Your Choice of These
Beautiful Fall Styles
for Only

$1

Deposit

Send only $1.00 deposit now. Judge for yourself the material, the style and the workmanship of the coat you select. Then, if perfectly satisfied, take

6 Months

to Pay

Here's your chance to have a stylish fall coat and never miss the money. With our liberal easy payment plan you send only a small amount each month, so little you can easily save it out of the nickels and dimes you would otherwise fritter away. Try it and see.

Select the coat you want now. Send only $1.00 deposit. You take no risk. Your deposit instantly returned if you say so. If perfectly satisfied take 6 months to pay. But act now while this offer lasts. Positively only one coat to a customer.

No C.O.D. to Pay

Fur Trimmed All Wool Plaid

Plaid coats will be extremely popular this season and we offer this in a richly colored fine quality all wool material. The special feature is the stylish shawl collar which is of long haired Mandell fur—the cuffs being made to match. This stylish coat is warmly interlined and lined with lustrous satin de che. Comes in rich tanish brown only. Sizes 34 to 44. Length 47 inches.

Order by No. C-10F. Terms $1.00 with coupon, then only $4.68 a month. Total $29.95.

All Wool Velour

Rich Fur Collar and Cuffs

Style, material and a bargain price are combined in this new model tailored of excellent quality all wool velour. The sides of the coat are in novel panel effect enlivened with cord tucking, silk stitching and silk arrowheads—likewise the sleeves are finished off to match. The neck collar and cuffs are of fine quality Mandell fur. This attractive garment is warmly interlined and lined throughout with satin de che. Rose or garnet blue. Sizes 34 to 44. Length 47 inches.

Order by No. C-11F. Terms $1.00 with coupon, then only $4.00 a month, Total Bargain Price only $24.95.

Send $1 Deposit with this Coupon

Elmer Richards Co.

PLAID

No. C-10F

Drown only

$1.00 with coupon

$4.68 a month

Total $29.95

VELOUR

No. C-11F

Rust

Blue

(Check Color Wanted)

$1.20 with coupon

$4.00 a month

Total $24.95

Dept. 2278 West 35th Street, Chicago

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State size wanted.

Name: __________________________

Address: ________________________

City: ____________________________ State: __________________________

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Jumps from $3 to $26 a Day
Mr. Cooke: If it had not been for your Course I would still be plugging away for $3 a day. Instead I have all the work I can do and my earnings run as high as $23 to $26 a day. I owe all my success to your training.—Edward A. Lehmann, 1521 Market St., Oakland, California.

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Will You Learn the Secret of Lehmann's and Hines' Success?
Mail Coupon for FREE BOOK THAT TELLS ALL

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IT sounds too good to be true—it's hard to believe—that thousands of men like the two pictured here could step out of small pay, no future jobs and earn $3500 to $10,000 a year in Electricity. Yet that's just what many hundreds of men have done. Most of them had no previous experience—all of them kept right on with their regular jobs and used spare time only, to prepare for the big-pay jobs they hold.

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No matter what you may have heard about home-training—no matter what kind of work you are doing now—you owe it to yourself to find out about Cooke Training which has already lifted hundreds of other men into the big-pay class, and which today offers you one of the world's greatest opportunities.

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L. L. COOKE SCHOOL OF ELECTRICITY
Owned and operated by CHICAGO ENGINEERING WORKS, Inc.
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Send me your free book about Electricity and proof that the men you have trained are holding big-pay jobs. I understand no agent will call on me and I won't be obligated to take your Course.

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Address

City. State.
FLYNN'S WEEKLY

WILLIAM J. FLYNN, EDITOR
Twenty Five Years in the Secret Service of the United States

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Get these three lessons. Look them over. Test your own ability to master Electricity at home in spare time. See for yourself how every fact has been simplified. See what thousands of men have paid millions of dollars for, to help them earn BIGGER PAY. Uncover some of the secrets of Electricity, and see why millions of men are so fascinated by it. Don't send a penny, don't enroll — just mail the coupon.

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CHIEF ENGINEER DUNLAP, Electrical Division

AMERICAN SCHOOL

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So writes W. H. Adams of Ohio in August 1925. V. A. Marini of California reports $11275 sales in three months. Jacob Gordon of New Jersey $4000 profits in two months. Alexander of Pennsylvania "$3000 profits in four months."

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No limit to the sale of Crispettes. Everybody likes them. It's a delicious food confection. Write for facts about a business that will make you independent. Start now, in your own town.

Profits $1000 a Month Easily Possible

Send postal for illustrated look of facts. It contains enthusiastic letters from others—shows their places of business, tells how and when to start, and all information needed. Free, Write now!

LONG-EAKINS COMPANY
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Springfield, Ohio

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ESTABLISH YOURSELF—AT HOME—AS A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPERT. Make $70 a week while learning. Write at once for TEMPOrary offer. INTERNATIONAL STUDIOS, Dept. 145b, 3601 Michigan Ave., Chicago.

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FIREMEN, BRAKEMEN, BAGGAGEMEN (white or colored), sleeping car, train porters (coloured), $150-$250 monthly. Experience unnecessary. 536 RAILWAY BUREAU, East St. Louis, Ill.

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GENUINE SYNTHETIC STONES. $2.00 PER CARAT. Beautiful rubies; rich dark blue sapphires; sparkling white sapphires. Superb cut and polish. Round shaped. Made abroad; firm established over 100 years. Have your jeweler select them.

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AGENTS

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S-119 G & J Blvd.
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You may send me your new complete Automobile Engineering library (1926 edition) 5 big volumes bound in flexo cloth, at days examination. If satisfied, will send you $2.50 then, and $3.00 per month until the special low price of only $21.50 is paid, otherwise, I will return them and owe you nothing. Include membership certificate and employment offer.

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They flew over the North Pole with Byrd

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Lieut. Commander Byrd in his fearless 1500-mile flight across the top of the world, added another thrilling triumph to the long, proud list of American achievements.

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It is eminently significant that in these glorious triumphs of American courage and American equipment where the test of men and their tools was the test of the survival of the fittest, that the standards of the Burgess Battery Company were selected, used and "carried on" under extreme and unprecedented conditions.

BURGESS BATTERY COMPANY
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JOHN HOLLAND GOLD PEN CO.
Cincinnati, Ohio

In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention this magazine.
For fifty years the blood-and-thunder artists have scratched their pens and tapped their typewriters over countless reams of paper anent one Jesse Woodson James, bank bandit par excellence and train robber extraordinary. They have presented their victim as a homicidal maniac riding hell-bent-for-election down the halls of time with his hoss pistols blazing death at every jump. They have made an inhuman monster of him and in writing the indictment have tossed in his elder brother, Frank, and Cole, Bob and Jim Younger for good measure.
Hundreds of ridiculous tales have been written and told concerning this man whose fame, if such it be, has outlasted the fame of the poets, soldiers and statesmen of his day and who was the outstanding character in one of the most astonishing chapters of American history. Jesse James has probably killed more persons in print than all the murderers since the beginning of time, not to mention the robbery, arson and other crimes that have been nonchalantly dumped at his door by the wild-eyed biographers.

**Because He Was Drove to It**

On the other hand, there is a small number of persons, mostly living in or near the old Jesse James country in Missouri, who, to this day, look upon the fast riding outlaw and his cohorts as wronged citizens, driven from their homes into a life of crime by circumstances over which they had no control.

In this connection, witness the storm of protest that went up when the famous fugitive was shot down from behind by Robert and Charles Ford, working under the direction of the Governor of Missouri and the police commissioner of Kansas City.

Major John N. Edwards, brilliant editor of the Sedalia — Missouri — Democrat, gave a typical example of this feeling of sympathy for the outlaws when, in a fiery editorial, he denounced Governor Crittenden for pardoning the men who ended Jesse James's turbulent career.

"Not one among the hired cowards, hard on the hunt for blood money, dared face this wonderful outlaw until he had disarmed himself and turned his back," Major Edwards wrote. "We called him an outlaw, and he was, but fate made him so. When the war closed Jesse James had no home. Proscribed, hunted, shot at, driven away from his people, a price put upon his head, what else could he do? He had to live. It was his country. The graves of his kindred were there. He refused to be banished from his birthright and when he was hunted, he turned savagely about and hunted his hunters.

"Jesse James has been murdered because an immense price had been set upon his head and there is not a low-lived scoundrel in Missouri to-day who would not kill his own father for money, and because he was made the scapegoat for every train robber, footpad and highwayman between Iowa and Texas. Worse men a thousand times than the dead man have been hired to do this thing.

"What a spectacle! Missouri, with splendid companies, regiments of militia, with one hundred and seventeen sheriffs, as brave and efficient as any men on earth; Missouri, with a watchful and vigilant marshal in every one of her principal towns and cities; Missouri, with every screw and cog of her administrative machine in perfect working order; Missouri, boasting of law, order, progress and development, had yet to surrender all these in the face of a single man, that the majesty of the law might be upheld."

Major Edwards's loyal defense of the slain bandit aroused a great deal of sentiment in favor of the Jameses and some of it has withstood the assaults of time; and now, if you were to journey into Clay County, find the oldest old-timer in the neighborhood and ask him what he thought of Jesse James, he would very likely reply: "Well, he warn't near as bad as folks said, and if he was bad at all, it was because he was drove to it."

**In the Shadow of Death**

These two views of Jesse James, the bloodthirsty demon on one hand and the persecuted fugitive on the other, represent partisan extremes. The real Jesse James was neither a joyful killer, with an inborn lust for blood, nor was he an honest, hardworking farm boy gone wrong. He was an exceedingly daring, energetic man, who, having once got into the bad business of robbery, found that he could not dismount the tiger, lest it devour him, and having a great desire to live, played out the string to the bitter end. Determined to survive at any and all costs, his conduct during flight and pursuit the greatest story of all time, was measured by the yardstick of that determination.

He knew, did Jesse James, that his end would be sudden and bloody, but with an uncanny and desperate skill he postponed
the fatal day until he had accomplished what few criminals have ever accomplished. He rode and robbed for sixteen years, and in all that time never spent a single day behind the bars. From the unknown backwoods of Missouri he came, and into them he fled, leaving no trace that the hundreds of militiamen, sheriffs, detectives and citizens could follow.

Living always in the shadow of death, he broke through the line of his pursuers time after time and left them empty-handed, until it seemed that no human could bring him to book for his many crimes. And even in the end, when he fell, it was no sleuth that brought him down, but a traitor in his own camp.

**His Rebel Sympathies**

Surely such a man may be properly termed remarkable. No less apt is the word for his associates in border banditry, the cautious and clever Frank James, the scholarly and daring Cole Younger and his less spectacular but loyal brothers, Bob and Jim.

This tale, of course, properly begins back in the little town of Kearney, Missouri, or Centerville as it was known then, where Jesse James first saw the light of day, the second son of Robert James, an itinerant preacher-farmer and Mrs. Zerelda Cole James. There were three other children, Alexander Franklin James, Susan and Robert. The latter lived but five days.

It was a happy family until 1850, when the father died. After five uneventful years, the widow James married the kindly little country physician, Dr. Reuben Samuel. Of this union four children were born. Jesse and Frank James were ordinary country boys, although Frank had a reputation in his early years of "being a little wild." His younger brother, on the other hand, is remembered as a quiet, backward, slender little fellow who did his chores and said nothing.

Then came the Civil War, throwing the border country open to the attacks of the guerrillas and home guards of both sides. Frank James was seventeen years old, a tall, slim sinewy youth, who could ride hard and shoot straight. He immediately joined the Missouri State Guards, part of the command of General Sterling Price, which sought to bring the State into the Confederacy. He fought in that terrific battle at Wilson Creek, near Springfield, Missouri, August 10, 1861, and some months later returned to the James home to visit his mother and stepfather. Frank, by this time, was an out-and-out rebel and he was reckless enough not to care who knew it.

In Kearney he announced his political ideas in no uncertain fashion, punctuated with a heavy revolver, which he waved carelessly at those who disagreed with him.

"And anybody in these parts who doesn’t like my friends can settle with me," said Frank, but not a soul cared to settle with this young man, and he went his way. But a few days later it came to the ears of the commander of the local Union militia that Frank James was home and had brought his rebel sympathies with him. The commander took a few of his men, caught Frank unwares in the Samuel farmhouse and hauled him away to prison at Liberty, the county seat of Clay County.

**A Lesson for the Doctor**

Frank was freed after he had signed an oath of allegiance to the Union. This oath, like a lot of other things, did not mean much to Frank, and as soon as he was out of the jail he scurried off into the woods and joined William C. Quantrill, the guerrilla chief, and went to bush-whacking union soldiers.

While all this was going on Jesse was staying at home, working quietly on the farm with his half brothers. As far as can be seen, Jesse was not greatly excited about the war. He felt no sympathy for the Southern cause; he sawed wood, so to speak, and said nothing at all. But in June, 1863, a company of Federal militia surrounded the Samuel farmhouse and called for Dr. Samuel to come out. The physician asked the men what they wanted, and the leader replied:

"Your folks are friendly to that cutthroat Quantrill and we have come to teach you a lesson."

Whereupon they seized Dr. Samuel, tied
his hands behind his back, looped a rope about his neck, hung him to a mulberry tree and rode away, leaving their victim to choke to death. Mrs. Samuel found him there a few minutes later, cut him down and carried him to the house, where she worked over him for several hours. In a few weeks he had recovered.

Again the home guards appeared at the Samuel farm. This time they were after Jesse, and they found him plowing in a cornfield. Chasing him down between the rows of corn they administered a brutal beating to the boy with ropes until he finally fled to the safety of the house.

**The Guerrilla Band**

"Now, you damned rebels," warned the regulators, "keep your mouths shut about the war and stay away from Quantrill."

Everything was quiet for three weeks and then the militia made a third call on the rebel sympathizers. It seems that the union commander had heard that Dr. Samuel and Jesse had failed to take their lesson very seriously, so they returned to kill them both. But the doctor and his stepson were not at home.

"Take the women then," ordered the guard commander, and Mrs. Samuel and her daughter, Susan James, were arrested and placed in jail at St. Joseph as "persons disloyal to the Union."

When they were released and returned home, Jesse, now sixteen years old, broke into tears.

"I can't stand it," he told his mother. "I'm going to run away and join Quantrill. Then I'll get even."

His mother tried to persuade him to stay on the farm, but it was useless. A few days later little Jesse James, with his mild blue eyes and his boyish smile, disappeared into the brush to become a guerrilla. With him went a neighbor's boy, Jim Cummings, a youth who became quite a bloodthirsty bandit in later years himself.

Jesse and Jim first joined a squad of Quantrill raiders directly under the command of Fletcher Taylor, but later they were transferred to a company headed by "Bloody Bill" Anderson, a murderous, unprincipled scoundrel. Another Quantrill squad was in charge of George Todd, who also made his mark as a plain and fancy killer. These mad and desperate men, Quantrill, Anderson and Todd, were among the worst characters of the Civil War. We must devote some space to their histories, for they were the tutors of the Jameses, the Youngers, Jim Cummings, George Shepherd and various other wild men who later became the terrors of the border as a bandit gang.

