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Edgar Wallace

MYSTERY MAGAZINE



EDGAR WALLACE

Warm and Dry

RAFAEL SABATINI

The Open Door

RACING RESULT

PLUS SEVEN NEW STORIES

and

JOHN BOLAND

The Outsiders

March, 1967

No. 32 Vol. 4

Edgar Wallace

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Edward Wallace.

EDGAR WALLACE

Mystery Magazine

Vol. IV No. 32

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Mystery, Crime, and Detection for the Aficionado

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Cartoons by MACIEK

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NOW AND AGAIN the gravest of publications is liable to take time off to tell its readers how wonderful it thinks it is, or, more sensibly, produce proof to back up the claim.

To beat a drum is a human weakness not peculiar to the press, and probably—in moderation—one of the most harmless and reasonable of weaknesses. *EWMM* is no more an island than any

Briefly

other publication, and recently it took a look at how it was doing in supplying itself with material for some refined boasting. The record is not at all a bad one, for, as readers

will be only too well aware, we published some blunt articles on the Hanratty case which called for an enquiry, and readers wrote, for over a year, *demanding* that enquiry.

EWMM therefore considers itself as one of the instruments whose proddings produced results. Just recently the Home Secretary ordered a high Scotland Yard officer to re-investigate aspects of the Hanratty case for his consideration.

In reviewing crime books *EWMM* reckons it must be one of the best in this country when it comes to coverage since it reviews over 300 crime books annually and, we are told, many readers in far places use our reviews as guidance for books they order from London. Now we can claim our reviewer has a gift for picking winners with prescience. In our September, 1966 issue, our review of *A Long Way to Shiloh*, by Lionel Davidson, said: 'A book so good it ought to be 1966's crime novel of the year, for I cannot imagine anyone writing its superior'.

In London last month critics from leading national newspapers and magazines met to choose the recipient of the Crime Writers' Association's Award for the best crime novel of 1966, and, as you will have guessed, selected *A Long Way to Shiloh*.

Now we have the bit between our editorial teeth, we can think of other things worth boasting about, such as the brilliant new writers we have found, the brilliant new stories we have published. But a statistical note seemed the best one on which to finish this egotistical chronicle. We give you for our selling price almost the wordage of a new novel, but with far more variety, and, every year, *EWMM* offers you well over half a million words of material so good that it feels justified in claiming to be one of the very best crime fiction magazines in the world . . .

The Editor

Edgar Wallace.

Warm and Dry

*It was silly of Nippy
to talk so much, and
sillier still to talk
about Juggy*

I WENT DOWN to see Superintendent Minter just before the election began. He heard that I was going to participate in the fray with a visible sneer on his homely face. "Politics!" he said. "Good Lord! At your time of life! Well, well, well! I've known a lot of fellows who took up that game, but nobody that ever made it pay, except Nippy the Nose, who used to travel the country and burgle the candidates' rooms when they were out addressing meetings.

"You know a lot about the hooks and the getabits of life, and you know that they're all specialists. If a man's a lob-crawler—"

"What's a lob crawler? I've forgotten."

The superintendent shook his head sadly. "You're forgetting everything," he said. "I suppose it's these politics. A lob-crawler's a man who goes into a little shop on his hands and knees, passes round the counter and pinches the till. There's not much of it nowadays, but once a lob-crawler, always a lob-crawler. If you go on the whizz—and I don't suppose you want me to tell you that whizzing is pocket-picking—you spend your life on the whizz. If you're a burglar, you're always a burglar. I've never yet met a burglar who was also a con man. That's the criminal's trouble: he's got no originality, and thank the Lord for it; If they didn't catch themselves we'd never catch 'em. Nippy was an exception. He'd try everything once. If you went into the Records at Scotland Yard and turned up his M.O. card, which means—"

"I know what a *modus operandi* card is," I said.

The superintendent nodded his head approvingly.

"That's right. Don't let these politics put business out of your mind. As I say, if you turned up his M.O. card you'd have a shock. He's been convicted of larceny, burglary, obtaining money by a trick, pocket-picking, luggage pinching—everything except blackmail. It's a funny thing that none of the regulars will ever admit they've committed blackmail, and there's not one of them that wouldn't if he had the chance and the intelligence.

"I used to know Nippy; in fact I got two of his convictions. Nothing upsets a police officer more than these general practitioners, because we're always looking for specialists. We know there are about six classes of burglars. There's a class that never attempts to break into a live shop, by which I mean a shop where people are living in the rooms upstairs; and there's a class that never goes into a dead joint which, you will remember, is a lock-up shop with nobody on the premises. And, naturally, when we get a burglary with any peculiar features, we go through the M.O. cards and pick out a dozen men who are likely to have done the job. After we've sorted 'em out and found which of 'em were in stir and which of 'em are out of the neighbourhood, we'll pull in the remainder one by one and give them the once over.

"So that, when there was a real big bust in Brockley, and we went over the M.O. cards, we never dreamt of looking for Nippy, because he hadn't done that sort of thing before; and we wouldn't have found him, but we got the office from a fence in Islington that Nippy had tried to sell him a diamond brooch. When you get a squeak from a fence it's because he has offered too low a price for stolen property, and the thief has taken it elsewhere.

"Nippy got a stretch, and the next time he came into our hands it was for something altogether different—trying to persuade a Manchester cotton man to buy a tenth share in a Mexican oilfield. Nippy could have got away with the loot, but unfortunately he knew nothing about geography, and when he said that Mexico was in South Africa the cotton man was a little suspicious and looked up the map.

"Nippy was a nice fellow, always affable, generally well-dressed, and a great favourite with the ladies. When I say 'ladies', I use the term loosely.

"Nippy used to do a bit of nosing, too, but I didn't know he was making a regular business of it. Now, a nose is a very useful fellow. Without a nose, the police wouldn't be able to find half the criminals that come through their hands. I suppose I'm being

vulgar and ought to call them police informers, but nose has always been good enough for me, because, naturally, I'm a man without any refinement.

"I happened to be walking down Piccadilly towards Hyde Park Corner when I saw Nippy. He tipped his hat and was going on when I claimed him. 'Good morning, Sooper,' he said. 'I'm just on my way to the office. I'm going straight now: I'm an agent, and everything's warm and dry. I've opened a little business in Wardour Street,' he said.

"Nippy had opened lots of businesses, mostly with a chisel and a three-piece jemmy, but I gather that he had opened this one by paying the rent in advance. All criminals tell you they're going straight. Usually they're going straight from one prison to another. There are exceptions, but I've never heard of 'em.

"We had a few minutes' conversation. He told me where his office was, and I promised to look him up. He was so happy about me calling that I thought he was lying, but when I dropped in a few days afterwards I found that he had a room on the third floor. I expected to find that he was the managing director of the Mountains on the Moon Exploration Company, or else the secretary of a new invention for getting gold out of the sea. It was a bit surprising to find his real name, Norman Ignatius Percival Young, on the glass panel. It was now that I found what he was agent for. He was standing in with the very fence who had given him away on his last conviction, and I suspected he was doing the same job. Anyway, he was full of information about various people, and he gave me a tip that afternoon to prove his—what's the word? Yes, *bona fides*—that's French, isn't it? I made a pretty good capture, a man called Juggy Jones, who did a lot of car pinching, and was in with a big crowd up at Shadwell; they took the cars, resprayed them and shipped them abroad.

"Anyway, Juggy was a very sensible man, and if ever a thief could be described as intelligent that man was Juggy. He didn't talk much. He was a big fellow, about six foot two, with a face as cheerful as the ace of spades. But if he didn't say much he did a lot of thinking. I took him out of a café, where he was having dinner with a lady friend, and we walked down to the station together and I charged him. He said nothing, but when he came up before the magistrate and heard the evidence and was committed for trial, he asked me to see him in his cell.

"'I shouldn't be at all surprised, Sooper,' he said, 'if I know the name of the man who shopped me.'

“ ‘And I shouldn’t be surprised either, Juggy,’ I said, ‘because you’ve known me for years.’

“But he shook his head and said nothing else. Somebody got at the witnesses for the Crown, and when they went into the box at the Old Bailey they gave the sort of evidence that wouldn’t bring about a conviction. It looked as if he was going to get an acquittal and something out of the poor box to compensate him for his wounded feelings, when the prosecuting counsel took a pretty strong line with one of the witnesses who, after he had changed his evidence three times, said just enough to convict Juggy on one count. He went down for a carpet. Am I being vulgar? Let me say he went down for six months; a very lucky man. If we could have convicted him on the other indictments he’d have been away for a long time. Naturally Nippy didn’t appear in court. I wondered what he was getting out of it. It was a long time afterwards that I found out that there was a quarrel between the two rings as to who the stuff should be shipped to, and Nippy had been put in to make the killing. He gave me one or two bits of information which were useful, but you could see that he was just acting for the fence. I made a few enquiries up Islington way, and I found out that whenever the police went to him to find out about stolen property he referred them to the gentlemen in Wardour Street who’d be able to tell them something.

“Now a thief who’s earning a regular living has never got enough money, and I was pretty certain that Nippy was doing something on the side, because he began to have his old prosperous look and attend the races. As a matter of fact, though I didn’t know it, he was working up a connection with a gang of luggage thieves. I found this out when he came on to my manor. I found him at a railway station acting in a suspicious manner, and I could have pinched him, but, being naturally very kind-hearted with all criminals if I haven’t enough evidence to get a conviction, I just warned him. Nippy was very hurt.

“ ‘Why, Sooper,’ he said, ‘I’ve got a good job. I’m warm and dry up in Wardour Street. Why should I lower myself to go back to my old and sinful life? I haven’t had a drink for three months, and I never pass the Old Bailey without taking off me hat to it.’

“ ‘There are two ways of being warm and dry, Nippy,’ I said. ‘One is to be honest, and the other is to get to Dartmoor, where I understand there is a fine system of central heating.’

“While this was going on, Juggy Jones came out of stir and I had a little chat with him.

"It's all right, Sooper," he said. "I'm going straight. I've had enough of the other game. How's Nippy—warm and dry?"

"Do you know him?" I asked.

"He thought a long time. 'I've heard about him,' he said.

"I should imagine he'd been doing a lot of thinking while he was in prison, and when I heard that he and Nippy had been seen together having a drink in the long bar, I thought it advisable to see Nippy and give him a few words of fatherly advice. But you couldn't tell anything to Nippy. He knew it all, and a lot more. He just smiled. 'Thank you, Sooper,' he said, 'but Juggy and I have always been good pals, and you couldn't wish to meet a nicer man.'

"According to his story, they had met by accident in the Haymarket. They had had a drink together. I think Nippy was a bit jealous of him, because he was one of the few crooks I've met who saved money. He had enough money, anyway, when he was at the Old Bailey to engage a good mouthpiece, and he'd got a little flat in Maida Vale. One of my men shadowed Nippy and found he was in the habit of calling there; so if Nippy disappeared and his right ear was found on the Thames Embankment, I knew where the rest of the body would be. Not that crooks are that kind: they never commit murder.

"I only heard the rest of the story in scraps and pieces. But so far as I can make out, Nippy had been trying to get the man into the luggage crowd, which was silly because, as I've said before, a man who knocks off cars doesn't knock off anything else. Juggy said he'd like to try the business, and he must have looked it over pretty thoroughly and taken an interest in it, because one day he sent for Nippy to come to his flat in Maida Vale, and put him on an easy job that came off and brought him about five hundred pounds. It's a simple trick. You have a car outside the station, and in it a little hand stamp and case of type. You hang about the cloakroom till you see a man coming along carrying a bag in and taking his ticket. You've got a little bag of your own, containing a few well-worn bricks wrapped up in your favourite newspaper. You edge up behind him, and when he takes a ticket you put in your bag and receive a ticket. Now, suppose you receive number four hundred and thirty-one; you know the ticket that went before was four hundred and thirty. You go outside to your little car. You've got a lot of blank tickets of all colours—they sometimes change the colour—and you just make up the stamp to four hundred and thirty and you stamp it. About three or four hours

later along comes a gentlemanly looking person, hands in the ticket and claims the bag, and that's the end of it."



"One night, just as Nippy was going to bed," the superintendent continued, "Juggy rang him up and asked him to come round to see him. When he got to the flat he told Nippy a grand story. It was about a man who travelled in jewellery and who was in the habit of taking one over the eight, and sometimes two. This fellow, according to Juggy, when he felt the inebriation, if you'll excuse the word, overtaking him, used to go to the nearest cloak-room and deposit all his samples in a bag which was kept in a case that you could open with a blunt knife.

"According to Juggy, this fellow was coming to London from Birmingham, and the two arranged to shadow him. They picked him up at a railway station—a large, fat man, who was slightly oiled. You may not have heard the expression before, but it means a man who has been lubricating—which is also a foreign expression, but you must go with the times. They tailed him till he went into a restaurant and met another man. He carried a bag, and he took out of this bag, and showed to the world, a large leather roll which he opened on the table. There were more diamonds in that roll than Nippy had ever heard of. When he saw it he began to breathe heavily through his nose.

"When they got outside the restaurant he said to Juggy: 'Can't we get him in a quiet place and convert him to free trade? It's warm and dry,'

"But Juggy wouldn't have it. He said that this man, because he was in the habit of getting soused—which is another expression you may not have heard of before, but it means the same thing—was always followed by a detective to watch him. Apparently, he wasn't an ordinary traveller; he was the head of the firm. They followed him for a bit. He went into a bar and when he came out he couldn't have driven a car without having his licence suspended for ten years. Sure enough he made for a railway station in the Euston Road, handed over the stock, and they watched it being locked in the safe.

"'He'll do that every day this week,' said Juggy, 'but no time's like the present. You're a peter-man, I'm not.'

"And then he told Nippy his plan. It was to put him in a packing case and deposit him in the cloak room. 'It's a Saturday

night. They close the office at twelve, and all you've got to do is to get out in the night, open the safe, claim the stuff, and I'll be down to collect you in the morning.'

"Nippy wasn't what I might describe as keen on the job, but he'd seen the diamonds and couldn't keep his mind off them. Juggy took him down to a little garage off the Waterloo Bridge Road and showed him the case he'd had made.

"'If you don't like to do it, I can get one of my lads who'll do the job for a pony and be glad of the chance. It's going to be easy to get, and we'll share fifty-fifty.'

"Nippy was still a bit uncertain. 'Suppose they put me upside down?'

"'Don't be silly,' said Juggy. 'I'll put a label on it: *This side up—glass.*'

"Nippy had a look at the case. It was all lined; there was a nice seat; and although it was going to be a little uncomfortable, there was a neat little pocket inside, with a flask of whisky and a little tin of sandwiches.

"You won't be able to smoke, of course, but you won't be there more than seven hours. I'll notify the left-luggage people that I'm bringing the case in, and I'll slip the fellow a dollar and tell him not to put anything on top. All you've got to do is open the side of the case and step out. It'll be like falling off a log.'

"Nippy had a good look at the case. The side opened like a door. It didn't look hard at all. The only danger was that when they came to the cloakroom in the morning they'd find out that the safe had been opened.

"'That's all right,' said Juggy. 'You needn't bust it. I've got a squeeze of the key.' He took it out of his pocket.

"'That's all right,' said Nippy. 'It's an easy job. We'll be warm and dry on this.'

"About seven o'clock that night Nippy got inside the case and tried it out. The air holes all worked; everything was as the heart could desire. He bolted the door on the inside, and then he heard somebody putting in screws on the outside.

"'Hi!' said Nippy, 'what's the idea?'

"'It's all right,' said Juggy. 'They're only fakes; they come out the moment you push.'

"I don't know what happened to Nippy in the night, and I can't describe his feelings, because I'm not a novel writer. He heard cranes going and people shouting, felt himself lifted up in the air, heard somebody say 'Lower away!' and he went down farther than

he thought it was possible to go. And then Nippy began to realise that something had to be done.

"It was two hours before anybody heard him shout, and at last the stevedores broke open the case and got him out. He was in the hold of a ship, and the packing case was labelled on the top: *Bombay. Stow away from boilers. Keep warm and dry.*

"It broke Nippy's nerve. He's in Parkhurst now, recuperating."

Superintendent Minter
appears in *Big Foot*,
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THE OUTSIDERS

John Boland

*The problem before Jefferson
was a difficult one, its
solution being bold
and debatable*

DETEKTIVE SUPERINTENDENT Thomas Linkmore Jefferson stood looking down at the girl's body, aware that his assistant, Hayes, was paying more attention to him than to the bloody corpse. Well, to hell with him. He couldn't help it if the sight of a young girl butchered by some madman, made him almost blind with rage against the unknown killer.

Jefferson was well aware of this flaw in his official armour. Men murdered, old, even middle-aged women getting the chop, these he could deal with in icy detachment. But a young girl . . . It made him burn with fever—fever to get the murderer, to pay him equal violence.

The only case up to now that he'd failed to bring to trial was of another girl, 16, killed two years back in Wales. And he knew that part at least of his failure in that case was because his brain did not work with its usual frozen efficiency. He'd known the maniac, of course, but . . .!

He forced himself to look away from the body. "No identification yet?"

The local D.D.I. stared at the Yard man indignantly. "We only found her an hour ago, Mr. Jefferson," he said acidly. "There was no handbag, no clothes." He restrained the temptation to add that his men were not psychic. "Is it all right to move her now?"

"Yes, yes."

The sooner those wonderful, generous curves of limbs and body were covered from the gaze of men, the better. And that dreadful, battered face should be hidden. "How old was she, doctor?"

"Hard to tell these days. Sixteen, maybe. I'll let you know later, perhaps."

Sixteen, the same age as that other, but this one had the breasts of a mature woman, a tiny waist and full-swelling hips moulded for her function as a female. What a bloody awful waste! "Doesn't look like rape."

"No, it doesn't," the doctor agreed. "But that's something again I'll have to confirm later."

Now that the body was covered and being carried away, some of the incapacitating rage drained out of Jefferson and he began to think coherently. In 19 cases out of 20 the victim of rape was left with legs spreadeagled and the type of assault was immediately obvious. In the 20th case you got the nutter who composed the limbs decently, folding the dead hands on the breast as though ready for interment. But whoever had butchered this girl had acted out of pattern—which could mean a cool, savage beast who delighted only in inflicting pain.

He shook his head vigorously to clear it. The men standing round were still peeping at him from time to time as though expecting him to make a spectacle of himself at any moment. "Right, let's have what you've got."

"Afraid there's little or nothing, sir." The D.D.I. listed the activities so far.

"Then we'd better get the Press in straight away. We want an identification and the sooner the better." He turned to his personal assistant, Detective Inspector Walter Hayes. "Get on to that, Wally. Now."

"Yessir." When Jefferson used that tone of voice, one jumped to it without argument.

"So. No weapon, no clothing, no footprints."

"Not up to now, sir," the D.D.I. agreed.

"Then in that case we'd better start work."

But after two hours nothing helpful had been found. The items recovered presented the usual mess you would pick up anywhere in a park. Three cigarette ends pulped by rain, which meant they had been there more than 36 hours and the girl had been alive 12 hours after that. A flattened, empty ice-cream cup, four burned matchsticks and a few scraps of paper.

There wasn't a great deal of blood either, although most of it must have soaked into the ground under the body. The bloodstains where the body had been discovered by one of the park gardeners, was in the centre of a clump of bushes less than 50

yards from a public path. Easy enough for the murder to have been committed elsewhere and the body dumped here later.

Identification was difficult. Despite the description given in the newspapers and on both radio and television, no one seemed to know the girl. From the condition of her hands it was clear she had been a manual worker. She was not a virgin and had no dental work in her mouth. Her age was, perhaps, 15.

His first night on the case, Jefferson didn't bother to go back to his bachelor apartment, preferring to spend a couple of hours in uneasy sleep stretched out in his office armchair, in his waking moments bitterly aware that every passing second without an identification made it much more difficult to track down the killer. In fact, without an identification it would be impossible even to find a suspect.



By the end of the third day, 27 people had looked at the body but none of them recognised the girl as a missing relative.

"So it's got to be done the hard way," Jefferson told his superior. "Missing persons, the lot."

Commander Mellick regarded the detective anxiously. "You had any sleep the last three nights, Tommy?" If anyone else had been available at the time he would never have put Tom on the case: he was a brilliant detective, but his emotions became roused over young girl victims of violence. The Commander remembered the Pickering case only too well and the recollection of it made his palms sweat.

Nancy Pickering, 16 years of age on holiday in mid-Wales, had been raped, murdered with the same brutal violence as in this case. Tom had been certain he knew the young man responsible, a member of a wandering community of self-styled gypsies. Nothing had been proved against the suspect, for the members of the roving caravanners had closed their ranks, resenting the interference of outsiders, and provided the young man with a cast-iron alibi.

Mellick sighed. On that occasion he'd been afraid that Jefferson would take the law into his own hands. It was that one point of uncertainty about Tom that had kept him from being made up to chief superintendent.

"Have you had any sleep these last three nights?" he demanded again.

"Enough."

"Look, Tom. I'm your friend as well as your boss. So what I'm going to say comes from a pal . . . Take it easy!" He paused. "If you don't, I'll have you off this case before you can blink."

"Someone else could do better?"

"Now Tom, it isn't that. You've got this reputation of being a bit of an outsider—you know!" His voice hardened. "And I've got the reputation of the Force to think of as well. So—take it easy."

The advice sounded stupid even to his own ears. How the devil could any of his understaffed force take it easy! They were all working ten, 12 hours a day and falling further behind in their tasks. "Watch it, that's all," he ended lamely.

Jefferson returned to his own office and tried to think. The head injuries had been caused by something like an iron bar, but no such object had been found by frogmen searching the Regent's Park canal. There was nothing—not even a nail scraping to provide a clue. He pressed the switch of the intercom.

"Wally, come in here for a moment."

"Right, sir."

The door leading to the outer office opened and Walter Hayes entered. "Sir?"

"We're going to get nowhere, the way we're doing things, Wally."

"No, sir." He didn't like the look of the super's face. It was lined with strain and his eyes were bloodshot so badly the whites appeared red. They made him look—fanatical. "So we'll try it arse-about-face. I want the files on every unsolved murder of women or girls over the past twenty-five years. And those where the killer served his sentence and was released."

"You think he's a repeater? But we've already checked with M.O., sir."

"Do as you're told, blast you!" Jefferson shouted. "Don't stand there arguing."

The moment the door swung shut behind Hayes' scurried retreat, Jefferson regretted the outburst. Walter was a good man, a respectable, pipe-smoking insider, married with three kids—and a possible future chief superintendent, for he was a good detective who had achieved results by solid, dependable plodding. Not a brilliant man, but 100 percent reliable.

An hour later Hayes returned, a considerable pile of folders clasped to his chest. He put them on his superintendent's desk.

"These are the unsolved ones, sir. They're sorting out the others for me, but Records say it'll take a bit of time to get 'em." The Pickering file was among the papers he'd dumped; God alone knew how the Old Man would react when he went through that one again.

"You—you want me to stay and help, sir?"

Jefferson knew perfectly well what the other man was thinking but managed to keep his voice steady, fighting the rage that consumed him. "Yes. As we can't get a straight lead on the girl. Let's see if we can find her killer first, then trace back to the victim."

"Bit slim, isn't it?"

"If you've got a better bloody idea, say so!"

Hayes flinched, wisely keeping his mouth shut and taking some of the folders. He sat down at the other end of the desk to study them and had read through several before he became aware of the sound of fingers drumming on the desk-top. He glanced across at Jefferson. The super's pile of documents was still unread, except for one: the Pickering case.

He coughed. "Sir?" he ventured.

Jefferson stared at him vacantly, then spoke almost in a whisper. "Stag Wilsher." He cleared his throat. "Find out where Stag Wilsher is, Wally."

"That was rape *and* strangulation, sir."

"*And* a smashed-in face, Wally."

The detective inspector did not care at all for the look on his superior's face. Two years back Jefferson had been obsessed by the certainty that Gordon Wilsher—Stag Wilsher—had killed the Pickering girl. But there'd been no proof.

"He used to live and work in Birmingham," he reminded.

"So he might have moved to London."

In bed that night, Hayes confided his doubts to his wife, as he always did. Marian's advice was invariably shrewd, sound and comforting. "I wouldn't be surprised if he tried to frame Wilsher if possible," he told her. "He's been eaten up by that case, you know."

"Well, darling," Marian said, "there's nothing you can do about it unless you get *proof* that he's going queer."

"I'd have to report it."

She kissed him. "Of course you would, and that would eat *you* up."

"He's been a good friend to me—and he's a bloody marvellous

copper.”

“He’s been a good friend to us both, darling.” She yawned. “But there’s no need to swear, the children might hear. We mustn’t set them a bad example.”

Jefferson, in his bedroom, found sleep impossible until he dropped off just before dawn, to wake three hours later, completely unrefreshed. The report waiting on his desk when he arrived at the office made him feel better. According to the Birmingham police, Wilsher’s former landlady stated the young man had left almost a year earlier, to move to London.

“He’s in the Smoke somewhere,” the superintendent said later, to Walter.

“He was a year ago, sir.” But it was like trying to talk to a deaf person and, resigned, he went out to see what he could discover. Finding one man in London’s millions wasn’t going to be easy, even supposing Wilsher was keeping straight and living under his own name.

Luckily, there were photographs of the young man, two years old but he wouldn’t have changed all that much, all being well. Stag Wilsher had worked in Birmingham for a spell as an attendant on Dodgem cars. It was a line worth following. At the third place he tried, Walter struck oil.

“Wilsher’s working for a small, travelling fun fair, sir,” he told Jefferson over the telephone . . . “Shall I bring him in?”

“No. I’ll be out to see him myself.”



During the drive out to Essex, where the fun fair was based for the time being, Jefferson dwelt on the coming interview, telling himself he must keep calm. But when he was actually face to face with the youth, he felt the old despairing rage slowly filling his consciousness. It was going to be the Pickering business all over again.

Wilsher, short but powerfully built, was dressed in oily jeans and a stained sweat shirt that displayed his muscular, tattooed arms to great advantage. His manner was precisely as the detective remembered, cocky and supercilious.

“Where was I on the twenty-first?” Wilsher repeated. “What’s the big idea? Tryin’ to pin another murder on me?”

“No one mentioned murder,” Jefferson stated flatly.

“Then it must be fer riding me tricycle without lights,” Wilsher

sneered. "I 'eard as 'ow they was puttin' the top brass on to the big jobs."

"Don't be cheeky with me, lad."

The whip-lash tone made Wilsher smile even more broadly, his sharp-featured face reflecting his pleasure at having scored. "An' don't you come the Lord Muck with me, copper, or I'll see wot me M.P. 'as to say."

Jefferson could feel the veins swelling in his neck. If he wasn't careful he'd smash his fist into the grinning face. "If you don't want to answer me here, I can always take you down to the station." His heart was thudding painfully as he strove to keep his temper. One wrong move now could crucify him.

"The twenty-first? When was that?"

As though he didn't know. "Last Friday."

"Last Friday? Then you're lucky, mate. I was workin' the Dodgems." He stared up innocently. "What's wrong, then?" There was something in his attitude that made Jefferson catch his breath, certain that Wilsher was implicated.

"Can you prove where you were?"

"Blimey, yes. I got two mates. Ask them." He laughed. "Ask anybody."

The detective felt a curious sense of having gone through it all before and in fact the general pattern of events was similar. In the Pickering case he'd got nowhere because the self-designated gypsies had closed their ranks: it would probably be the same with the men and women working the fun-fair. They formed a tight-knit community, everyone else was an outsider and they would lie solidly to protect one of their own kind.

But it was a start.

Last Friday the fun fair had been near Epping. If the girl had been killed there . . .? Certainly it wouldn't have been much of a drive to Regents Park—No! Why cart the body to where it had been found, if the murder had taken place near Epping? Plenty of open country nearer to hand than the Park, for the dumping. So, perhaps they'd met near the Park? By design, or by chance?

Jefferson groaned. This was mere idle speculation, not proof. And he had to have proof if he was going to get anywhere. The headache that had been nagging him for the past two days was turning into migraine proportions and he spent the night half-dazed by gargantuan doses of aspirin before bouts of vomiting made it impossible for him to take anything else to ease the pain.

"For heaven's sake, sir," Walter begged when he saw his chief

next morning, "why don't you report sick?"

"We've got a job to do."

"But you'll kill yourself, going on like this."

"Let me be the judge of that, Hayes!" But he stopped himself from delivering more abuse. Wally might report him to the M.O. or the Commander and then he'd be taken off the case.

