suitable price, had agreed to co-operate by letting fall certain hints in the right quarter, pulling certain strings and so on. As a result of all these manoeuvres Neusel was now a dead hero instead of a live one; and far more useful to his former colleagues that way.

They had of course had to allow Devon to get away. It would have been pleasant to have had a public trial of the reactionary capitalist assassin, but Devon might have said the wrong things. It was better to play safe.

Blake would have liked to tell Devon the whole story, if only to take some of the wind out of that conceited young whippersnapper's sails; but that was out of the question. It was a pity.

"It has been a pleasure working with you," Wulff said. "If at any time you should require my assistance—"

"Good-bye," Blake said. He ushered Wulff out and hoped he would never see him again.



Devon came in soft-footed and closed the door silently behind him. Blake was startled.

"You! I thought you'd be half-way to London by now."

"No," Devon said.

"Was the flight cancelled?"

"The flight wasn't cancelled. Just my reservation. You should have seen me on to the plane. It was careless of you. You're getting old."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Blake was beginning to be annoyed and just faintly uneasy. There was something wrong here, very wrong indeed.

The envelope was still lying on the table. Devon picked it up.

"So Wulff delivered, eh? I thought he would. In some ways they're very honest. Well, I don't think you'll be needing this."

Blake made a move towards Devon. "Now see here—"

A gun appeared in Devon's right hand. With a kind of professional reflex Blake identified it as a .38 calibre Colt Super automatic. No toy.

"Don't come any nearer," Devon said, and his voice was very calm, very cold, very menacing. "Do you know something? I think you really are too old for this game. In fact I think this is where you retire from business."

Blake stared at the automatic and could not move. He had been wrong about Devon. Devon might be young but he was no fool. In fact he was a very smooth operator. He was likely to go far in his chosen profession.

Blake just had time to make these reflections before Devon shot him—neatly, as a good operator should—through the heart.

NEW BOOKS

JOHN de SOLA

non-fiction

MY OWN CASE, Walter Jones (*Angley Books*, 21s.)

Ex-Detective Chief Superintendent Jones, for 13 years head of the Hampshire C.I.D., was voted the 'Detective of the Year' by the Crime Writers' Association. He made arrests in each of the 41 murder cases he investigated, and deserves his title. His story is modestly, and graphically, told; a number of fascinating cases are revealed from the working side for the first time. The Montagu case is one which the author snaps back (and rightly) at those who belittled the police handling of the investigation. One of the better autobiographies.

fiction

BOND AFFAIR, The, Ed: Oreste del Buono & Umberto Eco
(*Macdonald*, 18s.)

Eight Italian writers deal with various aspects of James Bond and everybody seems to take everything very seriously. The book is sound and really well done but, with all due respect to its writers, the Bond affair is getting out of hand when this puzzling form of veneration, this deep probing into motives and actions, goes on. Personally, I consider Bond the least pleasant of all the modern espionage heroes with an outlook and a creed I would hate to find in a son of mine.

BUSY BODY, The, Donald E. Westlake (*Boardman*, 16s.)

A cheerful and madly amiable story in which a gangster is buried with a mass of heroin in his jacket and, for all the courtesy due to the dead, the matter can't be left like that. A happy medley of people are involved in a chaos of confusion which is both funny and fast-moving.

DEADLY LOVERS, The, Anthony Gordon (Boardman, 13s. 6d.)

A private eye story in which the lovers hire Frank Richmond to find a missing relative (glimpsed in a live TV programme). An obvious investigation until some odd and remarkable facts come out, concerning one of the lovers . . . a slick, fast-moving and extremely well told story.

DEATH WALKS IN SHADOW, Lee Thayer (John Long 15s.)

One of the old timers of detective fiction, Lee Thayer's Peter Clancy was one of the favourites of my youth. And in this new adventure he is as adroit as ever, investigating the murder of the owner of huge Californian vineyards. Miss Thayer's touch is deft and the story highly enjoyable though, which shook me, Clancy . . . but read it to the end, particularly the end.