Quantrill, the commander of the Black Flag Brigade, was abnormal. There can be no doubt of that. His father was an embezzler, his brother a thief, his uncle a notorious bandit and he, himself, was being hunted by the law when he appeared with his gang of cutthroats in the Civil War. Professing allegiance to the Southern cause, Quantrill was, in reality, a Northerner by birth and inclination. He was "the bloodiest man in the history of this country," historians have asserted, and he gloried in his infamous work of murder, arson and pillage.

To win the sympathy and support of his men, Quantrill told a story of how the Kansans had attacked and murdered his elder brother and had desperately wounded Quantrill.

**To Even the Kansas Score**

"Revenge is what I seek," Quantrill told his followers, "and I have sworn to even the score with Kansas if it takes a lifetime."

Many of the men under the black flag were youths whose relatives had been slain by Union militia or regulators and they believed that their "heroic leader" was leading them to vengeance.

Bill Anderson and George Todd were but little better than their commander. They were cutthroats of the lowest type, men who had murdered their companions, betrayed their friends and forgotten their god.

Quantrill's most notorious exploit was the sacking of Lawrence, Kansas. On the nineteenth day of August, 1863, the guerrillas with their murderous leader at their head, left Missouri, crossed into Kansas near a town called Aubrey, and marched toward Cole Creek, eight miles from Lawrence,
where they halted. At sunrise, August 21, the band, about four hundred and fifty strong, swept down into the town, howling the rebel yell at the top of their voices. It was a gory feat of arms. All of the male citizens that could be rounded up were slain and the entire town was put to the torch. When Quantrill’s raiders backed out, one hundred and eighty-two dead remained behind and the place was in flames.

**Recruits for Bloody Bill**

As soon as news of the attack was carried eastward, regiments of militia and all the regular Federal soldiers available were hurried to the border to cut off Quantrill’s retreat. Harassed on every side the demon guerrilla cut his way to Black Jack, fifteen miles from Lawrence. There he made a stand in an old barn. He was completely surrounded, but cut his way out, his men fighting like maniacs. Then another dash and the followers of the black flag were back on Missouri soil and had scattered into the friendly countryside, far beyond the range of Federal bullets.

Two of those who participated in the bloody work at Lawrence were Frank James and Cole Younger. Jessie, despite hundreds of stories of the men he slew in the fight, was not at Lawrence. He, with Jim Younger, Jim Cummings, and others, was prowling around in Missouri with Bill Anderson.

After a few weeks of rest, Quantrill’s men reorganized, and “Bloody Bill” Anderson, who had looked upon Jesse James with favor from the start, placed that young man in command of a squad of thirty riders and turned him loose. Jesse had made quite a hit with “Bloody Bill,” who was considered a real artist at murder and pillage.

“There’s a fellow,” said Bill, “who will be heard of later.” True enough, but Bill did not live to see his sanguine prophecy fulfilled.

Jesse’s first effort as a raider was made near Blue Springs, Missouri, where he ambushed a force of Federal cavalry, and only twenty-five of the one hundred men in blue escaped the hail of bullets. Jesse then united his men with those of George Todd, and the two commands struck a company of the Second Colorado Cavalry under a captain named Wagner. These Federals were nearly all plainmen and trappers, and they put up a stubborn fight. Not until Jesse had killed their leader did they break and flee in consternation.

On September 27, 1864, Bill Anderson and his jolly men were encamped at Singleton’s farm, four miles southeast of Centralia, Missouri. In some way it came to Bill’s ever attentive ear that a west bound train would pass through Centralia about eleven o’clock in the morning and that a detail of Federal soldiers would be on the cars. Consequently Bill and his forces were waiting at the depot. As the train halted the guerrillas charged and it was soon in their hands.

Anderson quickly separated twenty-four Federal soldiers from the civilian passengers, shot them to death and rode back to Singleton’s, where he meant to get some well-earned rest. At this juncture George Todd and Jesse James appeared on the scene with their men and joined up with “Bloody Bill,” bringing word that one Major H. J. Johnson and two hundred and sixty Federal recruits were on the trail of the raiders. Anderson began preparations to give Major Johnson a characteristic welcome.

**Quantrill’s Final Move**

In the meantime Major Johnson, a brave and efficient soldier, was in Centralia, where a delegation of citizens called on him in an attempt to persuade him to give up the pursuit.

“These men are far too desperate for your recruits,” said the spokesman.

“We outnumber them,” replied the major, “and mean to fight them. I have yet to retreat from my enemy.”

The Federals caught up with a small number of the raiders near Centralia that afternoon. The guerrillas rode away, the Federals pursued. Straight into an ambush they dashed, and “Bloody Bill” began his work of butchery. The recruits had not one chance in a thousand with these skilled and desperate fighters, and all but a few fleeing stragglers were slain.

Jesse and Frank James, Cole and Jim
Younger and Jim Cummings did good work that day for the Black Flag Brigade.

A few weeks after the Centralla battle, Bill Anderson was shot and killed during a skirmish with Union soldiers, and Todd became the leader of that wing of Quantrill’s party.

In November of 1864, the guerrillas were hard pressed in Missouri, and the James brothers headed for Texas, but Frank finally left Jesse, rejoined his old leader, Quantrill, and accompanied that desperate fellow on his expedition into Kentucky. Quantrill never explained that final move, but many of his followers believed that the guerrilla chieftain hoped to cut his way into Virginia so that he might join General Robert E. Lee and get immunity in the surrender that was a foregone conclusion. Quantrill knew, and his men knew, that if they gave up in Missouri they would be hanged to the nearest tree.

**Ready to Surrender**

At any rate, Quantrill met with swift justice. Asleep in a haymow on a farm in Spencer County, Kentucky, he was found by Captain Ed Terral, a nineteen year old Federal guerrilla. Quantrill awakened, drew his revolver, but he was too late. Terral fired and Quantrill was fatally wounded. He died a month later in a hospital at Louisville.

In the meantime Jesse James had reached Sherman, Texas, with his guerrillas. Here the men split into two companies, one going into west Texas and the other returning to Missouri under Arch Clements. Jesse James was with the latter organization. Clements, by the way, was accused, some years after, as the man responsible for the first Missouri bank robberies, which were blamed on the Jameses and the Youngers.

At Lexington, Missouri, Clements, Jesse and about twenty men met Major J. B. Rodgers, a Union officer, and an agreement for surrender was entered into. By this time, of course, all of the regular armies of the South had laid down their arms, and in all places save the wild border the war was at an end.

Worn by months of fighting for the lost cause, there is every reason to believe that the James brothers were ready to surrender, at least for the time being. Their negotiations with Major Rodgers had progressed to a point where terms were being discussed when an unfortunate incident changed the whole complexion of affairs. Jesse, Clements and his men were attacked by a detachment of the Second Wisconsin Cavalry near the guerrilla camp. They returned the fire and charged their assailants, killing four of them, and then retreated as the Union forces summoned aid from the main body of the regiment.

Jesse, separated from his companions, was shot through the right lung, and a moment later his horse was slain under him. Falling to the ground, the young guerrilla was up in an instant and away into the woods with five men in hot pursuit. Reeling from the loss of blood and the pain of his terrible wound, Jesse killed three of the five men, and the other two turned on their heels and fled. They were two to one, and had they been men of courage the career of the man who was to become a great outlaw would have been ended then and there.

Jesse crawled into a near-by cornfield and fainted. Two days later he was found by a farmer, who took care of him until Major Rodgers located his retreat. The major provided the rebel rider with an escort and sent him to his mother, who was then in Nebraska.

**A Precarious Position**

“The best thing to do with this young man,” said Major Rodgers, “is to send him home and let him die in peace.”

But the will to live was strong in Jesse James, and although his wound made him but a shadow of his former dashing self, he recovered and returned to his homeland in Missouri with his mother and her children. Weary of the war, the people of Clay County, as a whole, were glad that peace had settled over the land, and in many instances old foes settled down on neighboring farms to lead quiet lives once more.

But there was a minority to whom the war was over with exceptions. These men were, for the most part, the younger fellows who had ridden hard and fast, had taken
what they pleased when they pleased, and now looked with disfavor upon rustic pursuits, such as plowing or harvesting. They wanted excitement, and what better way to get it than to persecute a few of their former opponents in the late difficulty?

Two former rebel raiders who were under the impression that the war was over, surrendered to the home guards of Clay County and were promptly hanged to the nearest tree. This was the beginning of a series of post-war fights, and as the list mounted Jesse James, on the Samuel farm with a bullet in his lung, knew that he was in a precarious position.

**The Younger Boys**

Frank appeared at the Samuel home a few months after the end of the struggle and the brothers discussed their future. The apologists of the James boys have always stressed this phase of their lives. They have insisted that Jesse and Frank would have surrendered formally to the Union authorities at the close of the war if assured a fair trial as guerrillas, but refused to take a chance when they learned that sentiment in Liberty was all against them.

One wintry night shortly after Frank had returned, Jesse was awakened by the noise of horses stomping in the yard. Carefully, he got out of bed, edged to a window and peered out. Seven horses stood hitched to the fence. Frank joined his brother at the window, and the two perceived the visitors sneaking toward the house. Throwing open the window Frank yelled:

"Come on, damn you! We're ready and waiting!"

The callers hesitated a moment and then fled in disorder to their horses, mounted and rode away into the shadows of the woods.

Out of this affair the red ink slingers have constructed a bloody battle in which Jesse and Frank were said to have slain three men.

The James brothers now realized that they could hope to find no rest in Clay County until some of the old hatreds stirred up by the war had blown over, so Jesse hastened to New York, where he took a ship for California, and Frank disappeared again into the friendly countryside of Kentucky.

Earlier in this narrative we made mention several times of the Younger brothers, Cole, Jim, Bob and John, and since they now become major figures in our story we will digress long enough to introduce them in a fashion deserved by bandits of such high attainments.

Colonel Henry W. Younger, a Union man, was the father of the four bold highwaymen. He was a farmer of more than ordinary substance, owning a fine spread of land near Lee's Summit, Missouri, in Jackson County, and a prosperous livery business at Harrisonville. He was a highly respected man in the community, and until the war no shadow of reproach had fallen upon his four stalwart sons.

Colonel Younger was murdered by Union guerrillas near Independence, Missouri, in 1862. He was robbed and his body was left lying in a ditch.

His widow, mother of the outlaws, was the daughter of Richard M. Fristoe, a member of the State Legislature. She was a refined and delicate woman, devoted to her sons and certain that they were not criminals until the last.

**The Nucleus of the Terrorists**

Cole Younger died not so long ago in Lee's Summit, where he lived for many years after his release from prison. He was a gentleman and a scholar, known far and wide over the countryside as "Uncle Cole," a genial old man who loved to sit on his front porch and read "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" or the Bible. Folks down in Lee's Summit believe "Uncle Cole" would have been a preacher, and a mighty good one, too, if the war had not thrown him into a guerrilla band and left him a fast-riding highwayman.

But in his younger days, Thomas Coleman Younger, that was his full name, was no such mild figure. Booted and spurred and with two huge pistols strapped to his sides, he was a man of iron courage and determination. When Thomas Coleman Younger, student, bandit and, yes, gentleman, went after a given thing, usually a mail pouch or a bank safe, he got it.
His brother Jim was a full-blown outlaw, a deadly shot and a man of resourcefulness. Bob was a fighter, too. John's career, as we shall see, did not last long.

Behold then, the Younger brothers of Jackson County who, with Jesse and Frank James, formed the nucleus of that band of border terrorists which endured for many years.

We now come back to Jesse, returned from California and in full possession of his health and deadly eye once more. Frank James, some say, also returned to Clay County about this time, but that matter is still open to debate. Frank, ever a cautious fellow, made himself mighty scarce if he was among those present at the first daylight bank robbery in the Middle West, the crime which served as the beginning of border banditry.

**Bird in a Cage!**

Defenders of the James boys have always insisted that Jesse was home and that Frank was in Kentucky when the Liberty, Missouri, bank or the Clay County Savings Association was held up and robbed. Wherever they were, they were blamed for the deed, and word went out to "bring in those James brothers and their pals, the Youngers."

The robbery was the first of the brand peculiar to the Jameses and the Younger. Early on the fourteenth day of February, 1866, twelve horsemen cantered into Liberty. Three of them were posted in advantageous spots outside the bank and the other nine entered quietly. Greenup Bird, the cashier, and his son, William, a bookkeeper, were the only persons in the bank.

The leading highwayman drew his revolver pointed it at the elder Bird's head and commanded:

"Open that vault before I blow your head off!"

Cashier Bird decided to open the vault and did, whereupon one of the robbers produced a sack and the contents of the strong box were thrust into it. Some seventy thousand dollars in perfectly good Government bonds went plunking into that sack, while the helpless Mr. Bird peered down the dark barrel of a revolver.

"Now," said the leader pleasantly, "all birds should be caged. Get into the vault, and hurry, please."

It is not on record that Bird exhausted himself laughing at the joke, but he got into the vault, the door was closed, and the riders walked out. But the spring lock on the vault failed to operate, and Bird was uncaged a moment later. He, with his son, ran to the windows and began yelling that the bank had been robbed.

By this time the bandits were mounted and wheeling their horses for the get-away. They were doing some yelling themselves, and it was the old, wild, hair-raising yell of "Bloody Bill" Anderson that came from their throats. Howling like Indians they thundered away, firing into the streets to intimidate any bold soul who might take it into his head to follow them.

Five of the bullets found their mark in the body of George Wymer, a school boy, who was dashing up the street to give the alarm. The desperadoes then tore out of town in a cloud of dust and were seen no more. It was a clean escape. Wymer died a few minutes after their departure.

Many men have been named as participating in this first of daylight robberies, but not one was ever captured and convicted. Among them was Arch Clements who was said to have been recognized by a citizen of Liberty. As a matter of fact, Clements had been shot to death at Lexington six months before.

"**Damned If We Can Find Them**"

For about eight months nothing was heard of the Jameses, the Younger and their companions in border banditry. Jesse and Frank were never officially accused of the Liberty holdup and the opinion in the country was about evenly divided on the subject, some believing the alibi offered and others urging the law enforcement officials to take some action toward bringing them in. At any rate, Jesse and Frank and the Youngers kept under cover pretty well, waiting to see just where they stood before venturing out.

Things had quieted down considerably by October 30, 1866, when five men rode into the little town of Lexington, Missouri,
made their way to the bank of Mitchell & Co., dismounted, entered and held up the cashier, J. L. Thomas. Again the wheat sack appeared and the robbers demanded all the money in the bank.

"All right," said Thomas, and handed over the currency amounting to less than two thousand dollars.

"Yours truly," said one of the bandits, and the men departed.

The thieves rode out of town in the usual fashion, yelling and shooting, and it was some hours later before a posse could be formed to follow. The posse spent several days poking about in the brush, and then returned to Lexington weary and disgusted.

"It's them James boys," they said, "but damned if we can find them."