All morning he tried to focus his mind on what to do next, but under the hammer-blows of pain the world was unreal; only pain was absolute. For the fiftieth time he opened the Pickering folder and read through its contents, trying to see if there was anything he had missed . . . But there—

"Hey!"

Had he overlooked a possibility? Wilsher came from the Goberry group. Joshua Goberry was the leader of his 'tribe', and they were the sort of people who lived their lives collecting other people's throw-offs. The meanest piece of rag, the shortest, most frayed length of string—these were prized possessions among them. Nothing was ever discarded until it disintegrated into rust or dust.

Of course, Stag had left the family group years ago, but he'd been born and brought up among them. So what would *he* do with a bit of scrap? Would he keep it, pick it up to sell to some junk merchant or totter? Most men followed the pattern of behaviour imprinted during childhood. How did Wilsher's mind work?

"Walter! Get my driver to bring the car round. We're going to Epping."

It was the seventh call that gave a lead. Among the bits and pieces offered for sale there was a belt, hand-woven from plastic-covered wire of many colours, and elastic. Jefferson felt his stomach churn as he stared at the gaudy thing: the Goberrys turned them out by the score, selling them all over the Midlands.

The dealer remembered buying the belt, and some girl's clothing, but not the person who had sold them to him. "I get dozens of people in 'ere every day, guv'nor," he protested. "Ave an 'cart." But he did remember when the belt had been bought: the day before the body had been found.

"Which doesn't get us any nearer, sir, does it?"

"It's *something*, Wally." That was true, but what Walter had said was an even greater truth. Unless he could link the belt with Wilsher . . .? The clothes were cheap and could have been bought anywhere, but the belt was distinctive.

It proved impossible. If anyone knew of a girl who went with Stag, they kept their mouths shut. All Jefferson's jubilation evaporated once more: he was back where he started. *There must be something, some lead.*

But what?

It took him two nerve-tortured days to think of the next possibility and when he did he was so exhausted he almost wept. He was going to pieces and he knew that even his iron determination wouldn't enable him to keep going for much longer. He'd got to the point now when every young man he saw took on Wilsher's hateful appearance—and all of them were laughing at him as he passed, their imagined yells of derisive merriment filling his head with piercing din and making his body shake with tension.

"Find out where the Goberrys are," he instructed Hayes, and went home to try to get a few hours sanity-saving sleep while the itinerants were traced. The Goberrys covered central England in their travels, from the Norfolk coast right across into Wales; as far south as Oxford, and north to Chesterfield.

The 'tribe' were parked in Shropshire, within sight of the Wrekin, when Jefferson caught up with them. As the caravans came into view he felt his stomach muscles tense until he could have screamed from the pain. In two minutes' time he was going to be face to face with Joshua Goberry, filthy and villainous, but nevertheless the undisputed king of the crowd of ex-convicts, ex-prostitutes and human derelicts he had collected about him.

Goberry claimed to be a Gypsy; in fact he had been born of a Coventry prostitute, fathered by a factory labourer. He had all his father's strength and something of his mother's blowsy good looks. Five foot four, with dark, greasy ringlets of hair framing a narrow face, he wore gold earrings and heavy gold rings on each hand to add knuckleduster power to his punch.

As though he had sensed the detective's arrival, Joshua moved out to wait at the opening in the circle of parked caravans, smoking and spitting. He hunched his shoulders at sight of the police car and swaggered over to where it stopped, peering in at its passengers. "I bloody remember you," he said to Jefferson. Joshua looked back over his own shoulder, conscious that 20 or 30 pairs of eyes were intent on him from the camping area. "We ain't got nothing to say to you."

Jefferson got out of the car slowly, then ordered the driver to move off. "I want a word alone with Mr. Goberry."

He waited until the driver had done as instructed, aware of Hayes' troubled regard from the rear seat, then turned to face Goberry. "I wanted to ask you something."

"You'll get nothin' out of me, copper." Joshua spat, then laughed as he saw the tremor that shook the detective's hands. "Got the wind up?" he asked contemptuously.

The superintendent took a deep breath, trying to steady his tall spare body. What he had to say next might lead to victory—or produce nothing, which would be disaster. From a pocket he took the belt and held it out. "This one of yours?"

"Why? You want to buy one?"

"Any of your tribe gone a-missing, Joshua? A young girl, say?" There was no sound in the world, no movement, as he waited, searching Goberry's expression.

"None of your bleedin' business, is it?"

The breath came out of the Londoner in a long sigh of relief. His guess had paid off; there *was* a girl missing from the camp. The belt had not been given as a present by Wilsher: it had belonged to the victim. It made sense: Wilsher was too mean to give away anything.

"Listen, Goberry. Two weeks ago a girl was found, murdered, in London. Stag Wilsher had been seeing her." Again there was that tiny response, the tightening of the corners of the other man's mouth, and Jefferson was satisfied. He'd done all he could. Five minutes later he was being driven to the local County Police Headquarters, maintaining a grim silence and ignoring Hayes' evident consuming curiosity.

Jefferson kept up his silence until he received the telephone call he'd been waiting for, from the Shropshire police. Goberry and two other men had left the camp, headed in the general direction of London.

It was easy to pick up the ramshackle vehicle when it arrived at the end of the motorway, and Jefferson and Hayes with another car load of police following them, trailed the car to its destination—the fun fair where Wilsher worked.

Most of the lights were out, the fair closing down for the night. Goberry returned, getting back into his car after two or three minutes and drove off again. This time the detectives trailed him to a seedy back-street in the town, where the man got out again, this time to peer at house numbers.

In the feeble illumination from the single street lamp, the detectives saw him turn and beckon to the two other men in the

waiting car. As the three of them entered the house Hayes realised it was where Wilsher lived. He turned to his superior.

"What now, sir?" The events of the day had puzzled him considerably and he still didn't know what was to happen next.

Jefferson's voice was soft. "We wait, my boy. And when those three get back in their car, I want 'em detained." He chuckled. "Just keep 'em until I've been to have a word with Stag." He chuckled again, contented, and the quiet sound added to Hayes' unease. It was the first time since they'd been on the case that the Old Man had seemed amused. What the hell was going on?

It was almost an hour before the three men emerged and they were taken before they could recover their surprise and put up a fight. But Goberry acted like a madman once the initial shock wore off and poured out an endless stream of obscenities at Jefferson, who seemed delighted by the abuse, if anything.

"Come on, Wally," he said lightly. "Time to have a word with Stag."

But Stag Wilsher had already spoken his last word. They found him dead on the bed: roped, gagged and with a score of shallow knife wounds; he must have died slowly and in agony.

"He didn't die easily, I guess." There was a satisfaction in Jefferson's tone which made Hayes turn and regard him in horror.

"You *knew* this was going to happen!" The superintendent's gaze was enigmatic and Hayes gasped: "*You knew it!* But how?"

Jefferson shook his head in mock regret. "I didn't know it, but I should have anticipated something like this." He smiled faintly. "'*Study the mind of the criminal*', how often have I said that to you, Wally? I should have realised Goberry was too proud a man to let one of his tribe get away with breaking their own particular set of laws. Goberry is the sort of man who makes and dispenses his own justice. That's the way his kind works."

"How did you know?"

"I didn't. If Wilsher had killed an outsider—one from *our* world, Wally—nothing would have happened. But he made the mistake of killing one of the tribe this time. So—the tribe executed him."

"You—you conniving bastard!"

Jefferson's smile broadened. "You're under strain, Wally, so I'll forget that. When you've had some rest, think for a bit. Decide whether you prefer to administer the law . . . or justice."

THE CARTOONIST AND THE CRIME WRITERS



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EDGAR LUSTGARTEN

JOURNEY UNDER JORDAN

STEWART FARRAR

*From the Spring of Gihon to the
Pool of Siloam was 1,200 cubits
. . . along the margin of Eternity*

"I'LL BET YOU ten quid, in sterling or dinars," Lisburn said, "that you wouldn't go through it after dark—without a torch."

"You're on," I told him.

Paula Lafèche said, "You're nuts, Dugald," but Willi Kaufmann of *Bildwoche* disagreed.

"A very easy ten quid, I think, unless Dugald is a claustrophobe. What is half a kilometre of tunnel?"

I was a little piqued. "Knee-deep in running water, five feet high at the most, two wide—and uneven and winding, at that? I'd say Hezekiah's Conduit in the dark was worth ten quid of any gambler's money."

"You *are* nuts," Paula repeated. "And if you brain yourself, don't say I didn't warn you."

Lisburn smiled. "Call the bet off, if you like?"

Of course I said: "Like hell we will! Tomorrow night as soon as it's dark—okay? That's if my editor hasn't shooed me out of Jordan by then."

"Might he?"

"Don't think so. Last cable said to stay here till the phosphate negotiations were over. That won't be for another ten days—wouldn't you say, Willi?"

Willi signalled for another round of Jordan-bottled lager, and then said: "From the dark hints you have been dropping for the past week, Dugald, I am sure you know more about that than Paula and I do."

"Could be," I admitted, trying not to sound smug.

He turned to Lisburn. "This tortuous Scot claims that there is villainy afoot, Mr. Lisburn . . ."

"I'd be deaf not to have gathered that."

"Indeed. Though if he's right, and the Jordan government are about to be taken for a million-dollar ride, you'd think he'd warn them, wouldn't you?"

"Is that a journalist's function?"

I cut in: "If a government on whose good will he depends is about to be swindled—yes, certainly. And I *shall* warn them, in a day or two, when I've got enough evidence."

"And meanwhile," Willi went on, "you'd think he'd dole out some crumbs of information to his nearest and dearest, wouldn't you? After all . . ."

This professional ribbing continued amicably over the lager, with Lisburn mostly listening. Paula and Willi and I are old pals, of course; Willi has the same Middle East parish as I, though *Bildwoche's* idea of 'Middle East' is Teutonically precise, and the *Announcer's* exhaustingly elastic; and Paula is a freelance specialising in the Arab countries. As you'd expect, the same news developments tend to draw us to the same places at the same times. In this instance, the puzzling implications of the phosphate deal had brought us sniffing to Jordan, and the fact that it was winter had landed us all in the Dead Sea Hotel near Jericho, 12 hundred feet below the Mediterranean level and therefore, as Paula pointed out, 'the lowest dive on earth'. Summer stopovers would find us in the National at Jerusalem, or the Philadelphia at Amman; but at this end of the year we preferred, like Herod the Great before us the salty warmth of the Jordan rift valley. And since it's half-way between Jerusalem and Amman (the only places in Jordan where any news happens) our consciences were satisfied.

"Journalists have consciences?" Lisburn gibed when Willi explained this to him.

"Indeed," Willi told him, unruffled. "Our consciences live in Bonn and London and Paris, and they are called Editors."

If I'd got in my answer before Willi's, it would have been less good-tempered. I didn't like Lisburn, though apart from his rather cheap leg-pulling I couldn't think why. None of us knew enough about him to have cause for dislike—unless Paula had been having bedroom-door trouble, which I suspected she had.

Lisburn called himself an archaeologist, and maybe he was. He certainly knew his Greece and Turkey (I'd soon have caught him out on those, if he'd been a phoney) but he admitted that Palestine

was new ground for him, which we inferred was the reason why he'd attached himself to us. Between us, Willi and Paula and I knew the ground pretty well, and loved it; and you can't know and love this part of the world without becoming at least an amateur archaeologist.

That's how the talk had got round to Hezekiah's Conduit.

As a news story, it's 26 centuries old; but still, for my money, a winner; I wish I'd been a war correspondent in those days. Sennacherib's Assyrians were closing in on Jerusalem. Hezekiah, with most of his kingdom of Judah already in enemy hands, was strengthening the city walls as fast as he could go. He must have looked out to the Spring of Gihon, Jerusalem's only water supply, and remembered nervously how David had captured the city from the Jebusites in the first place—by sending commandos along the ramshackle guttering that took the water from Gihon through the walls . . .

What David had done, Sennacherib might do. And anyhow, he could bring Jerusalem to its knees by cutting off the water.

So, with D-Day breathing down his neck, Hezekiah called his sappers; one squad to start tunnelling inwards from Gihon, the other outwards from the Pool of Siloam, through the virgin limestone below the city . . .

Even if I *had* been covering it, I couldn't have done better than the nameless sapper who scratched his report on the tunnel wall:

The tunnelling is completed: and this was the manner of it. While they toiled with their picks, each towards his mate, and while they still had three cubits to go, the voice of one was heard calling to the other: 'There's a hole, on the right—and one on the left. . . .' And on the day of the breakthrough, each tunneller struck towards his mate, pick to pick; then the water poured through, twelve hundred cubits from the Spring to the Pool—and the rock above their heads was a hundred cubits thick . . .

They closed up the outer entrance to the spring, to hide it from the enemy; destroyed the old guttering; made good the wall; and that was that—just in time. Jerusalem, its water secured, held out; the Assyrian army (through lack of the same good water?) was decimated by plague, and its remnants struggled home to Nineveh. Sennacherib had failed.

And just what difference 1,750 feet of crash-programme tunneling made to the history of the world—well, your guess is as good as mine. But although Jerusalem has moved away up the hill and David's city is now a sleepy orchard suburb, the waters of Gihon

still flow through Hezekiah's Conduit to the Pool of Siloam.

Lisburn liked the story, and went to have a look—wading the length of the tunnel with gumboots and torch. When we saw him again, next evening in the hotel bar, he was very pleased with himself; and perhaps it was tactless of me to point out that hundreds of tourists made the same trip every year.

So it served me right when he challenged me to do it the hard way. After dark, without a torch for ten quid.

"When *will* you grow up, Dugald Mackenzie?" Paula asked me later, as we strolled along the shore below the hotel. "I know it sounds easy—but you're a clumsy ox, and I'll bet you another ten you'll come out of it either stunned, or bleeding like a pig, or both."

I kicked a stone into the stillness of the Dead Sea, watching the ripples catch the hotel lights until the water succumbed once more to its own outrageous density.

"Done," I said.

"Oh, don't be silly."

"You worry too much," I told her; I'd believed it at first, but she was beginning to undermine me.

Paula took my arm and gave it an anxious squeeze. "Maybe, but I hope your editor calls you away before you get a chance to break your neck."

I disengaged my arm and put it round her. "Having you worried about me is something to exploit."

Her muttered answer was in French, too idiomatic for me; but she stayed where she was.



Exactly 24 hours later I was almost wishing my editor *had* called me away.

Lisburn and I stood at the top of the steps that lead down to the Pool of Siloam. The Pool itself is about as glamorous as a few yards of Paddington canal backwater sunk between clammy walls thirty feet below ground, and flowing sluggishly from an archway at one end. I knew this, and it didn't help, even though I couldn't see it; the landscape glared chalkily under a full moon, and the Pool by contrast was nothing but a black oblong hole with steps vanishing into it. A single light gleamed in the Arab house that bridges the archway; it looked homely, and that didn't help either.

"Good luck," Lisburn said. "I'll nip down the road and wait

for you at the Gihon end.”

“With ten quid in your horny hand.” I tried to make it casual, but it came out as a croak.

“Of course,” he laughed, and was gone.

I took a last look at the moon, a foolish thing to do, because it dazzled me, and fumbled down the steps. The flight was shorter than I judged it, and the little quay at the bottom nearly brought me to my knees. A fine start, and I wasn't even in the tunnel yet.

I squatted there for a moment, till my eyes could pick out the archway faintly in the reflected moonlight, and then lowered a gumbooted foot into the water. The other foot, and I stood up; so far so good. I felt my way into the arch.

Hezekiah's Conduit closed round me, and within a few yards the last of the moonlight had gone.

I moved forward carefully, crouching, with one hand in front of my scalp to warn me of the changing contours of the roof. Now that the stream was only a couple of feet wide it was moving quite fast; I could feel its pressure, and hear it protesting against the alien obstruction of my gumboots. I shivered, glad of my sweater and windcheater, and suddenly wondering why the hell I hadn't borrowed a crash helmet. Lisburn's bet had forbidden nothing but light. With a helmet I could have bashed confidently on at twice the speed. Oh, well. Dugald Mackenzie rushing into things bald-headed again. Though not quite *bald-headed*; at least I had hair, which would help the blood to clot, wouldn't it?

The tunnel was surprisingly noisy. Every splash of my boots, the hollow sound of the rubber flapping against my calves, my breathing, the scratch of my windcheater against the pick-roughened walls—all these seemed to echo along the whole of that sapper-scribe's 12 hundred cubits and back again.

One cubit, eighteen to twenty inches. How accurate was he? Actual length, 533 metres; don't know the exact figure in feet, and can't remember the conversion. But twelves into 533 centimetres is—er—44.4 centimetres, and I do know that conversion, it's 2.54 to the inch. Um . . . I make it about 17½ inches, so he wasn't far out, and . . . ouch!

I rubbed my smarting forehead, and decided to concentrate on my own movements.

I wouldn't mind absolute blackness so much; with that, you might be able to ignore your eyes. But when eyes have absolutely nothing to do, they start doodling; inventing blobs and flares, and shoals of little golden gnats, and wreathes of pink gauze, and

drifts of luminous folkweave, all designed to make it very difficult to forget your eyes and attend to your ears and fingertips.

I paused for a rest. The damp cold was eating at my face and hands, but inside my clothes the sweat was feverish. I realised I was impossibly tense, and deliberately relaxed my body, thinking of it part by part and ordering it to slacken off.

I'd have given half of that 10 quid to be able to stand up straight for a few seconds. I tried bending my knees to give me room to straighten my neck, and collected a trickle of icy water in one boot for my pains.

How far had I come? I hadn't the faintest idea. Could be a quarter of the distance, could be three-quarters. I remembered what I'd read about the tunnel, and I fingered both walls; the pick-marks pointed forwards. So I was still on the Siloam side of the breakthrough-point. I knew that the upstream course from Siloam, almost to halfway, was a long right-hand curve, nearly a semicircle; and that the rest was a series of smaller wiggles ending in a sharp right-hand bend to Gihon. I tried to relate my position to this pattern, but I found that in the blackness I could call on no sense of veering left or right.

No point in worrying, anyway. The only thing to do was to press on till I reached Gihon, however many cubits that might be.

I thought of the hundred cubits overhead. A 150 feet of solid limestone. Quite unexpectedly the realisation of it *did* panic me, and I sweated anew. I'd told Willi I wasn't a claustrophobe—I *thought* I wasn't—but . . .

I stood quite still, taking control of myself.

That was when I believed I heard someone else in the tunnel. The measured splash of moving legs, a sound almost lost in the chatter of the stream past my own.

I strained my ears, willing the water at my feet to keep silent. Nothing.

Or hold on—was there . . .

No, I told myself, I *must* have imagined it. Which direction had it seemed to come from, anyway—ahead or behind? That I couldn't answer at all. Any noise that wasn't immediately close to me seemed directionless, or rather two-directional, like the images seen by a man who stands between two mirrors; each sound and its opposed echo were identical, indistinguishable, multiplying, as they faded, overlaid with new ones . . .

In any case, there had been nothing but the ancient sound—*the water pouring through, 12 cubits from the Spring to the Pool . . .*

God rest you, old Hebrew sapper, I thought, patting a pick-mark. You had to dig, *each towards his mate, pick to pick*—and all I've got to do is wade, minding my head and feeling your walls as I go.

Wait a minute—the pick-marks were pointing *downstream*. So I was past the place where the two squads had met. I grinned to myself, in the dark, at the notion that I ought to have been conscious of it; that I should have been aware of their ghostly cheers as they scrambled the last rocks aside and hugged each other, shouting praise to Yahweh and Hezekiah, and triumphant obscenities to Sennacherib, in the newly-freed stream . . .



Plash, plash, plash.

Ghost or intruder, I'd heard it again.

Now think, I told myself. Anyone but me would have a torch.

So I looked back, and forward—and back and forward again.

There was nothing to see but the golden gnats that swam in my own eyeballs. That settled it. There *couldn't* be anyone else.

And anyway, I was nearing the end. I was pretty certain the tunnel had begun that final double-back to the right. And even if there was someone—who cared? All it meant was that someone else was as crazy as Dugald Mackenzie, in the same way on the same night. Improbable, but comforting. I flexed my aching back, spread my probing fingers, and waded on.

"Hullo, Mackenzie," Lisburn said.

I jumped, banging my head, though not too badly.

"Good Lord! Am I there already?"

"Keep still," he told me; not raising his voice, but it boomed softly in the black tunnel.

"All right—but why? And where are you?"

"If I have my units right—about three cubits in front of you, and a hundred or so cubits in from Gihon."

There was something in his tone that made me uneasy, but I dismissed the feeling as illusory and said: "I'd have thought *you'd* use a torch."

Lisburn laughed, amusing the echoes too. "That would be cheating—you're supposed to come all the way without one. I don't want to spoil the bet."

"Fair enough. Turn round, then, and let's push on. I'm bloody freezing."

"I'm sorry, Mackenzie," he said. "This is as far as you go."

I can't say we looked at each other, but crouching face to face in that narrow blackness it seemed like it. A sharp knowledge of danger cut into me like broken glass. My mind raced along two parallel tracks, grabbing at two questions: *how do you fight blind in a two-foot-wide tunnel when you don't know if the other man's armed?*—and, less urgently: *why?*

It was the second answer I got first, though.

"You bastard, Lisburn," I said. "The penny's dropped."

He laughed again. "I'm glad it didn't before, but it should have. You're a dam' fool, Mackenzie. Boasting in front of a perfect stranger that you had evidence of a major swindle, and were going to scotch it any day now. Never asking yourself why the stranger suddenly went out of his way to make friends with you . . . *Keep still!*"

"Have you got a gun, or a knife, or something?"

"Wouldn't you like to know?"

"I can bloody soon find out!"

"Yes, you could, couldn't you?" It was an invitation, and I checked myself.

"All right—what do you want, Lisburn?"

"Let me satisfy your curiosity first. You're quite right about the phosphate deal . . ."

"You've found a deposit," I interrupted him, "that makes the Ruseifa one look like peanuts, but you've shown the government another one, a quarter the size of Ruseifa. And the concession you're negotiating is so worded that it'll cover the one they *don't* know about, but when they do they'll find themselves cheated of millions in revenue by their own pledged word. And they'll have no way of proving that you knew about the big deposit first. You can't lose—unless someone like me blows the gaff in time. Right?"

"You impress me, Mackenzie. You know even more than I thought. It proves how right I was to get you here, doesn't it—before it was too late?"

My sweat turned icy, but I managed to ask: "So what's your offer?"—knowing that he'd laugh.

He did. "Offer? Don't be stupid. I'm going to kill you, right here."

In the silence I brushed involuntarily at my eyes, trying to sweep those golden gnats out of the way. Then I backed a little, getting ready to grapple with him the moment he started anything.

"Your body will be found here," Lisburn went on, "after I've

reported to the police—so anxiously, you know?—that I've been waiting for you at Gihon and you've failed to come out. It will have a bad bruise on the back of its head, and it will have drowned—obviously having knocked itself out accidentally against the roof and fallen in the water while it was unconscious."

"Charming for it," I said. "That means you can't shoot me or stab me, doesn't it? How are you going to manage?"

"Wouldn't you like to know?" he jeered again.

A hand was laid softly on my back.

I couldn't tell you, to this day, why I didn't cry out. Perhaps the instant realisation that it couldn't be Lisburn's numbed me. Or perhaps that hand, in some way, announced itself as an ally the moment it touched.

"Just tell me one thing," I gabbled, playing for time.

(the hand slid up my shoulder and pressed itself . . .)

"I don't see why I should," Lisburn said.

(. . . against my cheek, so that I could feel the ring . . .)

"If you've got me trapped as well as you say . . ."

(. . . the Turkish puzzle-ring I'd given Paula at Christmas . . .)

". . . you've nothing to lose, have you?"

She was crouching behind me, feeling the position of my boots, which were braced as wide apart as I could get them into the corners of the tunnel floor.

"I don't trust you, Mackenzie."

"I'll put my hands on the roof so that you know where they are. Out here in front of me."

"*Keep still!*"

"All right, they're there already."

He fell for it. His fingers came cautiously up to mine, touching them hand to hand.

"You see?" I said, "I was telling the truth. I won't move till you do . . ."

Lisburn screamed as Paula, slithering through my legs like an otter, banged her skull squarely on the target. I grabbed, felt him doubling up, and rabbit-punched clumsily. Then the three of us were in the water, coughing and struggling and wedging ourselves tighter between the narrow walls. But Lisburn was half-crippled, and couldn't stop me clutching his head in both hands and banging it against the wall with all the force two feet of space would allow me.

He went limp.

"That's him done," I gasped. "Fancy meeting you, Miss

Lafèche.”

Soaked and shivering, we dragged Lisburn not very gently along the last 50 yards and up the steps—all 32 of them—into the moonlight of the Kidron Valley. Paula’s little Renault was parked just down the road, and she ran to fetch it while I tied Lisburn’s hands with his own necktie, to make sure.

“Were you behind me all the time?” I asked when we’d bundled him in the back and were driving under the Temple walls towards the police station.

“All the time.”

“But why didn’t you let me know?”

Either she was laughing or her teeth were just chattering, but she said: “Because I’d have felt such a fool if nothing *had* happened to you. But—well, I’m sorry, Dugald, but I’d been working along the same lines as you. You had more than me, but one thing I’d found out which you hadn’t—that Lisburn lied about not having been to Jordan before. I just wasn’t happy.”

“When the police have locked Lisburn up and dried us out—as they will when I insist on phoning the Minister—I’ll give you every last fact I know,” I told her, “By God, you’ve earned it.”

“And Dugald . . .”

“Hey, just a minute—stop the car!”

“She braked. “Why?”

“I’ve remembered something—before we hand him over.” I leaned back and felt in the unconscious Lisburn’s pockets.

“Hurry up, Dugald, I’m frozen! What are you looking for?”

“Ten quid,” I said.

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period piece

THE THIEF

JOHN BANIM

The author of this fascinating picture of Ireland in the early 18th century was a writer of some prominence. Born in 1798 and dying in 1842, his Tales of the O'Hara Family were very popular

THE IRISH PLAGUE, called typhus fever, raged in its terrors. In almost every third cabin there was a corpse daily. In every one, without an exception, there was what had made the corpse—hunger. It need not be added that there was poverty, too. The poor could not bury their dead. From mixed motives, of self-protection, terror, and benevolence, those in easier circumstances exerted themselves to administer relief in different ways. Money was subscribed (then came England's munificent donation—God prosper her for it!), wholesome food, or food as wholesome as a bad season permitted, was provided; and men of respectability, bracing their minds to avert the danger that threatened themselves, by boldly facing it, entered the infected house, where death reigned almost alone, and took measures to cleanse and purify the close-cribbed air and the rough, bare walls.

In the early progress of the fever, before the more affluent roused themselves to avert its career, let us cross the threshold of an individual peasant. His young wife lies dead; his second child is dying at her side; he has just sunk into a corner himself, under the first stun of disease, long resisted. The only persons of his family who have escaped contagion, and are likely to escape it, are his old

father, who sits weeping feebly upon the hob, and his first-born, a boy of three or four years who, standing between the old man's knees, cries also for food.

We visit the young peasant's abode some time after. He has not sunk under 'the sickness.' He is fast regaining his strength, even without proper nourishment; he can creep out of doors and sit in the sun. But in the expression of his sallow and emaciated face there is no joy for his escape from the grave, as he sits there alone, silent and brooding. His father and surviving child are still hungry—more hungry, indeed, and more helpless than ever; for the neighbours who had relieved the family with a potato and a mug of sour milk are now stricken down themselves, and want assistance to a much greater extent than they can give it.

'I wish Mr. Evans was in the place,' Michaul Carroll told himself; 'a body could spake forn'ent him, and not spake for nothin', for all that he's an Englishman; and I don't like the thoughts o' goin' up to the house to the steward's face—it wouldn't turn kind to a body. May be he'd soon come home to us, the mather himself.'

Another fortnight elapsed. Michaul's hope proved vain. Mr. Evans was still in London; though a regular resident on his small Irish estate since it had come into his possession, business unfortunately—and he would have said to himself—now kept him an unusually long time absent. Thus disappointed, Michaul overcame his repugnance to appear before the 'hard' steward. He only asked for work, however. There was none to be had. He turned his slow and still feeble feet into the adjacent town. It was market-day, and he took up his place among a crowd of other claimants for agricultural employment, shouldering a spade, as did each of his companions.