DOUBLE AGENT, The, John Bingham (Gollancz, 21s.)

I did not like the last Bingham adventure at all, but in this he seems at the top of his old form again. The story is about a British agent Reginald Sugden, and, generally, the need for a Russian defector for certain purposes. But in getting that defector things turn out very differently than they should have been. This is realistic, expert and extremely exciting.

EVIL THAT MEN DO, The, Hugh Pentecost (Boardman, 16s.)

Told from the viewpoint of the Beaumont Hotel's public relations man, the story of a very rich woman and her friends and the rascality they get up to. The Beaumont, and its director, are the heroes in a crime story both well told and packed with more excitement than such a plot would suggest. The author is not only a good writer but so deft in his technique that this fiction almost reads like fact.

MURDER HAS NO FRIENDS, Bradshaw Jones (John Long, 15s.)

A neat, zestful thriller which concerns the bodies found of dead girls with numbers written on their backs. Chief Superintendent Carson is called in to sort out what seems a wholly crazy mystery, inspired with a genuine touch of evil. The ending is both ironic and highly satisfactory. Recommended as out of the ordinary.

NO SENTIMENT IN MURDER, Marten Cumberland
(Hutchinson, 21s.)

Our old and delightful friend Saturnin Dax appears in his 34th book, as beguiling as ever. This time the problem is in the matter of Victor Limayrac, who seems to escape from a series of accidents which are highly suspect, then he is killed and the mystery begins, the mystery of the anonymous letters and the very lovely Madame Limayrac. Marten Cumberland is as entertaining as always and, despite a sense of time suspended in his stories, enormously readable.

PICK AND RUN, John Farrimond (Harrap, 18s.)

A story of a crime in a sense, but more dependent on its brilliant picture of a mining town than anything else. Its hero, Joe Baker, is one of a number of people who seek lumps of coal in the dirt discarded by mine workings, which the Coal Board bars. Then some missing detonators bring security men and police into the story, with unexpected results. A raw, rough and fierce novel well worth reading for both its vigour and the ugly world it portrays.

THE BUSY BODY

Donald E. Westlake

"Oh joy! . . . here's a merry, black, amoral little gangster comedy, with The Organisation trying to trace a corpse wearing a suit lined with half-a-million dollars' worth of heroin . . . Really funny."—PETER PHILLIPS, *The Sun*.

16s.

THE DEADLY LOVERS

Anthony Graham

It was a simple, routine investigation. So private investigator Frank Richmond thought—but that was before he found a murderer at work and realised that his lovely wife, Vivien, was even more dangerously involved than himself.

13s. 6d.

Mysteries from T.V. BOARDMAN

SERPENT'S SMILE, The, Olga Hesky (John Long, 21s.)

Opens with the victim on a morgue table and leads into a fast-paced mystery story concerning a nasty weapon of war. Police Inspector Tami Shimoni (a well drawn character) finds himself up against an organisation both dangerous and terrifying, and succeeds in winning the trick and a girl friend. The background, Israel, is wholly new and the picture of the Israeli police well done. Warmly recommended, a book that deserves a far better jacket than it has.

SKY PROBE, Philip McCutchan (Harrap, 18s.)

Commander Shaw again, this time up against a plot directed at a U.S. space craft which not only threatens the space crew manning it but the prestige of the United States. Another danger is of global war which, and, in keeping with the generous space background of the story, the plot moves swiftly across most of the civilised world. In his eighth adventure Commander Shaw is better than ever, and so is Mr. McCutchan. An exciting book, filled with incident.

A SCATTER OF PAPERBACKS

ACCOUNT UNSETTLED, Georges Simenon (Penguin, 3s. 6d.)

A slow-paced, typical Simenon where the hearts of the characters are as important as the mystery surrounding them. Most readable, and brilliant.

ANGEL ESQUIRE, Edgar Wallace (Tallis, 4s.)

The plot deals with a safe containing two million pounds and clues to its opening hidden in a riddle-rhyme. A crackling yarn combining humour and excitement.