**A Fighting Mayor**

There was no real evidence to connect the Jameses or the Youngers with the Lexington robbery, nothing except circumstances. It looked like their handiwork, and that was all there was to it, as far as the good citizens were concerned.

It was March 2, 1867, when the raiders made their next appearance, and the little town of Savannah, Missouri, county seat of Andrew County, was the host. Five men rode into the village and leaving one of their number to guard the horses, four of them entered the private banking house of Judge McLain. The judge and his son were in the place and McLain as soon as he observed the four men, slammed the door of his vault, seized a huge pistol which he kept under the counter and commenced firing. He got in the first shot, and had his aim been better at least one of the raiders would have been left upon the scene for the coroner to identify.

But the judge missed, and a moment later was lying upon the floor, shot through the shoulder. His son dodged between the outlaws and gave the alarm with such good effect that the bandits fled, pursued by a posse of citizens. As usual, they escaped.

Judge McLain, though desperately wounded, recovered and lived for many years to tell of his desperate encounter with the James and Younger bandits, for neither the judge nor any of his fellow townspeople doubted that the raid had been led by Jesse James.

Things were beginning to happen fast now, too fast, in fact, for the comfort and security of Missouri. Three months after the shooting of Judge McLain, fifteen handsomely-mounted men thundered into Richmond, Missouri, bellying the old rebel yell and shooting into the streets with wild abandon. At the banking house of Hughes & Co. they came to a halt in a whirl of dust. Six of the men dismounted quickly and charged into the institution, demanding the bank's funds with bloody threats of death.

The doors of the vault had been locked by employees who heard the shouting raiders enter the town, but they were soon smashed down and about four thousand dollars was hauled out and deposited in the usual wheat sack. The six then rejoined their companions who were still yelling and shooting in the street.

By this time the enraged citizens were beginning to gather around various corners. They did not propose to stand by and see their bank looted. Somebody suggested that they do something about it and Mayor Shaw hunted up an old revolver and stepped forth to do battle with the most desperate band of murderers that has ever graced the pages of history. Like Judge McLain, the mayor was a poor shot, but he did not have the judge's luck. Four of the outlaws' bullets struck him and he fell dead.

**Havoc to the Posse**

The victorious outlaws then decided that they had some friends locked in the county jail, which was near the bank, and set off in that direction with the intention of liberating the prisoners. They were met by B. G. Griffin, the jailer, and his fifteen-year-old son, each with a revolver and plenty of courage. The boy fired six or eight shots at the attacking force without effect and was, in turn, slain. His father, rushing to his aid, was riddled with bullets and fell over his dead son. After this butchery the outlaws decided to leave their friends in durance vile and galloped out of town with the four thousand dollars.
Three days after the tragedy at Richmond, a posse of stalwart citizens surrounded one Peyt Johnes, accused of being a member of the raiding gang, in a farmhouse near Independence. Before the posse could get set for the capture, Johnes dashed out of the house, carrying a shotgun and wearing two pistols in his belt. He shot and killed B. H. Wilson, a member of the posse, and seriously wounded a little girl who had been taken along by the men as a guide.

Johnes was chased into the woods by the infuriated men, but managed to escape. He was killed several years later in a drunken brawl.

**Jesse’s Little Joke**

Two other men, suspected of being in the raid under the Jameses and the Youngers, were captured by posses and lynched, the temper of the country at that time being such that it was unsafe to wait for a regular trial. One of these was Richard Burns, who was taken near Warrensburg, and the other was Andrew McGuire, hanged to a tree near Richmond.

A third suspect, Thomas Little, was chased all over the county, but finally got away and came to St. Louis aboard a steamer. He was arrested by the St. Louis police and a month or so later was taken to the Warrensburg jail, where he stayed just long enough for a mob to select a tree to hang him from.

By these developments it will be seen that the citizens were considerably aroused by the depredations of the robber band and were ready to take extreme measures to combat them. Jesse and Frank began to find their situation uncomfortable, to say the least. At this time Jesse was just a little short of twenty-one years of age, tall, slender and sinewy despite his terrible wound, a fast rider and a dead shot.

Probably his outstanding characteristic was his love of fun, the inborn streak of humor that provoked him to dry sarcasms when most men would have been wondering how to get away without taking on a lot of weight in the form of lead. Jesse did love his little joke and he would have it, regardless of the gravity of the situation.

Frank, as time went on, was growing more cautious. He began, more and more, to urge Jesse to take greater precautions, pointing out the dangers of their position, but without avail. Jesse refused to see the gathering hosts of the enemy.

Perhaps it was Frank’s desire for a change of scenery that took the outlaws into Kentucky, March 20, 1868, when five men invaded the pretty and rich little town of Russellville, scattering the rural population with a flurry of pistol shots and riding to the Russellville Bank, where one man menaced Cashier Long with a revolver and ordered him to give up the institution’s money.

Instead, Long whirled and made a dash for the back door, but there was an outlaw there, too, and he took a shot at Long, slicing a neat hole in the cashier’s head. Long went down, but he was not out. A good fighting man was Long, and he no sooner hit the floor than he was back and had seized the outlaw by the mustache. The bandit was no easy mark himself, and using his pistol as a club he soon beat Long into submission, remarking as he did so:

“This fellow puts up a right good scrap.”

While all this was going on the other bandits were busy in the bank and had extracted fifteen thousand dollars from the safe and dumped it into the well-known wheat sack. They were preparing to depart when Long recovered his senses, staggered to his feet and leaped out the back door, slamming it after him. As he disappeared in a hail of revolver shots, the bandits decided that the vicinity was rapidly growing too hot for them, and rode out of town, yelling and shooting.

**Yankee Bligh, Sleuth**

But the citizens of Russellville did not submit as tamely as some of the victims of the Jameses and the Youngers in their own home counties. A few hours after the outlaws departed with the fifteen thousand dollars, Russellville had fifty men on their trail, armed to the teeth and looking for trouble. But the men from Missouri were astride the best horses they could steal and they were experts at galloping over rough country and through the woods. The Ken-
tuckians had the same luck as Missourians who had hunted the James boys and returned to their homes without a man.

The next day the Russellville inhabitants, their anger still unabated, hired a famous detective of that time, one "Yankee" Bligh, and put him on the job, with instructions to accomplish the downfall of as many of the raiders as he could. Bligh was a real sleuth. He trailed the robbers northward for about seventy-five miles to the home of George Shepherd, the old Quantrill raider, introduced earlier in this tale.

An Outlaw's Religion

Shepherd's home was surrounded and the ex-guerrilla was ordered to come forth and surrender. Come forth he did, with a smoking revolver in each hand and a yell of defiance upon his lips. He put up a good fight, but Yankee Bligh and his posse were too strong. They ran Sheckerd down and hauled him away in irons. He was tried and sentenced to serve three years in the penitentiary, and here temporarily disappears from our narrative. He will be back later in another rôle.

Bligh, after the arrest of Shepherd, decided that George's cousin, Oll Shepherd, was a member of the raiders and sent word to that effect to the sheriff of Jackson County, Missouri. When Oll arrived home the sheriff sought to arrest him. Oll broke away and tried to run for it and was shot and killed.

The determined sleuth then announced that he had positive evidence that those with the Shepherds were Frank James, Cole and Jim Younger, and he also advised the Missouri authorities of this fact. A few days later Bligh himself invaded Missouri, armed withquisitions for the wanted men, but they had flown. The Younger home was raided, but no one was found; but Bob and John, the youngest brothers.

Bligh, at the time, named Jesse James as an accessory in the Russellville raid, asserting that the outlaw, while ill some miles away, had been the man who planned the job. Bligh declared that the purpose of the robbery had been to procure enough money to send Jesse James to California. At any rate Jesse did make another trip westward and was later joined there by Frank. It is believed that they hoped the fury started by their Russellville victims would blow over, but when they returned to Clay County, disappointment awaited them. Their pursuers were on the trail, as hot as ever.

Despite this fact, Jesse returned to the onerous duties of the Samuel farm and lived a quiet, though watchful life for some months. He joined the Baptist church during one of those old-time revival meetings, but it is to be feared that he did not take his religion very seriously.

It was in December, 1869, that the famous raid on the Gallatin, Missouri, bank took place, an event which brought the James and Younger brothers out into the open as real dyed-in-the-wool outlaws for the first time. In all of the previous crimes there had been some slight chance that other doers of evil had been responsible, but in the Gallatin affair there was none. It was undisputably the work of Jesse and his men.

There are several versions of the holdup and murder. According to a story told by Mrs. Zerelda Samuel, mother of the James boys, one Jim Anderson, brother of the guerrilla Bill Anderson, appeared at the Samuel farm early in the month of December, dismounted and came in to chat with his old pals.

To Scalp the Cashier

The conversation, so Mrs. Samuel said, ran something like this:

"Well, what are you going to do next?" asked Jesse after the greetings were over.

"I don't know exactly," Anderson replied, "but there is a fellow named Cox that's the cashier of a bank in Gallatin. He has always boasted that he killed Bill Anderson and I'm going in to scalp him. I'd like to have your help."

"Much obliged, Jim," said Jesse, "but I don't want anything to do with that kind of business."

"It will pay," Anderson urged, "because we'll not only kill him, but we'll get the bank's money."

But Jesse steadfastly refused to have
anything to do with the crime, Mrs. Samuel insists, and Anderson rode away.

A week later, on December 7, three men cantered into Gallatin, rode to the Davies County Savings Bank and dismounted. One of the men remained outside to hold the horses and the other two entered the institution where Captain John W. Sheets, the cashier, and a young man were transacting some banking business.

One of the robbers laid down a one hundred-dollar bill and asked for change. Captain Sheets was obligingly counting out the money when the second man drew a revolver and placed it against the cashier’s head.

**Man-hunting in Earnest**

“Give me the keys to the safe,” he ordered.

Captain Sheets handed over the keys and the man ransacked the safe, taking about seven hundred dollars in currency. Then the two robbers held a whispered consultation and the first man suddenly turned on Captain Sheets and shot him dead.

Outside several citizens heard the report and rushed toward the bank, but were driven off by the lookout who flourished two large weapons in very handy fashion.

“Hurry!” yelled the lookout. “I can’t hold them much longer.”

At this juncture the two outlaws dashed out of the bank and began to mount their steeds. But one horse became frightened and bolted, leaving the bandit afoot in hostile territory. A leap and he was astride the lookout’s mount and a moment later the three tore out of town on two horses, with the old rebel yell echoing after them.

A few miles out of town they met a farmer riding a nice horse and made fast work of taking it from him. Near Kidder, Missouri, the outlaws encountered a preacher in a buggy and forced him to show them a road leading around the town. After the service had been rendered, the slim young outlaw on the stolen horse addressed the preacher and said:

“I’m Bill Anderson’s brother, and I’ve just killed a fellow named Cox in Gallatin.”

All might have been well and the crime would have been fastened on Jim Anderson, who would have suffered but little thereby, except for the fact that the bolting horse was recaptured by members of a posse. It was taken to Gallatin and then to Kearney, and all hands were forced to admit, no matter what their prejudices might be, that the horse undoubtedly belonged to Jesse James.

Therefore, for the first time, the authorities had some concrete evidence against the young guerrilla. It was his horse. The description of the man who killed Captain Sheets fitted him to perfection. There could be no doubt. The manhunt was on in earnest now, and Jesse James was the quarry. Cole Younger was wanted also. The authorities had an overpowering conviction that Cole was the second man in the bank and that Frank James was the determined look-out with the two large pistols.

The Jameses immediately got busy and circulated a story that Jim Anderson had borrowed Jesse’s horse just as he departed from the Samuel farm; but it found but few receptive ears.

As to the wanton murder of Captain Sheets, it was said that the cashier resembled Cox, and Jesse, notoriously quick on the trigger, determined to avenge the death of his old tutor in evil ways, “Bloody Bill” Anderson.

**For Missouri’s Name**

At any rate the Gallatin affair aroused much sentiment against the outlaws. Mass meetings were held, funds were subscribed, and the law enforcement officials were called upon to do their duty forthwith, and bring in Jesse and Frank James and Cole and Jim Younger. Posses were organized and scoured the Missouri woods with shotguns and an ample supply of pistols, but found nothing that even resembled the dreaded bad men.

When the news of the Gallatin crime reached Liberty, with the proof that Jesse James’s horse had been left at the scene, a meeting was held at which ways and means of getting rid of the Jameses and Youngers were discussed. There was much talk, but small indication of action, until John S. Thomason, a former Confederate officer and
ex-sheriff of Clay County, got the floor and offered to lead an expedition after the outlaws.

Captain Thomason was one of the most unrelenting enemies of the men he sought. He was certain that they were guilty of all the crimes charged against them, and did not hesitate to express his views. He had no reason for doing them an injustice. The Jameses and the Youngers had fought under his flag; they were men of his country; but Captain Thomason felt that the outlaws were responsible for Missouri's name as a lawless State, and he was ready to risk his life to bring them to justice.

A Thief With Sentiment

So, with a squad of men from Liberty, the doughty captain headed for the home of the James brothers.

Jesse and Frank saw their visitors coming, and rode cautiously down the road to meet them.

"I want you to surrender," yelled Captain Thomason as he halted his men.

"We'll never surrender," called back Frank James.

Captain Thomason and his men, as befits soldiers who are defied, went for their weapons. They fired a scattering volley at Jesse and Frank, who returned the fire. It seems apparent that the James boys were careful not to kill any of the posse men, for they could have scarcely missed at that range.

After a few shots had been fired Jesse, deciding that Captain Thomason was not to be lightly chased away, drew a good bead and pulled the trigger. Thomason's horse dropped dead with a bullet through its head, and Frank and Jesse, laughing at the joke, strode off into the woods to the place where their own mounts were tethered. Jesse did love his fun.

Captain Thomason walked to the Samuel house, borrowed a horse from the stable, and headed his men for Liberty, feeling rather downcast as the result of the expedition.

We will pause here to tell a tale of Jesse James which is said to have taken place some years later when the outlaw was dodging with might and main to escape the bullets of his pursuers. It is related that he met Oscar Thomason, brother of the captain who led the Liberty posse.

Thomason did not know just what his fate would be at the hands of the old family enemy, but his fears were set at rest when Jesse said:

"Oscar, I've always hoped to meet you—so that I could pay you for that horse I killed under Captain Thomason. I always wanted to pay him, but never got the chance. What was that horse worth, Oscar?"

Oscar replied that the horse was worth about one hundred and twenty-five dollars, whereupon Jesse drew out a hefty pocketbook, peeled off the bills and rode away.

We now have Jesse James, a full-grown man and a full-blown outlaw, beginning his game of hide and seek with society. At the time of the Gallatin raid this prince of robbers was a smiling, devil-may-care, blue-eyed fellow, who shot straight and true and feared no man alive. He was a queer combination of murderer and gentleman, a thief who took what he wanted, killed if necessary, and then surprised his fellow cutthroats with an exhibition of downright sentiment.