Many farmers came to the well-known 'stannin,' and hired men at his right and at his left, but no one addressed Michaul. Once or twice, indeed, touched perhaps by his sidelong looks of beseeching misery, a farmer stopped a moment before him, and glanced over his figure; but his worn and almost shaking limbs giving little promise of present vigour in the working field, worldly prudence soon conquered the humane feeling which started up towards him in the man's heart, and, with a choking in his throat, Michaul saw the arbiter of his fate pass on.

He walked homeward, without having broken his fast that day. 'Bud, *musha*, what's the harm o' that,' he said to himself; 'only here's the ould father, an' *her* pet boy, the weenock, without a

pyatee either. Well, *asthore*, if they can't have the pyatees, they must have better food—that's all; ay'—he muttered, clenching his hands at his sides, and imprecating fearfully in Irish—'an' so they must.'

He left his house again, and walked a good way to beg a few potatoes. He did not come back quite empty-handed. His father and his child had a meal. He ate but a few himself; and when he was about to lie down in his corner for the night, he said to the old man across the room:

"Don't be a-cryin' to-night, father, you and the child there; bud sleep well, and ye'll have the good break'ast afore ye in the mornin'."

"The good break'ast, *ma-bauchal*? A-then, an' where 'ill id come from?"

"A body promised it to me, father."

"*Avich!* Michaul, an' sure it's fun you're making of us, now, at any rate. Bud, the good night, a *chorra*, an' my blessin' on your head, Michaul; an' if we keep trust in the good God, an' ax His blessin' too, mornin' an' evenin', gettin' up an' lyin' down, He'll be a friend to us at last; that was always an' ever my word to you, poor boy, since you was at the years o' your own weenock, now fast asleep at my side; an' it's my word to you now; *ma-bauchal*; an' you won't forget id; and there's one sayin' the same to you, out o' heaven, this night—herself, an' her little angel-in-glory by the hand, Michaul *a-vourneen*."

Having thus spoken in the fervent and rather exaggerated, though everyday, words of pious allusion of the Irish poor man, old Carroll soon dropped asleep, with his arms round his little grandson, both overcome by an unusually abundant meal. In the middle of the night he was awakened by a stealthy noise. Without moving, he cast his eyes round the cabin. A small window, through which the moon broke brilliantly was open. He called to his son, but received no answer. He called again and again: all remained silent. He arose, and crept to the corner where Michaul had lain down. It was empty. He looked out through the window into the moonlight. The figure of a man appeared at a distance, just about to enter a pasture-field belonging to Mr. Evans.

The old man leaned back against the wall of the cabin, trembling with sudden and terrible misgivings. With him the language of virtue was not cant. In early prosperity, in subsequent misfortunes, and in his late and present excess of wretchedness he had

never swerved in practice from the spirit of his own exhortations to honesty before men, and love for, and dependence upon God, which, as he had truly said, he had constantly addressed to his son since his earliest childhood. And hitherto that son had, indeed, walked by his precepts, further assisted by a regular observance of the duties of his religion. Was he now about to turn into another path? to bring shame on his father in his old age? to put a stain on their family and their name?

He was sitting on the floor, shivering like one in an ague fit, when he heard steps outside the house. He listened, and they ceased: but the familiar noise of an old barn door creaking on its crazy hinges came on his ear. It was now day-dawn. He dressed himself, stole out cautiously, peeped into the barn through a chink of the door, and all he had feared met full confirmation. There, indeed, sat Michaul, busily and earnestly engaged, with a frowning brow and a haggard face, in quartering the animal he had stolen from Mr. Evan's field.

The sight sickened the father—the blood on his son's hands, and all. He was barely able to keep himself from falling. A fear, if not a dislike, of the unhappy culprit also came upon him. His unconscious impulse was to re-enter their cabin unperceived, without speaking a word; he succeeded in doing so; and then he fastened the door again and undressed, and resumed his place beside his innocent grandson.



About an hour afterwards, Michaul came in cautiously through the still open window, and also undressed and reclined on his straw, after glancing towards his father's bed, who pretended to be asleep. At the usual time for arising, old Carroll saw him suddenly jump up, and prepare to go abroad. He spoke to him, leaning on his elbow.

"And what are you about now, *ma-bauchal*?"

"Going for the good break'ast I promised you, father dear."

"An' whos' the good Christhthan 'ill give id to us, Michaul?"

"Oh, you'll know that soon, father: now, a good-bye"—he hurried to the door.

"A good-bye, then, Michaul; bud, tell me, what's that on your hand?"

"No-nothin'," stammered Michaul, changing colour, as he hastily examined the hand himself; "nothin' is on id: what could

there be?"

"Well, *avich*, an' sure I didn't say anything was on it wrong; or anything to make you look so quare, an' spake so sthrange to your father, this mornin';—only I'll ax you, Michaul, over agin, who has took such a sudd'n likin' to us, to send us the good break'ast?—an' answer me sthraight, Michaul—what is id to be, that you call it so *good*?"

"The good mate, father"—he was again passing the threshold.

"Stop!" cried his father; "stop, an' turn fornent me. Mate?—the good mate?—What 'ud bring mate into our poor house, Michaul? Tell me, I bid you again an' again, who is to give id to you?"

"Why, as I said afore, father, a body that——"

"A body that thieved id, Michaul Carroll!" added the old man, as his son hesitated, walking close up to the culprit; "a body that thieved id, an' no other body. Don't think to blind me, Michaul. I am ould, to be sure; but sense enough is left in me to look round among the neighbours, in my own mind, an' know that none of 'em that has the will has the power to send us the mate for our break'ast in an honest way. An' I don't say, outright, that you had the same thought wid me when you consented to take it from a thief—I don't mean to say that you'd go to turn a thief's receiver, at this hour o' your life, an' afther growin' up from a boy to a man widout bringin' a spot o' shame on yourself, or on your weenock, or one of us. No; I won't say that. Your heart was scalded, Michaul, an' your mind was darkened, for a start; an' the thought o' getting comfort for the ould father an' for the little son made you consent in a hurry, widout lookin' well afore you, or widout lookin' up to your good God."

"Father, father, let me alone! Don't spake them words to me," interrupted Michaul, sitting on a stool, and spreading his large and hard hands over his face.

"Well, thin, an' I won't, *avich*; I won't;—nothin' to throuble you, sure: I didn't mean id;—only this, *a-vourneen*, don't bring a mouthful o' the bad, unlucky victuals into this cabin: the pyatees, the wild berries o' the bush, the wild roots o' the arth, will be sweeter to us, Michaul; the hunger itself will be sweeter; an' when we give God thanks afther our poor meal, or afther no meal at all, our hearts will be lighter, and our hopes for to-morrow sthronger, *avich-ma-chree*, than if we faisted on the fat o' the land, but couldn't ax a blessin' on our faist."

"Well, thin, I won't, either, father; I won't: an' sure you have

your way now. I'll only go out a little while from you—to beg; or else, as you say, to root down in the ground, with my nails, like a baste-brute, for our break'ast."

"My vourneen you are, Michaul, an' my blessin' on your head; yes, to be sure, *avich*, beg, an I'll beg wid you—sorrow a shame is in that—no, but a good deed, Michaul, when it's done to keep us honest. So come; we'll go among the Christthans together. Only, before we go, Michaul, my own dear son, tell me—tell one thing."

"What, father?" Michaul began to suspect.

"Never be afraid to tell me, Michaul Carroll, *ma-bauchal*? I won't—I can't be angry wid you now. You are sorry; an' your Father in heaven forgives you, and so do I. But you know, *avich*, there would be danger in quitting the place widout hidding every scrap of anything that could tell on us."

"Tell on us! What can tell on us?" demanded Michaul; "what's in the place to tell on us?"

"Nothin' in the cabin, I know, Michaul; but——"

"But what, father?"

"Have you left nothing in the way, out there?" whispered the old man, pointing towards the barn.

"Out there? Where? What? What do you mean at all, now, father? Sure you know it's your ownself has kep me from as much as laying a hand on it."

"Ay, to-day mornin'; bud you laid a hand on it last night, *avich*, an' so——"

"*Curp-an-duoul!*" Michaul imprecated—"this is too bad, at any rate; no, I didn't—last night—let me alone, I bid you, father."

"Come back again, Michaul," commanded old Carroll, as the son once more hurried to the door: and his words were instantly obeyed. Michaul, after a glance abroad, and a start, which the old man did not notice, paced to the middle of the floor, hanging his head and saying in a low voice, "Hushth now, father—it's time."

"No, Michaul, I will not hushth; an' it's not time; come out with me to the barn."

"Hushth!" repeated Michaul, whispering sharply: he had glanced sideways to the square patch of strong morning sunlight on the ground of the cabin, defined there by the shape of the open door, and saw it intruded upon by the shadow of a man leaning forward in an earnest posture.

"Is it in your mind to go back into your sin, Michaul, an' tell me

you were not in the barn, at daybreak, the mornin'?" asked his father, still unconscious of a reason for silence.

"Arrah, hushth, ould man!" Michaul made a hasty sign towards the door, but was disregarded.

"I saw you in id," pursued old Carroll sternly: "ay, and at your work in id, too."

"What's that you're sayin', ould Peery Carroll!" demanded a well-known voice.

"Enough to hang his son," whispered Michaul to his father, as Mr. Evans's land-steward, followed by his herdsman and two policemen, entered the cabin. In a few minutes afterwards the policemen had in charge the dismembered carcass of the sheep dug up out of the floor of the barn, and were escorting Michaul, handcuffed, to the county gaol, in the vicinity of the next town. They could find no trace of the animal's skin, though they sought attentively for it; and this seemed to disappoint them and the steward a good deal.

From the moment that they entered the cabin, till their departure, old Carroll did not speak a word. Without knowing it, as it seemed, he sat down on his straw bed, and remained staring stupidly around him, or at one or another of his visitors. When Michaul was about to leave the wretched abode, he paced quickly towards his father, and holding out his ironed hands, and turning his cheek for a kiss, said, smiling miserably, "God be wid you, father dear."

Still the old man was silent, and the prisoner and all his attendants passed out on the road. But it was then the agony of old Carroll assumed a distinctness. Uttering a fearful cry, he snatched up his still sleeping grandson, ran with the boy in his arms till he overtook Michaul; and, kneeling down before him in the dust, said:

"I ax pardon o' you, *avich*—won't you tell me I have id afore you go? An' here, I've brought little Peery for you to kiss; you forgot *him*, *a-vourneen*."

"No, father, I didn't," answered Michaul as he stooped to kiss the child; an' get up, father, get up; my hands are not my own, or I wouldn't let you do that afore your son. Get up, there's nothin' for you to throuble yourself about; that is, I mean, I have nothin' to forgive you: no, but everything to be thankful for, an' to love you for; you were always an' ever the good father to me; an'——"

The many strong and bitter feelings which till now he had almost

perfectly kept in, found full vent, and poor Michaul could not go on. The parting from his father, however, so different from what it had promised to be, comforted him. The old man held him in his arms and wept on his neck. They separated with difficulty.

Peery Carroll, sitting on the roadside after he lost sight of the prisoner, and holding his grandson on his knees, thought the cup of his trials was full. By his imprudence he had fixed the proof of guilt on his own child; that reflection was enough for him, and he could indulge it only generally. But he was yet to conceive distinctly in what dilemma he had involved himself as well as Michaul.



The policemen came back to compel his appearance before the magistrate; and when the child had been disposed of in a neighbouring cabin, he understood, to his consternation and horror, that he was to be the chief witness against the sheep-stealer. Mr. Evans's steward knew well the meaning of the words he had overheard him say in the cabin, and that if compelled to swear all he was aware of, no doubt would exist of the criminality of Michaul in the eyes of a jury.

"'Tis a sthrange thing to ax a father to do," muttered Peery, more than once as he proceeded to the magistrate's; "it's a very sthrange thing."

The magistrate proved to be a humane man. Notwithstanding the zeal of the steward and the policemen, he committed Michaul for trial, without continuing to press the hesitating and bewildered old Peery into any detailed evidence; his nature seemed to rise against the task, and he said to the steward:

"I have enough of facts for making out a committal; if you think the father will be necessary on the trial, subpoena him."

The steward objected that Peery would abscond, and demanded to have him bound over to prosecute, on two sureties, solvent and respectable. The magistrate assented; Peery could name no bail; and consequently he also was marched to prison, though prohibited from holding the least intercourse with Michaul.

The assizes soon came on. Michaul was arraigned; and, during his plea of not guilty, his father appeared, unseen by him, in the gaoler's custody, at the back of the dock, or rather in an inner dock. The trial excited a keen and painful interest in the court, the bar, the jury-box, and the crowds of spectators. It was

universally known that a son had stolen a sheep, partly to feed a starving father; and that out of the mouth of that father it was now sought to condemn him.

“What will the old man do?” was the general question which ran through the assembly; and while few of the lower orders could contemplate the possibility of his swearing to the truth, many of their betters scarcely hesitated to make out for him a case of natural necessity to swear falsely.

The trial began. The first witness, the herdsman, proved the loss of the sheep and the finding the dismembered carcass in the old barn. The policemen and the steward followed to the same effect and the latter added the allusions which he had heard the father make to the son upon the morning of the arrest of the latter. The steward went down from the table. There was a pause, and complete silence, which the attorney for the prosecution broke by saying to the crier deliberately, “Call Peery Carroll.”

“Here, sir,” immediately answered Peery, as the gaoler led him by a side door out of the back dock to the table. The prisoner started round; but the new witness against him had passed for an instant into the crowd.

The next instant old Peery was seen ascending the table, assisted by the gaoler and by many other commiserating hands, near him. Every glance fixed on his face. The barristers looked up from their seats round the table; the judge put a glass to his eye and seemed to study his features attentively. Among the audience there ran a low but expressive murmur of pity and interest.

Though much emaciated by confinement, anguish, and suspense, Peery’s cheeks had a flush, and his weak blue eyes glittered. The half-gaping expression of his parched and haggard lips was miserable to see. And yet he did not tremble much, nor appear so confounded as upon the day of his visit to the magistrate.

The moment he stood upright on the table he turned himself fully to the judge, without a glance towards the dock.

“Sit down, sit down, poor man,” said the judge.

“Thanks to you, my lord, I will,” answered Peery, “only, first I’d ax you to let me kneel, for a little start”; and he accordingly did kneel, and after bowing his head, and forming the sign of the cross on his forehead, he looked up, and said, “My judge in heaven above, ’tis you I pray to keep me to my duty, afore my earthly judge, this day—amen”—and then, repeating the sign of the cross, he seated himself.

The examinations of the witness commenced, and humanely

proceeded as follows—the counsel for the prosecution taking no notice of the superfluity of Peery's answers.

"Do you know Michaul, or Michael, Carroll, the prisoner at the bar?"

"Afore that night, sir, I believed I knew him well; every thought of his mind, every bit of the heart in his body: afore that night, no living creature could throw a word at Michaul Carroll, or say he ever forgot his father's renown, or his love of his good God; an' sure the people are afther telling you by this time how it came about that night—an' you, my lord—an' ye, gintlemen—an' all good Christhthans that hear me;—here I am to help to hang him—my own boy, and my only one—but, for all that, gintlemen, ye ought to think of it; 'twas for the weenock and the ould father that he done it;—indeed, an'deed, we hadn't a pyatee in the place; an' the sickness was among us, a start afore; it took the wife from him, and another babby; an' id had himself down, a week or so beforehand; an' all that day he was looking for work, but couldn't get a hand's turn to do; an' that's the way it was; not a mouthful for me an' little Peery; an' more betoken, he grew sorry for id, in the mornin', an' promised me not to touch a scrap of what was in the barn,—ay, long before the steward and the peelers came on us,—but was willing' to go among the neighbours an' beg our breakfast, along wid myself, from door to door, sooner than touch it."

"It is my painful duty," resumed the barrister, when Peery would at length cease, "to ask you for closer information. You saw Michael Carroll in the barn that night?"

"*Musha*—The Lord pity him and me—I did, sir."

"Doing what?"

"The sheep between his hands," answered Peery, dropping his head, and speaking almost inaudibly.

"I must still give you pain, I fear; stand up, take the crier's rod, and if you see Michael Carroll in court lay it on his head."

"*Och, musha, musha*, sir, don't ax me to do that!" pleaded Peery, rising, wringing his hands, and for the first time weeping—"och, don't, my lord, don't, and may your own judgment be favourable, the last day."

"I am sorry to command you to do it, witness, but you must take the rod," answered the judge.

"Michaul, *avich!* Michaul, *a corra-ma-chree!*" exclaimed Peery, when at length he took the rod, and faced round to his son, "is id your father they make to do it, *ma-bauchal?*"

"My father does what is right," answered Michael, in Irish.

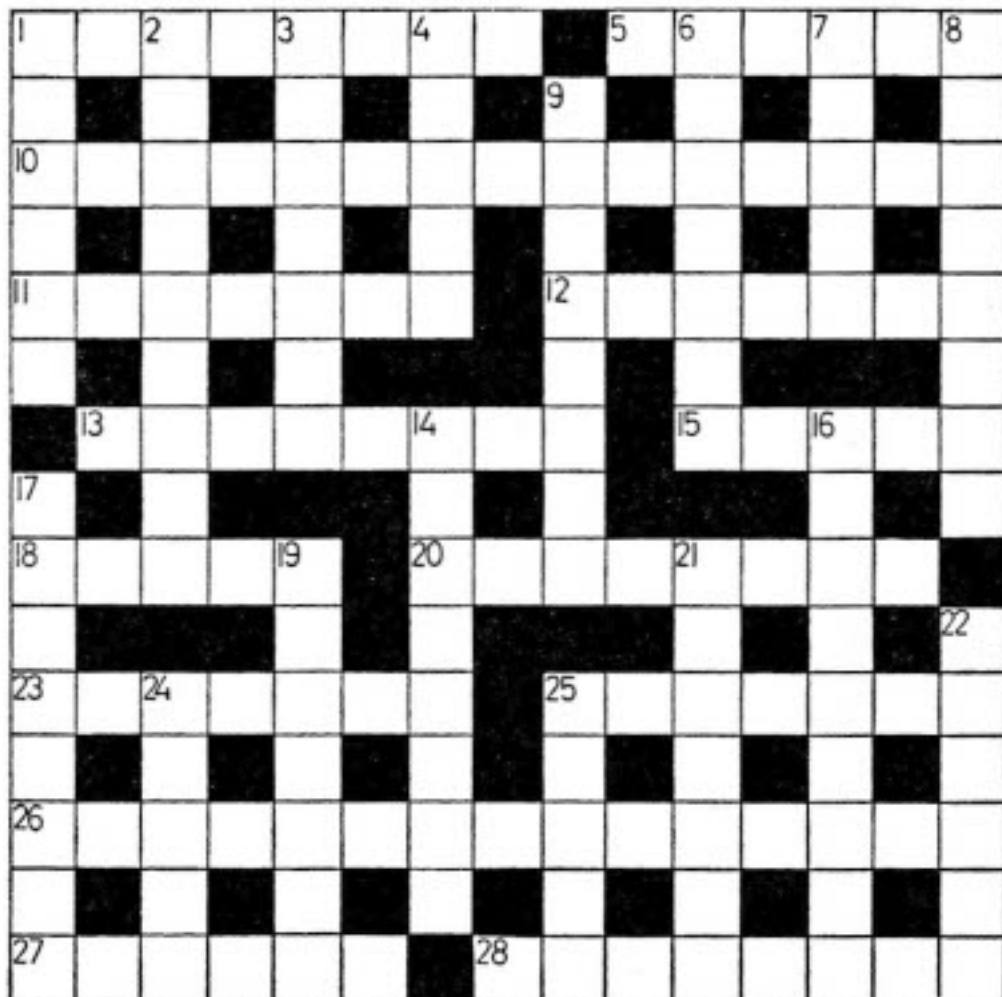
The judge immediately asked to have his words translated; and when he learned their import, regarded the prisoner with satisfaction.

"We rest here, my lord," said the counsel, with the air of a man freed from a painful task. The judge instantly turned to the jury-box:

"Gentlemen of the jury, that the prisoner at the bar stole the sheep in question, there can be no shade of moral doubt. But you have a very peculiar case to consider. A son steals a sheep that his own famishing father and his own famishing son may have food. His aged parent is compelled to give evidence against him here for the act. The old man virtuously tells the truth, and the whole truth, before you and me. He sacrifices his natural feelings—and we have seen that they are lively—to his honesty, and to his religious sense of the sacred obligations of an oath. Gentlemen, I will pause to observe that the old man's conduct is strikingly exemplary, and even noble. It teaches all of us a lesson. Gentlemen, it is not within the province of a judge to censure the rigour of the proceedings which have sent him before us. But I venture to anticipate your pleasure that, notwithstanding all the evidence given, you will be enabled to acquit that old man's son, the prisoner at the bar. I have said there cannot be the shade of a moral doubt that he has stolen the sheep, and I repeat the words. But, gentlemen, there is a legal doubt, to the full benefit of which he is entitled. The sheep has not been identified. The herdsmen could not venture to identify it (and it would have been strange if he could) from the dismembered limbs found in the barn. To his mark on its skin, indeed, he might have positively spoke; but no skin has been discovered. Therefore, according to the evidence, and you have sworn to decide by that alone, the prisoner is entitled to your acquittal. Possibly, now that the prosecutor sees the case in its full bearing, he may be pleased with this result."

While the jury, in evident satisfaction, prepared to return their verdict, Mr. Evans, who had but a moment before returned home, entered the court, and becoming aware of the concluding words of the judge, expressed his sorrow aloud that the prosecution had ever been undertaken, that circumstances had kept him uninformed of it, though it had gone on in his name; and he begged leave to assure his lordship that it would be his future effort to keep Michaul Carroll in his former path of honesty, by finding him honest and ample employment, and, as far as in him lay, to reward the virtue of the old father.

EWMM Crossword No. 26



ACROSS

- 1 One whose occupation doesn't pay! (8)
- 5 Tightens up on warders? (6)
- 10 An examiner of the uniformed branch, it seems (6, 9)
- 11 They may be kept running for the getaway (7)
- 12 Perhaps married man who thinks a lot of you (7)
- 13 Deny it may be Gene Bata (8)
- 15 These used to land one in prison (5)
- 18 A mere change of title (5)
- 20 They have yet to be proved guilty (8)
- 23 Lucrative business for a 'baron' (7)
- 25 Showing no leniency (7)
- 26 One who went 'over the wall'? (7, 8)
- 27 Hold hard! (6)
- 28 Send to one's death? (8)

DOWN

- 1 Crook catcher? (6)
- 2 Not, surely, like the work of a forger? (9)
- 3 It seems it may burn with anger (7)
- 4 A girl gone wrong! (5)
- 6 Screamed its head off! (7)
- 7 Come into court? (5)
- 8 Take unawares (8)
- 9 Those whose opinions are of value (8)
- 14 Gives the law the slip (8)
- 16 Worse if you do, of course (6,3)
- 17 Steam had concealed where the flag lies (4-4)
- 19 Unusually precise cooking instructions (7)
- 21 Takes off some of the pressure (5, 2)
- 22 An attempt to find '26'? (6)
- 24 Cambridge contribution to the soccer team (5)
- 25 Give your consent? (5)

(Solution will appear in our April issue.)

The LEMON LAUGH

MAX MUNDY

*To a child the ways of the
grown-up world can be
dark and horrifying*

IT WAS DARK, very dark, in the hall cupboard, but Marian welcomed it. She snuggled into the folds of the thick tweed coat, feeling the rough fabric against her wet cheeks and clutching with tender, sore fingers, the singed and torn ear of her yellow teddy bear.

The rest of Teddy was smouldering in the fireplace; she could smell the burning now. Just like burning a real live person, she thought, choking with tears and horror. She could still see Teddy's wistful, reproachful expression as she'd been forced to push him into the flames, forced to stand by and watch as they licked greedily at his soft, comforting, furry body. Agonised, she'd tried to pluck him out of the fireplace, burning her hands as she did so. But only his singed ear, already almost severed from his head as her mother had struggled with her for his possession had come away in her hands.

Marian knew she had been naughty; she wasn't supposed to play with Mummy's things. She'd been warned never to touch the dressing-table but she'd done so and broken the new bottle of scent, spilt the strong perfume over herself and the pretty satin drapes.

The little girl had been bored. For days now it had been raining and she had been cooped up in the flat with her mother. Sometimes when Marian was disobedient her mother just yelled at her—occasionally she hit her if Marian wasn't quick enough to dodge away, but it usually ended in the two of them yelling at each other until the neighbours banged protestingly on the wall. Then Marian and Mummy joined forces to shout together at the neighbours; that usually put mummy in a good humour and she'd

forget the little girl's naughtiness. "Come on, tiddler, let's get out of this crummy place," she'd say, and they'd go for a walk in the park where Mummy would find a new friend, another uncle for Marian. She'd tell uncle to buy Marian a toy in the corner shop and then they'd all come back to the flat for a party. At least, Mummy and the new uncle would have a party in Mummy's room, while Marian played with her latest toy.

She was a big girl now, nearly five, and she'd had plenty of toys, though somehow she never seemed able to keep her favourites for long. Mummy's way of punishing her for really bad things wasn't a beating but watching Marian destroy her best-loved toy while she laughed what Marian called her 'lemon laugh', a bitter, taunting hysterical sound that accompanied the little girl's pathetic attempts to look as though she was destroying her toy while actually doing as little damage as possible. Sometimes she could get away with this, but if Mummy was really cross, she was made to break the toy into tiny pieces or, worse still, to burn it, so that it was lost for ever.

Through her sobs, Marian heard the front door bell ringing and her mother's footsteps as she passed the cupboard to open the door.

"What do *you* want?" she asked, but Marian didn't hear the reply. She'd buried her head in the coat again as two pairs of footsteps passed the cupboard and went on into the living room.



For a while there was only the muffled murmur of voices and then Marian heard her mother's lemon laugh—again, and the visitor's protests—"I could kill you for that; women like you aren't fit to live!" and Marian wondered if Mummy was making the visitor burn a favourite possession, too. She could understand the cry of anguish only too well—she'd felt just the same about Teddy. Watching Teddy burn had been like watching part of herself in the fire. And worst of all had been the sight of her mother standing there gloating, and the sound of that horrid, lemon laugh.

But the laugh suddenly stopped. It was half a scream and half a gurgle and then there was no noise at all except the sound of hasty footsteps and the slam of the front door. Marian clutched Teddy's ear in a feverish hand as she listened apprehensively for her mother's screams of rage.

She stood rigid in the cupboard, ears straining, but there was no sound, nothing at all. And presently, anxious to see if by any chance something of Teddy had remained, curious to know what it was Mummy had made the visitor destroy, Marian pushed open the closet door and cautiously crept into the living room.

At first she couldn't see Mummy at all. But the room itself was full of the smell of Teddy's burning fur. She ran to the fireplace, choking back renewed sobs. Nothing at all remained of beloved Teddy except one glass eye that had fallen on to the hearth, and the fragile frame of his burnt body pushed into the heart of the flames. Mummy had made quite sure this time. She must have used the poker, for Marian herself had carefully put Teddy just at the side of the fire, where the flames were lowest.

She saw the poker then, not in the hearth but lying on the carpet, and then she saw Mummy. Mummy was lying on the carpet, too. Her eyes were closed and she was groaning softly. As Marian watched, she tentatively put one hand to the back of her head where it had caught the edge of the metal fender as she had fallen. The other hand moved searchingly towards the poker she had dropped, and suddenly, like a tiger cub, Marian was galvanised into action, pouncing on the poker herself.

"You killed Teddy, *you* killed Teddy!" she screamed hysterically. "*You* did it; *you* did it!"

She lifted the poker with both hands, dropping the torn ear unheeding, and with a strength born of terrified anger and despair, she brought the weapon down blindly.

It caught her mother across the temple, but Marian didn't stop to see what she'd done. Flinging the poker down again, she picked up the furry ear and ran back to the shelter of the dark cupboard.



She was still there, cowering on the floor, when the police came next day and took her away to the children's home. The report in the evening papers stated that the child must have witnessed her mother's murder through the open door, and the shock had apparently paralysed her speech muscles. She could say nothing but, pathetically enough, was not to be parted from the singed ear.

What really shocked the newspaper-reading public was not so much the murder itself—the woman was a well-known prostitute, after all—but that the murderer should have been contemptible

enough to have burnt the child's teddy bear; and a subscription was promptly opened by one of the popular daily papers to set up a trust fund for Marian's education.