ANXIOUS CONSPIRATOR, The, Michael Underwood (Corgi, 3s. 6d.)

The highly realistic plot concerns the selling of forged travellers' cheques, which Detective-Superintendent Manton has to solve. Speedy and readable.

BLACK ROOM, The, Christopher Short (Four Square, 3s. 6d.)

In diary form this one is about a German archduke who builds a room without regard to cost for a highly curious purpose. A mystery of a sort, in documentary style.

Edgar Wallace,

EDUCATED EVANS

Never did Edgar Wallace draw more richly on his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Turf, and his interest in the people who follow racing, than in the creation of the optimistic, irrepressible Educated Evans, the self-styled 'Profit and Champion Turf Adviser'. The Educated Man is one of the great creations of comic literature.

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be at your local bookseller*

Tallis Press, Ltd., 4, Bradmore Road, Oxford.

BOOK OF BOND, The, Lt.-Col. William Tanner (*Pan*, 3s. 6d.)

Every man his own Bond, a do-it-yourself book, either written dead-pan, or the sort of book that makes me say 'Ugh!' Readable, keeping handy a sense of the absurd.

CALAMITY TOWN, Ellery Queen (*Penguin*, 4s. 6d.)

The great man in deepest Wrightsville, renting Calamity House and pitchforked into mayhem, mystery, and murder; 24 years old and fresh enough to be written yesterday.

DEAD CALM, Charles Williams (*Pan*, 3s. 6d.)

A superlative tension story of a newly married couple who pick up an apparently wrecked mariner. They land in a situation packed with horror and murder.

DEADMAN'S HILL, Lord Russell of Liverpool (*Tallis*, 4s.)

The Hanratty case surveyed and dissected with masterly skill by a brilliant lawyer. For or against the verdict, you should read this to know the real facts.



Some EWMM Contributors . . .

Alistair Allen was born in Scotland, and served in World War One. Is (under his proper name) a doctor in general practice, living in his native land.

Morris Cooper. A prolific short story writer, particularly in mystery magazines. American-born, he lives in San Francisco.

Miriam Allen deFord. Born Philadelphia; lives in San Francisco. Her book, *The Overbury Affair*, won M.W.A.'S 'Edgar.' Popular Mystery and fact writer; publishes translations she makes from Latin originals.

C. M. MacLeod. Basically an artist, Charlotte MacLeod is Canadian; many of her pictures have been bought for private collections. She went into advertising then into writing. Lives and works in Brookline, Massachusetts. Is a highly capable graphologist.

James Pattinson. Born Norfolk, 1915. Served in Maritime Royal Artillery, World War Two. Has written a dozen novels, and is a playwright.

Paul Tabori. Born Budapest, 1905; educated Switzerland and Germany. Prolific author of many books, plays, films, TV presentations. Hon. Sec. International Writers' Guild.

Geoffrey Whiteley is 32. Born Lancashire. Has freelanced widely, broadcast extensively as a news-reporter for the BBC. Worked on several newspapers, and now attached to *The Guardian* newspaper.

ENTER MURDERERS, Henry Slesar (*Penguin*, 3s. 6d.)

Once you are over the none-too-beguiling start, this develops into a gripper, a mystery where nothing is exactly what it seems. Well written.

HANDS OF CAIN, The, Martin Thomas (*Mayflower*, 3s. 6d.)

An early *EWMM* contributor writes a shock packed thriller which is certainly not for the nervous. Thoroughly readable, with a large grain of salt. (Original).

MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E., The (*Souvenir Press/Four Square*, 3s. 6d.)

Sub-titled *ABC of Espionage*, this is about fictional characters—at least 'introduced' by Illya Kuryakin and Napoleon Solo—with a lot of non-fiction information. Very slick.

MEN WHO EXPLAINED MIRACLES, The, John Dickson Carr (*Penguin*: 3s. 6d.)