On the Verge of Fame

On one occasion the James gang captured a youth who was believed to be a spy in the employ of the Clay County prosecutor. All of the members of the band were for killing the captive on the spot, and Jesse drew his pistol for the deed. The youth, knowing that the end for him was near, began talking of his young sister.

Jesse threw his weapon to the ground.

"I can't do it," he said, and walked away. The youth went unharmed.

At other times Jesse almost justified the blood-and-thunder writers by his cruelty, for instance, when he shot down the defenseless Captain Sheets.

The young outlaw was fond of music, and often whiled away the hours while hiding from his pursuers, singing. He was cosmopolitan in his tastes, howling the ribald ditties of Civil War days along with such pieces as "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" He was also a good billiard player,
but had small chance to exhibit his talent since the playing of billiards almost always involves letting some person stand behind one, and Jesse was exceedingly ticklish on that subject. He preferred to have the world before him.

As befitting a much-hunted man he had, by the time of the Gallatin raid, collected a small arsenal of weapons, including four revolvers and two rifles, and he was very fond of all of them. Each had its name. The four revolvers were “Daisy,” “Beauty,” “Pet,” and “Baby,” and the rifles were “Old Faithful” and “Big Thunder.”

Of Jesse’s boldness while he was being sought for the various Missouri robberies many tales have been told but it does seem certain that the young outlaw, instead of hiding in the woods, went to Kansas City and St. Louis, where he walked the streets unrecognized. It is related that in Kansas City Jesse went into a saloon where a youth was entertaining the assembled multitude by playing the piano. Among the ditties sung by this lad was:

If Jesse James was here,
He wouldn’t treat to a beer,
He’d walk off on his ear,
Baby mine.

Jesse thought it was a huge joke and bought the singer a large beer, which he presented “with the compliments of Jesse James.” All the boys had a good laugh, and the incident was forgotten, except as an anecdote.

In St. Louis Jesse stayed at the old Laclede Hotel and passed himself off as a cattle buyer. He also went to Chicago and loafed around for several months. Later some of his old companions declared that Jesse went north gunning for Allan Pinkerton, the detective, whose men hunted the noted outlaw for many years.

In many ways Frank James was much superior to his more famous brother as a criminal. Cautious and clever, where Jesse was reckless and wild, Frank was a man of genuine intellect, although of a desperate nature. He could speak French, German, and Spanish, and often saved himself when in a tight place by falling into the dialect of one of the races.

These, then, were the men who are now ready to become nationally notorious as the first train robbers in the history of this country. Known in Missouri, Kansas and Kentucky as the worst of bad men, they are on the verge of breaking into all the front pages of the nation’s papers in a series of desperate exploits.

Booted and spurred, they ride into Iowa with the Youngers at their heels ready to startle the country.

TO BE CONTINUED

NEXT week FLYNN’S WEEKLY begins “Under the Green Moon,” by Frank Blighton. This is a posthumous two-part story done in Mr. Blighton’s most breathtaking style. It probably will be the last story under that signature ever to be published in any magazine. We earnestly recommend you not to neglect it.
Reggie went down on his face like a dead man, and there was a scurry of running feet

THE CAT BURGLAR

By H. C. Bailey

A MAN DOESN'T CLIMB WITH A BAD ARM, DECIDED REGGIE FORTUNE, AND HE SEARCHED THE TOWN FOR THE BEAST WITH THE BRAIN

CHAPTER I

FRIGHTENED OFF WITH THE MOONSTONES

"The decisive factor," said Mr. Fortune sleepily, "the decisive factor was that Doris Bromsgrove married Bill Davis. That tore it." He smiled at the bewildered face of the chief of the Criminal Investigation Department.

"Seems irrelevant, what? Who knows the inscrutable design? Doris falls in love with Bill Davis, most ordinary, most correct. And Satan's invisible world's displayed."

"The nastiest case of my time," said Lomas. "I suppose you know you're merely babbling, Reginald."

"No, no. The web of life—Doris Bromsgrove—as clean and simple as milk—she gets bound up with Mr. Maple Vanstittart. It's like finding a link between music and a rat's diseases. Well, there is, of course. Queer, interestin' world, Lomas, old thing."

So afterward he philosophized. But he saw nothing queer in the beginning. Doris Bromsgrove, the daughter of that eminent throat specialist, Sir Alceter Bromsgrove, met Bill Davis when he was her father's house physician, and as soon as he was established in a thriving way fell in love with him. She always found it comfortably natural to do the right thing.

They married with universal approval, and Reggie Fortune, who had known her since she could talk, and taught Bill Davis
the little he would ever know of claret, sent them a parcel of Venetian glass for a wedding present and became a friend of the house. For Doris he respects as one of the few women who understand that tea is a meal.

One afternoon he called a little early. She was not in her drawing-room. When she appeared she had perhaps three hairs on her nice head out of their appointed places. She was almost excited.

"Oh, how do you do? Is this professional?" she said.

"What have I done?" Mr. Fortune gazed at her with alarm. "Don't you love me any more?"

"You haven't heard? I nearly sent for you this morning. We've had a burglary."

"I'm so sorry. Anything serious?"

"Well, it's rather horrid in a way. The creatures have taken my moonstones."

"Moonstones," Mr. Fortune repeated.

"You know. The set that mother gave me. Dear things. We are insured, of course. But I did rather love them."

"Yes. Charming. Yes. Too bad. Anything else taken?"

"Nothing at all. We were really awfully lucky, as Bill says. Of course I haven't got so very much. But I was wearing my pearls and my diamond star."

"Oh. You were out?"

"We had gone to Lady Shovel's dance. We didn't get home till three, and then my moonstones were gone. There were some other little things, but the poor burglar didn't get them. The police say that perhaps something frightened him."

"Yes. Do the police say anything else?"

"They say it was a cat burglar, Mr. Fortune. It's rather thrilling, isn't it? He must have been awfully clever to get up to my bedroom. The inspector said he was a high class expert."

"Who is the inspector?"

"Inspector Pargo. Do you know him? He said the local police thought it was a case for Scotland Yard. He was very solemn and so quick and keen. I was quite frightened. But he is rather a lamb, really."

"Pargo. Yes. He's a burglary specialist, much esteemed. And he says it was an expert's job. Well, well."

"What do you think of it, Mr. Fortune?"

"I don't think. They wouldn't like me to think about burglars."

"Oh, you believe there's something Inspector Pargo didn't see! How frightfully thrilling. Do come and look."

"It's not in my line, you know," Mr. Fortune murmured, but he let himself be taken up to her room, a pleasant, airy place as neat as became her.

"There—" she demonstrated—"the moonstones were in this drawer. The inspector took the case away to look for finger prints. But he said there wouldn't be any. He couldn't find any on the window or anywhere."

Mr. Fortune put his head out of the window. The room was on the second floor at the back, more than twenty feet above a small paved yard, behind which was a narrow street with houses only on the farther side.

"The inspector said the burglar must have come down the mews there, got over the wall into the yard, and climbed up by the drain pipe. Look! What a distance to stretch to my window sill!" She shuddered. "Fancy! In the dark too! He must be an awfully good climber. I shouldn't like to be a burglar, Mr. Fortune."

Mr. Fortune brought his head in again and turned from the window to her dressing table. Besides its silver apparatus, there was some jewelry, a gold bangle, a brooch of opals and diamonds. "These were lying about?" he said.

"No, not last night. They were in the drawer here with these other little things."

"But he might have had them if he'd looked."

"Isn't it lucky? He must have been frightened by some noise, the inspector said, and off he went. Fancy getting across to the pipe in the dark when he was frightened! How dreadful if he'd fallen!"

"Yes, yes. That would have made a bad night of it," Mr. Fortune murmured.

"Oh!" she shuddered. "You're rather horrid, aren't you? Sort of cold. As if you didn't believe in it."

"My dear child, I believe everything. It happened. It all happened just as Pargo said. Some fellow came up the pipe last
night and took your moonstones and went off with them, quite hasty.”

Her brown eyes were still troubled. “You make it sound shivery. I hope he won’t come again.”

“Don’t worry. He won’t come again. Not twice.”

He comforted her further at tea; he left her restored to her wonted simple gayety, but he walked home by way of the mews, and in the morning he called at Scotland Yard.

CHAPTER II

“SEE WHAT WASN’T THERE”

THE chief of the criminal investigation department was on holiday. “Salmon fishing, sir,” Superintendent Bell explained, searching Mr. Fortune’s round and placid face. “Didn’t you happen to know?”

“I know. The ruling passion. He must play at catching creatures. How is life, Bell? Busy?”

“About the usual. Nothing big, you know.”

“You have an anxious eye.”

Bell laughed uneasily. “That’s your fault, Mr. Fortune. You know, you see too much. I hope I’ll never be up against you. But I wasn’t worrying till you came in. You have a way of bringing us a bit of trouble.”

“Oh, my, Bell! How can you? I’m always smoothin’ things out for you. And this is just a friendly call. Some friends of mine have been and had a burglar.” Here Bell sighed. “I only wanted to say what about it?” said Mr. Fortune plaintively.

“Which case is that, sir?”

“Had a lot lately?”

“Oh, no—not big stuff. There’s always plenty of little jobs. We haven’t had much high class work since that crop of West End cases in the spring. The cracks have been lying low for a bit.”

“This is a West End case. Holland Street. Dr. Davis’s house, night before last.”

Bell nodded. “I remember. Cat burglary. Rather fine work.”

“No, no. A crack burglar don’t often go after moonstones, does he?”

Inspector Pargo chuckled. “I should say not, sir. He made a poor bid that time. Moonstones!” His quick eyes twinkled at Superintendent Bell. “Not much market for that sort of stuff.”

He became serious again. “But I’m afraid the lady thought a lot of them, Mr. Fortune. We’ll do what we can. As I was saying, it was a first class crack and he had pretty good information.”

“What about the servants?” said Bell.

“I’ve looked into them, sir. They seem all right. No, I think it was worked from outside. He found out the lady had some good stuff; he got to know about her engagements, and managed to pick a night when she and her husband were out. He had to take a chance on what she was wearing, and it didn’t pan out. She hadn’t left much behind her but the moonstones. I bet he was sick.”

“Yes, very clear. Yes. Would you bet you’ll get him?”

Inspector Pargo looked knowing. “Oh, come, sir. Touch wood. It’s not a thing to bet on.”
"I suppose you know all the first class men?" said Reggie meekly.

"I wish I did, Mr. Fortune. I know men who could have done it." He looked at Bell. "Not so many either, eh? First class cat burglars—they're pretty rare. And they lie very low, the cracks. We've never got the man that brought off those jobs in the spring."

"Oh. One man did the lot, did he?"


"And one man here? Same man?"

"Ah, that's as may be," Inspector Pargo winked. "I couldn't say, sir. Spotting the man, you see, for a job of this kind it's working over the cracks who could have done it and finding what they're up to. Then if you can get a line on one of them you may pick up some evidence."

"Any hopes?"

"I'm always hoping, sir. Is there anything you would like to suggest, Mr. Fortune?"

"Me?" Mr. Fortune opened round eyes. "Oh no, not me. It's not in my way. I'm a child in these things. I come in only when you've got a corpse or so."

"I hope it won't come to that, sir," Inspector Pargo laughed. He conferred a moment with Bell; he promised to do his best for the lady; he was gone.

Mr. Fortune sat still. Mr. Fortune lit a cigar and gazed solemnly through the smoke at Bell. "Zeal, lots of zeal," he murmured. "He knows his job, sir."

"But only one idea," Mr. Fortune sighed.

"Well, it's a pretty plain case."

"My dear fellow! Oh, my dear fellow! The hypothetical expert, he marks down Mrs. Davis as a lady worth burgling; which she isn't. He takes pains to find out all about her nice house, which hasn't anything in it. He chooses a night when she's out at a ball; when she'd be wearing any jewels she's got. With highly skilled agility he gets in, leaves a lot of gold trinkets alone and pinches a set of moonstones. That's a very remarkable expert."

Bell moved in his chair. "If you put it like that," he said slowly. "But you know you can always put a case so it sounds silly. All crimes are silly in a way."

"Oh, my, Bell. Oh, no. It's silly to be a criminal at all. But the clever fellows don't play the fool in their crimes."

"I've known a lot of 'em to fall down over a silly blunder in a clever plan—just like this chap."

"Yes, yes. Only he hasn't fallen."

"Why, he only got the moonstones for all his trouble. That's what you're saying, sir."

"I wonder."

"Is there some catch about these moonstones?" Bell cried.

"No, no. They're just moonstones in a little white gold."

"I don't know what you're getting to, sir."

"Nor do I, Bell." Mr. Fortune rose and wandered to the door. "Quite dark, isn't it quite dark?" With the door open he paused and looked back. His round face was like a troubled child's. "I wonder what's next," he said.

Superintendent Bell breathed hard, and when the door was shut allowed himself to remark that he wished Mr. Fortune wouldn't try to see what wasn't there.

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CHAPTER III

WHAT IS NEXT?

On the next day, reading the evening paper in his bath before dinner, according to his habit, Mr. Fortune came upon the headline, "Millionaire Cat Burglary." A brief bald narrative informed him that the night before, while Lord Silvertown, the soap king, and his wife were out at dinner, her dressing room had been entered by a cat burglar, who had gone off with most of her diamonds.

Mr. Fortune came down in his dressing gown and sought the telephone and called up Superintendent Bell. "That you, Bell? Fortune speaking. Which I wish to remark—now we do know what's next."

The telephone reported an inarticulate noise. "Tut, tut," said Mr. Fortune.

"Is that all you wanted to say, sir?" said the telephone.
"And the next thing, please?" Mr. Fortune inquired. The telephone buzzed and cracked.

The morning papers told the same story, with more flowers. Reported on the day after that the police had important clews, wrote a history of famous cat burglaries, and forgot all about it. And in a week there was another.

The heiress of a gentleman in the frozen meat trade found that her tiara and dog collar had gone from her bedroom while she was at the fancy dress ball of the season—the only night for weeks, she told reporters with emotion, when she had not worn them.

The thought of a girl who never dined without a tiara stirred the great heart of the people, and newspapers were bitter about the police force, and Mr. Fortune walked across the park to Scotland Yard.

Superintendent Bell lay back and looked at him heavily.

"Hello, Bell. Seen the papers?" Mr. Fortune smiled.

"I don't worry about what the papers say," said Bell, with slow reproachful emphasis.

"Yes. That's very noble. I'm not sure you're right."

"But I wish you didn't want to be funny, sir."

"Oh, Bell!" Mr. Fortune was affected. "Oh, my dear man. I don't. I wouldn't. I've been and walked all the way across the park to see you about it. Extraordinary energy. And very painful, too. I don't ever walk. That shows how serious I'm taking it."

"That's what bothers me, sir. I know you're thinking something. But you will go on pulling my leg. Ringing me up like that to say, 'Now we know what's next.'" He shook his head. "It isn't helpful, sir. It isn't like you either."

"Yes, I think so. I wasn't pulling your leg, Bell. I was humbly suggestin' you weren't taking things seriously."