Less than a week later, there was an even bigger sensation. It was Sunday, and the inmates of the children's home were walking in a crocodile to church. As the line rounded a corner, Marian had been snatched from the pavement into the open door of a waiting car which had disappeared down the road before any of the startled youngsters, or their escort of older girls, had the wits to raise the alarm or take the car number.

As the newspapers were quick to point out, the child, though still dumb, was a potential danger to the murderer. The fingerprints on the poker were blurred and only one or two of the dead woman's own prints had been found clear enough for identification. But the child had been a witness—she would be able to identify the murderer and now she was apparently in his power.



Marian's new uncle was kind and generous. He had given her new clothes, arranged a flaxen wig over her dark curls and told her they were playing at dressing-up. There were new toys, including a teddy bear she ignored, preferring to fondle the old singed ear. And they had gone to a pleasant backwater on the Thames and boarded a boat. A big boat, it seemed to Marian, a boat with engines and two little bedrooms the uncle had called cabins. She had one of them all to herself, with her new playthings. Marian didn't mind even when uncle locked the door. She could still climb up on the bed and look through the little round porthole. She took off her blonde wig and tried it on back to front, admiring herself in the mirror over the dressing-table, a dressing-table all to herself, just like Mummy's. And then she rearranged her wig the right way round. Fair hair was much nicer than dark, she decided, as she fiddled with the curls just as she'd seen Mummy do.

When the man unlocked the door at last and told her she could come up, there wasn't any land in sight at all and Marian thought that was very strange. So strange indeed, that without even realising what she was doing, she said so to the man, and at once he had seemed very excited, done something to the big wooden wheel with spokes on it, then picked her up and sat her on the chintzy cushioned seat.

He was a big man, but he knelt down on the deck and took

Marian's hands in his and looked right into her brown eyes.

"Tell me, Marian, what did you see that night when your mummy died?" he asked, squeezing her hands in his anxiety.

She snatched them away, frightened, and remembering the broken scent bottle and Teddy—and yes, there was something else she didn't want to think about now. She fell silent again, staring vacantly at this new uncle, shaking her head.

The man's worried expression, his drawn, grey cheeks and deep, dark circles round his strained eyes, made him look ill, but he kept on trying to coax her to speak. In the evening he sat with her in the saloon after cooking a meal for them both, and talked to her with quiet desperation, but not once did she open her mouth to speak. It was as though some evil genie had cast a spell over her.

"Marian, listen to me—it's terribly important that you should tell me what you saw that day. You see, I knew your mummy very well once—a long time ago. Now the police are going to think that I killed her—or that my wife killed her. And that isn't true, Marian. You know that, don't you?"

He stared intently, willing her to speak, but she only stared back at him with a puzzled, frightened expression on her face.

He persevered, desperately, despairingly.

"You know who did it, don't you, Marian? You know who killed your mummy? Who was it—tell me, for God's sake tell me, Marian. Who hit Mummy with the poker?"

But Marian would wriggle and look down at her Teddy's ear or simply stare back with solemn blankness and the man would sigh heavily and put her to bed.



They didn't bother about the blonde wig while they were at sea, but one afternoon Marian was once more locked in her cabin with the wig arranged over her dark curls, and Uncle told her to be good and not to worry because he was going ashore to get some stores and he'd be back very soon.

But Uncle never did come back. Instead some men in uniform broke open the cabin door and a large lady, talking very strange words that Marian couldn't make out, wrapped the little girl in her arms amid explosive sobs and what were certainly naughty words, even though Marian couldn't understand them, and then she was put on an airplane and flown back to England with English people who treated her as though she was the Queen

herself.

This time Marian was taken, not to a children's home, but to the family of a policeman, a jolly man with two children of his own, as well as a cat and a dog and a jolly, plump wife. It was a home, a family home, such as Marian had never known in her short existence, and after only a few days the warmth and love that surrounded her began to have its effect.

Something smelt very tantalising, cooking in the kitchen where the jolly policeman and his wife were sitting at the table, and Marian found herself drawn towards the tempting aroma from the playroom where she'd been left with the Labrador. The man and his wife were talking and for some reason Marian hesitated outside the door, listening.

"We've got the woman," he was saying, his mouth full of sponge cake fresh from the oven. "She swears her husband never went near the place. She discovered the blackmailing letters she says, and she went along to try and plead with Murray—" (that was *her* name, Marian knew. Marian Murray. But nobody had come to plead with her). She pressed her ear to the door and listened again.

". . . according to her story, Murray laughed in her face and then she picked up the poker and began pushing the child's teddy bear into the flames. The woman says that made her see red and she pushed Murray, intending to knock the poker out of her hand, but Murray stumbled against the fender and fell down and hit her head—that bit's true, anyhow.

"I remember that in the papers—they said she'd hit the sharp edge of the fender in falling, but that didn't kill her—don't eat all that cake, love. Save some for tea."

"It's good, though; nobody makes lemon sponge like you . . ."

Marian pushed the door open.

"Lemon—lemon laugh. Mummy's lemon laugh," she began. The policeman and his wife turned to stare at her, unaware that the child had been listening outside the door.

"She's talking—" the man put down the sponge cake and picked up the little girl, sitting her on his knee. "Here—have a piece," he offered.

She took it timidly.

"Did your mummy make cake like that?"

She nodded, her mouth full.

She wanted to explain that it was Mummy's horrid sour laugh as she burnt Teddy that had made Marian hit her with the poker.

She hadn't meant to hurt Mummy badly—she hadn't thought about hurting Mummy, only that Mummy had burnt Teddy. It was Mummy's lemon laugh that had done it, that was the trouble, that was why Teddy had died. It was Teddy who died in the fire, not Mummy . . .

"Did you see the lady hit Mummy with the poker?" the policeman went on more cautiously while his wife frowned warningly at him from across the kitchen table.

But Marian pulled Teddy's ear out of her pinafore pocket and suddenly she was blinking back the tears.

"Mummy laughed—her lemon laugh. Teddy was in the fire—the lady came—she—she . . ."

"She hit Mummy?"

Marian nodded. "Yes, Mummy was on the floor. Hit her! Hit her! Hit her!" she screamed suddenly, remembering again the feel of the poker in her hands, her blind fury at seeing Teddy consumed by the flames.

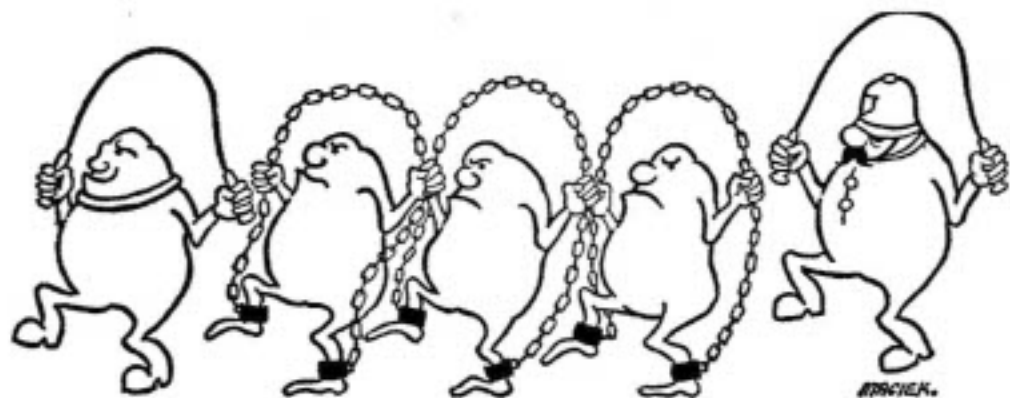
As the policeman's wife took her in her arms, stroking the dark curls with compassion, trying to still the wild weeping, the policeman got up and went out to the hall where the telephone stood.

"Well, that's it," she heard him say. "No doubt about it now. Husband and wife in it together I'd say—deliberate attack with the poker . . . he snatched the child—damn' lucky we got her in time . . ."

"Poor little mite," said the woman as she looked at the tear-stained face. "Poor little mite, to have gone through all that . . ."

But Marian was already asleep, Teddy's ear pressed against her cheek.

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THE OPEN DOOR

RAFAEL SABATINI

This vigorous historical tale of rascality and blackmail is typical of the work of Rafael Sabatini (1875-1950), whose novels were always packed with action and swordplay

THE OPEN DOOR,' says the Castilian proverb, 'will tempt a saint,' which is only the Spanish way of saying that opportunity makes the thief.

It is not pretended that Florimond Souverain de la Galette was a saint, or that only exceptional temptation would lead him to seize an opportunity of profit, whatever the moral considerations involved. Nor did the discerning suppose that he had any right to that too high-sounding name of his, or that it was anything more than one of the theatrical properties calculated to create the romantic background which he conceived proper to his profession. It was of a piece with his favourite description of himself:

'I live by the sword.'

This being translated into vulgar terms meant no more than that he was a fencing-master. The sword by which he lived was buttoned and padded at the point, otherwise he would not have lived by it long. For, in fact, he was an indifferent performer; and if he drove even a precarious trade in the exercise of his art, this was because a great vogue of swordsmanship had been created in the declining lustres of the Eighteenth Century by the *Art des Armes*, that revolutionary and widely-read treatise on fencing by the great Parisian master, Guillaume Danet.

Those were days in which the name of Guillaume Danet was on every lip. His methods were discussed wherever gentlemen assembled, and fantastic tales were told of his wizardry with the blade.

It was Florimond's pretence that he had studied under Danet. The truth was that he had learnt what swordsmanship he knew in a third-rate Paris fencing-school, where, in addition to sweeping up the floor and furbishing the foils, it had been his function to instruct the beginners in the various guards. He had read Guillaume Danet's famous treatise assiduously, and, having scraped together a few louis, the little rascal had gone off to Rheims to set up as a master-at-arms. Over his door he hung a shield, bearing the conventional but in his case unauthorised and inaccurate legend, '*Maitre en fait d' Armes des Academies de S.M. le Roi.*' And he appropriated some of the lustre of the great name of Danet by unblushingly proclaiming himself the favourite pupil of that master.

That magical name accomplished all that Florimond could have hoped, but only until the young gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who had flocked so eagerly to his academy, discovered the falsehood of his pretensions to teach an art of which he himself possessed little more than the rudiments. After that, his only pupils were a few aspiring younger members of the bourgeoisie, and Florimond fell upon esurient days.

His fortunes were touching their nadir when he became aware of that open door which is said to tempt the saint. He made the discovery, by purest chance, at the inn of the *Sucking Calf*—*Le Veau Qui Tête*—where it was his evening habit to sit over a game of écarté with Philibert the notary, Desjardins the wine merchant, and Fleury the apothecary.

Into that hostelry, on an evening of Spring, came a gaudy, overdressed young man in yellow and silver, with cheap lace at throat and wrist, and a ribbon wherever he could stick one, who had just descended from the Paris stagecoach.

He was the son of a mercer named Desfresnes, of the Rue St. Antoine, and he had lately inherited from his father a modest fortune with which he was setting out upon his travels, proposing to play in the world the careless, glittering rôle of a man of fashion. With his cheap finery he had put on the insolent airs which he had observed in men of the class of which he aspired to be accounted a member.

There may have been a dozen patrons in the common-room of the *Sucking Calf* when he swaggered in, calling, so as to be heard by all, for the best supper, the best wine, the best room, and the best of anything else the house could supply. In the hush produced by his loud commands, Florimond turned to look him over

with an eye of increasing scorn. For Florimond, who, for a time at least, had rubbed shoulders with members of the lesser nobility, knew a gentleman when he saw one.

The day had been a lean one, the cards that evening were not going well for him, and the moment's inattention caused by the noisy advent of this pinchbeck gallant betrayed him into a disadvantageous discard. It was enough to sour his humour.

The newcomer, who had announced his name of Desfresnes in such a way as to make it sound like de Fresnes, conceived it in his rôle that no pretty woman should be overlooked; and little Pâquotte of the *Sucking Calf*, with her merry eyes, red lips, plump bosom and tip-tilted nose, suddenly found the young gentleman's arm round her waist and his finger under her chin.

"My dear, I vow to Heaven that you're too dainty a pullet for a provincial inn. I profess to Heaven you'll adorn the Palais Royal. You'd find your fortune there at Février's." With princely condescension he added: "I vow to Heaven you shall wait on me, little one." And in the best manner, as he supposed, of the Palais Royal rake, he placed a kiss, which none could have described as chaste, upon her fresh young lips.

Whether his spuriousness deceived her or not, and whatever may have been her feelings, Pâquotte knew her duties too well to make a fuss. With a laugh she slipped from his detaining arm, and moved off to prepare a table. Monsieur Desfresnes was following when Florimond's unkindly comment on a note of mimicry arrested him.

"I vow to Heaven we are to be edified by this canary. He talks of the Palais Royal, of Février's. I vow to Heaven he will have been a waiter there."

The words were bad enough, but carried to every corner of the room by Florimond's thin, piercing voice they aroused a general laugh.

Monsieur Desfresnes stood arrested by this brutal shattering of his proud persuasion that he was dazzling these provincials. He lost his head.

A dark flush on his lumpy countenance, he turned back to the card-players' table. He wore a sword, and, leaning his hand upon the hilt, he thrust it up behind him like the angry tail of a roaring captain. And his tone matched the attitude in truculence. He ransacked his wits for words that should sear and scorch. But, failing to discover them in the little time at his disposal, he contented himself with being haughtily direct.

"Did you talk at me, sir?"

Florimond put down his cards, and swung round on his chair. His glance took in this haughty challenger, from the curls of his cheap wig to the buckles (of gilded brass) on his shoes, and his mouth tightened with malice.

"Now that I behold you better I perceive how little that was worth while."

The intransigence of the phrase should have warned Desfresnes that here was a man who, for all his slight build and the rusty black of his garments, might be dangerous. But, like the fool he was, he allowed himself to be swept forward by his gust of passion. He slapped Florimond's face.

"Let that teach you to mend your manners."

Consternation was followed by hubbub.

Florimond knocked over his chair in his haste to rise, and his three friends rose with him to restrain him. In what he did, however, he was as restrained as he was deadly.

"The lesson calls, I think, for payment. Monsieur Fleury, do me the honour to arrange a meeting for eight o'clock tomorrow morning in the Pré-aux-Chêvres. The length of my blade is twenty-five inches." He bowed with cold formality. "Not to embarrass you, monsieur, I will withdraw."

He marched out stiff with dignity, leaving consternation in the bosom of the Parisian who found himself so abruptly with a duel on his hands. Reminding himself, however, that he had to deal with a benighted provincial, for whom such elementary swordsmanship as he possessed should be more than enough, Desfresnes recovered his confidence, and sustained the ruffler's part.

"I vow to Heaven, sirs, that your friend is in a hurry to get himself killed."

Florimond's three associates regarded him with disconcerting pity. Then Fleury, the apothecary, answered him.

"If he doesn't kill you, sir, you will owe it either to his kindness of heart or to his fear of the consequences. The law is not lenient with a fencing-master, even when he has been provoked."

"A what?"

The three men sighed as one. Philibert shook his big head.

"Ah! You would not know, of course. A fatal ignorance, young sir. The gentleman you have so unpardonably struck is Monsieur Florimond Souverain de la Galette, master-at-arms of the King's Academies."

Desfresnes suddenly felt that the dinner eaten at Epernay had

disagreed with him. He stared wide-eyed and pallid, the jauntiness had gone out of him like air from a pricked balloon.

"A fencing-master! But—Sacred-name!—one does not fight a fencing-master!"

"It is not prudent," the lean wine-merchant agreed. "But then neither is it prudent to slap a fencing-master's face."

Fleury however, showed himself brisk and practical. "I trust, sir, that you have a friend to make the necessary arrangements with me?"

"But . . . but . . ." Monsieur Desfresnes broke down, and finally demanded: "Where does he live?"



It was a boy from the inn who conducted him on foot to the shabby house behind the Cathedral where Florimond had his being and his academy.

Florimond's greeting was not encouraging. His scowl was forbidding.

"Monsieur, this is most irregular."

Desfresnes stammered in a nervous flurry. "Mu . . . Monsieur in ordinary circumstances . . . But these circumstances are . . . quite extraordinary. I did not know that you were a fencing-master."

"Ah! Indeed! I am to wear a placard on my breast, for the warning of impertinent cockerels."

But no insult could inflame anew the young Parisian. "It is impossible that I should meet you."

"Of course, if you prefer that I cane you in the streets . . ."

"Monsieur, I have come to apologize."

"Apologize?" Florimond laughed, and to Desfresnes it was the most dreadful sound that he had ever heard. "But where do you come from, then? From Egypt, or Persia, or perhaps China? For all that I know, it may be possible in some of these places to slap a gentleman's face and avoid the consequences by an apology. But in France, monsieur, we arrange it differently, as you may have heard. For even in the Palais Royal, even at Février's, these things are understood."

The young man abased himself in intercessions. Florimond, with no other end in view but completely to humble the upstart, did not yet choose to be mollified.

"You fetched the blood to my cheek just now. I shall fetch

yours to your shirt in the morning. Then we shall be quits, and honour will be satisfied."

Desfresnes was in despair. He thought of flight. But his baggage was at the inn, which, moreover, was the post-house. Surreptitious departure would be impossible. His wandering, fearful eyes observed that the furniture of Florimond's room was shabby, that Florimond, whilst spruce to the casual glance, was threadbare to a close inspection. And so he became by the inspiration that was, in the sequel, to make a rogue of Florimond.

"If I were to offer compensation for the injury, monsieur?"

"Compensation?" Florimond's eye was terrible.

"You live by the sword. You give lessons for money. Why should you not satisfy your honour by . . . by . . ." He halted foolishly.

"By what, monsieur?"

Desfresnes took a flying leap at his goal. "By ten louis."

"Leave my house, sir!" roared the incorruptible Florimond.

"Fifteen louis," gasped Desfresnes, putting up his hands as a shield against the other's wrath.

But the fierceness had gone out of the fencing-master's eyes. His lips twitched.

"Fifteen louis! Bah! Name of a name, it costs more than that to smack my face, young sir."

"Twenty, then," Desfresnes said hopefully.

Florimond became suddenly thoughtful. He stroked his chin. Here was a queer, unexpected shaping of events. Twenty louis was as much as he now could earn in a year. For half the sum he would gladly allow himself to be slapped on both cheeks and any other part of his body that might tempt an assailant. He cleared his throat.

"You understand, of course, that in these matters there can be no question of compensation. Honour is not for sale. But a fine, now: that might be different. After all, I do not want your blood. By a fine of, say, twenty louis, I might consider that I had sufficiently mulcted your temerity. Yes, all things considered, I think I might."

Desfresnes lost not an instant, lest Florimond should change his mind. He whipped out a fat purse, bled himself and departed.

And from that hour Florimond was a changed man.

An unsuspected source of easy profit had suddenly revealed itself. It was the open door that tempts even the saint. Florimond strangled a conscience that had never been robust, and crossed the

threshold.

Twice, in the month that followed, he gave such provocation to travellers resting at the *Sucking Calf* that on each occasion a challenge resulted. True, the meetings provoked never followed. If Florimond, hitherto so gentle and unobtrusive, had suddenly, to the dismay of his three card-playing friends, become truculent and aggressive, at least, to their consolation, he was always to be mollified by a visit from his intended opponent. Commonly the visit was suggested by Fleury. Of the nature of the mollification which Florimond exacted, his honest friends had no suspicion. From the fact that he now spent money more freely, they simply assumed that the affairs of his academy were improving. Nor did these good, dull men draw any inference from the circumstance that his clothes assumed a character of extreme bourgeois simplicity, and that he abandoned the wearing of a sword, which, in the past, had been an integral part of his apparel.

Their suspicions might have been aroused if Florimond's victims had walked less readily into his snares. Shrewd in his judgment of likely subjects, he spread his net only for the obviously self-sufficient numbskull, and he never forced the pace, always leaving it for the victim to commit the extreme provocation.

Subjects such as these were, after all, by no means common. It is certain that at no time did the average run higher than one a fortnight, and with this, Florimond was at first abundantly content. Greed, however, increasing with prosperity, and fostered by the ease with which it could be satisfied, he grew less cautious.

Yet all went smoothly for him until one Autumn evening, when a moon-faced, quiet-mannered man in the plainest of tie-wigs, his sober brown suit almost suggesting a plain livery, descended from a post chaise at the *Sucking Calf*, and mildly ordered himself supper, a bottle of wine and a bed for the night.

From his table in the usual corner Florimond observed him narrowly, and judged him a timid simpleton of the merchant class, yet a man of substance, since he travelled in a chaise and not by the stage. He was an ideal victim, save that his unobtrusiveness opened no avenue of approach.

Demure and self-effacing, he ate his supper and Florimond began to fear that at any moment now he might call for his candle, and so escape. Some departure from ordinary tactics became necessary.

Florimond loaded a pipe, rose and crossed the room in quest of

a light.

The stranger, having supped, had slewed his chair round and was sitting at his ease, a little unbuttoned and somnolent, his legs stretched before him. Florimond trod upon the fellow's foot; after that he stood glaring into the moon-face that was raised in a plaintive stare. Thus for a long moment. Then:

"I am waiting, monsieur," said Florimond.

"Faith! So am I!" said Moon-face. "You trod on my foot, monsieur."

"Let it teach you not to sprawl as if the inn belonged to you."

The man sat up. "There was plenty of room to pass, monsieur," he protested, but so mildly plaintive as merely to advertise his timidity.

Florimond had recourse to strong measures. "You are, it seems, not only a clumsy lout, but also a mannerless one. I might have pitched into the fire, yet you have not even the grace to offer your excuses."

"You . . . you are amazingly uncivil," the other remonstrated. The round face grew pink, and a wrinkle appeared at the base of the nose.

"If you don't like my tone, you have your remedy, monsieur," snapped Florimond.

Rouder grew the eyes in that bland countenance. "I wonder if you are deliberately seeking to provoke me."

Florimond laughed. "Should I waste my time? I know a poltroon when I see one."

"Now that really is going too far." The stranger was obviously and deeply perturbed. "Oh, yes. Much too far. I do not think I could be expected to suffer that." He rose from his chair at last, and called across to a group at a neighbouring table. "You there, messieurs! I take you to witness of the gross provocation I have received from this ill-mannered bully, and . . ."

Florimond's piercing voice interrupted him.

"Must I box your ears before you will cease your insults?"

"Oh, no, monsieur. So much will not be necessary," He sighed mournfully, in a reluctance almost comical. "If you will send a friend to me we will settle the details."

It came so unexpectedly that, for a moment, Florimond was almost out of countenance. Then he brought his heels together, bowed stiffly from the waist, and stalked off to request of Fleury the usual service. After that, pursuing the tactics long since perfected for these occasions, he departed from the inn. As the

unvarying routine of the matter had taught him to expect, it was not long before he was followed. Himself, as usual, he opened to the knock, and with his usual air of indignant surprise admitted the moon-faced gentleman. As usual the victim displayed all the signs of distress proper to these occasions. His nervousness made him falter and stammer.

"Mu . . . Monsieur, I realize that this is most irregular. But . . . but the fact is . . . I realize that I have been too hasty. It is necessary that I should explain that . . . that a meeting between us is after all, quite . . . quite impossible."

He paused there, prematurely as it seemed, and as if fascinated by the wicked smile that was laying bare the swordsman's dog-tooth. Into that pause came the sarcastic answer that had done duty on every occasion since Desfresnes':

"Ah! I am to wear a placard on my breast, so as to warn the impertinent that I am a fencing-master."

But the phrase which hitherto had proved so disconcerting proved now the very opposite. The stranger's expression completely changed. It became so quickened by surprise and relief that it entirely lost its foolish vacuity.

"A fencing-master! You are a fencing-master? Oh, but that makes a great difference." The enlivened glance swept round the room, observed its bareness, the lines chalked on the floor, the trophies of foils, plastrons and masks adorning the walls. The man drew himself up. His figure seemed to acquire an access of virility. He actually smiled. "And this, of course, is your school. I see. I see. In that case everything arranges itself."

Heels together, he bowed with the proper stiffness. "Forgive the needless intrusion. We meet, then, at eight o'clock in the Pré-aux-Chêvres." He turned to depart.

For the first time in one of these affairs it was Florimond who was disconcerted. He set a detaining hand upon the other's shoulder.

"A moment, Monsieur le mystérieux. What the devil do you mean by 'everything arranges itself'?"

"Just that." The eyes in the moon-face twinkled with amusement. "For me, as for you, monsieur, a duel with an ordinary civilian would be a serious matter. If there should be an accident the consequences might be grave. You see, I am, myself, a fencing-master. But since you are of the fraternity there are no grounds whatever for my apprehensions."

A sensation of cold began to creep up Florimond's spine. As a

swordsman he knew that whilst among asses he might be a lion, among lions he was certainly an ass. He looked more closely at this stranger in whom he had been so mistaken; he looked beyond the round placidity of that pallid countenance, and observed that the man was moderately tall, well-knit, of a good length of arm and an exceptionally well-turned leg.

"You are, yourself, a fencing-master?" he echoed, and his stare was foolish.

"Even of some little celebrity," was the answer in a tone of mild deprecation. "My name is Danet."

"Danet?" Florimond's voice cracked on the name. "Not . . . not Guillaume Danet?"

Again the stranger bowed, that stiff bow from the waist so suggestive of the swordsman. "The same. Very much at your service. I see that you have heard of me. You may even have read my little treatise. It has made some noise in the world. Until to-morrow, then, at eight o'clock, my dear confrère."

"But . . . a moment, mon maître!"

"Yes?" The other paused, his eyebrows raised.

"I . . . I did not know . . ."

He heard his own phrase cast in his teeth.

"Am I to wear the name Guillaume Danet on a placard on my breast as a warning to impertinent little provincial fencing-masters?"

"But to meet you, mon maître . . . It is not possible. You cannot wish it. It would be my ruin."

"That will not matter since you will probably not survive it."

Wide-eyed, pallid, Florimond stared at this opponent, the very mildness of whose aspect had now become so terrible. Already he had the sensation of a foot or so of cold steel in his vitals. "I will apo . . . apologize, mon maître."

"Apologize! What poltroonery! You provoke, wantonly you insult the man you suppose to be incapable of defending himself, and you imagine that an apology in private and in secret will adjust the matter. You are caught in your own trap, I think. You had better be making your soul, Monsieur de la Galette. Good night!"

"Wait! Ah, wait! If now . . . if I were to compensate you . . ."

"Compensate me? I don't understand."

"If twenty-five louis . . ."

"You miserable cut-throat, do you dare to offer me money? Not for fifty louis would I forgo the satisfaction of dealing with

you as you deserve. To bleed you of a hundred louis might perhaps be to punish you enough. But—”

“I will pay it! Master, I will pay it!” Frantically, Florimond made an offer that would beggar him of almost every louis wrung from the victims of his dishonest practices.

Round grew the eyes and the mouth in the round face that confronted him. “A hundred louis!” The great master’s tone reminded Florimond that every man has his price. Slowly Monsieur Danet seemed to resolve. Slowly, with a shrug of the shoulders, he spoke. “After all, why not? The object, when all is said, is to punish your temerity. Since you are penitent, to kill you or even to maim you, might be too much. I am a man of heart, I hope. It is not in my nature to be inclement. I will take your hundred louis, and bestow them on the poor of Paris.”

It was of no consolation to Florimond to assure himself that the poor of Paris would never see a sou of the money. With a heart of lead he counted out his hoard, and found to his dismay that ninety-eight louis was his total fortune. But now the great Danet showed himself not only clement, but magnanimous. Far from exacting the last obol, he actually left Florimond three louis for his immediate needs.



You conceive, however, that this generosity did not mitigate the fencing-master’s bitter chagrin to see the fruits of months of crafty labour swept away. The only solace he found for his mortification was the reflection that what he had done once he could do again. There would be no lack of pigeons still to be plucked. In future, however, he must proceed with greater caution and not trust too readily to a mild and simple exterior.

So, putting a brave face on the matter, he resumed his habits, and each evening at the *Sucking Calf* he sat like a spider in its web, waiting for the unwary fly to blunder in.

They were on the threshold of winter, a season of diminished travelling, and for the best part of a fortnight, Florimond’s vigilance went unrewarded. Then one evening a traveller arrived whose entrance was like a gust of wind, whose voice, summoning the landlord, was sharp with authority.

The vintner bustled forward, and Florimond could scarcely believe his ears.