Not the best of titles for seven short stories in their author's best

DEADMAN'S HILL

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The murder of Michael Gregsten at Deadman's Hill on the A6 in 1961 resulted in a long trial at which James Hanratty was sentenced to death, and hanged. Controversy has raged ever since, asking—

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SQUARE EMERALD, The, Edgar Wallace (*Pan*, 3s. 6d.)

A dead man on a common with the emerald in his hands, and a beautiful girl detective . . . one of E.W.'s best, with more psychology than usual, and a magnificent plot.

STORIES MY MOTHER NEVER TOLD ME, Alfred Hitchcock (*Pan*, 3s. 6d.)

And not surprising, either. A flock of mainly horror yarns of which *An Invitation to the Hunt* and *Witch's Money* are top shockers. A first-rate collection.

E W M M

February issue includes

An unpublished
Edgar Wallace

Evelyn Waugh

Bill Knox

Ralph Sallon

and many other top-level stories and features

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 Miser of Lyons

I was most interested in your study of the miser of Lyons—Crépin-Crépin [October]. I have never seen this case written about before, and though it occurred at the beginning of the 18th century, I heard of it in my own childhood in Lyons as if it were yesterday. I had an old peasant 'Nanny' who told me the better parts of Crépin-Crépin's life on frequent occasions, and, when I failed to go to sleep as ordered, the warning that Crépin-Crépin 'will come for you if you are not a good boy' never failed to frighten me!

Your true crime series is most interesting. You are to be congratulated on bringing so many 'little known' murders to the attention of your readers.

M. H. LAWRENCE.

London, N.8.

Correction

May I point out that in your November issue the players appearing in the scene from *The Dark Eyes of London* [Famous Edgar Wallace Films] are incorrectly identified as *Wilfred Walter* and *Greta Gynt*. The actor is, in fact, *Bela Lugosi* and not *Walter* (who portrayed the mute 'monster', *Jake*), although in this photograph *Lugosi* is shown in his disguise as *Dearborn*, at the *Hostel of the Blind*, who is revealed in the climax to be the same person as *Orloff*.

An interesting gimmick in this production was that the director decided to dub an English actor's voice in the place of *Lugosi's* in the *Dearborn* scenes in order to complete the disguise, as *Lugosi's* guttural Hungarian accent—which he was never able to lose—would otherwise have been an immediate giveaway. I believe the English actor was *O. B. Clarence*.

RICHARD GORDON.

New York, N.Y.

- EWMM stands corrected, and apologises.

Len Deighton

Though I am an admiring fan of Len Deighton, and much enjoyed Ralph Sallon's brilliant caricature [November], I was puzzled that 'Len' should be cooking and with two cats watching him. Is there something significant in this?

RONALD KINOY.

London, W.14.

- *Len Deighton is an expert chef, and his two cats usually keep an eye on everything he undertakes.*

Crime & Detection

I am a devoted reader of *EWMM* and have been since it began. I am also a reader of your 'stable companion', *Crime & Detection* which I consider a remarkable, even brilliant production.

But I have noticed in the past occasional mentions of *EWMM* in other papers and, recently, an extract from an article in *Crime & Detection* published in a newspaper. I always thought copyright did not allow others to publish from your work.

DENNIS SHAW.

Gorleston, Norfolk.

- *Copyright, briefly, is a general protection, but it is customary (and gratifying!) when extracts from this magazine, or Crime & Detection, are published with the usual acknowledgements. No editor is ever adverse to having reasonable quotations from his publication used by a contemporary.*

Bouquets

The Night of the Jackal [November] was real old time Sax Rohmer, the genuine, lovable hokum—splendid! In the same issue *A Candle for the Killing* and *The Richmond Atrocity* were very well done.

PETER FRANCIS.

Pinner, Middx.

I thought *Girl in Flight* [October] lacked the 'bite' of many stories, but it had a charm and a writing style which made it a joy to read . . . what a very clever story . . . was *Throw Time A False Coin*, also in that number, but I thought *So Dark the Rose* was plain gloomy . . . when I turned to the *Who's Who* section and read that its author, Christine Hickman, is 21 I was not surprised. These young writers *do* get so worked up about things older people take in their stride, don't they!