"Well, now, I didn't think to hear that from you, sir! That's like the papers. You know we can't do miracles. The only way to work the case is inquiries about the expert burglar who might have done it. It's a slow business, but Pargo's sharp enough, and he's got all the men he can use."

"On the moonstones?"

"Something more than moonstones to think about now, isn't there? But I reckon if we can get the man who had the moonstones we'll have the man who did the other jobs."

"You think so?"

"Why, isn't that what you said yourself, sir? 'I wonder what's next!' after the moonstones, and 'Now we know what's next' after Lady Silvertown's diamonds were taken. You were always thinking the moonstone case was a fellow getting his hand in."

"Was I?" Mr. Fortune murmured. "I didn't say so. No, if I was a crack burglar who knew how to put his hand on diamond necklaces and diamond tiaras I wouldn't bother with a young doctor's wife."

"Do you mean that wasn't a burglary, sir?"

"No. Oh, no. It was a burglary all right. Up the drain pipe. Fine climbing."

"Well, there you are!" Bell cried. "It wasn't worth doing, but it was done."

"Yes. It was done. That's what's so interesting."

"Look here, sir. If you didn't mean there'd be other burglaries, what did you mean with your what next?"

"I meant it looked like leading to something. I didn't know what. I don't know now."

"It looked like a cat burglar getting to work again," said Bell. "That's pretty plain."

"Plain!" Mr. Fortune murmured. "Oh, Peter! Plain! You haven't caught anybody, have you?"

"You see, we have to go by facts, sir," Bell smiled. "That makes us so slow. Pargo's had two old hands held for inquiries. Both of them put up good alibis."

"Oh, yes. There would be alibis. And that's all you've got? Two nice healthy alibis!"

"Well, I don't mind telling you there is another bit of work doing. Pargo's got a line on a fellow who's going to have a lot to explain."

"Which case?" said Mr. Fortune sharply.
Bell smiled. "When we’ve found the man who did one there won’t be any complaints."

Mr. Fortune sank back in his chair. "It beats me what you’re worrying about," Bell cried.

Mr. Fortune made an odd gesture. His hands moved in the air as if he were trying to grasp something unpleasant. "It’s queer," he murmured. "Don’t you feel it, Bell? It’s queer."

"Good Lord!" Bell grinned. "No, sir; not me. You’re seeing things. You will try to see what isn’t there."

"You think so? Well, well. Let me know when you get the next alibi."

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CHAPTER IV

THE SQUIRREL AND JUSTICE

But it was Mrs. Davis who brought him into the case again. Two days afterward he was adjudicating upon some burgundy—a question between Musigny and Richebourg—when he heard her voice, opened the dining room door, and beckoned her in. She came like a leaf on the wind. "Oh, Mr. Fortune, have you heard? Oh!" She saw the wine and was shocked.

"I am always being misunderstood," said Mr. Fortune sadly.

"Two bottles of wine in the afternoon!"

"This is a scientific investigation, Doris. One chooses the most placid hour."

"One is rather a pig," said Doris, putting up a little nose.

"My poor child," Mr. Fortune murmured. "You can’t help being a woman, but you shouldn’t be proud of it."

"Oh, don’t be silly! Mr. Fortune, they’ve found my moonstones."

"Well, well," said Mr. Fortune, and turned away and put a chair for her with mathematical precision.

"I’ve just been to Scotland Yard to identify them. They are my moonstones. And who do you think took them? They say it was a chauffeur who lived in the mews. And we know him, Mr. Fortune! Such a nice man. I can’t believe it. He drives for the Durand garage. We often have a car from there, and he generally takes us. I can’t imagine it was him.

"But they say the moonstones were found in his locker at the garage, and I shall have to go into the witness box and say he did it." Mr. Fortune’s dreamy eyes opened. She went on fast and a little shrill: "Don’t you see? He’s always been so nice. It’s horrid getting him into trouble."

"You aren’t. You’re only saying your moonstones are yours. I’m afraid you’ll have to do that."

"That’s what Bill says," she began to be pathetic. "I did think you’d be able to help me, Mr. Fortune."

"I’ll go down to the court with you. I’ll have another look at the case."

"I almost wish they hadn’t got the things back. That detective said he didn’t think they would."

"Yes, yes. He was wrong there," Mr. Fortune murmured, watching her with large, solemn eyes.

"Oh, you make me quite frightened!" she cried.

"Not me. No. I’m only seeing fair," said Mr. Fortune. But he had some trouble in getting rid of her. It was an agitated woman whom he deposited in her own house before he drove off to Scotland Yard.

There Superintendent Bell beamed widely upon him. "Hello, sir! Have you seen your little lady lately?"

"This isn’t kind, Bell. It isn’t quite nice. You were going to let me know when you caught anybody else. Now you goat."

"Well, sir, you had your bit of fun with me. We haven’t found another alibi. Not this time. Has the lady told you?"

"She says you’ve been and pinched her nice chauffeur."

"And got her moonstones. She wasn’t what you’d call grateful either. Kind of peevish." Bell gave a large indulgent sigh. "You never know with the ladies."

"You think not? Well, well. How did you get him?"

"You’d better see Pargo, sir. He’s made a neat job of it."

Inspector Pargo came, brisk and smiling. His quick eyes glanced from his superintendent to Mr. Fortune and back again.
"Mr. Fortune wants to hear all about it, Pargo."

"I'm very glad we've been able to get the lady's jewels. That's a bit of luck I didn't count on," he chuckled. "I'm afraid we won't put our hands on the diamonds. They'll be in Amsterdam by now. But it's Mr. Davis's case you're interested in, of course. There was a fellow I've been looking for some time. Since those burglaries, early in the spring," he glanced at Bell.

"But I couldn't get a trace of him. Just before the war there was a fellow we caught on a job in Mayfair. The Squirrel, they called him. Real name is Tom Briggs. Started life as an electrician and took to burglary. He turned out a first class hand at the cat game. Several jobs I knew he was in, but we only got him once, and then they let him off with a light sentence for a first offense.

"He came out of prison, and we lost sight of him. War time, you know. When we had these fresh cases I started looking for the Squirrel again, and after a bit I heard he'd been seen working at the Durand garage. There he was, bold as brass, but not as Tom Briggs. Oh, no; he was Mr. Jim Bayliss. He'd got his job with a character in that name from a Major Denham that died before the character was written.

"And his little home is in the mews at the back of Mrs. Davis's house. I had Jim Bayliss detained, took his finger-prints, found he was the Squirrel right enough, and sent a man round to search his place. He kept nothing at home. But in his locker at the garage there were the moonstones done up in a bit of rag and some neat little burglars' tools. That's the case, sir. We've got the real goods this time. See how it all fits in?"

"No, no. Not exactly," said Mr. Fortune. "It isn't my sort of case."

"Well, sir, it's a matter of piecing things together. Here's this chap, a crack burglar, gets a job at a big West End garage. Why? It puts him in the know about all the people that hire from there, like Mrs. Davis. Waiting at theaters and balls he's in touch with the chauffeurs of all the rich folks in London, like Lord Silvertown."

"That puts him up to their little ways, and when they'll be out at night. Then he's got a good car to use and a fine excuse for hanging about with it. He'd just drive up, watch till the coast was clear, do his job and pop off in the car—and a nice little home handy in the West End to go to. Oh, he's a smart man, the Squirrel."

"Yes. What's he say about it?"

"Not a word. He knows the game. He don't give anything away." Inspector Pargo winked. "If he got talking he might happen to put us on to the diamonds. He don't mean to lose them. He'll take what's coming to him and collect for the diamonds when he comes out. Worth waiting for. He'll have to wait though. He's booked for a long stretch."

"I don't quite see," Mr. Fortune said, meekly. "What's the evidence in the diamond cases, Pargo?"

Inspector Pargo glanced at his superintendent. "If you have three cat burglaries, all close in a week, and you catch the man that did one, that's pretty good evidence who committed the others, Mr. Fortune."

"Yes. You can say that to me. You won't be able to say it to a judge."

"I know that, sir. There's a lot of evidence that isn't evidence in court. I can't charge him with the other two cases. But when he's convicted I shall be satisfied." His quick eyes consulted Superintendent Bell.

"Not much doubt," Bell nodded. "He won't be the first fellow that only took sentence for one crime when we know he did more. You've seen that in your time, Mr. Fortune."

"Yes, yes. An unjust world."

"It'll work out all right, sir," Pargo said quickly. "We'll prove the one case, but the jury will have the others in their minds, and so will the judge. The Squirrel will get a good stiff sentence."

"Oh, my goodness!" Mr. Fortune murmured and sat up. "Justice. A theory. By Inspector Pargo." He contemplated that dapper man with smiling curiosity.

"Well, sir, I think it's justice to stop a run of burglaries. And you'll see I've done it, Mr. Fortune."

CHAPTER V
FOR A JURY

HAT he did next was to ring up Dr. Davis. “Hello, Bill. Fortune speaking. I’ll drive Doris down to the police court in the morning. Are you coming with us?”

The voice which answered suggested that Doris’s husband found life difficult. Doris was rather upset. She didn’t want to appear against the man. Was it really necessary to go on with the case?

“I don’t know how you’re going to drop it,” said Mr. Fortune.

The voice gloomily supposed not. Well, Doris should go if she was fit. He was going too, of course. But it was very decent of Fortune.

“She’d better be fit,” said Mr. Fortune.

She was. A tense and angry little woman with a glum husband entered Mr. Fortune’s big car. At the police court Inspector Pargo met her all smiles. “We shan’t keep you long, Mrs. Davis. Your evidence is just a matter of form, and—what, Mr. Fortune! Are you giving evidence too?” he chuckled.

“No. I’m just seeing fair, Pargo.”

The politeness of Inspector Pargo allowed him a moment’s stare. “Oh, Mrs. Davis will be all right, sir,” he said.

They went into court. Thomas Briggs was put in the dock. The solicitor for the police arose. He did not think the charges would detain the court long. Probably his worship would consider it was a case for a jury. The prisoner—

But Mr. Fortune was not listening. He lay back looking with curious intensity at Thomas Briggs. “The prisoner,” as the reporters say, “seemed to feel his position acutely.” He was a slim, erect fellow, with strength in his shoulders, neatly turned out in spite of his night in the cells.

He could not stand still, though he kept his right hand gripping the rail of the dock. He turned this way and that, looking round the court, now anxiously, more often with a fierce curiosity, and he had a fighting chin. But it was not his face that Mr. Fortune studied.

A detective sergeant was in the witness box. Proceeding to 18 Holland Street on the sixth, on information that a burglary had been committed there, he found that a second floor room had been entered through the window by climbing a drain pipe. On calling at the Durand garage he had seen the prisoner, acting as a chauffeur under the name of James Bayliss, and recognized him as Tom Briggs, convicted of cat burglary in 1913. He found that Bayliss had made use of a forged character, searched his locker and found there burglars’ tools and a set of moonstones.

“It’s not true,” a woman screamed.

The prisoner flushed, gulped, put his left hand to his collar and stumbled to ease it. “God knows it ain’t true,” he said. His hand fell and the arm hung bent.

Mrs. Davis was called. Mrs. Davis had often been driven by the prisoner. Mrs. Davis came home on the night of the fifth to find that her bedroom had been entered and her moonstones taken. The moonstones produced were hers. Thank you, Mrs. Davis.

On this evidence—justified in asking—commit prisoner for trial.

“Anything to say, Briggs?”

“I have, sir.” The man in the dock stood to attention. “What he says about me doing time, that’s true. But I’ve gone straight since, so help me God. When I came out of clink I joined up, name of Bayliss, being mother’s name, and me wanting to do my bit. I served with the Rutlands, second battalion.

“You can get my record all right, and there’s them as would speak for me. When I was demobbed Major Denham he took me on as chauffeur. But he went west in that French railway smash in 1920, and I was down and out. So I wrote myself a character from him and got on with Durand’s. And I been straight with Durand’s, they’ll tell you that.

“I kept off the old game and never saw none of the lads till this spring when one of ‘em—” he turned fiercely on the detective sergeant—“if you know so much you know the Slug—he came to me at my
little place and began to talk about a job he had for me. I slung him out quick.

"That's all I ever had to do with the old game since I did my bit of time. So help me; I thought I'd wiped it all off. How the swag came into my box at Durand's I can't tell no more than a baby. The swine that put the cops on to me, he knows all about that."

"It's a case for a jury, Briggs," the magistrate said. "You should have a lawyer, you know. Better have a lawyer."

"I never done it, sir," Briggs said sullenly. "I know I'm for it. You can't fight the cops. But I never done it."

Mr. Fortune, watching him with scientific interest was nudged by Bill Davis.

"I say, Doris wants to get out of this."

"Oh, ah! Take her to the car. I shan't be long." He slid out of court.

When they saw him next he was coming out of a post office. The agitation of Mrs. Davis was not subdued by waiting. She tried to hide that she was crying by a voice of bitterness and spite. "I hope you're satisfied, Mr. Fortune."

Mr. Fortune smiled. "No, Doris. Not satisfied. But very interested." He turned to her husband. "Well, Bill, what about it?" he said briskly.

"It's a miserable business, Fortune."

"Oh, yes. Quite. What did you make of the man."

"Poor devil! I don't know what to think. I believe he really meant to keep straight."

"Of course, he did," Doris cried. "I hate your horrid policemen, Mr. Fortune!"

"Yes. Yes. I wasn't asking for kind sympathy. I wanted a medical opinion, Bill."

"Medical?" Dr. Davis stared. "I didn't see anything—the man's suffering from nervous strain, of course—that's to be expected. He's quite normal."

Mr. Fortune sighed. "My poor Bill! And I once tried to teach you anatomy!"

"I don't know what anatomy has got to do with it."

"Oh, hush!" said Mr. Fortune.

Dr. Davis began to ask what he meant, but was overwhelmed by his wife. "Mr. Fortune, you think there's something—something—" The car stopped.

"Oh, yes, there's quite a lot," said Mr. Fortune, and opened the door and handed her out. "Good-by. Scotland Yard, Sam."

CHAPTER VI

"LOTHARIO THIRD"

E found Superintendent Bell in conference with Inspector Pargo. "Thinkin' second thoughts, Pargo?" he smiled.

Pargo laughed. "It's the Squirrel that's got to think again, isn't it? He didn't cut much ice with that gallery stuff this morning."

"Ah, I wouldn't say that! He wasn't talking to the gallery."

"Then I don't know who he was talking to," Pargo sneered.

"God," said Mr. Fortune. Again Pargo laughed. "More fool he. God knows all about it."

"That'll do, Pargo," Bell was shocked. "You've got something to put to us, Mr. Fortune?"

"Yes. You'd better go into the case."

Pargo sat forward. "You'll excuse me, sir, I have. It's clear evidence and he's got no answer. I'd like to know what you mean."

"Well, several things. For instance, you didn't mention he'd served in the war."

"I didn't know he had."

"Oh, but you said you'd gone into the case! It's time somebody did, Bell. You might look up his regimental record, Second Rutlandshires."

Bell nodded and made a note.

"That's all very well," Pargo cried. "I dare say he did his bit. Lots of old lags did. But I'm here to put down crime. And a burglar's a burglar."