“Landlord, I am seeking here in Rheims a rascally fencing-

master, who is a disgrace to his calling, and who goes by the flamboyant name of Florimond Souverain de la Galette. Can you tell me at what address he may be found?"

It was Florimond, himself, who answered.

With the feeling that the gods were casting a timely gift into his very lap, he sprang from his chair. He seemed to spin round in the act of leaping, and landed, heels together, in a rectangle before the enquirer.

"He is here."

He was confronted by a tall, lithe gentleman elegantly dressed in black, who regarded him sternly out of an aquiline countenance. A cold stern voice rang upon the awed stillness of the room.

"You are that scoundrel, are you?"

At least a dozen pairs of eyes were turned in pity upon this rash stranger who came thus to skewer himself, as it were, upon the fencing-master's sword. A dozen pairs of ears listened attentively to his further words.

"Another in my place might account himself your debtor. For I have to thank you for four pupils who have sought me in the course of the past two months. Each of them had been craftily entangled by you in a quarrel, so identical in detail as to betray its calculated nature. Each of them, so as to keep a whole skin, paid you in blackmail either ten or fifteen louis. Before the last of them came to me for fencing lessons I had already begun to understand the rascal trade you are driving. I have since assured myself of it, and for the honour of the profession of arms, of which I am a jealous guardian, I account it my duty to put an end to it."

"Who are you?"

"You have the right to know. I am Guillaume Danet, master-at-arms of the King's Academies."

"You? You, Guillaume Danet?" Goggle-eyed, Florimond regarded him; and then his glance was drawn beyond this tall stranger to a man who entered at that moment, carrying a valise: a man in sober brown that looked like a plain livery; a man with a round, bland, pallid moon-face, hatefully well known to Florimond.

"Then who the devil may that be, that fellow behind you?"

The stranger looked over his shoulder.

"That? That is my valet. The man I sent here a couple of weeks ago, to verify my conclusions about you."

And then this poor, rascally Florimond committed his worst

blunder. Like all rogues, judging the world to be peopled by rogues having kindred aims, he uttered a snarling laugh.

"He did more than that. He anticipated you. You are behind the fair, Monsieur Danet."

"Behind the fair?"

"That scoundrel had a hundred louis from me. I have absolutely nothing left."

"I see. He played your own game, did he? And you do me the honour to suppose me equally base?"

He laughed, not pleasantly. He raised his cane, and for months thereafter they told the tale in Rheims of the caning administered by the great Danet to Florimond Souverain de la Galette, a caning which made an end of his career as a master-at-arms, at least in that part of France.

© Rafael Sabatini, 1935.



Some EWMM Contributors . . .

Alistair Allen was born in Scotland, and served in World War One. Is (under his real name) a doctor in general practice, living in his native land.

John Boland was born in Birmingham, lives in east Sussex. An active worker for writers and journalists. Wrote the famous *League of Gentlemen*. Now engaged on a new novel.

Stewart Farrar, born London, 1916. An Artillery major in World War 2, has written several detective novels. Now a freelance, he is author of many scripts for *Dr. Finlay's Casebook* on BBC TV, and *Emergency—Ward 10*, for ATV.

Pete Fry, served in Royal Navy, World War 2; now lives in London after five years in Spain. Written 11 novels for Boardman; now under John Long imprint.

Herbert Harris, born London, 1915. Public relations officer. Author of nearly 3,000 published short stories. Active CWA member, now editing the CWA anthologies.

T. C. H. Jacobs. Plymouth-born, T. C. H. Jacobs is a prolific writer whose work has been filmed and broadcast. Past Chairman of the Crime Writers' Association, he has written over 80 books.

Max Mundy. Has just bought a house in Spain. Worked ten years with the Foreign Office in Algiers. Travels a lot. Hobby is archaeology. Will be living in Persia for the next two years.

The Cop and the Corpse

NIGEL MORLAND

Detective-Inspector Luccan last appeared in A Girl Died Singing. This story is an experiment to discover how a science-minded policeman fits in a short-short

IN THE EARLY days before he came to New Scotland Yard and the glory he was to win there, Rory Luccan was the same lean, lank and amiable man, but no more than a humble sergeant of divisional police.

At the time his family was still angry with him. His father—one of the best pathologists ever to work for the Home Office—had trained him patiently and well, only to see his son walk out to join the uniform police, sacrificing what had been a notable academic career for the greater fascination of human nature as the man on the beat knows it.

Disdaining the inevitable short cuts, Luccan got his sergeantship by sheer ability. At times he received more latitude than routine permits, but not every sergeant knows scientific criminology as well as his own face.

He was passing a house in Brazier Square on an unseasonably warm morning in March when a bothered-looking woman in shabby clothes and an old apron ran down the steps, showing that pleased horror proper to a Londoner who needed a policeman, and had found one.

“Lor, I *am* glad to see you, ducks.”

“Are you, ma’am?” Luccan smiled in a friendly fashion. He had no dignity of rank. “Something wrong?”

“Well . . .” She paused uneasily. Policemen who spoke in the clear accents of Cambridge University were new to her. “There’s the uniform, of course.” She nodded, native caution satisfied.

"Come orn in, any'ow. Mr. 'Arper's lying in 'is workshop, quite dead."

Luccan followed her into the excellently furnished house, listening to Mrs. Harry Puttick, as she said her name was, explaining how she had arrived ten minutes before to do her daily four hours, which she had done for the past year, and had found what she had found. With a combination of Cockney imperturbability and purely feminine unease, she led the way to a long room, littered with chemical paraphernalia, and pointed to the floor.

Luccan saw that the man lying there was a pleasant faced person of early middle age. He wore a white overall.

"Epilepsy, don't you think?" Mrs. Puttick suggested. "Lorst my own that way. Took sudden, too, 'e was."

"Maybe." Luccan bent over to pull back a flaccid eyelid, noting the pupil contraction and felt the premature damp coldness of the skin. He decided on a poison, and probably an alkaloid at that. "What did he do for a living?"

"Something to do with oil, investigating it, like, with all them toobs and things for 'is company. Clever all right. Mrs.—er—'Arper's away for the week end. Coming 'ome tonight."

"I see." Luccan considered the room, glancing at an excellent microscope standing beside its glass bell on the main work bench: it was the work-room of an efficient man. "What was the 'er' for?"

Mrs. Puttick sniffed, then winked. She liked Luccan.

"She's all right, I s'pose, but she's got an 'usband living. Never 'ad no second ceremony for 'Arper, you might say." She wriggled in that indescribable manner of a woman who had her lines safe and sound.

"Well, they will do it. Are they happy?" Mrs. Puttick reluctantly admitted she thought so. "And the real husband?"

"Walter Baker." The answer was instant, the omniscience of one who would follow her long nose into many private corners. "'E rung 'er up 'ere more than once. 'E works in an 'orspital. Always trying to get 'er back."

"Um?" Luccan was enchanted: this was human nature being its freakish self. To concentrate on the positive factors he went round the room. Harper had started work early, if the untidy breakfast tray on a side table meant anything. The tall sergeant tapped a tin of glucose on the tray.

"Has he been ill recently, Mrs. Puttick? This stuff's usually taken as a quick pick-me-up, or as a tonic."

"'E took it in everything, 'stead of sugar; took spoonfuls of it

all the time. Used to swear by it." She shuddered. "I told 'im stout was better."

"Quite, but I daresay it's a matter of taste. Well, there seems nothing more I can do. It'll go through the proper channels." He was shown the telephone and called for the murder squad, then made a further call to Bedford, where, Mrs. Puttick had said, Mrs. Harper was staying.



Later Rory Luccan had another talk with Mrs. Puttick in the kitchen, while the murder squad was at work.

"You tell me he was a contented man, but not liked?"

"Real 'appy 'e was, but certainly not liked though always perlike to me. Clever, mind you, not that that don't make 'em a bit odd."

"Now, what about callers. Who has been here lately?"

Mrs. Puttick opened her mouth then closed it again at the gravity of Luccan's expression.

"Yes, sir. Mr. 'Arper, 'e was always round at 'is oil company of an afternoon, but I see the visitors, mornings. Not that we've 'ad many lately. The usual tradesmen at the door, then a man selling vacuums Friday—I sent 'im orf. The gasman come too, that morning. Mr 'Arper was out. Fridays is 'is golf days."

"The gasman came in?"

"Yes, sir. 'E come to see that Bunkum burner thing."

"The Bunsen burner?" Luccan thought it sounded most improbable. "What did he do?"

"Oh, 'e never done nothing wrong. 'Ad on 'is cap and all. 'Ad a look at the Bunkum burner, and then at Mr. 'Arper's microscope—leastways, 'e was fiddling with it when I come back from answering the door for a parcel. Told 'im off, I did. 'E said it was a luvverly thing, so I couldn't be real 'ard on 'im."

Luccan studied his blunt hands.

"Suppose you show me what he was doing?"

The work-room was empty, now that the official work was done. Mrs. Puttick, slightly surprised at the absence of the corpse and the presence of a chalked outline on the floor, led the way to the microscope and placed a grimy finger on the coarse adjustment.

"'E 'ad that electric light orn orn the bench right there, and 'e was fiddling with this knob and looking down 'ere." She touched the ocular.

"That all he did?"

"Yes—no, 'e took out that thing." She pointed to a slide in a slotted case. "Then 'e told me it was luvverly."

Luccan eased out the slide and saw, by its notation, that it held ordinary crystals of lead chloride.

"He was fiddling with that thing, when you came in?"

"That's right. Never touched nothing else. Is that 'ighly significant, would you say?" With her tale told Mrs. Puttick was nosing out possible dramatic slants, her eyes eager.

"You never can tell, can you?"



Luccan, with his name to help him, had an interview with the Home Office pathologist after the post mortem.

"Want the facts, Sergeant? Unusual poison; could be self administered—veratrine. It's a powerful alkaloid, as you know, a white amorphous powder. Two grains'd kill a cat, but it must've been nasty for the dead chap to take. Want to check over my specimens for yourself?"

"No thank you, sir." Luccan grinned back at the grinning pathologist, and went away to talk to this area superintendent. As a result of it, two plain clothes-men appeared outside St. Arthur's Hospital. Walter Baker, as he left for home, was discreetly whisked away to divisional headquarters where, after questioning, was charged with the murder of Reginald James Harper of Brazier Square.

The area superintendent, who had a great respect for Rory Luccan's intelligence and background, saw him in his office after the arrest.

"Well, Luccan, we've got a confession. Baker's been trying to get his wife back. He kept on failing, he says, and thought she'd come back of her own accord if he killed the fascinating Harper." The area superintendent, a much married man, had a most queer expression.

"I see, sir. Not an unheard-of reason."

"Well . . . no. I took a chance in following your suggestion, Luccan—I've done it before and I've been lucky. Still, you were taking a chance, surely?"

"No, sir. It seemed fairly obvious. To start with, Baker could have found out about Harper's habits from his wife, since they were constantly in touch. Baker waited till she was away for the week-end, then, in a gasman's cap, went to the house on Harper's

golfing day, put veratrine in the glucose; the poison's sharp tasting but the glucose would hide that. Mrs. Puttick didn't know him and even if that parcel hadn't arrived at the providential moment, he would have got her out of the work-room for a few minutes."

"Granted. But why fasten on the gasman?"

"Baker is a hospital technician, sir. He couldn't resist Harper's microscope any more than you can resist police business when you're on holiday. Mrs. Puttick told me enough to decide the gasman was looking at lead crystals, fiddling with a certain knob—the obvious answer was Baker, and the obvious was right as usual.

"That knob was the coarse adjustment, sir." Luccan, in spite of himself, put on a faintly academic voice. "No amateur but only a very adept bird would be able to get a good refined image with the coarse adjustment and say it was 'lurveverly'. I guessed Baker was a trained hospital man with the necessary expert touch required: an amateur would have worked on the coarse adjustment, then the fine, and probably botched the image, anyway—it all fell together very nicely, sir."

"Most observant, Luccan. There's something in this scientific criminology stuff, eh—coarse and sweet, you might say, eh?" The area superintendent laughed immoderately at his little joke. Luccan, who was a very tactful young man, admitted he thought the phrase was a positively killing one.

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RACING COMPETITION RESULT

Readers found this competition apparently most interesting; entries came from as far north as the Isle of Skye to as far south as Sussex. There seemed to be a diversity of opinion as to the order of the captions for the 'talking horses'. Probably inspired by the coming of the Grand National in April, voting favoured caption No. 5 ('Jumped any good brooks lately!'). The analysis of the voting order was for the following caption order: 5-4-1-3-2. Only one reader forecast the exact voting order with his entry: Mr. T. Marsh, 22, Heather Way, Holymoorside, Chesterfield, Derbyshire. He will receive a £5 note towards fares for himself and a friend, and he will be invited to choose a race-meeting he would like to visit as *EWMM's* guest where he and his friend will be given VIP treatment and an excellent lunch.

I, the Accused . . .

PETE FRY

*By force of circumstance, with
fact and clue, a police net
can be woven which
binds and holds*

IT HAD BEEN raining all the week-end and was still raining as if it would never stop. I had spent all Sunday morning indoors, reading the Sunday papers instead of going round to see Angela as I usually did when I was working the week-ends—I'm second projectionist at the Savoy Cinema. Ma Scannel, my landlady, had seemed a bit annoyed and asked, wasn't I going out?

"Not in this rain," I'd told her.

"Have you two had a row?"

"Of course not . . ."

There was a police car outside the cinema when I got there earlier than I was in the habit of doing on Monday afternoon. I'd had no lunch and explained to Ma Scannel that I didn't feel hungry and I'd run all the way through the rain. That was why I was so breathless.

Miss Browne—Amy, as no one dared call her to her face—was in a state. When she had arrived at the office the place stank of some kind of disinfectant. Mrs. Watson, the woman who always cleaned the office, told her there had been a stain on the carpet in there, which she had managed to rub off. What sort of stain? Mrs. Watson supposed Donaldson, the manager, must have been ill or something. I could imagine her shrugging her shoulders as she said it: the old dear couldn't have cared less about Mr. Donaldson or about anyone else, for that matter. She knew all about Donaldson's little weakness for the bottle. So did Amy; but she was loyal—the loyal secretary, that was Amy! But she began to worry. That could have been expected. She was the worrying sort.

Donaldson was generally in the office before her, she said. She

rang his flat, she added, about eleven o'clock; but there was no answer. He was a bachelor and lived alone. So if he were out there wouldn't have been an answer, anyway. By midday, when he still hadn't shown up, she rang the other cinema on our circuit and had the assistant manager from there come round with a spare key to open the safe. She and the assistant manager had checked the takings, which were always counted and put into white canvas bags after the show. There'd been Saturday's as well as Sunday's money in the safe because, of course, the banks closed before midday on Saturday. I nodded. I didn't say anything. She hadn't known what to think, she said.

It was unlike old Amy to open her heart to me like that. But, as I've said, she was in a state. I gathered she'd got round to asking herself if Donaldson mightn't have decamped with the takings. All the ten shilling and pound notes had gone from the safe. The notes were put into separate bags. Three bags of silver seemed to be missing as well.

I shook my head. "No," I said and added hurriedly, "He wouldn't do a thing like that."

"I'm sure he wouldn't . . ." She was tearful. "But what are we to think?"

The assistant manager had apparently phoned for the police.

"I saw the police car outside," I said. "Where are they—the police, I mean?"

"I don't know." I could see she was getting more agitated. "They're foraging round somewhere . . ."

"What about the show?"

"It goes on" she said firmly and as though she'd decided to pull herself together.

"In which case" I said, "I'd better get up to the box."

That was where I was when, an hour later, Larry—the other projectionist—opened the door and came in.

"You're here early" I remarked. It was my evening off and I hadn't expected him until four o'clock.

The main film had been running for about 20 minutes.

"They want you" he said. "Down in the office. I'll take over."

"Who want me?"

"The police" he said. "They sent round for me, brought me here in a car. They're questioning everybody. Donaldson was found in the basement. Someone fractured his skull." He looked straight at me. "The swine's dead."

"You oughtn't to say he's a swine" I mumbled. "Not when he's dead."

He looked as if he couldn't make out whether I was serious.

"A fat lot either of us care whether he's dead or not." Larry had never liked Donaldson. He went on to say, "They found the axe. It had bloodstains on it . . ."

"The fire axe?"

"That's right. How did you know?"

"What other axe is there?"

It was the one that hung beside the fire-buckets in the back corridor where there were a number of disused dressing rooms. The Savoy had once been a theatre.

"Well" I said, "I suppose I'd better go and see what they want."

Larry called me back as I was moving over to the door. "Look!" he said. "They'll probably want to know about your movements on Sunday evening. That's what they were asking me about. I told them you were on duty here and I mentioned we'd met outside The Three Tuns at closing time."

"I was in the saloon bar" I said.

"I know. That's what you said."

"Did you tell them that?"

"They didn't ask me. I just said you'd walked home with me and, as far as I knew, you'd gone home, yourself . . ."

"Of course I went home."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, what else could I say? I had to tell them, hadn't I? They asked me . . ."

"That's all right" I said. "That's all right. What are you worrying about?"

He looked confused and said, "I'm not worrying, mate."



The older one was sitting at the late Mr. Donaldson's desk. I'd been told to go in. The other detective, a younger man, who was standing beside the desk, asked me who I was and what I did. There was a policeman without his helmet, sitting at Amy's table, taking notes. They let me sit down, too. Except for the way the old detective kept staring at me it wasn't too bad—I mean, they seemed to accept the answers I gave to their questions and not to want to go on and on about things. It was almost

as though they didn't care, as though they were in a hurry. They did say, in a rather casual way, that they were asking everyone to have their fingerprints taken, and asked if I had any objection to being fingerprinted.

"Of course not" I said and tried to smile. "I've no objection at all."

Afterwards I got a couple of plastic cartons of a fruit drink from Maisie, one of the usherettes, and went back up to the projection box where Larry and I sat drinking the stuff through a couple of straws and chewing the fat for a while. They'd taken his fingerprints, too, and, apart from asking me if I'd noticed whether Donaldson had been in his office when I'd left the cinema, they'd asked him more or less what they'd asked me.

"How can you be sure what time you're here and what time you're there?" I said. "You'd think they expected people to be looking at their watches every five minutes!"

"Oh, it's not so difficult" Larry said. "When I met you outside the pub it was just after closing time and, allowing for drinking up, you can more or less say what time that was. I left you at the end of my street after we'd walked there together . . ."

"What time was that?" I asked him.

"About five to eleven—well, more or less" he said. "It must have taken us about ten minutes. We didn't stop anywhere on the way. It was raining . . ."

"That's right" I said—I'd just thought of something. "It was raining, wasn't it?"

"It probably still is . . ."

"That was what I said. I told them I couldn't be sure of the exact times. But they seemed satisfied."

"Why shouldn't they have been? These are routine questions—the sort they always ask. I don't suppose they'll ever find the fellow who did it."

"Perhaps not."

"Anyone could have done it," Larry went on, sounding as though he were getting interested. "He wouldn't even have needed to break in. He could have just locked himself in one of the lavatories and waited there until everyone had gone and the lights had been switched off, then gone to the office. If Donaldson had been there, drooling over his whisky as he usually was, he wouldn't have been able to put up much of a struggle . . ."

"You're probably right" I said.

"Of course I am" he said. "The fellow's well away by

now.”

It must have been after five o'clock when I arrived at my lodgings. Mrs. Scannel was out somewhere and there was nobody else in the house. I went up to my room and realised at once that someone had been there. The furniture had been moved—even the bed, which had been pushed back crookedly and not right against the wall as it usually was. I felt a horrible sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. When I opened the wardrobe I found that the tweed jacket and the pair of shoes I'd been wearing on Sunday had gone. Some time after that I heard Mrs. Scannel unlocking the front door downstairs. I hurried down the stairs to her without giving myself time to think.

I thought she looked sheepish.

“Who's been in my room?” I heard myself shouting.

“There wasn't anything else I could do. I had to let them in. They were from the police, asking questions. About poor Mr. Donaldson's death. It's a terrible thing . . .”

“What could *you* tell them about Donaldson's death?” I hadn't meant to bark at her that way; but I was angry.

“They were asking about *you*, if you want to know.”

I could see how overwrought she was by then and that by being so short with her I'd only made her angry, too. Somehow I didn't mind.

“Then I hope you told them all you knew. Yes; you told them to search my room, I hope, and to take away my jacket and my shoes.”

“I had to tell them . . .” she began.

“Tell them what?”

“What time you came in on Sunday night.”

“How did you know? You were in bed. Everybody was in bed . . .”

“It was twenty past twelve. I remember looking at the clock. I'd only just gone to bed when I heard you come in. I don't know where you'd got to till that time of night and I don't want to. It isn't any of my business.”



“That's all right” said Superintendent Phillips, the old detective, who was questioning me again and had somehow got round to mentioning my jacket and shoes. I can't remember how it was. I certainly didn't ask him. He did suggest that I might have been

the last person to see Donaldson alive; but I insisted that I hadn't seen Donaldson that night and that I'd told him so before. It was hard to know where you were with him. He went on asking the same questions he'd asked the first time.

"And you left the cinema on Sunday night shortly after ten twenty and went to have a drink with your friend, Laurence Symonds, the other projectionist at the Savoy. It's only a few steps from the cinema to The Three Tuns, isn't it?"

I nodded.

"Isn't it?" he asked again. "Will you please answer my questions and not just nod your head?"

"That's right. But I didn't meet Larry in The Three Tuns. I was in the saloon bar; he was in the public."

"Why was that?"

"I couldn't get in the public. There were so many in there the door was wedged from inside. I met Larry outside."

"At closing time?"

"Yes."

"That would be about ten forty-five?"

"I suppose so."

"And you walked with Laurence Symonds as far as the end of the street where he lives? That would take you ten minutes?"

"Yes. About that" I said, trying not to sound worried.

"And then you went home, yourself?"

"That's right."

"Do I understand that you went straight home?"

"Yes. Yes, of course."

"Your landlady states that you did not return to your lodgings until well after midnight."

"She must be wrong. I don't know what time it was; but I'm sure it wasn't as late as that."

"What time do you suggest it was?"

"I don't know, I tell you . . ."

He didn't say anything.

"Aren't I telling you I don't know?" I said. "It was raining, wasn't it? I sheltered in a shop doorway."

"What shop was that?"

"I don't know. I don't remember . . ."

"And you didn't see anybody? Nobody saw you?"

"There wasn't anybody about."

Once again he kept quiet and seemed to be waiting for me to go on; but I got a hold on myself. I told myself two could play at

that game.

"I'm sorry to have to ask you these questions," he began after what had seemed a long silence. "But you realise I have to check up on everything."

I nodded.

"Well, then. You have a girl friend, a Miss Angela Smith. You're not officially engaged, I think?"

"What has Angela got to do with it? Leave her out of it, can't you?"

"You're worried about her, aren't you?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"I've seen her," he said quietly. "She believes she may be going to have a baby . . ."

"She doesn't know," I blurted out, confused and ashamed. "She hasn't been to see the doctor, yet."

"Quite so. I think she should tell her parents; but of course it isn't any of my business." He leaned back in his chair. "I understand you've been asking around to see if anyone knew a doctor who could procure an abortion?"

"No," I said. "No. Not really . . . I mean, I may have asked a few people. But we weren't meaning to do anything. We hadn't made up our minds what to do."

"Yes," he said. "I see."

He sat looking at me for a moment longer, then got up out of his chair and let me go.



Mrs. Scannel got so that she didn't seem to want to know me. She was tight-lipped, put the meal on the table in front of me and hardly spoke. I didn't see much of her husband, either; but then I never had seen much of him. I kept away from Angela. If she wanted to see me she could come round: she knew where I lived. After a while it no longer seemed as if I were deliberately avoiding her. I just went on working at the cinema and trying not to worry. Amongst us at the cinema there seemed to be an agreement that we wouldn't talk about what had happened.

Donaldson had been buried, of course. None of us went to the funeral because the coffin had been sent to one of his brothers who lived in another town.

The superintendent was still at the police station and enquiries, people said, were continuing. The police had had a slide made,

which was flashed on the screen during the performances. I suppose it was shown at the other cinemas as well. It asked anyone who had been at the Savoy on that Saturday or Sunday and who had paid with a ten shilling or pound note they knew the number of or that had had any distinguishing mark on it to come forward; but I didn't hear of anyone who did. It was pretty unlikely that anyone would, I thought; but if anyone had done the police wouldn't have come round and told me, or anyone else, about it.

I don't think I realised how all this was affecting me. There was the atmosphere back at my lodgings, too. I'd put off seeing Angela for so long that I simply couldn't bring myself to go round there. She would be in a state and wanting to know why I hadn't come and, in defence, I'd have started wanting to know why she hadn't been to see me. I didn't want to do anything. It was as though I were waiting until something happened. I didn't see much of Larry, either. When we did meet in the pub, with each of us avoiding talking about what had happened at the cinema, there seemed to be nothing else to talk about. I usually went to bed early; but I didn't sleep much.



Then I received that note from the superintendent. It merely said would I like to come in to see him? I was in a funk and didn't know what to think. I tried, unsuccessfully, to pretend it was some kind of joke and ask myself what would happen if I were to send a note back saying, "No thank you; I wouldn't like to come in and see you." But naturally, of course, I did nothing of the sort; I rang up the police station and said I'd come.

I got there and the superintendent was almost affable at first. He asked me to sit down and sat there, himself, as though waiting for me to say something. When I didn't he said, encouragingly, "I thought you might want to get something off your mind."

"No," I said. "No . . ."

He waited for a moment; then he said, "We've been testing your alibi and we've found one or two gaps in it . . ."

Again he seemed to be waiting for me to say something; but I couldn't speak. I felt strange. I was scared; but it was more than that.

"Have you forgotten to tell us anything?" he was asking me. "Did you go anywhere else that night?"

"I've got a funny feeling," I heard myself saying. "Here . . ." I rubbed the side of my head. "I don't feel very well."

He ignored this and went on, as if he hadn't been listening to what I said. All the time he was looking hard across at me. His eyes held me and I felt I must be wriggling in the chair in a vain attempt to escape from him. And why was he going on like this? It was as if he knew the answers to all his questions without needing to ask them.

"Did you go back to the cinema?"

I shook my head.

"Well?" he said. "I'm waiting for your answer." His voice and manner had changed. He sounded disgusted and impatient to be finished with me. "Did you go back to the cinema?" he shouted at me.

"I don't know," I said. "I don't know. I may have done."

"Now we're getting somewhere," he went on, the tone of his voice altering again. "You went back to the cinema."

I looked across at him. I said, "I've got this pain . . ." I put both my hands up to the sides of my head and pressed. "I can't think," I told him. "I can't think . . ."

"You went back to the cinema," he said. "You killed Philip Donaldson. You took the key from him and opened the safe. What did you do with the money?"

I shook my head from side to side, still gripping it tightly with my hands. I was determined I wasn't going to say anything more. But he kept on with his questions, became threatening.

"You've admitted you went back to the cinema. You've admitted it!" I don't think I was imagining that he'd become so unnaturally excited; he was leaning across the table to me, shouting.

"I may have done. I may have done . . . Why can't you leave me alone?"

I wasn't clear about what else he said. I didn't seem able to understand half of it. If I told him what had happened, he said, he would help me; if I didn't things would be bad for me. He'd charge me with the murder of Donaldson.

"No," I said. "No . . ."

I was in despair. I knew it was going to be no use. So after that I just refused to say anything.

He got abruptly out of his chair and went out of the room, shutting the door behind him and leaving me there by myself. It was the worst half hour I'd ever spent—if it was half an hour. I really didn't know how long it was. The superintendent eventually

returned. He had a typewritten sheet of paper in his hand. This he put on the desk in front of me.

"It's the statement you've made. Sign it," he said, pushing a pen at me.

I couldn't see to read what was on the paper. My eyes had filled with the tears I had been trying to keep back. The superintendent angrily snatched up the sheet of paper and read from it. It was a brief, bald statement to the effect that I now believed I had gone back to the cinema that Sunday night.

"Well?" he said.

"Yes . . ."

That evening after I'd had my meal or, rather, pushed the plate away because I'd had no appetite I was in my room, lying on the bed, when two policemen came for me. I was taken to the police station, charged with the murder of Philip Donaldson, then locked in a cell.



What happened after that and for some time afterwards was blurred, so far as I was concerned. I appeared before a magistrate the next morning. I remember the occasion as utterly unreal. Before I'd gone along the corridor to the court a policeman, who seemed friendly, had said this would only be a formality and I'd be remanded until the Assizes.