MICHAEL E. M. VICTOR-TROTT.

Chiclana, Spain

I had forgotten Edgar Wallace's *The Devil Doctor* and much enjoyed it in my November number; *The Night of the Jackal* left me cold, though it was neat. Ralph Sallon's 'Len Deighton' was a gem and so was the Editor's study of the short crime story. The *Second Time Round* series ties up beautifully with the *Period Piece*. *EWMM* is so much more original than any other crime magazine.

D. M. STURGE.

Ffestiniog, Wales.

Having been abroad I am just catching up on *EWMM*, but must hasten to congratulate Michael Gilbert on *The Conspirators* [August]. I thought it was really an outstanding and remarkable story. I consider him easily our leading crime writer today.

J. D. R. KINLEY.

Halesowen, Birmingham.

FAMOUS EDGAR WALLACE FILMS

(see back cover)

THE FEATHERED SERPENT

Columbia (1934)

Director: P. Maclean Rogers

Ella Crewe (Enid Stamp-Taylor); Joe Farmer (D. A. Clarke-Smith); Peter Dewin (Tom Helmore); Inspector Clarke (Vincent Holman); Daphne Olroyd (Molly Fisher); Paula Ricks (Isir Baker); Leicester Crewe (Evelyn Roberts); Harry Hugg (Moore Marriott); Gregory Beale (O. B. Clarence).

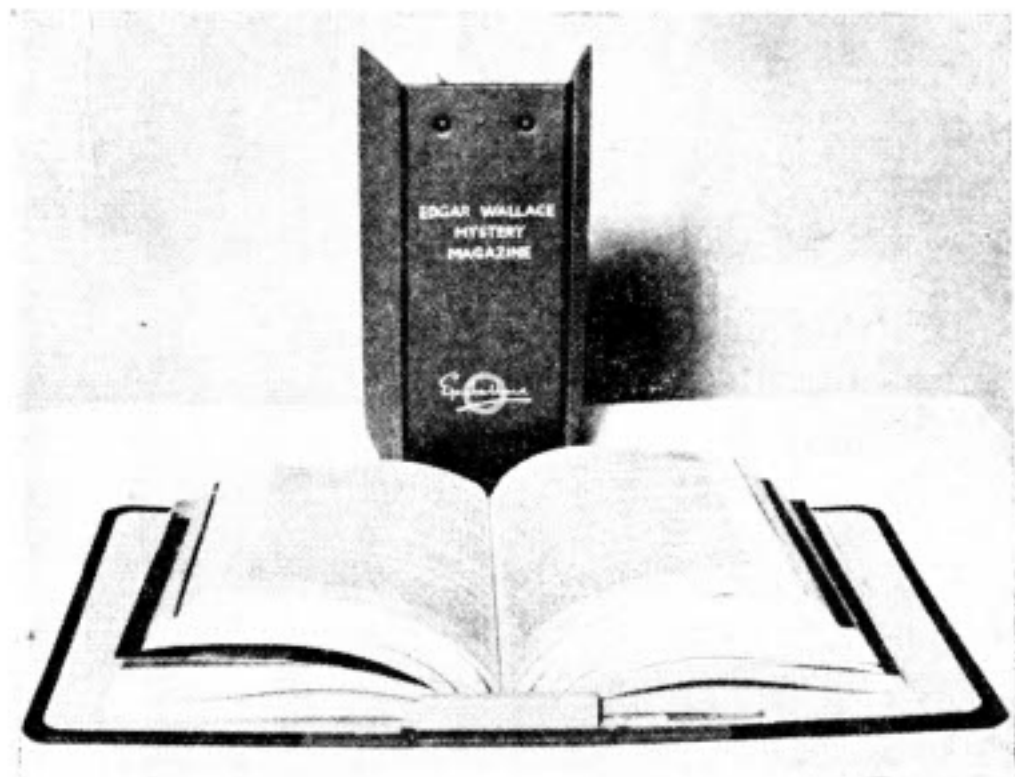


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