"Yes. Once a burglar always a burglar. That's the hopeless sort of argument that got you into this mess."

"I see no mess. We've got him sent to trial with a clear case."

"For a burglary he didn't commit. Yes. Very pleasant all round."

"Ha, that's pretty good!" Pargo cried.

"I suppose you saw him not doing it?"

"No. I only saw he couldn't do it,"
said Mr. Fortune. " Didn't you notice that? Well, well. His left arm is bent at the elbow and stiff. His left hand won't close. There's some injury to the muscles and nerves, probably from a wound in the war. You should have thought of that. It's impossible for that man to cross from Mrs. Davis's drain pipe to her window."

"Good Lord, sir," Bell said, and smiled a rueful smile. "That's torn it, Pargo."

"How do you know he wasn't shamming?" Pargo cried.

"I know, thank you," Mr. Fortune murmured.

"If he's got a weak arm, he'd have said so. He'd have been the poor wounded soldier who couldn't do a cat burglary for his life. You bet he would."

"And he said nothing. Yes. That's what clears him. He knows he can still climb. He knows he could do a cat burglary. What he doesn't know is that he couldn't do this one. He doesn't know he'd have to hang by the left hand getting from the pipe to the window."

Mr. Fortune gazed at Inspector Pargo with a slow, benign smile. "That proves he wasn't on this job, you see."

"Does it show how the moonstones got in his box?"

"No. No. That seems to be up to you."

"What do you mean?" Pargo cried. "If that's meant for me it ought to be plain."

He appealed to his superintendent. "Mr. Fortune heard the sergeant swear he found the moonstones in the man's locker. I want to know what he's hinting at."

"You're so touchy," Mr. Fortune murmured. "I'm hinting there is a lot we don't know. Do you know the Slug?"

"The Slug? What's that?" Bell said.

"My God!" Inspector Pargo was overcome. "If you're taking what that fellow said for gospel, you have got a job on."

He gazed at Mr. Fortune with pity and contempt and turned to his superintendent. "It's the Squirrel telling the tale in the dock that's got Mr. Fortune. The usual stuff. One of his old pals has a down on him because he was trying to live honest and wouldn't go back to the old lay. Lord! How many times have we heard that!"

"I've heard it when it was true," Bell said. "Some chap he called the Slug came to him, eh? You don't know who he meant?"

"Not me. Never heard the name before. I know most of 'em, too."

"You'll have to go into it," Bell pronounced. "See if any of your men have heard of the Slug. If some of 'em remember the chaps this fellow used to work with you might get a line. It wants working, Pargo. I don't like the case. Better get busy."

"Very good, sir." Inspector Pargo went out like a lamb—a brisk lamb.

Bell stared heavily at Mr. Fortune. "He's a bit hard, is Pargo," he sighed. "Don't seem to feel things. It hampers him."

"Yes. Yes. I thought that," Mr. Fortune smiled.

"But he's sharp, you know. And he does work."

"Yes, that's what I am afraid of," said Mr. Fortune. "Not a nice case, Bell. Not a nice case at all."

"I'll watch it, sir," Bell assured him. Mr. Fortune smiled. When he came out to the courtyard his car had no chauffeur. He exhibited no surprise and drove himself away.

On the next day Mrs. Davis was shown into his consulting room. "Oh, Mr. Fortune, I only wanted to ask you—the magistrate said that poor man ought to have a lawyer—and he hasn't any money, of course—I thought perhaps we could get a lawyer for him. Bill says we oughtn't, we're prosecuting him. But I'm not really, am I? I don't see why I shouldn't help him to get off."

"Don't worry. He's got a lawyer. I sent him one yesterday."

"You? Oh, Mr. Fortune, you are kind." She was prettily affected.

But Mr. Fortune stared at her with solemn eyes. "Oh, oh well, that was all," she faltered. "Thank you ever so much. I'm sure you're dreadfully busy."

He did not deny it. He showed her out, and when he came back to the consulting room took up the paper that was tossed behind his desk, the Daily Echo.
What interested him in it was a small advertisement:

Lothario third. Blue eyes. Case altered. Auntie gone to grass. Wrong number again. Take slip or cover.

He studied those remarkable sentences for some time, then copied them out in a large hand and continued his studies.

After awhile he took another sheet of paper and worked out this composition:


He frowned at it with dissatisfaction, but having made experiments on it which pleased him no better, put it in his pocket and rang for a taxi and drove to the office of the Daily Echo. Thereafter he conferred with the inquiry agent, who had once been Inspector Morden, but emerged pensive.

In that state he remained, to his look’s anxiety, and it was after a meager breakfast next day that his telephone called Superintendent Bell.

CHAPTER VII
A DINNER IN SOHO

ELL came briskly into the consulting room to find him sitting on the small of his back under much cigar smoke.

"I wanted to have a chat with you, sir. You were right about that fellow’s arm."
"Fancy," Mr. Fortune murmured.

"I had the prison doctor look at it. The arm’s all weak and wasted. And we’ve turned up his record. He was in the Rutlands all right. Stopped some shrapnel at Cambrai. That clears him, doesn’t it? We’ve made a bad break. What beats me is why his pals tried to put the job on him when he was sure to get off."
"Oh no, he wasn’t. He didn’t know he couldn’t have done it. If I hadn’t seen the window you’d never have known. But I don’t think the chap who put the moonstones in his locker knew he’d been wounded."

"I see. Just doing the dirty on him because he was living respectable? That’s a regular crook’s trick."
"Yes. It’s all highly professional. Yes. What about his friend the Slug?"
"Pargo can’t make anything of that, sir. Nobody seems to know the name. Can’t get a line on him at all."
"I’m always telling you to read the papers. Ever hear of the Daily Echo? Nice paper for an infant school. But it doesn’t get many agony advertisements. Yesterday it only got this."
Bell frowned over those cryptic sentences.

Lothario third. Blue eyes. Case altered. Auntie gone to grass. Wrong number again. Take slip or cover.

"What are you giving me, sir?" he grinned. "Some flapper and her best boy playing the fool, isn’t it?"
"You think so? There was another one printed this morning."
Bell read out:


"Sweetbread on the pounce," he repeated. "Feeling skittish, eh?"
"I wasn’t," said Mr. Fortune with indignation.

"Good Lord, sir. You wrote it?"
"Only the second. I thought I’d like to give a helpin’ hand. ‘Sweetbread on the pounce.’ Yes, it is a little obvious. But I wanted to be quite clear."
"Clear! That isn’t what I’d call it. Some cipher you’ve got at, is it?"
"Yes. I think so. ‘Lothario’ is the address. The key is ‘third.’ Take every third word. ‘Case—gone—wrong—take—cover.’ To which I sent the answer: ‘Nothing — doing — meet — sweetbread—pounce—street—ten—or—biff!’ See?"
"I do not, sir," said Bell with decision.
"Oh, my dear fellow. But it’s quite simple. Some fellow was being warned that the case against the Squirrel had gone wrong and he’d better take cover. So I thought it would do good to answer in his name that there was nothing doing. He
must have a meeting at ten o'clock at the Sweetbread—that's the Ris de Veau, a little French restaurant—or biff—he'd blow up the whole concern.”

“'What's the idea, sir?''

The idea is that the case against the Squirrel was put up to cover the man who did the diamond burglaries. You know if you'd got the Squirrel convicted you wouldn't have looked for any one else.”

“It's a bit too clever for me, Mr. Fortune,” Bell said slowly.

“Yes. It's a gamble.”

“You don't know if it's anything to do with the cat burglaries?”

“No. Not yet. But I want you to come and dine with me at the Ris de Veau.”

Bell laughed. “Well, sir, I don't mind if I do. No harm in it. But it's all fancy.”

“No. Quite a nice dinner. Half past eight? Right. Don't tell anybody.”

“Not me, sir,” Bell chuckled. “I'd never hear the last of it.”

The Ris de Veau shows a little window like a shop on a narrow street in Soho. Within it is a place of holes and corners. Superintendent Bell, on the stroke of half past eight, found it noisy and bustling. A fat man with the whiskers of a French farce loomed round the piles of fruit on the counter and smiled at him and pointed to a table in a recess behind the door hidden from any man who came in till he was well inside.

There Mr. Fortune welcomed him. “I thought we wanted comfort, Bell. Cray fish soup, plain red mullet, their own particular sweetbread, which is luscious and an entre-côte. Anything in that against your principles?”

“You know all about a dinner, sir,” Bell grinned. “But it's not a place a crook would come to, to my mind.”

“You think not? Well, well. They keep a fair Corton. Fill the cup that clears today of past regrets and future fears. Don't you like olives? What a life!” He dissolved seriously of food. And they dined well and at length, and the company dwindled, but no anxious gentleman looking for a friend appeared.

When they had come to the peaches Bell began to fire off some heavy jokes. Nice quiet place to bring your lady friends, the Ris de Veau, but Lothario didn't seem to be coming along with blue eyes. Perhaps he wasn't much of a hand at cipher. Perhaps Mr. Fortune had rung up the wrong number. It was long after ten; no one remained at the tables but themselves and a couple of artists with model complete in the latest fashions of Chelsea. “How late are we staying, sir?” Bell grinned. “Looks to me Lothario's turned you down.”

“Have you got a man outside?” said Mr. Fortune quickly.

“No me. I don't draw blanks more than I can help. It's bad for discipline. If you don't mind my saying so, Mr. Fortune, this was a bit hopeful, this stunt. You see, you never knew you were on to the cat burglary case at all.”

Somewhere a clock struck eleven.

“Well, well,” said Mr. Fortune, and rose. “Thank you for a very pleasant evening.”

They went out to a quiet dark street and parted.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE HOSPITAL?

R. FORTUNE had gone some little way when a man crossed the street behind him. He became aware of it as a blow was aimed at his head. He went down on his face like a dead man.

There was a scurry of running feet. The still body was turned and lifted. “Go after him, you fool,” Mr. Fortune gasped. He was let fall to the pavement again and the feet fled away.

A police whistle screamed, the heavier feet of Superintendent Bell arrived. “Did they get you, sir?” he panted as he knelt, but Mr. Fortune lay silent. “My God!” Bell groaned and blew his whistle again and took the limp arm and fumbled for the pulse.

People were coming out of the houses, constables lumbered up.

The body was borne away in an ambulance. Bell went with it to the hospital, saw it carried in with respectful care, and turned to meet a brisk young doctor.

“It's Mr. Fortune, Mr. Reginald For-
tune. Been knocked on the head by a couple of crooks.”

“Some of ’em getting a bit of their own back?” that young man grinned.

“I’m counting on you to do your best, sir?” said Bell solemnly.

“Oh, we’ll do him proud.”

He bent professionally over the body and started. Mr. Fortune’s lips had whispered, “Get rid of the nurse.” That busy woman was given an errand which surprised her. Mr. Fortune sat up and smiled. “Yes, we have no concussion,” he said.

“Only a deuce of a bruise of the right shoulder blade. Sorry to bother you. But I want it given out Mr. Reginald Fortune was brought to the hospital with serious injuries. Only that and nothing more. If any newspaper chaps come asking questions just say that and look wise, what?”

“Can do, sir,” the young surgeon grinned.

“Now, Bell, if you’ll just telephone that to the newspapers our young friend’ll get me quietly out of the hospital.”

“I’m going to take you home, sir.”

“You can put me to bed if you like. After you’ve told our able and enterprising press.”

When they were driving away in a taxi: “You gave me a pretty start, Mr. Fortune,” Bell reproached him. “What’s the idea of lying low?”

“The same idea, same old idea. I want to know what’s coming next. Something rather recherché if it was worth while knocking me on the head first. Why did they want me out of action? The Squirrel case is broken down anyway. If they think I’m in hospital we’ll have the next move good and quick.”

“Do you know who hit you, sir?”

“No. No. I only knew he was there when he hit. I dropped as he swung, or I should have had it on the head. Only the end of the blow got me. Quite enough,” he wriggled uncomfortably. “Good heavy life preserver he used.”

“But there were two of them in it. One had you after you fell. Didn’t you get a look at him, sir?”

“Oh, that was Mordan. Silly ass. He ought to have caught the beggar.”

“Mordan? You’ve put him on the case? You don’t trust us much, sir.”

“Well, you know, I did think our friend Pargo wanted a little help. Here we are. Come in, Bell. Another little drink wouldn’t do you any harm.”

“Not me, sir. I’ve had enough, thank you.”

“Oh, my, Bell. You’re not cross with me?”

Superintendent Bell in a firm voice directed the taxi to Scotland Yard. “Well, well. Let me know what happens next,” said Mr. Fortune.

It came in the morning, it came while Mr. Fortune, eating his late breakfast, received a report of Inspector Mordan’s operations from the mouth of his chauffeur. The telephone rang. Bell was speaking. “How are you this morning, sir?”

“Sitting up and taking nourishment. Have you got anything?”

“Not about your business, sir. But it’s a funny thing, there was another cat burglary last night. Westington way. House of Mr. Maple Vansittart. The chap didn’t get away with it this time.”

“How’s that?” said Mr. Fortune quickly. “Had a fall, sir. Picked up dead in the back garden this morning.”

“Well, well,” said Mr. Fortune, and turned to his chauffeur. “They’ve found the fellow dead in the garden, Sam.”

“My oath!” Sam muttered.

“What’s that, sir?” the telephone asked.

“Now we know what was coming next, Bell. Anybody seen the corpse?”

“Local men say the chap broke his neck, sir. Pargo’s gone up to the mortuary. The divisional surgeon’s doing a post mortem.”

“What’s the matter with me?”

“Well, sir, you’re in the Piccadilly Hospital badly hurt.”

“Stick to that. But come round with a couple of hefty men.” Mr. Fortune hung up the receiver.

Superintendent Bell’s car drove up. Two large men packed beside the chauffeur gazed solemn surprise at Mr. Fortune.

“What are we doing now, sir?” said Bell.

“Superintendent Bell is goin’ to clear up a very nasty business.”
"Is he? You don’t mind my saying so, Mr. Fortune, but I do like to be trusted."

"Oh, Bell. Oh, my, Bell. I trusted you with everything last night. You could have given the whole show away. You’re coming out all right."

"Thank you very much, sir," Bell was ruffled. "I don’t want any compliments. But it beats me why you can’t talk plain."

"Well, do you know anything about Mr. Maple Vansittart?"

"Never heard of him before."

"No. You haven’t heard of him. Had Pargo?"

"He didn’t know the name at all."

Mr. Fortune laughed.

CHAPTER IX

A BLOW ON THE HEAD

The car stopped at the mortuary. Bell went in first and behind him Mr. Fortune. Just inside the doorway they met Inspector Pargo. "Hello, sir, you’ve come along?" he said briskly. "It’s what they told us. The surgeon says there’s no doubt—"

"Does he, though?" Mr. Fortune came round Bell’s shoulder.

Inspector Pargo stopped talking and stared at him.

"Yes. You didn’t mean me to see the body, did you?" Mr. Fortune said.