Weeks passed. It was still as though I'd been removed bodily from the real world. I knew vaguely that, outside the prison, there was the town where I'd lived and worked for four or five years; but it was as if I couldn't quite believe that this was so. No one came to see me. I had heard nothing from Angela. I wondered if perhaps, as a remand prisoner, I wasn't allowed any visitors; but I didn't want to ask about that for fear they would say I was and I'd then have to admit that all the people I'd known had made up their minds to have nothing to do with me. The solicitor, who was to prepare my defence, came several times and even he seemed unsympathetic and scarcely interested. The blood the police had found on my jacket must have been from when I'd cut my finger at work the week before that Sunday. I hadn't noticed the blood, myself. He made me think back and remember what day it was. I told him the doctor at the police station had taken a sample of my blood. That was something else I'd forgotten about. He shrugged his shoulders and said it didn't matter: Donaldson's

blood must have been the same group as mine. Larry would remember my cutting my finger, I suggested; but he mightn't want to give evidence.

"Don't worry about that," the solicitor said. "He'll testify."

He looked dubiously at my finger.

"I heal quickly," I said.

"So it seems."

What chiefly interested him was the circumstances under which I came to make that statement at the police station. He went over and over it and kept coming back to it, saying how important it was to be absolutely sure of what the superintendent had said when he'd been threatening me. I had enough sense to conceal from him how hazy was my recollection of what had been said and kept stubbornly to the words I'd first said the superintendent had used. I said I'd been threatened and forced into signing the statement by being told I'd be arrested if I didn't and, in practically the same breath, that I'd be left alone if I did . . .

The last time I saw him he said, "Try not to worry. I think we have a chance."

The moment I found myself standing there in the dock in that huge courtroom everything suddenly became real again and I felt helpless, alone and as if all the stuffing had been knocked out of me. I felt I didn't want to go on and couldn't go on putting up a show any longer. All I wanted was for it all to finish. The judge in his wig and robe, sitting up on the high bench in front of me, looked indifferent; the expression on his face was one of bored patience. He would listen to everything that was said just as he had been listening day after day for years, unmoved and uninvolved. The 12 people in the jury box were all staring at me. I looked away. I was given a chair and allowed to sit down—and was glad to.



The prosecuting counsel opened the proceedings. The superintendent came into the witness box, looked almost casually across in my direction, but only for a moment. Quite unexpectedly, then, my own counsel rose to oppose what he had called the admissibility in evidence of the statement I had made at the police station. The judge, leaning forwards, asked some questions but in so low a voice I could scarcely hear what he was saying and then said he would hear counsel. I still didn't altogether understand what was

happening; but the jury were told to leave. I watched them filing out of the courtroom and some of them looked as puzzled as I was.

There followed more discussion, much of which I was unable to grasp; then, in a sort of daze, I was led from the dock and told to go into the witness box. When I'd taken the oath my counsel put the same questions the solicitor had so often asked about the superintendent's threats and promises. I merely repeated the answers I'd given then and began, absurdly, to feel easier in my mind.

I was in despair again as soon as the prosecuting counsel took over. He began by smiling at me and saying he would only have a few questions.

"What was written down in the statement was true?"

There was a protest about this; but the judge said I was to answer the question and I did.

"Yes," I said.

What did it matter any more? It was all over. That was what I wanted: for it to be over . . .

"Were you forced into saying it was true by something that was said?"

"Yes," I said. "Yes . . ."

"But let's be quite clear about this." He gripped the collar of his gown with his fingers. "You do say that what was written in this statement is true?"

"Yes."

"Will you speak a little louder so that his lordship may hear what you are saying?"

"Yes." I was glad to say it. "Yes. Yes . . ."

I had to go back to the dock and there was some more argument; then the judge spoke at some length and finally said he had decided that the statement I had made at the police station was inadmissible in evidence. At which the prosecuting counsel seemed to lose his temper and threw his papers on to the table, a few of them fluttering on to the floor to be retrieved by another, younger barrister, who was sitting beside him.



The jury came back into the courtroom. I watched them settling themselves into their seats. The trial was resumed. I couldn't understand why it had to be. I'd admitted my statement that I'd gone back to the cinema was true, hadn't I? I'd expected

that to be the end of it. I'd wanted it to be. I didn't want it to go on. All I wanted was for it to be over.

But the trial went on. The witnesses were called. I was scarcely even listening to what was being said. I was sitting, leaning forwards, with my head in my hands.

In the end the prosecuting counsel was saying that that concluded the case for the prosecution and I roused myself and stared at the back of my own counsel, who had risen in his seat. I heard him submitting that there was no case to answer. The judge was listening to him and looking worried. Once again I seemed to lose my grasp on what was happening. I suddenly realised the judge was instructing the jury to return a verdict of not guilty.

I was standing there in the dock and couldn't believe it was true. It was absurd for this to happen. I'd killed Donaldson, hadn't I?

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E W M M

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Postscript to Tragedy

T. C. H. JACOBS

Few modern murder cases contain such a variety of strange facts as this history of a double murderer who executed himself

MRS. BERTHA MERRETT was 55 years of age and her son, John Donald, nearly 18, when they took up residence at 31, Buckingham Terrace, Edinburgh, on 10 March 1926.

Previously had lived at Mortimer, near Reading, Donald being then at Malvern College. His mother, separated from her husband, hoped he would enter the Diplomatic Service. He was her only child, born on 17 August 1908, at Levin, North Island, New Zealand, where his father was an electrical engineer.

Donald was to have gone to Oxford University, but his general conduct at school had become such that his mother decided to send him to Edinburgh University, which, being non-resident, she felt she could keep a closer watch on him. How futile this hope proved to be is revealed by subsequent events.

Mrs. Merrett came of a prosperous Lancashire family and her annual income was some £700, much of which she spent on her son and his education.

On 17 March Mrs. Henrietta Sutherland, a young woman engaged as daily maid, arrived as usual at 9 a.m. Mrs. Merrett and her son had finished breakfast, and Mrs. Sutherland cleared the table. At 9.40 Mrs. Merrett was in the sitting-room, writing a letter to her bank in reply to a statement that her account was overdrawn, a statement which had worried her, as she thought she was well in credit. Her son was with her.

Mrs. Sutherland was in the kitchen when she heard a shot, and a few moments later Donald ran out, crying, "Rita, my mother has shot herself."

When questioned by the police, Mrs. Sutherland gave contradictory accounts of what happened. In one, she said she saw through the open door Mrs. Merrett falling from her chair, a pistol in her hand. Her second version of the tragedy was that, after the shot, she heard a scream and a thud, and before she could collect her wits Donald Merrett ran out to say his mother had shot herself. This was the story she told at the trial, and appears to be what really did happen.

When she went into the room with Donald she found his mother on the floor, blood flowing from a wound in her head. Her chair was overturned and the pistol, a small Spanish .25 automatic, was then on top of a bureau. Even this evidence was disputed and it was never determined whether the pistol was on the bureau, or on the floor when Mrs. Merrett was first seen by the maid.

Nine months elapsed between the shooting and the arrest of Donald Merrett. His mother was still alive, but unconscious when she was removed to the Royal Infirmary and placed in a guarded ward, under arrest for attempted suicide. She lingered for two weeks, recovering consciousness, able to talk rationally and to sign a cheque. She appeared to have no idea as to what had happened. All she knew was that something like a pistol shot had sounded near her head.

Donald had been standing beside her while she was writing. Mrs. Merrett declared she said to him, 'Go away, Donald, and do not annoy me. The next I heard was a kind of explosion.' Later, she asked, 'Did Donald do it? He is such a naughty boy.'

Donald Merrett agreed that she had used these words, but said he had gone back to the recess at the other end of the room and was reading when the shot was fired. He admitted that he had bought the pistol, with 50 rounds, a few days before the tragedy. First, he said his mother knew of it and took it from him, placing it in a drawer of the bureau. But later he agreed that she did not know of the pistol.

One cannot help feeling that the whole sordid affair was very casually investigated from the very beginning, possibly because it was believed to be a case of attempted suicide.

Mrs. Merrett had been worried about her son, because she thought he was overworking. He was, but not at the University. He left with his books every morning, seldom attending any

classes. He locked himself in his bedroom with his books at night, asking his mother not to disturb him.

With the help of a rope and a drainpipe he slipped out to the Dunedin Palais de Danse, in Picardy Place, and an attractive dance hostess. His pocket money was 10 shillings a week, yet he managed to 'book out' the young hostess at 30 shillings a night, and 15 shillings an afternoon, buy her rings, purchase a motor cycle, and order a second one of higher power at well over £100.

His conduct during his mother's last two weeks of life followed the pattern of his previous wild behaviour. He spent the afternoon of his mother's admission to hospital with his girl friend at Queensferry, and in the evening he took her to a cinema. He made a brief call at the Royal Infirmary and asked if his mother was still alive. On being told that she was, he went off again with the girl.

On 1 April his mother died. She had not been charged with attempted suicide, but a case had been prepared. By her will the whole of her estate was left in trust for her son until he reached the age of 25. One of the two administrators was the Public Trustee, who, in fact, acted alone, the other trustee having renounced his office.



Mr. and Mrs. Penn, Donald Merrett's uncle and aunt, took over the Buckingham Terrace flat and Donald lived with them. They were not at all convinced that Mrs. Merrett had committed suicide, and viewed with growing alarm and suspicion their nephew's mode of life, although they knew only a very small part of his misdemeanours.

Other relatives, too, were expressing misgivings over his mother's death. Donald grew uneasy about their suspicions. In April, he borrowed money from Mr. Penn and went off to London to 'consult a famous detective.'

Unknown to his uncle, Donald went with a taxi-cab driver friend and two girls, one of whom being under 16 years of age was soon brought back by the police. Later, the two men, penniless, walked and hitch-hiked back to Scotland from London.

Donald's conduct became steadily worse and he was taken by his uncle to be examined by an alienist, who pronounced him perfectly sound and sane. His uncle then sent him off to Hughenden, near High Wycombe, where it was hoped he would have less temptations and might, perhaps, be persuaded to settle down to

study.

In the meantime, evidence of Donald Merrett's forgeries began to come to light. On the day before Mrs. Merrett was shot, the Clydesdale Bank in Edinburgh notified her that she was overdrawn, and enquiries revealed the method by which her son had managed to cut such a dash with his girl friends.

Mrs. Merrett's principal account was with the Midland Bank at Boscombe. From this, and from the Clydesdale Bank, over £450 had been withdrawn during February and March by means of 29 cheques made out to J. D. Merrett. One wonders what would have happened if his mother had not so conveniently died. Matters must have been coming perilously close to a show-down for Donald.

By November 1926, under pressure from relatives, the police had decided to act. A petition by the Procurator Fiscal of Midlothian was issued, charging Donald Merrett with murder and uttering. On 29 November he was arrested at Hughenden and taken to Edinburgh.

He came up for trial before Lord Alness on 1 February 1927, at the High Court of Justiciary, Edinburgh. He was being tried under Scots law upon two different charges taken together, murder and uttering—that is, presenting for payment cheques he knew to be forged.

Counsel for the Crown were the Lord Advocate and the Advocate Depute. For the accused, Mr. Craigie Aitchison, K.C., led.

John Donald Merrett, when he stepped into the Court, was seen to be a powerfully built young man, broad-shouldered, six foot one inch in height, who looked much older than his 19 years.

The trial lasted seven days, five of which were taken up by the presentation of evidence for the Crown. About the forgeries there never was any doubt, but the murder question was not so straightforward.

The maid, Mrs. Sutherland, was subjected to severe cross-examination about her conflicting statements. Her evidence was, of course, extremely important. If she had seen the pistol in Mrs. Merrett's hand, as she had first said, then the charge of murder fell down at once, or nearly so. But she stuck to her second version of the tragedy and said that the pistol was on the bureau.

A piper in the Kings' Own Scottish Borderers, who had been a policeman at the time of the shooting and had been the first officer on the scene, showed a lack of observation in that he did not

know where the pistol was, but thought it was on the floor.

Two medical officers from the Royal Infirmary stated that they had seen no powder tattooing around the wound, as would have been the case if the pistol had been discharged close to the head in a suicidal attempt. But both admitted that there had been much blood around the wound, and this had been removed with swabs soaked in water. No serious attempt, apparently, had been made to search for powder marks, and the suggestion that it was a suicide attempt had not been questioned.

The Crown called two medico-legal experts, Professor John Glaister and Professor Harvey Littlejohn, Professors of Forensic Medicine at Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities respectively. They described experiments made with the .25 automatic pistol. Shots had been fired at ranges varying from point blank to nine inches. There was much blackening and tattooing at the shorter ranges, a little at six inches, and none at all at nine inches.

Professor Littlejohn declared that the idea of a suicide was inconceivable. Of accident, he said the same. Mrs. Merrett was alleged to have reached behind her for something on the bureau, overbalanced her chair and, in falling, unwittingly snatched the pistol from the pigeon-hole where it was kept.

Under pressure from Mr. Craigie Aitchison the professor qualified his statement by saying that if it could be proved that it was a close discharge, then either suicide or accident might be just possible. By the time Mr. Aitchison had done with him the professor's evidence looked very tattered and did nothing to advance the case for the Crown.

The important point in the medical evidence was whether there had been blackening and tattooing. In his summing-up the judge said to the jury of 15, of whom six were women, "I think you must take it that the case for the Crown on this matter depends on the absence of blackening, and on nothing else."

So that was it. No blackening, no murder.

No such marking had been detected with the naked eye by the medical staff at the hospital. But experiments had shown that tattooing, or penetration of the skin surface, could not be washed away with soap and water and the Crown case was that the pistol could not have been held close enough to the head for it to have been either suicide or accident.

Professor Glaister, who followed Professor Littlejohn into the witness-box, fared little better than his colleague under the relentless cross-examination of Mr. Craigie Aitchison, a masterpiece of

adroit skill and dogged persistence. Mr. Aitchison complained of the witness's repeated use of the word 'probable' and tried to pin him down to definite statements.

Donald Merrett, very wisely, did not go into the witness box.



Professor G. M. Robertson, an authority on mental diseases, said that though the brain itself had not been touched, the medical facts indicated that the brain covering had been perforated. This would result in definite and serious mental changes. Mrs. Merrett would be in a state of altered consciousness, and while she might well appear normal, her memory would be so affected that it was unsafe to draw inferences from anything she said during the period following her wound to the time of her death. She might well have forgotten all impulse to commit suicide.

The defence had been doing very well. They now brought their big guns to bear. They called Sir Bernard Spilsbury and Mr. Robert Churchill, the firearms expert, both men with great international reputations.

Mr. Churchill said that having carried out a series of experiments with a weapon similar to that figuring in the case, he was also present at Sir Bernard Spilsbury's further experiments in Edinburgh with the actual Spanish .25 pistol. The ammunition was identical with that bought by Donald Merrett and did, in fact, come from the same gunsmith's shop.

A .25 automatic cartridge, he said, contained two grains of flake smokeless powder, a very small charge. Flake powder, fired from a small pistol, would not really tattoo the skin, even at close range. The flakes would not penetrate, but merely adhere to the skin surface. Blackening would be superficial and easily removed by a wet swab. In this circumstance no inference as to blackening could be drawn from the absence of blackening. On both these points he was absolutely definite.

From the direction of the wound, it might have been either suicidally inflicted, or the result of an accident. He had, he said, personal experience of a woman who had shot herself from behind the right ear. There would probably be an instinctive movement of the head away from the pistol muzzle and which would account for the course which the bullet had taken.

With regard to the possibility of accident, Mr. Churchill said that a similar wound could be reproduced by grasping the pistol

with the thumb on the trigger-guard and the fingers on the butt. The actual weapon in question was of a cheap make with a very light pull. No reliance, he declared, could be placed on such weapons as they were liable to go off accidentally.

Sir Bernard Spilsbury was making one of his rare appearances on behalf of a defence, and his tremendous reputation for absolute fairness and honesty, combined with a knowledge and skill second to none, must have carried a great weight with the jury.

No Counsel ever succeeded in shaking Sir Bernard's evidence, which was always given with calm assurance, clearly, in a manner which a jury could understand, however technical or obscure the point might be. The prosecution was faced with real trouble when he stepped into the witness-box.

"I have applied my mind," he began, "to the question of the possibility of drawing any certain inferences as to whether the wound which resulted in Mrs. Merrett's death was homicidal, suicidal, or accidental. So far as my experience goes there is nothing in the site of the wound inconsistent with suicide."

With the actual pistol, he demonstrated how the weapon could have been held. With its light weight there would be no strain on the hand or arm, even if held some inches from the head. He agreed with Professor Littlejohn that a great range of movement in the shoulder joint was found in women, because of the habit of putting up their long hair.

On the vital evidence of the powder blackening, he said the bleeding, which had been heavy, would wash away some of the blackening and the subsequent swabbing with a wet cloth would make it that no sure conclusion could be drawn as to the distance from which the shot had been fired. The flakes of the smokeless powder used, unlike the particles of granulated powder, which penetrated the skin, were easily removed and left no trace.

Sir Bernard said that suicide was a possible explanation of what had occurred. Of accident, he said:

"From my own experience of accidental shooting one knows of extraordinary positions sometimes resulting from accidental discharge of weapons, and in such a position as this an accidental discharge, I think, could never be entirely excluded. It might even be at a range greater than that which would produce local marks round the wound."

One wonders what Donald Merrett was thinking as he listened to all this learned evidence.

When the judge delivered his charge to the jury he dealt with the

conflict of opinion between the scientific witnesses and described it as irreconcilable. He stressed the importance which he attached to Sir Bernard Spilsbury's evidence when he said to the jury,

"I should imagine you would be disposed to attach the very greatest weight to his conclusions."

The trial was conducted with the utmost fairness, the judge's summing-up favourable to the accused. No comment was made on the fact that he had not been called upon to give his own evidence. If ever there was a case which called for such evidence as Donald Merrett alone could give, surely this was it.

That he should have had Sir Bernard Spilsbury on his side was an inestimable advantage. No less fortunate was he in his advocate, Mr. Craigie Aitchison.

On the charge of uttering forged cheques he had small chance of acquittal and the defence concentrated on the murder charge.

The jury, by a majority, returned a verdict of 'Not Proven', a verdict peculiar to Scottish law. On the charge of forgery there was a unanimous verdict of 'Guilty.'

Donald Merrett was sentenced to 12 months, and one can only think that he was an exceedingly lucky young man.

He served his sentence in a Scottish prison, and shortly after his release he married a 16-year-old girl from Gateshead, whose Christian names were Isobel Veronica.



They seemed to have been a well matched couple, for soon after their marriage they visited a Newcastle jeweller and obtained goods to the value of £300 by means of a worthless cheque. When arrested he and Vera had drifted by uneasy stages to Kenton, Middlesex, where they were found living in a makeshift tent and drawing public relief. Donald went down for nine months but Vera was discharged.

When he had served his sentence, their life of fraud began all over again. He received a succession of short sentences and finally, to hid his identity, he changed his name to Chesney.

In 1939, when the war came, he joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and soon obtained a commission. He served in M.T.B.s on the Channel Patrol for some months, and was then given command of an armed trawler and transferred to the Mediterranean.

His ship was lost off Tobruk and he was captured by the

Italians, from whose custody he promptly escaped and eventually reached Gibraltar.

In war, men of his flamboyant nature are at their very best, or worst. He appears to have served with courage and resource, although he won no decoration or special mention. The end of the war found him without suitable employment.

It is not clear if, or when, he parted from his wife, but in 1952 he made a declaration changing his name once again, this time to Milner, and it was in this name that his passport was renewed.

The operations of the Tangier smugglers attracted him and he found employment with them shortly after his discharge from the Royal Navy, gun-running and smuggling, working from Tangier into France, Spain, and even as far east as Egypt and Turkey. He was caught and convicted in France, but escaped to Belgium in 1949, evidently a difficult prisoner to hold in custody for long.

In Ostend he was living with an attractive East German girl who had shot dead a Russian officer, but had escaped to the Western Zone of Berlin. In due course, with the aid of an American military friend, she had reached Belgium.

Chesney, as he was then called, lived on his wits as an operator in the Black Market, a flourishing business while it lasted.

In April 1951 he was convicted at Lewes, Sussex, for smuggling currency and was jailed for 12 months. On his release, under the name of Milner, he lived in a houseboat on the Thames and became well known in the West End of London, a great favourite with the ladies.

He was a man born 400 years too late, a swashbuckler, flamboyant in everything he said, did, and wore. His left ear was ornamented with a gold ring, his clothes were tailored to cause notice and comment, his manner was loud and hearty. On a ship flying the skull and cross bones he would have been in his natural element.

On 12 February 1954, the morning newspapers carried headlines, 'Two women strangled in old folks' home. Double murder in Ealing', and statements that the police were anxious to interview the husband of one of the dead women as he might be able to help them in their investigation, the usual formula when they have a Number One suspect.

The man wore a gold ring in his left ear.

The murdered women were Mrs. Isobel Veronica Chesney, the same Vera, who at the age of 16, had married John Donald Merrett, and her mother, self styled 'Lady' Mary Menzies. The

two women were running an old people's home in Montpelier Road, Ealing, London, W.

The murderer had entered the house shortly after midnight and made his way to a back room where 'Lady' Menzies slept. He had knocked her unconscious with a copper coffee-pot and strangled her with one of her own stockings. Not very original, but effective.

He had then crept upstairs to the first-floor bathroom, where Mrs. Chesney, clad in a black nightdress and pink wool cardigan, was preparing a bath, thrown her into the water and held her head under until she was dead. He was still a very powerful man, and she had no chance of resistance although she must have tried. Locking the door, he had returned to the hall and left the key on a side table.

On Tuesday 16 February, in a lonely park three miles from Cologne, Germany, a post-office worker stumbled across the body of a man shot through the head, a heavy Colt revolver by his side. In his pockets the German police found press-cuttings relating to the murders in Ealing. Inside a British passport was a three line will leaving 'everything' to his German girl friend, Fraulein Sonja Winnike, whom he had left the day before in Düren, 30 miles away.

Before his suicide he had written to her, 'After all that lies behind me, I have no chance and as I have not seen one tonight, I am ending everything. All my luggage is in the baggage at Cologne. You must pick it up. Here is the deposit document and the return fare to Düren. When you receive this letter I won't be alive any more.'

So ended a man whose life had been one of mystery, crime, turbulence, and an unbalanced kind of courage.

On 23 March 1954, in the Coroner's Court at Ealing, the life story of this man was unfolded as witnesses came forward to add their chapter during the inquest on his wife and mother-in-law.

Detective-Superintendent Wilfred Daws gave evidence of his investigations and of his journey to Germany with Detective Sergeant Frederick Chadburn, where they had examined Chesney's body and taken possession of his property. Superintendent Daws had ordered the forearms of the dead man to be severed and had brought them back to Scotland Yard.

Superintendent Percy Law, the police expert, had photographed them in colour. A small epidiascope was made to show the Coroner and jury colour slides of the hands and wrists, which revealed the severe scratching and bruising. It was the first time the Metropolitan Police had used colour photography in Court.

Dr. Lewis Nickolls, head of the Scotland Yard forensic laboratory, said that he found under the fingernails tiny shreds of pink wool which matched the cardigan Mrs. Chesney was wearing when she was found dead in the bath. In addition, he had found human blood-stains on Chesney's trousers and waistcoat, and several hairs identical with those from the head of 'Lady' Menzies.

Evidence was given that Chesney had attempted to bribe several men to murder his wife. One was a fellow convict in Wandsworth Prison to whom he had offered £1,000. He told the man he had already tried to kill her by gas poisoning but had failed.

The motives for murder were threefold. The first, he wanted a divorce, so that he could marry the German girl. The second was the marriage settlement, made in January 1929, and worth £8,400. The income from this settlement went to his wife during her life and on her death reverted to him. The third motive was his belief that his mother-in-law and, probably, his wife had betrayed him to the police over his smuggling operations.

He had tried to persuade his wife to visit him in Germany, but she had refused, anticipating his intention to stage an 'accidental' death for her. Being a Roman Catholic, she would not agree to a divorce, and had told him that no German woman would hold a British passport through her.

Information of Chesney's flight from Amsterdam to London on the evening of 10 February, travelling on a stolen passport was given, and of his recognition by persons who knew him and had seen him in the vicinity of Montpelier Road.

It took the jury 37 minutes to name him as a double murderer and so close the last chapter in the life story of this modern swashbuckler who had run the whole gamut of crime between the first trial for the murder of his mother, to which he is alleged to have confessed to friends, and the double murder of his wife and mother-in-law.

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THE WAY OF RELEASE

Herbert Harris

*A chill little story of
incompatibility with
a Grand Guignol
finale*

MOVING WITH a slow determination in the half darkness, one hand shakily gripping the handle of the big glass jug, the tall dark girl went up the wide stone staircase, her heel-taps echoing eerily in the cold barren house like the ticking of an old clock.

The look on her face blended many things—fear, disgust, a pent-up hatred that was ready to explode. In the next few minutes, she told herself, she would seek revenge on a man she had come to loathe. The intention brought a momentary wave of sickness.

She paused for a short while at the head of the stairs, closing her eyes as if to shut out the evil picture forming in her mind. Then she regarded herself in a long mirror and saw the woman who was still beautiful, still slim-hipped and firm-breasted, still young . . . too young for the man who lay in the big old-fashioned bed in the bleak room on the other side of the landing.

A few hours earlier, the doctor had told her: "Your husband's condition seems to show a slight improvement. He'll never be fit and active again, of course, but if he lives quietly and avoids excitement he could easily go on for another ten years."

The doctor had observed the quick turn of her head, the look of agony and frustration in the tired eyes.

"I understand what that must mean to you, Bronwen," the doctor had murmured gently, placing a sympathetic arm round her shoulders. "You'll need patience enough to stand him for another ten days or ten weeks, let alone ten years . . ."

She stood very still, staring past the doctor. Her eyes said: Ahead is purgatory, a dark tunnel into which fate is rushing me. The doctor squeezed her arm. "Courage, my dear," he said, and went out.

After the doctor's departure, she had sat in the chair that was too old by the fire that was too small. Arthur begrudged every penny spent on heating. He was even quibbling about the money spent on food, though, Heaven knew, she was feeling too weak to eat much.

Then came the bout of quiet sobbing, followed by the build-up of hatred deep inside her. And once more the soft tap-tap-tap on the french doors. A familiar enough sound, but it made her jump violently.

"Oh, David, you ought to come to the back door!" she whispered anxiously, frowning at the sturdy dark-haired young man who stepped at once into the room when she opened the door. "You know how people gossip!"

"To hell with the prattling old women," he growled, his powerful arms around her, crushing her fiercely to him.

When she withdrew from him abruptly, her body tense, her lover demanded crossly: "What's up? Are you scared of something?"

"Sometimes I think I hear shuffling footsteps . . . as if Arthur were creeping up on us . . . I know it's imagination, but I can't help it . . ."

"That foul old man will be the death of you," he said bitterly. "He's brought you to the edge of madness, Bronwen; he'll drive you completely crazy. Look at your pale face! My God, I wish you were free of him . . . I'd bring back the colour in your cheeks all right!"

She nodded, her body trembling as she sobbed into her spread hands.

"Still, maybe it won't be for long," he consoled her. "Then you'll come into everything the old miser's got."

"There's not much money now, David."

"Maybe not," he said, "but there's his workshop across the way. That's thriving. I can go on running it like I'm running it now, can't I?"

"Yes, you do it well, David. Arthur never paid you enough."

He snorted. "You can say that again! He's too mean to tell you the time. What the hell made you marry him in the first place I don't know."

He did know, though. She had told him.

How she had been left all alone when her parents were drowned off the Gower Peninsula, left with no relatives and no friends. Well, nobody to lean on but Arthur. She was working in Arthur's office as a junior straight from school, and he had taken a bit more than just an employer's interest in her.

Oh, yes, far too much interest, David reckoned. He would never have let the friendship ripen if he'd been around at the time. After all, she had been a mere kid, green as grass. Arthur must have thought himself dead lucky, having a pretty kid like this around him all the time, him being a widower . . .

Maybe if that boy she was a bit keen on hadn't killed himself on his motor-bike, she wouldn't have gone all to pieces and let friendly old Arthur make her his wife on the rebound.