Inspector Pargo licked his lips. "The superintendent said you were in hospital, sir. Very glad you’re better, I’m sure. The divisional surgeon’s in there with the body. You’ll excuse me, sir, I have to get round to the house."

"No. Oh, no. You’ve got another engagement. Don’t let him break away, Bell."

"You stand fast," Bell took a grip of the man. "What is all this, Mr. Fortune?"

"Oh, Pargo’s the man that knocked me out last night."

"Good Lord. Do you charge him, sir?"

"That’ll do to go on with. There’ll be other charges all right."

"I don’t know what you mean," Pargo stammered. "I never—"

"Why talk?" said Mr. Fortune. "Mordan saw you. He saw you somewhere else, too. Ah, look after his hands, Bell."

Bell wrenched a pistol out of the man’s pocket. "Like that, eh, Pargo?" he said. "You fool." He nodded to the two large men in the doorway and Inspector Pargo was marched out. "My God, Mr. Fortune, what is this game?"

"Not a nice man, Bell. Not at all a nice man, but he isn’t the devil. Well, well. Lock him up and come back. I’ll go and have a look at the poor beggar who paid his bill last night."

The divisional surgeon was surprised and not pleased to see Mr. Fortune. There was nothing in the case. The man’s neck was broken. Obviously by a fall. He had been found lying in the garden of a four-story house. Some burglar’s tools on him. Scratches on one of the upper windows and the drain pipe. Quite clear what happened. Fellow climbed up, slipped, fell and was killed.

"Yes, very lucid," Mr. Fortune murmured, bent over the body. "Very neat. But there’s no injury anywhere except on the head. That’s very unusual. And there—and there there’s too many."

"I don’t understand you, Mr. Fortune."

"Oh, but it’s quite simple. He didn’t have a fall. He was dead before he was put in the garden. Just have a look at those bruises on the head again. Good-by."

Bell was waiting outside. "What now, sir?"

"Last act. Mr. Maple Vansittart at home."

"Why, that’s the gentleman that was burgled. What’s he got to do with it?"

"Oh, Bell!" said Mr. Fortune sadly. "Oh, my, Bell!" He wasn’t burgled. There wasn’t a burglary. That fellow wasn’t killed by a fall. He was stunned by a life preserver. Same like I ought to have been. Then they broke his neck bending his head back and back."

"They? Who do you mean they, sir?"

"Well, you’d better ask Mr. Maple Vansittart. That poor devil went into his house last night. Mordan’s men saw him. But he didn’t come out again. Not by the front door."
"But who is he, sir?"

"I'm afraid he's Lothario," said Mr. Fortune gravely. "I'm sorry. Not a nice case, Bell. Come on."

The house of Mr. Maple Vansittart stood in a quiet suburban byway, one of a row of plain Victorian dignity embowered in gardens. A man opened the door, a plump man, the same size all the way down, on top, a dark shiny face with no features to speak of. "I am a police officer, Superintendent Bell. I've come to see Mr. Maple Vansittart."

The man stared a moment. "This way, sir," he said, and showed them into a room which looked out on the street. "I will tell Mr. Vansittart," and he shut the door.

By the door Mr. Fortune waited listening. "What's the matter, sir?" Bell whispered.

"Well, I think we've found the Slug," Mr. Fortune smiled. "And I think Mr. Maple Vansittart doesn't live downstairs." He opened the door and went into the passage. Another door below opened and shut. Mr. Fortune led the way to the back room. From the window he saw the Slug running across the garden. Bell hoisted himself over the sill.

"Don't worry. The back door's watched," said Mr. Fortune and, as the Slug opened it, he shouted: "Take that man." The Slug arrived into the competent arms of Inspector Mordan's men.

"Yes. Mr. Maple Vansittart's being coy. I'm afraid we'll have to look for him by hand." He glanced round the room, a place of fine taste and many treasures, Empire furniture, a Chinese carpet, a table of rococo jewels, a Fragonard child, a Boucher nymph. "He's done himself well," said Mr. Fortune sadly. "The beast."

CHAPTER X

"HOW CAN HE PAY?"

Bell was not attending. Bell was out at the front door. One of his men was to watch it, the other go through the house with him. On their heels Mr. Fortune followed. It was a wonderful house. Mr. Maple Vansittart guided a catholic love of beautiful things by a sense of harmony.

Every room had treasures of furniture and he set them off by pictures and china and fabrics that made the best of them. With reverent and covetous eyes Mr. Fortune wandered about the room with its bed of Louis Quinze and its Greuze and its tapestries and its beautiful clock. But Mr. Maple Vansittart was not there. He was in none of his charming rooms.

They came to the top landing. Bell's man swung himself up into the cistern loft. There was a shout, a scuffle; he appeared dragging after him a little man all dust and cobwebs, a little man who panted and shook as he was lowered by the scruff of his neck into Bell's arms.

"Yes. You would be like that," said Mr. Fortune.

The little man brushed at himself and revealed under dirt and smears, a neat little gray beard and mustache, a velvet coat and flowing tie.

"Mr. Maple Vansittart, I presume?" Bell asked.

"I don't understand you," his teeth chattered, "let me go, please." He made futile efforts to get away from Bell's grip.

"Stand still. I'm Superintendent Bell. You're under arrest."

"Me? Oh, no, no! You don't mean that! Why should I be arrested?"

"For murder," said Mr. Fortune.

"But that's absurd—"

"Better hold your tongue," Bell broke in. "Anything you say will be used against you. You know that."

"My dear sir, you don't understand. It wasn't me. It was Pargo."

"You little rat," said Bell.

Mr. Maple Vansittart shrank and his knees were loosened. It was necessary to carry him, a twittering, miserable creature, to the car.

"And that thing was the brains of it all," Mr. Fortune said wearily. "Well, well. A queer world."

"How do you mean the brains of it, sir?"

"Oh, don't you see now? He's the managing director of your cat burglaries. He found out where the stuff was and arranged
the operations and disposed of the swag. I don’t know when he made contact with Pargo, but I dare say you’ll find that going through his pass book. That simplified things, of course, but it wasn’t enough. If you had recurring crops of cat burglaries and nobody was ever caught, there’d be nasty questions for Pargo.”

“There have been, sir. Mr. Lomas made a bit of a fuss over those cases in the spring.”

“Yes. That’s why Pargo had to catch a man when they started business again. So our friend the Slug was put on to the Squirrel. Their error. They ought to have found out the fellow had a game arm. But they’d have brought it off all right if I hadn’t happened to know Mrs. Davis.

“Pargo worked it quite neatly. If the Squirrel had been convicted everybody would have believed he was the fellow who did those other burglaries. But that’s what struck me. It was all so nice for Inspector Pargo. And I put old Mordan on to watch him and found he was running off to Mr. Maple Vansittart. Then came the advertisement.”

“I knew Pargo had been to the advertisement office of the Daily Echo. Nothing in that, of course. But it was interesting. So I looked for anything unusual and I found Lothario third and put in my little answer.” He looked at Bell gravely. “I’m sorry. You see how it was. They were warning the poor chap who did the burglaries to run for it when he thought he was safe.

“Then he saw my advertisement, too, and was more rattled. He came up to Vansittart to know what it all meant. Pargo was here, too. They were all scared. I suppose the burglar turned rusty and they laid him out. Then somebody had a brain wave.

“They had him stunned on their hands, they didn’t know what was coming next, why not break his neck and make him into a cat burglar that had a fall in his business? If they had any luck left that’d clear it all up. Then Pargo hustled off to the Ris de Veau to see who was on the job there and he saw me.

“He knew if I had a look at his corpse the game was up. If he could keep me out of it, he would be able to work the divisional surgeon all right. So he had a smack at my head. The last chance. And he thought he’d brought it off. I wonder how he felt when he saw me this morning?”

“Like a lost soul,” said Bell.

“Yes, I think so,” Mr. Fortune said gravely. They passed slowly down the stairs of that silent house. By the room of the Louis Quinze bed and the tapestries of pink and gold, Mr. Fortune stopped walking.

“Charming, isn’t it charming? And Mr. Maple Vansittart was sleeping there while poor devils were doing burglaries and Pargo was selling his soul to keep him nice and comfortable. A queer world, Bell.”

“He’ll pay,” said Bell fiercely.

“Oh, my aunt!” Mr. Fortune murmured.

“How can he pay?”

**THE END**

Agatha Christie offers “The Soul of the Croupier,” next week
THE MAN WITH THE GOUT

By Henry Leverage

BIG SCAR STARED AT HIS TORMENTOR THROUGH RED-RIMMED EYES. "GO ON," HE SAID, DRUNKENLY. "BUST TH' LOWER ONE; I CAN STAND IT"

WHEN Big Scar, Oregon boot and all, hurled himself through the plate glass of a Pullman bound to a penitentiary city from which he had escaped, he expected to find in soft earth or a ditch by the side of the railroad track.

He struck, instead, neat mounds of ballast of the size that prisoners say are little rocks made out of big ones. He rolled over and over, twisted, bunched himself, flailed with his arms, ground his unshaven face upon more rocks and brought up finally against mile post 318 on the Pacific and Western Railroad. He grasped this mile post like a drowning man a straw. His seamed and bleeding features assumed some semblance to a human being. He leered at the rear lights of the disappearing train.

It was not every trip that a felon got away from two deputies—noted for their foresight. The Oregon boot which would have stopped most men, was an iron sleeve, riveted at ankle and knee of the left leg. It weighed seventy pounds.

Leg irons, handcuffs, wrist chains, were thought unnecessary when a prisoner was disgraced with a boot made of cast iron. Big Scar made sure the train went on. Then he sat down and examined the contrivance.

Some of his history filled police blotters; the American Bankers' Protective Association had settled him in the penitentiary for twenty years; he was known in yegg records, and hobo camps, as a burly giant—defaced with a scar from ear to chin—who would stop at nothing short of murder. He had graduated from a hobo kid—who worked the main stems for handouts at his superiors' orders—until an inherent trait brought him in touch with dynamiters and
soup men, who taught him how to use a can-opener or a few drops of nitro-glycerin on safes marked “burglar proof.”

His get-away from the deputies, returning him to prison, was the culmination of a desperate life. He realized instinctively that the search for him would be a State-wide affair, with all the odds in favor of the law.

The Oregon boot, impossible to conceal, would mark him like a blackbird in a flock of white pigeons. The baffled deputies were sure to return, by auto or another train. Already the telegraph wires might be sizzling with news of his get-away. Big Scar knew what would happen to him if he was recaptured.

He cast a glance in a wide circle for some aid in his difficulty. A deserted road ran parallel to the Pacific Western. It was after midnight, no autos were likely to be passing at that hour. Big Scar would have liked to stop one and tell the driver a thing or two. He considered the countryside. A faint light shone in a farmhouse window. An alarm from the farmer, or the farmer’s dog, would show the deputies which way he had gone. No farmer possessed the tools to remove an Oregon boot—particularly when the leg had swollen tight against the patent locks.

The outlines of a freight car, standing on a siding, decided Big Scar. He hobbled toward it and lifted his eyes over the side door sill.

His cell-sharpened vision for dark places came to his aid. A hobo lay sprawled with a newspaper over his features and another paper for a blanket. Big Scar lifted himself to the floor of the car; he crawled to the hobo and prodded him in the ribs, none too gently. “Sit up!” he snarled.

A bald head, the fuzzy outlines of a weak chin, and puffed cheeks came into Big Scar’s view. The hobo yawned, then stared at the intruder.

“Be you a railroad shack?” he questioned.

A shack, Big Scar knew, was a brakeman. “Not that you could notice!” he retorted. “I ain’t a railroad tec, either, bo. I’m a tourist with th’ gout—an’ if y’u don’t want your throat slit y’u’ve got to help me cure this leg o’ mine.”

The hobo’s eyes lighted on the Oregon boot. He drew away from Big Scar, rustling the newspapers until he was crouched in the farthest corner of the car. “Th’ iron gout,” rasped Big Scar. “What I need to cut it is—a couple o’ hacksaws, a bastard file, an’ maybe a locksmith. This is a bad case of gout. Got it from livin’ too high on other people’s money. Are y’u goin’ to help me—or d’y’u want me to slit your throat?”

Nollie Matches, otherwise known as Kid Fresno, gained a weakling’s courage. He recognized in Big Scar one of those rare hoboes who possessed enterprise. Why else the Oregon boot?

“There ain’t no files or hacksaws around this section,” he offered. “I’ve walked every tie from here to th’ coast. You’re in luck, though, friend. Take it from me, you are—if you got that boot the way I think you got it. You’re in luck.”

“How so, bo?”

“There’s an extra, West, going to stop an’ pick this car up pretty soon. I can fix the shack for a buck, for the two of us, to ride the division. I don’t know why they put that boot on you—but I guess you don’t want to stay around here.”


The bald-headed hobo struck a match.

“Sure!” grinned Big Scar, relieved. “Y’u was in th’ same cooler I was—up at Truckee. Remember th’ Kangaroo Court we held on those ice cutters they threw in for bein’ drunk? Y’u was judge of th’ court. Y’u had a gift of gab, an’ y’u was ingenious. Ain’t you called Sparks or Matches?”

“Nollie Matches is my moniker.”

“Sure as shootin’!” Big Scar hesitated. “Well, bo,” he went on, “th’ damn police are hot after me. Sure about that extra, West, for if y’u ain’t—for if y’u ain’t—I’ll slit y’u’re throat before I’d let y’u squeal on me.”

Big Scar had no knife or weapon. The deputies made sure of that before they started for the penitentiary.

“It’s due now,” said Nollie Matches. The hobo went to the open side door and peered
out. "Here it comes," he announced. "It's takin' the sidin' down by those cattle pens. Lay low behind me; slip me a buck and I'll fix the shack. He'll be along with a lantern to get the car number."

Big Scar got up, steadied himself against the car's side, and prodded Nollie Matches for a second time since their meeting. "You slip him th' buck, bo. Y'got it, 'cause y'u always had kale—even in Truckee jail. Tell him we want to be let off at Snowshoe Junction. I've got an idea—a friend there who'll help us both out. My friend's a moll. She lives in th' biggest house in town. I can plant there—until I get rid of th'—gout."

Nollie Matches believed Big Scar was sincere. He interviewed the brakeman, who took the bill offered and closed the side door of the car.

"See if he sealed it," throatened Big Scar cautiously. "I don't want to get caught in any trap."

"Nope!" announced Nollie Matches, after investigation.

Big Scar staggered when the locomotive bumped into the car; another crash came when the car was attached to the train. A comforting whistle sounded; the coupling links were taken up; the extra, West, climbed the grade toward far-off Snowshoe Junction.

"It's dark in here," said the yegg. "Roll me a cigarette an' pass it over this way. Light it. I want to make sure of y'ur face. I'm desperate, I am, an' can't afford to take any chances."

"Does the boot pinch?" queried Nollie Matches after Big Scar's satisfactory scrutiny.

"Th' damn deputies!" rumbled Big Scar in answer.

"Can I help it any? Maybe I can loosen it some."