"Arthur was all right at first," she said. "Then he seemed to change. Jealousy had a lot to do with it, of course. He was more than twice my age. He thought the fellows in the workshop were making passes at me and that I was leading them on. His rages got worse and worse, and he started drinking heavily, and when he got drunk—"

She broke off, lowering her head, shuddering. "It was a nightmare until he went down with those angina attacks."

"Sure, Bronwen, I can guess what it was like for you." He came up behind her, wrapping his arms about her, caressing the curves of her body. He kissed the hollow between her neck and shoulder. "But it can't be long now, can it?" he said again.

"No, David, I guess not," she said. She didn't tell him what the doctor said, that Arthur might be good for another ten years if he avoided excitement. It would only give him another fit of depression and make him unbearable to the men at the workshop.

"Shall I come back later?" he asked hopefully.

"No, David, not tonight if you don't mind. I'm tired out. I'd like to go to bed early, get a good night's sleep." She turned her face up to him. "There's always tomorrow, isn't there? And—who knows—it might be a brighter day?"

He kissed her mouth passionately again. Then she pushed him away gently. "Good-night, David . . ."

When he'd gone, leaving the emptiness, she had sat down again in a mood of black despair, to let the evil thoughts jostle one another in her mind once more.

And alone, in the oppressive silence, she remembered Arthur's storms of abuse, his distrust, his cruelty, his lust, his utter selfish-

ness. All the nightmare memories had risen inside her like mounting waves of nausea.



Some time later she allowed the devil to take possession of her. The hatred filled her, making her want to hurt, to torture, to kill even.

Reaching the top of the stairs, and having paused only to look at herself in the long mirror, she carried the big glass jug towards Arthur's room.

Her husband awoke out of a haze of drowsiness and his face, looking older than the years justified, seemed uglier than ever. He looked at her with a withering contempt.

"Oh, there you are. You've been long enough, haven't you. I could die here for all you care. What's been keeping you, then? Found a new lover-boy, have you?"

The hate blazed more fiercely inside her. She regarded him with loathing.

He waved a plump hand at the big glass jug. "What's that you've got there, then?—water, is it?—lemonade? I didn't ask for anything to drink!" he snapped.

"No, it isn't anything you can drink," she said evenly. "It's sulphuric acid."

He stared at her blankly, his rubbery lips parted.

"Sulphuric acid? What's the matter with you? Is that supposed to be funny? Have you gone crackers? I always thought you were a bit weak in the head!"

"Oh, yes, Arthur, I'm mad all right. Quite mad, like you always said. And this is vitriol all right. Undiluted. I've been over to the workshop and got it out of one of the carboys."

His slack lower jaw fell. "What the hell for?"

"To throw over you, Arthur. To pay you back for your torture—your cruelty—to disfigure your vile ugly face more than nature has done . . ."

"My God, you *are* crazy!" he muttered. His whole face twitched and trembled with fear. Sweat covered his skin. He recoiled from her, pressing his back against the heap of pillows.

"I'm a sick man, Bronwen!" he screamed. "I'm sick—sick—don't you understand?" He shielded his face. "Oh, God, no—not acid!"

He watched with staring horror as she drew back the big glass

jug with both hands. Then, with one lightning movement of her arms, she flung the contents of the jug into his face.

She stood for a long moment staring unfeelingly at her victim, her breasts rising and falling with each shuddering breath.

The doctor leaned over the dead man.

"Oh, dear, he's all wet," he said. "Properly drenched, as if somebody had spilled some water all over him. What happened, Bronwen?"

"He wanted a long drink, he said. A big drink to slake his thirst. So I filled the glass jug with water and put some fruit juice in it. When I took it to him, he was in one of his tempers. He snatched it from me, but he hadn't got hold of it properly . . ."

"Yes, I see. Spilled it over himself. I warned him about getting into tempers. You'll go out like a light, I said. That's what happened. Sooner than I expected. Still—a happy release, my dear."

The dark girl nodded slowly, unsmiling. "I think my foreman wants to see me," she said, and went downstairs to meet David.

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CONSIDER YOUR VERDICT

ALISTAIR ALLAN

*This graphic and unusual story
debates the controversial
problem of the doctor facing
a patient with an incurable
disease, and a future of pain
and hopeless suffering*

THE CORONER opened his court, and, looking around at the various officials, said, "We are here to make enquiry into the death of a man, John Morgan. He was suffering from cancer, but I have received certain information, from which it is clear that the cause of death will require further elucidation. First of all, I propose to take the evidence of Mrs. Morgan, the widow of the deceased."

A policeman called out, "Mrs. Morgan!"

A woman in deep black proceeded to a point near the coroner's desk. As she approached a small table on which a Bible was lying, the coroner instructed her to take the oath. She did so with a slight sway.

The coroner said, "You may sit down, Mrs. Morgan." She sat down on a nearby chair, holding a handkerchief to her face.

The coroner continued:

"I do not wish to add to your distress, but, you understand, we have to make an enquiry into the death of your late husband, John Morgan."

Mrs. Morgan nodded, and the coroner went on.

"For some time before his death, had your husband suffered from cancer?"

"Yes."

"And he died in the early hours of Tuesday morning?"

Mrs. Morgan, twisting her handkerchief: "Yes."

"And who was in the house at that time?"

"My sister, myself, and Dr. Brighthouse. You see, our own family doctor—that is, Dr. Brown—was on a night call when I telephoned."

"And was there anything done by Dr. Brighthouse for your husband?"

"No, nothing at all. Dr. Brighthouse was very kind, but he said my husband was beyond any help."

The coroner looked at Mrs. Morgan, then: "Do you know—or have you any grounds for believing—that your husband could have died from any cause other than his original illness?"

"Oh! No; not at all."

"I understand that your husband was receiving injections from Dr. Brown. Did you know what they were?"

There was a slight rustle from the public benches. Mrs. Morgan glanced round, then:

"Oh, yes, I knew quite well. They were morphia. Dr. Brown told me so himself—and he explained that he would have to make them stronger—as the illness progressed—and that then there might be some risk . . ." She paused.

"Some risk, Mrs. Morgan—a risk to whom, did you think?" The coroner's voice was wary.

"Well, at the time, I thought it referred to my husband—he was so far through. But I realise now that Dr. Brown took all the risk upon himself, to save my husband suffering, and lingering in misery."

"Now, about the injections, Mrs. Morgan. Could you tell us roughly how many?"

"Well, Dr. Brown was calling latterly twice in the day for the last month of my husband's life, to give injections to let him get sleep, and to ease the pain. The doctor was so attentive—what we'd have done without him, I can't bear to think."

"So then it could be said that your husband had these injections morning and evening for the last month of his life—and that latterly the amount of the drug was being increased—very considerably." The coroner paused and looked at her. "Now, Mrs. Morgan, would you say that this might have hastened the end?"

Mrs. Morgan—realising the purport of the coroner's question, replied: "You mean? No! Oh! No! My husband couldn't

settle at all until the doctor had called. But for Dr. Brown, it would have been a living death for John” She looked very distressed. The rustle from the public benches came again.

“Thank you, Mrs. Morgan, thank you. I don’t think I need ask you any more questions.” The coroner adjusted his glasses.

The next witness was Dr. Brighthouse. He stepped briskly to his place, and took the oath in precise, clipped tones.

“Is your name Arthur Brighthouse?” The coroner began.

“Yes, sir.”

“And are you a doctor of medicine, of Leeds University?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And are you in general practice at Tile End?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Dr. Brighthouse, you notified me yesterday morning—quite properly—about certain facts which had come to your notice, in connection with the death of John Morgan, and I understand that you were called to the house of the deceased in the absence of the family medical attendant—Dr. Brown, who was occupied with a confinement.”

Dr. Brighthouse nodded. “That is so, sir.”

“And in what condition did you find the patient, John Morgan?”

Dr. Brighthouse lowered his voice, and said: “He appeared to be dying.”

“In your opinion, would it have been possible to have revived him?”

“No, sir. It was quite clear from what I saw that he was beyond all medical aid, and, indeed, the terminal event took place within a very short time of my arrival.”

“And did it occur to you then, as to what might have been the cause of death? Was it consistent, say, with the symptoms of the terminal phase of a lingering illness?”

“Well, not altogether, sir.”

“Then what *did* you think, Dr. Brighthouse?”

“From my findings and observations, the fatal issue had been determined by the administration of some drug—a drug of the narcotic group, I should say.”

“Could you tell us upon what grounds you base this statement?”

“The patient was in a deep coma. He could not be roused, and his breathing was very laboured and difficult.”

“And are those the signs of dosage with a narcotic drug?”

“They signify *overdosage*, sir.”

"And the drug? Could you say what might have been used?"
Dr. Brighthouse hesitated, then: "I would be inclined to identify it as morphia, probably."

"Thank you. That will be all, Dr. Brighthouse."



The next witness was Dr. Brown. There was some considerable stir in the public part of the court as his name was called. He stood up and took the oath quietly.

"You are Richard Brown, and you hold an M.D. of London University?" The coroner began.

"Yes, sir."

"And you are engaged in general medical practice in Tile End?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are the Morgans' family doctor, and I understand that you attended the late John Morgan over a long period in this illness—which, in fact, proved to be his last?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you satisfied yourself as to the cause of death?"

"Yes, sir. To the best of my belief and knowledge, John Morgan died of cancer."

The coroner, looking round the court, said: "Perhaps I had better recapitulate the findings at the post-mortem examination on John Morgan." He paused, then he read from some papers.

"Besides extensive deposits in the body, of a malignant growth, an excess of a drug—morphia—was found in certain organs."

The coroner continued, looking at Dr. Brown—"As the family doctor, in close attendance on the deceased, John Morgan, can you offer any explanation of the presence of this drug?"

"Yes, sir, I can. I myself, personally administered morphia to John Morgan during the last month of his life."

There was a fresh stir in the court.

"In the usual dose, Dr. Brown?"

"Yes, sir, at first—but later—in doses increasing in strength."

"And would you yourself, then, have called them large doses?"

"They would certainly have been massive doses, in ordinary cases, but this was not an ordinary case."

"Dr. Brown, would you please tell us what you mean when you say 'this was not an ordinary case'?"

"My patient was afflicted with a hopeless disease, which was slowly but surely sapping his life. It was attended by extreme pain.

Not a simple pain that would respond to a simple drug.”

“And so you felt you had to use an extra-ordinary drug, in much larger doses than normal?” The coroner paused significantly, “and this, even though it might have endangered his life?”

“Yes, sir. There was no other way. That was the only course open to me.” Dr. Brown’s face was very pale.

“Thank you, Doctor. You have been very frank and clear in your evidence.”

The coroner looked round the court, and, addressed the jury, who were paying very close attention to what was being said;

“We have heard the evidence of the three witnesses, which has been given in a very straightforward manner. Regarding the evidence of Mrs. Morgan, what she has said is in substantial agreement with that of the two doctors, but now we are faced with two conflicting medical opinions. On the one hand we have Dr. Brighthouse affirming that he believes that the cause of death was an overdose of morphia. On the other hand, there is Dr. Brown, who has stated that his patient died of cancer. I would point out to you, that in the case of Dr. Brighthouse—any observations he may have made at the bedside of the deceased were necessarily brief, because the doctor was there for only a few minutes before death ensued. However, you have to remember that the evidence of Dr. Brighthouse is supported by the final report of the post-mortem examination, where a very large amount of the drug was found in the body.

“Turning now to the evidence of Dr. Brown, that the cause of death was cancer—you must bear in mind that Dr. Brown was the family doctor of the deceased, and that he had been in regular attendance on John Morgan over a very long period. So, Dr. Brown would naturally be in a better position than Dr. Brighthouse, to offer an opinion as to the cause of death, but you must also remember that Dr. Brown has frankly admitted the giving of morphia to his patient. Perhaps you may think that Morgan would have died in any event, and that his passing was simply eased by the drug. But we know, from the post-mortem examination, that an excess of morphia was found in the organs, far beyond the medicinal requirements. Further, you heard the evidence of Dr. Brown himself, where he admitted that this was so.

“Therefore, it comes to this. What you have to decide is—did John Morgan die of cancer, or was it, in fact, an overdose of morphia which actually caused his death? Should you agree on the first question, you will return a verdict of death from natural

causes. Should you arrive at the latter conclusion, then your verdict must be manslaughter against the person responsible for the giving of the morphia, in this case, Dr. Brown. I would therefore ask you to consider this with the greatest of care. You may also add a rider to your verdict, should you think this is necessary."

The jury began to talk earnestly amongst themselves, then, after a due interval, the foreman stood up.

Addressing the coroner, he said: "Having considered the findings at the post-mortem, in the case of the deceased—John Morgan—and having heard the evidence of Dr. Brighthouse, and that of Dr. Brown and Mrs. Morgan, we are agreed upon our verdict. We find as follows." He read from some papers in his hand: "First that John Morgan died from an overdose of morphia. Second, that this overdose was given by Dr. Richard Brown. We therefore return a verdict of manslaughter against Dr. Richard Brown."

The foreman paused, then he continued, "However, we wish to add the following rider—we are unanimous in finding that Dr. Brown acted towards his patient in what he conscientiously believed to be in his very best interests, and that, while his action may have unfortunately endangered the life of this patient—such life as it was—in so doing, the doctor was fully aware that he was incurring a very considerable risk to himself."

There was an outbreak of movement and whispering in court. Then the coroner spoke, addressing Dr. Richard Brown:

"Dr. Richard Brown, the jury has returned a verdict of manslaughter against you. I therefore issue a warrant for your apprehension, to appear before the Central Criminal Court at the forthcoming Assize."



In the press there appeared later the following item of news.

Before a judge and jury today, at the Old Bailey, a doctor was found guilty of the manslaughter of a patient. He was Dr. Richard Brown, of Tile End, who had been awaiting trial for three months, released on bail. Dr. Brown was sentenced to one day's imprisonment. The case had aroused considerable interest, not only amongst the general public, but also in the medical profession. The judge, in his summing up, referred to

the phrase 'mercy-killing', and made it clear that in law, there was no justification for this course. The judge further added that Dr. Brown would still have to appear before yet another court, that appointed by the General Medical Council, which, in the case of any misdemeanour, is the supreme arbiter of a doctor's fate.



It was the court of the General Medical Council, which was sitting to conduct the enquiry into the case of Dr. Richard Brown.

On the platform was present the president of the court—Sir Godfrey Armstrong. On each side of him sat three members of the Council, in academic dress. All were well known members of the medical profession, their faces reflecting the gravity of the matter in hand.

In the space before the platform sat Dr. Brown, at a small table. Some little distance away sat the solicitor for the General Medical Council, Mr. Wood, and his clerk. There was a rustling of papers, and quiet talk between these two. Then the President began to speak.

"This meeting of the representatives of the General Medical Council has been summoned as a court of discipline and conduct. We are here to determine whether or not a medical practitioner, Dr. Brown of Tile End, is guilty of infamous conduct, in a professional respect."

The president looked towards the solicitor's table.

"I understand from our solicitor, that Dr. Richard Brown is present in person. Is that so, Mr. Wood?"

The solicitor rose, and indicating Dr. Brown replied: "Yes, sir, Dr. Brown is here."

Dr. Brown stood up and bowed to the court. He remained standing. He was addressed by Sir Godfrey Armstrong.

"You are Dr. Richard Brown?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have been furnished with a copy of the charge upon which you now appear before the General Medical Council?"

"Yes, sir."

Sir Godfrey, looking round at the other members, "And I understand that each of you has a copy also?"

There were murmurs of assent.

"Then," Sir Godfrey continued, looking at the solicitor, "I

would ask Mr. Wood, to proceed on behalf of the Council."

Mr. Wood, with some papers in his hand, addressed the court.

"Dr. Richard Brown, a general practitioner of Tile End, whose name appears in the current Medical Register as a doctor of medicine, of London University, was committed to the Assizes at the Old Bailey. This was upon a coroner's warrant following a verdict of manslaughter. At the Old Bailey, Dr. Brown was found guilty of administering an overdose of morphia to a patient—John Morgan—as a result of which, that patient died. The judge and jury took a lenient view, and although Dr. Brown was found guilty of manslaughter, he was sentenced to one day's imprisonment, which, of course, meant his immediate release."

Sir Godfrey, looking at Mr. Wood: "Were there then any extenuating circumstances?"

"No, sir, at least, not as recognised in law, but in any case, I have to inform the court that Dr. Brown refused all offers of legal aid."

"So he spoke for himself—and what defence did he put forward?"

"Dr. Brown said that he had acted in what he considered to be the best interest of his patient. He went on to say that he was associated with the Euthanasia Society. This is a society which has many supporters among the lay public; and it also includes not a few sympathisers amongst the medical profession. The object of the Society is, to promote legislation for what it calls 'voluntary euthanasia', or to express this term in common parlance—'painless death'. The ultimate aim of this body is to endeavour to introduce legislation which would empower doctors in certain circumstances, to terminate life. For example, as in the case of a patient who is said to be hopelessly incurable.

"But as the law stands at present, any doctor who would act in such a rash and dangerous fashion, could be accused of murder. In fact, Dr. Brown was fortunate in that the lesser charge of manslaughter was preferred against him. And this despite his assertion that not only was he in favour of euthanasia, but that he was associated with the Euthanasia Society, and that he had been so for some considerable time. Such statements coming from any member of the medical profession are not in accordance with the high standards of medical ethics. Further, the action taken by Dr. Brown, in the case of his patient, constitutes a flagrant violation of the vow taken by every doctor at his graduation ceremony, the Hippocratic Oath. Dr. Brown is now, therefore,

charged here before the General Medical Council with administering a noxious drug to one of his patients, as a direct result of which that patient died." Mr. Wood bowed. "And that, sir, concludes the case."

Sir Godfrey inclined his head: "Thank you, Mr. Wood." Then he turned towards Brown. "Dr. Richard Brown, you have heard the charge against you. Do you wish to speak or have you any legal representation?"

"No, sir. I am prepared to speak for myself."

"Then let us hear what you have to say."

Dr. Brown, looking at Sir Godfrey directly, began to speak.

"Gentlemen, I am honoured and proud to stand here before you. I am not asking for mercy, although I am fully aware of the consequences which may follow on account of my action. I am a general practitioner, a family doctor, and for many years now I have cared for my patients. Some of them I have cured, some of them I have helped to live, but some of them I have also helped to die. This I freely admit, for I am a practising member of the Euthanasia Society. In regard to the present case, I did no more than perform my duty as a medical man, in full accordance with the dictates of my conscience. Would you have had me stand by the bedside of my patient, my friend, John Morgan, looking on while he was suffering an agonising, lingering, and inevitable death? What would you call me?" Dr. Brown paused. "No, I did not kill John Morgan by the drug I gave him—I killed his pain!" He paused again in distress. "Gentlemen, whatever may be the findings of this court—whatever judgment you may pass upon me, all I ask is that posterity may think well of me and of my action."

"Dr. Brown, is that statement final, or have you anything to add?"

Brown made a slight bow to Sir Godfrey.

"No sir. That is all I have to say."

There was more rustling of papers, and murmuring of voices, then the president said, "These proceedings will now be adjourned until the members of the General Medical Council arrive at a decision."

Then the court broke up, and the doctors retired through a door behind the platform, into the Council Chamber.

Sir Godfrey was the last to be seated at the long table. He appeared to be somewhat restless, and on his way to his seat at the head of the table, he paused at a framed inscription on the wall—

above the busts of the physicians of old—Hippocrates, Aesculapius, Celsus. There was some head-nodding amongst the doctors who were waiting for Sir Godfrey. At last, Sir Godfrey joined them, and sat down.

Immediately a member rose to his feet and began: "Before we proceed with the business in hand, there is something I must say, As we all know, our president, Sir Godfrey Armstrong, has very recently suffered a sore bereavement in the death of his wife. I speak for myself, and I am sure, for all of us here, when I say that we wish to extend to him our deepest sympathy in his great loss." They all rose, and stood silent for a second or two. Sir Godfrey got up and addressed them with some emotion.

"Gentlemen, it is impossible at this moment for me to express how deeply I am moved by your sympathy in my tragic loss." He hesitated. "And now, I can say no more at present, for it is my duty to continue with the enquiry into the conduct of Dr. Richard Brown." He had, by now, completely recovered himself and went on. "I have to draw your attention to a very important point. Should we bring in a verdict against Dr. Brown, in this particular case, should we find that he is guilty of infamous conduct, in a professional respect, then the only sentence we may pass is that the name of Dr. Richard Brown be erased from the Medical Register.

"Finally, I would draw your attention to the following: according to the findings of the High Court of Justice, there can be no appeal from this judgment and sentence, if these have followed proper enquiry, and I would remind you that no court of justice can interfere with our verdict—there can be no appeal against it. And now I propose to ask each one of you for your individual observations."

Sir Godfrey looked around the table, and addressed one of the members. "Dr. Hardy. You are now a specialist physician, but you were also in general practice for many years before that. What are your views?"

Hardy answered promptly.

"I believe that Dr. Brown did the right thing. He was Morgan's family doctor—so he had experience and a real knowledge of his patient. He knew that Morgan was beyond cure, indeed this opinion had been confirmed by a specialist."

Sir Godfrey interposed at this point. "And do I understand then that you yourself, Dr. Hardy, would consider an overdose, if you found yourself placed in similar circumstances?"

"Well, no, hardly that. Perhaps I would not consider an overdose, but I will say this." Hardy paused. "On many, many occasions I have wished that I could have been endowed with the tremendous courage possessed by Dr. Brown."

Sir Godfrey made a note on the pad in front of him. The rest of the court were silent. Then Sir Godfrey looked up and addressed another member of the court.

"Dr. Chandler Ford. As we all know, you hold an appointment at the Home Office. You are a toxicologist, and you have an intimate knowledge of drugs. I think, too, you have written a monograph on morphia. Further, you were present at the post-mortem on Morgan, Dr. Brown's patient, were you not?" Dr. Chandler Ford nodded assent. "What is your opinion, then?"

"I say without a doubt that Dr. Brown overstepped his duty. He grossly exceeded the dose of morphia which he gave to his patient, and thereby he was instrumental in causing the death of that patient."

"Then, if you yourself were engaged in general practice, would you administer more than the specific dose of a drug, having due regard to the circumstances?"

Dr. Ford replied emphatically: "No, sir, I would not exceed the specific dose under any circumstances whatever!"

Sir Godfrey made no comment. After making a further note on his pad, he looked round the table and addressed another member.

"Dr. Grant, you are in charge of the Norbreck Hospital, where patients are admitted with advanced, incurable diseases. Let us hear your views, please."

Dr. Grant replied: "Well, of course, I find myself in complete agreement with Chandler Ford. Many of our inmates may be in the final stages of a lingering illness, and naturally they receive every care. Our nursing staff is specially trained in the use of sedatives, and when these measures lose their effect, then, and then only, are we compelled to resort to morphia. But, mark you, in very small doses.

"This has the effect of sustaining whatever of life remains, and the patient may drag on indefinitely, in a semi-conscious condition, for many months. Unfortunate, maybe, but that is our treatment, and the best we are able to offer. For our aim is to relieve pain, *not* to hasten the end. No, I think that what Dr. Brown did was wrong—morally and ethically wrong. Indeed, how could he have been sure that the man who died that day might not have been cured the very next day, by some new medical discovery?"

Again, Sir Godfrey made a note on his pad. Then he looked round at another member. "Mr. Brownrigg, you recently contributed a masterly article to our medical literature on abdominal surgery, in which you have been engaged for many years. How do you look upon the conduct of Dr. Brown?"

Mr. Brownrigg hesitated before he replied: "Yes, I have tackled many a patient like Dr. Brown's. 'Tackled,' I think, is the word here—for if you operate in such a case, and find something rather difficult and unpleasant, you have to decide there and then whether to go ahead. If you feel there is a chance, even the very tiniest chance, it becomes quite a problem, what to do for the best. Oh! of course I have been tempted many a time, perhaps a slip of the knife, or maybe a loosely tied artery. No one would have ever known, except myself." Brownrigg paused and looked tensely round the circle of faces. "Then the patient would have been delivered from a miserable and dreadful death.

"But at times like these, I always remember the odd case. I was only a house surgeon at the time, but it is indelibly imprinted on my memory. We had admitted a patient to the ward—an emergency, as it turned out, for my chief decided that she required an immediate operation. He was an able surgeon of great experience, but here there was nothing he could do. An open and shut case, if you like—as we used to call it, for that's exactly what it was. My chief began the operation, took a long, careful look, then he closed the wound at once. Gentleman, that patient is alive and well today, the odd case unexplained." Brownrigg concluded: "My opinion is that Dr. Brown should have held his hand—and his patient, for all he knew, might have been alive today."



Sir Godfrey made a note on his pad writing very slowly, then he looked round the court.

"Dr. Jermyn Lane, it's your turn now. We all know you best as a consultant physician, but you have other interests. You are an active member of the church; you have very strong religious convictions, and I think you have spoken from the pulpit more than once."

Dr. Jermyn Lane nodded agreement.

"The question of euthanasia, or 'mercy killing'—to use the popular term, is a dilemma which faces every doctor in his professional career, sooner or later. Some medical men may

appear to be matter-of-fact, even apparently callous, according to their view. But most are humane, and for them the decision is even harder. If they favour euthanasia out of compassion, as an act of mercy, this would be illegal, as the law stands at present. Myself, I believe that it is morally right to be merciful, and here I quote the Bible, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy'. This is the way I look at it. We would not be taking away life in such a case. We would simply be anticipating the inevitable. We would be helping the patient over the last hurdle, for in most cases, only a shell of a body remains. Everything has gone that made life worth living, so the doctor who sincerely believes in euthanasia would be mercifully releasing the spirit from a tortured, broken frame. As a Christian, I believe in the sixth Commandment—'Thou shalt not kill'—but I do not believe that it would be contrary to the Divine Will that human suffering be shortened, where there is no hope of recovery." He paused, and looked round. "And therefore I would be in favour of euthanasia, but only if it were put on a proper footing, and permitted by law."

Sir Godfrey said: "Thank you, Dr. Jermyn Lane, you have made your point very clear." After making another note, he said to the remaining member: "Dr. Rigby, you have been engaged for a considerable time now, in medical research. What is your opinion, bearing in mind that you have been indirectly and on many occasions, directly very closely associated with certain outstanding medical discoveries for the well-being of the human race."

Dr. Rigby answered carefully, as if he had weighed his words:

"Medical Research is of necessity very slow in its progress, and in its findings it is extremely guarded. Even the slightest advance or discovery means many years of intricate work, and check and counter-check by international medical teams. It may be that one day far distant no disease will be incurable. Remember, however, that medical discoveries, no matter how brilliant, cannot ever confer immortality upon the human race. Nor is it of any comfort to a dying man, to hold out the vague possibility of a cure, when it is quite clear that there is absolutely no hope for him in his present condition.

"From my own standpoint as a scientist, I believe that where a patient has passed the point of no return, where an incurable disease has invaded his whole body, where every known means has been employed to halt the advance of the disease, and where these efforts have failed, and there remains only a living death for the

sufferer, then one should be in complete favour of euthanasia, as long as it would bring about a speedy and painless termination of life. I say that in circumstances such as I have described, I would be completely and without hesitation, all for some form of euthanasia, provided this procedure would be put on a proper footing by law."

There was a silence among the other members, broken only by the rustling of papers. No one ventured a comment. At last Sir Godfrey said: "Gentlemen, I have to thank you for expressing your views so clearly, and so very ably, too." He glanced at his pad. "Let us see now how the score stands." And he read, looking at each one in turn as he spoke slowly and with deliberation:

"Dr. Hardy, you are for Dr. Brown.

"Dr. Chandler Ford, you are against him.

"Dr. Grant, you are against him.

"Mr. Brownrigg, you are against him.

"Jermyn Lane, you are for him.

"Dr. Rigby, you are for him."

Then he continued. "Three of you are for Dr. Brown. Three are against him, and so, it seems, the final decision rests with me." He paused. "I expect you are all wondering what I am thinking. But before I tell you, may I claim a few moments of your attention. We mustn't take too long. Think of what that poor devil out there must be going through just now. We mustn't keep him in suspense."—He paused, then continued—"waiting, waiting for the verdict."

Sir Godfrey raised his head, and, speaking very quietly, he went on: "It was I, myself, who performed the operation on Dr. Brown's patient. It was plain to see that the disease was far advanced. There was not a vestige of hope, there was nothing anyone could do. And so he was sent home, home to die. Like many more, he passed from my mind." Sir Godfrey paused, in obvious distress. Then, recovering himself, he continued: "Suddenly, one day I was face to face with a terrifying reality. It was my wife. She was stricken by illness; everything possible had been done, and soon it became evident that there was to be no recovery. Our doctor had ordered sedatives . . . drugs . . . all to no purpose. Time dragged on through days—days became months. How she lingered . . . In her conscious moments she beseeched me, implored me to end it all. But no doctor is willing to have thrust upon him such authority—such dread responsibility

—and so I was adamant.

“Gentlemen, we are all old friends here, and I think you are aware of my life-long abhorrence of drugs. But one night as I sat watching by her bedside she fell into a fitful, uneasy sleep. Suddenly she roused. The power of speech had gone, but the appeal—the pleading in her eyes was heart-rending. It had been a trying day for everyone. I could see that her personality was rapidly deteriorating. At last I realised that no dignified person would wish to end their days thus—kept alive in a stuporous state by drugs, over an indefinite period.

“We were quite alone. The doctor had just left the house. As my eyes wandered restlessly over the room, I noticed something. The doctor had forgotten his bag, and then in an instant it was revealed to me what I must do, what it was my duty to do.

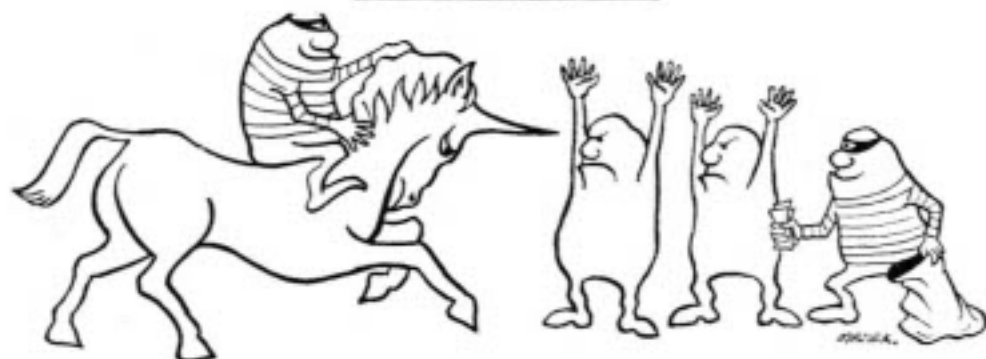
“You must understand that there was nothing furtive about my actions. I was calm and deliberate. I might have been performing a surgical operation, instead of giving just a simple injection. I remember glancing at the clock . . . it was nearly midnight, and in a fraction of time she had passed beyond earthly suffering.” Sir Godfrey paused. “She was at rest.”

He got up from his chair and raised his hand towards the wall, where the Oath of Hippocrates was displayed. Then the members’ voices were heard repeating: “I will follow that system which according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patient. I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked—nor suggest any such counsel.”

Then Sir Godfrey spoke as he turned to face the court:

“Gentlemen, should you not believe that I acted in accordance with my ability and judgment—that I have violated the Oath of Hippocrates—then I stand here before you, by the side of Dr. Brown, waiting—waiting for the verdict.”

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CRIME IN VIEW

PETER MAGNUS

*The latest news of TV shows
to come, from EWMM's
reporter on the spot*

FOR A FEW joyous days it seemed that the halo—already tarnished by familiarity and overlong exposure to the fumes of fish-finger commercials—was about to wobble and fall. The television world was full of rumours about ITV's mechanical thriller series, *The Saint*, ending this year.

Even Roger Moore, star of the show, could muster only a wan comment on its future: 'I made a 1967 good resolution to believe in *The Saint*.'

Then ATV Network, its makers, stepped in with a firm statement. Despite the rumours, said a spokesman, the programme would continue for at least one, and probably many more seasons—giving it a guaranteed life well into 1968.

All of which is bleak news for crime addicts who still miss *Z Cars* and yearn for something to approach its freshness, originality, and attack.

They should not lose heart. *The Saint*, *The Baron* and the rest of that cardboard-cutout peirage of television thrillerdom go plodding on; but new programmes are treading on their heels.

And the latest crop of newcomers, fittingly for the spring, have a hopeful look—not another flock of sheep, but a bunch of maverick beasts, with courage enough to be different. Or at least, that is the promise made by their masters.

The first newcomer, of course, is nothing of the sort. This month (March) *Z Cars* returns as a twice-weekly serial on BBC 1, with James Ellis as Detective Constable Bert Lynch, and several other familiar faces from the long-dead series.

Z Cars, although it showed signs of exhaustion towards the end, built up a tremendous reservoir of goodwill and respect among

more discriminating viewers. It shunned the cut-and-dried plot, often ending on a confused note, but justified the raw, 'slice of life' approach by its flair and authenticity.

Whether the magic formula can survive the twice-a-week battle for viewers without being cheapened or destroyed, is a question of deep concern to creative people within the BBC. Yet without doubt, legions of crime fans will give it a chance—even if the project has an unpleasant whiff of grave-robbery.



Most heartening news of the 1967 television season is that BBC 2, usually the leader in quality, is to make its first-ever crime drama series. It will be produced in Scotland.

The Revenue Men deals with the work of customs and excise authorities, and in particular, its investigations branch, 'the customs C.I.D.' Although it is not a documentary, the BBC has ordered a high standard of authenticity for the productions.

There will be a fair amount of location filming, some of it as far away as Brussels. The stories cover everything from bonded liquor swindles to diamond smuggling and tax evasion. The series starts soon.

ITV has not been idle. ABC, to do the firm justice, leads in original material—offbeat ventures such as *The Avengers*, and determinedly unromantic tales in *The Public Eye*.

Now they are trying to breathe life into the spy story with a series called *Callan*, which starts production in April. Although Callan is an agent with a 'Double-O' prefix, he may well prove to be a character in his own right.

Bull point is the actor chosen to play the hero—Edward Woodward, whose portrayal of Guy Crouchback in the BBC 2 adaptation of Evelyn Waugh's war satire rightly won him wide acclaim. ABC took the unusual step of giving viewers a 'secret preview' of the series in the form of a single Armchair Theatre play, *A Magnum For Schneider* last month.

Callan, obviously an unBonded spy, is efficient but reluctant. Pretty girls come his way, I understand, but he is no womaniser.

Back to the BBC, and a venture providing almost as much detection off the screen as on it—*Mickey Dunne*. The Corporation is remarkably secretive about this series, due to begin next month—April.

But I can tell you that Dinsdale Landon, star of that above-

average espionage series *The Mask of Janus* (later changed to *The Spies*) plays the lead in *Mickey Dunne*. Why the security measures?

Apparently the central idea of the light-hearted episodes bears a vague similarity to an existing ITV series. Officials feel that advance publicity might give viewers a warped impression—they want audiences to watch and judge for themselves.

Mickey, however, is 'a contemporary figure', neither stainless steel hero nor deep-dyed villain.



On the whole, not too gloomy a prospect, then.

Television's main failing, apart from the mass of fictional material, is its lack of interest in the documentary aspect of crime.

But here again, a few chinks of light show on the horizon. The BBC'S investigation of the Hanratty affair and the assassination of President Kennedy were, by and large, disasters. Nevertheless, they are signs that producers and directors are beginning to look to the law and lawbreakers, along with industrial disputes and the latest emergent African state, when seeking documentary subjects.

And a blow-by-blow account of a murder, narrated in part by the criminals—a Polish item shown in the BBC's 'Europa' magazine—was an eye-opener in more senses than one. Now the Corporation is keeping in touch with similar projects from behind the Iron Curtain.

It is a measure of the caution and apathy in British television that such serious aspects of crime should be ignored in favour of *The Saint* and *The Baron*.

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SOLUTION TO EWMM CROSSWORD (No. 25)

ACROSS. 1, The Black Abbot. 9, Education. 10, Reach. 11, Owllet. 12, Post. 13, Legs. 15, Roedean. 17, Yardman. 18, Unloads. 20, Awnings. 21, Taps. 22, Fair(cop). 23, Uncle. 26, Exist. 27, Door alarm. 28, Grappling iron.

DOWN. 1, The Four Just Men. 2, Equal. 3, Lead the way. 4, Crippen. 5, Amnesty. 6, Barb. 7, Tradesman. 8, The Sinister Man. 14, Orang-utang. 16, Eclipsing. 19, Stand up. 20, A priori. 24, Chair. 25, Etna.

NEW BOOKS

JOHN de SOLA

non-fiction

BOSTON STRANGLER, The; Gerold Frank (*Cape*, 30s.).

The melancholy tally at the beginning of this book lists 13 dead—murders which began in June, 1962. The panic and the uproar which swept Boston as the crimes continued will be seen as not unlike London must have been during the 'Ripper's' reign. An extraordinary manhunt got under way as the murder list grew and every known means of detection—rational and bizarre—was employed to catch Albert DeSalvo, who was eventually tried for the crimes, caught by his own confession. A bold and able book, which not only covers the subject expertly, with compassion and detachment, but is far superior, in my estimation, to the recent, noisily received Truman Capote book.

GREAT DECEIVERS, The; Judge Gerald Sparrow (*John Long*, 25s.).

Something of a lightweight, an examination of such people as Sir Charles Dilke, George Joseph Smith, Frederick Bywaters, and others—'men and women,' says the publisher, 'who deceived society because they became involved in a great sexual intrigue' which is certainly true. But the treatment is too much on the lines of the author buttonholing the reader, and the style is archly 'popular'. I feel the author could write a solid and absorbing book, if he would abandon cases which are written out, and a style which cloy. Nevertheless, a readable work.

fiction

BACKLASH, Paul Durst (*Cassell*, 18s.).

A sheriff in America's troubled South shoots a Civil Rights worker; an American millionaire sets out to reveal the truth about this, and other crimes which are uncovered in the probe. A first



Colin Watson

LONELYHEART 4122

'Quietly written, even laconically written thriller . . . about a seaside town's Matrimonial Agent . . . No fuss. No blood. No shots. No mayhem either. Just a cesspool in the murderer's garden. Highly recommended for a quiet hour.'

The Book Society 21s.

GRAVE DANGER

Kelley Roos

'First-class thriller-writing . . . a delicious tangle of a tale, glittering with bitchy dialogue.'

Peter Phillips, Sun 21s.

**Evelyn
Berckman**

STALEMATE

'Intricate and surprising approach to criminology . . . a murder story of flesh as well as blood.'

The Book Society 22s. 6d.



EYRE & SPOTTISWOODE

rate book, but I have a rooted objection to crime tales becoming too involved in hotly disputed political and social matters—novels, yes, but *not* whodunits.

CASES ALTERED, The; Sara Woods (*Crime Club*, 16s.).

I liked this one better than this author's last. In this a young man seems most circumstantially guilty of stealing an actress's emeralds. His girl friend won't have it and asks Anthony Maitland to investigate, which he does with skill. Tense and readable, and with deft characterisation.

CASE OF THE DEADLY DIAMONDS, The; Christopher Bush (*Macdonald*, 16s.).

Seems a shorter Ludovic Travers' adventure than usual; or could it be the author's speed of narrative? A lot of diamonds have been vanishing and the Morren family—jewellers—ask Travers to investigate. He uncovers some odd facts, and then some challenging ones, but solves everything neatly. Right up to standard.

CRIME OF ONE'S ONE, A; Edward Grierson (*Chatto & Windus*, 21s.).

A smooth and readable tale of a romantic bookseller who smells out spies at the drop of a hat, but in all his wild imaginings there are some unexpected truths. I liked this a lot but, with all respect, the author might do some homework on crime and on one or two literary matters.

DEATH'S BRIGHT DART, V. C. Clinton-Baddeley (*Gollancz*, 18s.).

This has a scholastic background in Cambridge—a great change from the usual Oxford colleges!—and from that angle is exceptionally well done, the characters agreeably drawn and the atmosphere splendid. But the initial poisoning, with the subsequent investigation, left me uneasy. I got the impression the author is at home with Cambridge, but not with the nuances of a whodunit.

DETECTIVE, The; Roderick Thorp (*Arthur Barker*, 30s.).

This massive book totals 598 pages and, I think, could be cut by a third with advantage, for though the sprawl of the narrative

may suit the plot, it is still too long. The tale concerns a brilliant police officer who resigns his job, and sets up as a private eye. He takes on an investigation which calls for much insight both in certain physical as well as mental matters, in which he acquits himself brilliantly. Very readable, but I think the next book is going to be much better.

FIRE BUG, The; Eric Bruton (*Boardman*, 16s.).

Here is an absolutely top-rate City Police procedural novel basically concerned with a setter of fires. The crimes are incidental to the excellence of the background, the neat secondary plot and the characterisation. Real coppers doing real jobs.

FOUL PLAY, Jeremy Potter (*Constable*, 21s.).

A collection of heavy-drinking bores, called the Old Soaks Hockey Club, is the target for murder, but though the motive at the back of all the excitement is complicated, there is the very concrete fact of heroin smuggling being in the picture. This one is most readable, with good backgrounds and some excellent descriptive writing.

GIRL IN BLUE PANTS, Richard Nettell (*Hodder*, 18s.).

The leader of an anti-nuclear protest group is murdered, and there is a nuclear undertaking in Scotland which motivates the complicated plot. A good and solid story, competently told but, I must add, guilty of the same faults as those I grumbled about in *Backlash*.

HARDBOILED DICKS, The; Ed. Ron Goulart (*Boardman*, 21s.)

An extremely pleasant journey down an unusual Memory Lane, for this is an anthology of some of the forgotten thick-ear blood-baths from such famous magazines as *Black Mask*, *Dime Detective* and *Detective Fiction Weekly*. Offered are names like Raoul Whitfield, Frank Gruber, Richard Sale and others from the days when crime stories were rough and tough, and enormous fun. A definite must.

HOUSE OF CARDS, James M. Ullman (*Cassell*, 18s.).

This is a real crackler. A crooked financier disappears when his financial empire is toppling—his small son sees him go and believes

he carries a million in diamonds. The son grows up and sets out to find his father, despite warnings not to do so. The man's sheer, gutsy nerve gets him through, and solves, quite startlingly, a clever crime.

KILL 3, Milton Shulman (*Collins*, 21s.)

I read a long and stuffy review of this one in the *Sunday Times*. Ignore it. This is a gem of a book, about the kidnapping of three unimportant children and an outside firm being made to pay a ransom on humanitarian grounds. From then on a circus of publicists and self-seekers get in on the act. A very good story indeed, somewhat journalistically written, but a cliff-hanger in suspense and sheer tension.

LITTLE PEOPLE, The; John Christopher (*Hodder*, 18s.)

Not really a crime novel in the full sense of the word. A woman inherits an Irish castle and turns it into a guest house. Queer people come and stay; and there is a sort of cousin to thalidomide which produces a troop of foot-high people, and there are tortures . . . well, yes, a very clever book which occasionally over-reaches itself.

THE FIRE BUG

A New City of London Police Novel

by ERIC BRUTON

'Mr Bruton writes with competence and convincing detail. His policemen come across as real people.' That was how the *Manchester Evening News* described one of Mr. Bruton's earlier City of London Police novels. In *The Fire Bug*, the fifth in the series, he has again produced a fine, suspenseful insight into how the Police of the City really go to work: not only does Inspector Judd have to cope with short-handedness and difficulties within his Division—there is an arsonist, too, running wild through the City.

T. V. Boardman Ltd.

16s.

LONELYHEART 4122, Colin Watson (*Eyre & Spottiswoode*, 21s.)

Handclasp House was one of those places where lonely hearts were united, among other things. The trail leads that way in a sense when one woman vanishes, and then another . . . the slow growth of suspicion out of natural things is one of the gems in this superlatively well written book which has a sort of genial brashness.

MATTER OF MANDRAKE, The; Barry Norman (*W.H. Allen*, 18s.)

Slightly rumbustuous in places and sometimes youthful, this is a good, fast-moving thriller with a Spanish setting and one of those titillating tricks of keeping the hero always hovering near the heroine's bed but never quite getting there, until the last page. Readable.

MURDER FANTASTICAL, Patricia Moyes (*Crime Club*, 16s.)

The Manciples are an old and eccentric family, but they come under suspicion when the purchaser of their family home is shot. Chief Inspector Tibbett is the expert who disentangles the mystery and the Manciples like separating an artichoke—he does it well and believably. A classic type of whodunit, craftily contrived and enormously readable.

NEW LEASE OF DEATH, A; Ruth Rendell (*John Long*, 21s.)

A clergyman is inspired by his son's love for a hanged man's daughter to work at proving the dead man innocent. And if the subject sounds as if it might contain false sentiment, it does not. The plot is good and the writing adroit. There is a neat twist at the end of this recommended tale.

NO BONES ABOUT IT, Joan Fleming (*Crime Club*, 16s.)

An awkward literary trick if it doesn't come off, the principle of letting each character tell what has happened from his or her angle. But the trick succeeds admirably, telling how the hard-up Borgan family goes mildly mad as 'Grand'pa' hands out packets of five pound notes . . . and that is the mystery and the fun of it. Excellent, with a snappy ending.

NOW LYING DEAD, Olive Norton (*Cassell*, 16s.)

A non-writer decides to try his hand at a whodunit, and picks out the most harmless man of his acquaintance as the literary victim, then reality steps in unexpectedly and with dismaying results. Slick and readable, with sound police detail and a nice economy of incident.

OTLEY PURSUED, Martin Waddell (*Hodder*, 18s.)

In a sort of John le Carré sub-world, Otley smashes a neo-Nazi plot that starts out in Sussex and ends in Belgium, with Otley doing his stuff most effectively. Doesn't quite come off in some ways but is exciting and ingeniously done.

PRISONER'S BASE, Celia Fremlin (*Gollancz*, 18s.)

Earthy, very female, and graphically told, this is one of those highly realistic thrillers where nothing is exactly what it seems, even to an insurance clerk pretending . . . but that will spoil a story with a plot as cleverly contrived as one of those jigsaws which proudly announce how many hundreds of pieces they possess.

CRIME & DETECTION

This remarkable and highly successful quarterly magazine is unique. It covers the broad field of forensic science, the police, criminology, the law, and crime. It offers factual material by experts, clearly and simply written. The February issue, now on sale, contains articles on: *The Future of Forensic Science*, by Professor F. E. Camps; *State of the*

Police, by Frank Elmes; *Absence of the Body in Murder*, by Lord Russell of Liverpool; *International Crime*, by Jean Nepote; *The Concept of Justice*, by Professor Robert Waelder; *Oswald: The Mind of the Assassin*, by Joel Casavantes; *Death and Identification*, by Bernard Picton, &c. The issues will grow into a permanent reference library—comprehensive, authoritative, invaluable.

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RESURRECTION MEN, The; Thomas Walsh (*Cassell, 21s.*)

Usually I like Thomas Walsh but this one was both a hard book to get into, and not gripping to read. It concerns a man who vanishes and returns years later, no longer a respected judge but a criminal. The twists and turns of that (and the judge's son's adventures) comprise the plot which, for me, never came to life.

RETURN FROM VORKUTA, David St. John (*Muller, 18s.*)

A Royalist leader of the Spanish Civil War, presumed dead, returns after many years to Spain where he heads some sort of Soviet plot, or so it seems. This brings the CIA storming into the fray. Fresh in background, with sound technical detail, this is a bit twee and journalistic at times—nevertheless, exciting and very readable.

**SHERLOCK HOLMES v. JACK THE RIPPER, Ellery Queen,
(*Gollancz, 18s.*)**

A really smart plot, this one. Ellery receives a notebook apparently written by the immortal Dr. Watson and, with the help of Holmes in a sort of involved form of writing, the solution of the Ripper case is revealed with Ellery in at the kill, as it were. The guilty one isn't at all a bad invention according to certain experts.

**THIS SIDE MURDER, John & Emery Bonett
(*Michael Joseph, 25s.*)**

Spain is becoming as fashionable a whodunit background as it is a popular holiday resort. This book concerns a journalist sent to Spain to check on a Victorian novelist, about whom he has written a snarling biography. He is murdered and a flock of people look like suspects. Inspector Borges is the successfully drawn investigator, and the book urbane, smooth and really enjoyable.

THORN IN THE DUST, A; Pierre Audemars (*John Long, 21s.*)

One of my favourites this time, M. Pinaud of the *Sûrete*, who is sent to solve the problems of a sex maniac and a trio of mysterious murders. The background is Normandy where the Seigneur de Frontenac is a moving spirit and an important part of Pinaud's work. A good mystery that holds like a bulldog clip.

TO HELL IN A BASKET, Irwin R. Blacker (*Cassell, 25s.*)

This is expert stuff, with the real blood and bones of genuine espionage and political intrigue. The plot concerns a Negro professor who is told to shift Chinese infiltrators from Burundi and clean up part of the Congo. This nasty task he does on his own, without official backing on orders from General Le Grande, whom we have met before. A real breath-stopper.

W.I.L. ONE TO CURTIS, Philip Loraine (*Collins, 16s.*)

The initials stand for Western Intelligence Liaison, which is concerned with a number of people who, in turn, have the fate of at least one nation depending on them. Major Alex Curtis is delegated to sort out a political cat's cradle in this fiction-documentary story. Though I disliked the ending, it is all breathlessly exciting.

A SCATTER OF PAPERBACKS

ALWAYS LEAVE 'EM DYING, Richard S. Prather (*Hodder-Fawcett, 3s. 6d.*)

The leader of a fake cult is killed, but promises a return to life, which he achieves. A crashing, speedy tale; skullduggery without end.

BARON AND THE CHINESE PUZZLE, The; John Creasey (*Hodder, 3s. 6d.*)

John Mannering is invited to an antique exhibition in Hong-kong, but the problem is getting there, for someone wants to stop him. Exciting.

CREASEY, John (*Sphere, 3s. 6d. each.*)

Here Comes the Toff; The Toff Proceeds; Double for the Toff, and *The Toff Goes to Market* are self-explanatory titles for a quartet of books out this month. Readable as ever.

CASE OF THE DEADLY TOY, The; Erle Stanley Gardner (*Pan, 3s. 6d.*)

A curious tale of a small boy who loves guns and seems to commit murder . . . a Perry Mason tale, twisting and turning as always, and most readable.

GAMBIT, Kendall Lane (*Hodder-Fawcett, 3s. 6d.*)

A man schemes the perfect crime and needs only a certain type of girl to pull it off. That is the plot peg, and on it is hung a rattling good story.

GARDNER, Erle Stanley (*Sphere, 2s. 6d. each*)

The Case of the Lucky Legs; the Velvet Claws, and the Sulky Girl are three Perry Mason adventures, together with *The D.A. Calls a Turn; Cooks a Goose, and Goes to Trial* which have been republished, early ESG's with the old touch of fascination.

MIND OF MR. J. G. REEDER, The; Edgar Wallace (*Pan, 3s. 6d.*)

Eight superb stories with Mr. Reeder at his very best. It includes two of my greatest favourites—*The Stealer of Marble* and *The Poetical Policeman*.

TEN PLUS ONE, Ed McBain (*Penguin, 3s. 6d.*)

An innocent man walking along is sniped to death, then another apparent innocent. First rate, with Steve Carella solving the crimes by interpreting a hopeless clue.

TRAIN, The; Georges Simenon (*Pan, 3s. 6d.*)

Not a Maigret, but a story set early in World War 2 with a startling undertone of menace and horror, put across in the apparently guileless Simenon fashion.

VALLEY OF GHOSTS, The; Edgar Wallace (*Hodder, 3s. 6d.*)

In Beverley Green all is not what it seems, and when a dead man returns and a moneylender vanishes, there is a sort of hell to pay. 'It is impossible not to be thrilled . . .'

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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 Secret Plans

When authors write of the secret formula, or the plans of this weapon or that bomb, they are after tension but low in real life. Few secrets exist today, and most so-called 'secrets' are not very hard to abstract from government hiding places in most countries. Secret agents are, indeed, a laughable lot, easily circumvented and easily detected.

The clever *real* spy goes after chaps and typists and such—you can get more secrets out of minor workers than clever intelligence departments ever imagine. Believe me; I've been in several sections of the Game, and know what I am talking about.

Glad to see *EWMM* gives us clever stories, and not the *endless* whodunits (the count-every-paving-stone kind) of some magazines.

M. E. CHATTERELL.

Slough, Bucks.

● *Thank you for the compliment. We would hesitate to be dogmatic, but some of these points above are surely oversimplified? Or have Ian Fleming and John le Carre been pulling our leg!*

Kate Webster

I was glad to read Charles Franklin writing about my favourite murderess—Kate Webster [November]. Being a real life crime buff, I set out on my retirement to look at places associated with certain famous crimes. I visited Kate's birthplace, all the known places where she stayed or worked, and the murder house in Richmond. Like D. E. H. Eade [December] and his 'murder book' I 'collect' murders but not in a book. I simply go round and stare at places (which interest me) with murder associations. In January I set off on a cruise specially chosen to visit certain over-

seas murder sites. A gruesome hobby, perhaps, but less harmful than taking drugs or boring my relatives to death with old man's reminiscences!

Shanklin, I.O.W.

E. PETER.

● Our readers collectively appear to possess some fascinating hobbies but, as Mr. Petter says, they are harmless enough compared to some!

Bouquets

The Bernard Shaw story [January] was quite a discovery on your part; good. And, in the same issue, I thought the *Murders at the Moorcock* excellently done.

Halifax, Yorks.

N. E. PORRITT.

EWMM goes from strength to strength; the January issue was very good, particularly the Editorial—I think this is always excellent.

Diss, Norfolk.

HERBERT A. SMITH.

Just had my February issue. *Ricochet in Pearls* was a joy (and unpublished before; thank you!) I liked, too, the *Mystery House in Beverly Hills*. By the way, many thanks for 'Second Time Round' and 'Period Piece'—you're a great picker!

Swansea, Glam.

T. E. G. RICHARDS.

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THE GREEN PACK

(see back cover)

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Photograph shows Aileen Marson, John Stuart, Garry Marsh, and Michael Shepley.

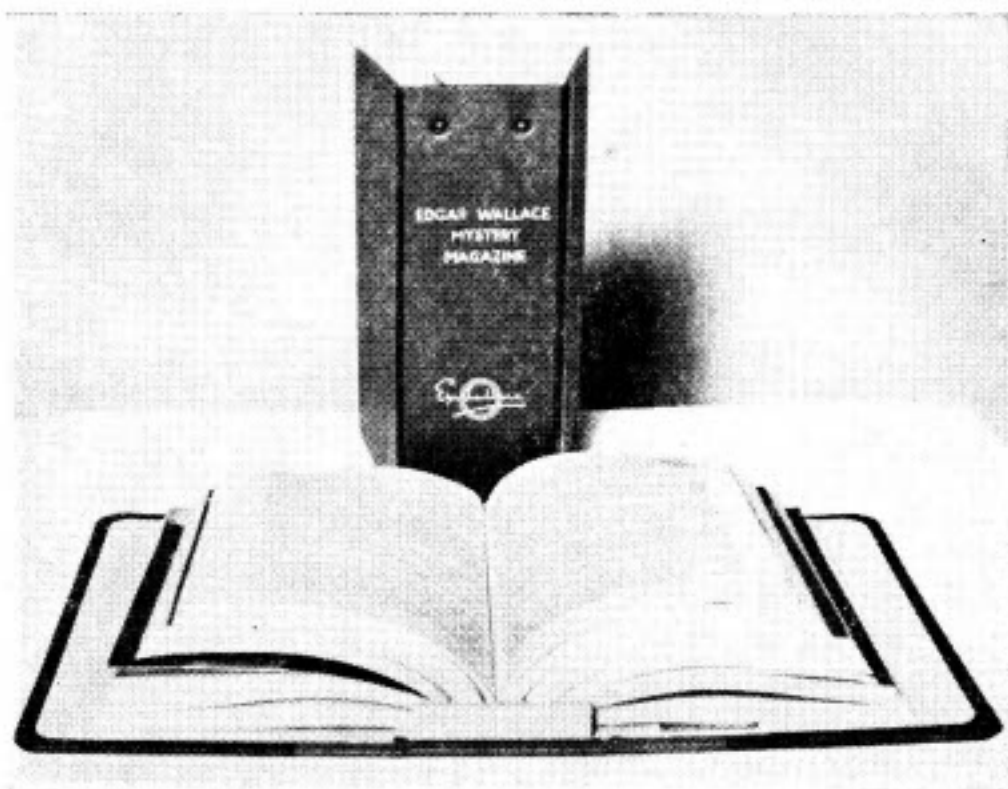


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