"Keep your hands away, bo. Them what put it on said a sledge hammer would have to get it off. Nice way to treat an old-timer like me."

Nollie Matches began to count the freight's stops. He opened the door each time and looked out through a narrow crack. "French Lake," he announced to Big Scar. "This is Creston. Now we're goin' up through th' snow sheds. Now we're gettin' in th' yard limits of Redwood. That's the power station up there. Snowshoe Junction, you said? It's next stop. Can you get off—without hurting your leg? We don't wanta go clear up to th' station."

"Bo," said Big Scar, "I got off th' Limited when it was hittin' fifty miles an hour. Leave it to me—say when."

"When!" shouted Nollie Matches, throwing open the car door.

Big Scar dropped after the bald-headed hobo. They struck gravel beneath the spout of a water tank. No one was around or about.

The hobbled yegg was in a familiar locality; he had paid a visit to Snowshoe Junction once before, at the suggestion of a gay cat, and gotten away with a satisfactory touch. He recalled any number of hiding places above the junction, in deserted prospect holes—the echo of a mining boom. Toward one of these caves he urged Nollie Matches.

"Let me lean on you, bo?" he requested, with a heavy hand. "This gout ain't no joke. That's it." Big Scar bent the hobo almost to the ground with the weight of his left hand. "This way," insisted Big Scar. "Through them rocks, now up th' hill, now, before it cracks dawn, we'll plant in a wood-lined, sanitary hidin' place where no one comes, 'cept eagles an' buzzards."

Nollie Matches threw himself upon the bottom timbers of the tunnel, gasping: "You broke me shoulder."

"Not exactly, bo. It'll get straight—if y'u wait long enough. We ought to have some arnica. I need it for my leg. It's swelled twice its size—around them locks. D'y'u think y'u could mooch to town an' get some liniment an'—hol' on, bo, y'u better get some other things? Files an' hack-saws ain't no use now. Th' swellin's got to go down before I begin to operate."

"What other things?" Nollie Matches queried.

"This idea of mine," mumbled Big Scar. "Th' particular reason I wanted off that rattler at Snowshoe Junction calls for other things. There's a drug store down in th' burg—near th' railroad station. Maybe its open all night. Have you got a shrieve?"
Nollie produced a jackknife.

"Then we won't need to get one, bo. We need arnica, about four bits' worth; we need salve. Get th' kind that smells like a hospital. Maybe y'u better get iodoform. An', bo, get about two pounds of cotton an' 'bout fifty feet of gauze for bandages. I'm goin' to fix this Oregon boot so it won't be noticeable."

"Them things 'll cost two or three bucks," Nollie protested.

"Wot of it! I'm goin' to make y'u rich. Didn't I say there was a moll in this burg who has tons of kale? She has—or ought to have. I got somethin' on her, bo. Y'u help fix me up like an' old-timer with th' gout an' a crutch—you can whittle out of a saplin'—an' we'll pay her a visit 'bout noon. Y'u be my attendant. I'll do th' talkin' an' y'u look wise. We're goin' to plant in a soft thing—if ever there was one."

"Blackmail?" Nollie questioned.

"Run along, bo. Get them things. For if y'u don't—if y'u don't—I'll take that shieve of yourn an' cut y'ure throat. D'y'u think a man with an Oregon boot would stop at a little thing like slittin' a throat?"

Big Scar's threat was bloodcurdling. It came from a hairy, husky chest and drove Nollie Matches scrambling down the foothill. He returned, an hour later, with a well wrapped package under his arm.

II

COST three bucks an' two bits," he protested to Big Scar. "I told th' drug clerk I wanted it for a lumber camp crew. He gave me a pint of alcohol for another buck. I found a quart bottle—so we can mix some white line an' drink to—"

"To th' gout!" grinned Big Scar. "Them deputies thought they had me when they pinched up th' locks of th' boot. We'll show 'em, won't we, bo?"

Big Scar added, after a swig at th' white line:

"Toss me th' bundle, bo, an' I'll bandage up my leg till it looks like a millionaire's down at Hot Springs."

The couple who left the mining tunnel shortly after the western sun reached zenith resembled a burly giant, injured in an explosion, and a half-witted attendant, whose clothes, garnered from back yards, hung like black bags about his limbs. Big Scar used a crutch in getting down the hill. This crutch was heavy enough to club a man to death. His bandaged leg reeked of iodoform. He gritted his teeth each step he took.

"We'll mooch by that back trail," he told Nollie Matches. "Keep out of sight of th' railroad station—there may be a town bull there. Lead th' way past that barn. Th' house we're goin' to visit is th' third one up that stem. Th' big one with th' awnings an' th' fountain on th' lawn. I've had it described to me more than wunst."

"Thought you knew the dame," stammered Nollie Matches.

"Close y'ur trap! Who's directin' things—y'u or me?"

A dog came leaping over the lawn when Big Scar opened the front gate. He raised his crutch. The animal crouched out of reach; it showed its teeth.

"Go on up an' push th' button," Big Scar told Nollie Matches. "Tell anybody who answers it to call th' dog off me. Tell 'em I want a word in private with Miss Ivy Penrose—that's th' dame's name. Don't give her mine—cause I'm layin' low with a secret."

Nollie Matches avoided the dog; he rang the bell; a gray-haired woman came to the screen door and held it open. "No beggars allowed," Big Scar heard her say to Nollie. "If you're actually hungry—you can go around to the back door. We never turn any deserving man away from here."

"Y'u won't turn me away, either," Big Scar threatened, under breath. He hobbled straight for the dog. It avoided him—just out of crutch reach. He stomped up the porch steps and touched his hat with a finger.

"This man of mine, lady," he explained, "isn't a beggar. Neither am I. I'm a minin' man. I made a fortune in a gold mine—up in th' mountains." Big Scar pointed at the highest peak in sight. He lowered his crutch. "I got th' gout," he resumed, "from—improper food. I've come to call on Miss Ivy Penrose. I want to tell her somethin' important."
A girl took the old lady’s place in the doorway. “I’m Miss Ivy Penrose,” she said to Big Scar. “Who are you?”

Nollie Matches saw Big Scar try to soften his unshaven features. The yegg rested his weight on the crutch. His bandaged leg was crooked until the great, club-shaped foot was off the porch planks. He leaned close to the girl—so close his bristles almost touched her cheek. Nollie noticed Big Scar’s lips moving in a husky whisper. The girl suddenly clasped both hands to her breast. She formed a word without giving it voice.

“Yes,” muttered Big Scar aloud. “That’s who I am—come to see you—after all those years. Little Ivy.” The big yegg tried to put pathos in his tone. Nollie sensed the falseness of the note. He remembered the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Big Scar resembled a timber wolf, if ever a man was like one.

The girl backed into the house. The screen door closed softly.

“Sit down,” Big Scar told Nollie Matches. “Take that chair; give me th’ big one—with th’ cushion. Move it in th’ shade—where I can watch th’ fountain. I ain’t no fortune teller, bo, but I just guess that little dame will be out here with a plate of cake an’ wine pretty soon. An’ th’ old dame don’t know what I told th’ young one.”

“What did you tell her, pal?”

“Enough to keep me in smokes an’ eats till th’ rumble dies out about me. Enough, bo, to give me kale for a get-away an’ time to cure this gout.”

“Did you threaten her?”

“Not exactly. Just keep y’r trap shut an’ watch how she acts. Pretend I’m hirin’ y’u at five bucks a day—an’ y’u don’t know nothin’ about me.”

“What’s going to be your new monicker?” Nollie shifted in his chair.

“Jus’ call me Mr. Guffman. I don’t want th’ old dame to get wise.”

“Wise to what, pal?”

“What’s between th’ moll an’ me?” Big Scar lifted his bandaged leg and laid it on a porch stool. “Get me another cushion,” he ordered. “Put it under me heel. I like this place.”

Nollie Matches resented being kept out of the secret of Big Scar’s hold on Ivy Penrose. The hobo scratched his bald head in perplexity. How had a man with an Oregon boot fallen into fortune?

He gave up questioning himself and stared over the porch rail to where green foot-hills rose and became rugged mountains, some tipped with snow. The vista, with the railroad cutting a V in the range, was one of peace and tranquillity. The odor of cooking came to Nollie’s nostrils; he distended them. Big Scar winked sagely.

“We’ll have good scoffins from now on,” said the yegg. “That old dame is makin’ a chicken dinner for us. Guess th’ kid is helpin’ her.”


“Won’t you eat?” she queried tearfully. “You must be hungry after that long journey, Mr.—Mr.—”

“Call me Guffman, around here,” said Big Scar. “Come on, Nollie—here’s where we fill up.”

That evening Big Scar and Nollie took the breeze from the cool of a side porch, screened with wire-netting. “Th’ kid fixed it up here for us,” the yegg explained, after resting his leg on two cushions, “cause nobody can look in from th’ outside. What people don’t know—won’t hurt ’em any, at all.”

“I heard her doing a lot of weepin’ this afternoon.”

Big Scar puffed at a Havana cigar; he held it out, then let it recoil between his unshaven lips.

“She needn’t have done that, Nollie. I ain’t goin’ to eat her. I jus’ told her I had to have some kale—two thousand bucks—then I’d blow th’ State.”

Nollie Matches was impressed and interested.

“One for you an’ one for me, pal?”

“Gawan!” Big Scar shot a savage glance at the hobo. “Y’u’ll be took care of. But y’u don’t cop a thousand bucks—this trip. What have y’u done to earn a grand-note? I earned whatever I get. Look at me leg. Pipe it, Nollie.”

“It looks swollen, up above.”
"'Tis. Ain't I sufferin'? I need medical attention—I do."

"Is all that kale for medical attention?"

"Sure! Sisst. Here's th' kid."

Ivy came around the house; she wore a sun-bonnet and carried a small black brief-case. Big Scar rose, reached for his crutch, and went out of earshot of the listening Nollie. He talked with the girl, through the screen. She opened the screen door and handed him an envelope. The door closed as he ripped the envelope open. His features underwent a savage change. "Is that all?" he rumbled. "Where's th' rest? Y'uo know what I told y'u?"

Nollie expected an explosion.

"They're going to give me the rest by noon to-morrow," said Ivy. "It was too late for the bank to fix up the loan—but the president gave me that."

"Chicken feed," grumbled Big Scar. "All right," he added, "see that y'u get th' rest."

"How much?" asked Nollie when Ivy went around the house.

"Only a hundred an' ten." Big Scar thumbed the bills. He hobbled back to his chair and adjusted his leg. "A hundred an' ten ain't to be sneezed at," he commented, "but this gout of mine is goin' to be expensive. That kid has got to mortgage this house to th' limit—before I blow from here."

Again Nollie wondered what Big Scar had on Ivy Penrose.

"Is th' old dame related to th' girl?" he asked.

"Naw! Th' old dame's just a kinda servant."

"She's a swell cook."

"She don't know nothin' but doin' that an' keepin' house. Th' kid is alone in th' world. I come to be her protector." 

Nollie Matches gulped his next question and remained silent. He followed Big Scar up to a bedroom and watched the yegg sprawl across a four-poster bed, brought west by the '49ers.

"Put some of that arnica on me leg!" Big Scar ordered. "Don't burn me—for if y'u do—for if y'u do—"

Big Scar was snoring before Nollie finished rebandaging a leg that resembled a gigantic sore thumb thrust out over the bed. The hobo curled himself on a rag carpet and went to sleep. He woke before dawn; the yegg sat on the edge of the bed; a light came through a tilted transom, that was sufficient to illuminate doubt on Big Scar's features.

"I ain't so sure," he mumbled. "Nollie, I ain't so sure. Better mooch out in th' hall an' see if anythin' is stirrin'. Take y'ur kicks off—so nobody'll hear y'u. I gotta hunch."

Nollie returned, pulling the door shut easily.

"Nothin' around, pal. I goes into th' old dame's room; she's kippin' sweet—with th' covers over her head. Th' kid's—"

"Does she sleep with th' dame?"

"No, pal. She's in another room. She was awake, but she didn't hear me. I guess she was sayin' her prayers—'cause she was kneelin' by th' bed. I heard her say somethin' about her father. She wished he was here—or she wished he wasn't here."

"Can that!" growled Big Scar. "What's it got to do with us? Sure y'u looked downstairs? Where's th' dog? Did y'u look outside? Maybe there's a town bull watchin' this house. That kid went to th' president of th' bank to-day, or yesterday. He's a wise bird—they all are. She got money from him. Maybe he did a little brain work. She wants more money. He'll be wonderin' what struck her. She's lived in this burg fifteen years without pullin' anythin' like that. It ain't a big town, Nollie. Somebody may have seen us sittin' on th' porch."

"D'you think they'll pinch you?"

"Not if I can help it." Big Scar limped to a window, slowly separated the curtains and scowled through them. "Nothin' stirrin'," he announced. "That stem looks dead—but m' hunch is workin'. Maybe I need a drink. Th' damn gout!"

The yegg examined his left foot. "If I had about a quart of white-line, Nollie, all to wunst, I might stand to be operated on by a sledge hammer. Maybe I c'ud put a drop or two of soup in th' locks an' blow them open. I'm gettin' tired of wearin' this boot."

A wind from over the range whined
around the house's eaves. Big Scar listened with one huge ear cocked.

III

"NOLLIE," he said huskily, "there was that shack y'u gave th' buck to—for lettin' us ride th' division. He must have heard about me gettin' away from th' deputies. He could put two an' two together. It stands to reason I went West—I couldn't have gone East an' got away. They didn't find trace of me at Mile Post No. 318, where I jumped off th' Limited. I'm tellin' y'u this 'cause I better beat it from here while th' goin' is good. Ain't there likely to be a rumble from that shack who took y'ur buck at th' sidin' where I escaped? Sure, an' he knows we got off th' rattler near this burg. Come on, let's blow!"

"How about the two thousand, pal?"

"Maybe I'll send for it—but I want out of here."

Big Scar stomped over the creaking planks of the hall, down the stairs and out on the front porch. A bright moon was rising, throwing shadows from the irrigated trees. A train whistled for Snowshoe Junction.

"I'd like to make that," said the yegg to Nollie, "but I got to be operated on first, before I can hop a rattler. We'll plant in th' mining tunnel for safety. I don't feel right under a roof. I couldn't breath th' way I wanted to in that bed. An' what to hell was that kid prayin' for?"

"Something about her father, pal."

"Maybe she turned me up—an' was sorry over it. Y'u can't trust a moll."

The prospector's tunnel was aglow with daylight when Big Scar's brain hit on a plan. He reached over and shook Nollie's nearest shoulder. "Rise an' shine!" he ordered. "Pry y'ur weepers open an' listen to me. Here's fifty bucks. Beat it down to that house by th' side of th' blacksmith's shop. I turned that shop off once when I wanted tools for a job near here. There's plenty of tools there—th' kind of instruments I need for an operation. I ain't goin' to trust y'u to do it, neither."

"Y'u wouldn't know a pair of pliers from a pinch-bar. Tell that blacksmith, in th' house, he's wanted. Offer him fifty bucks. Tell him a miner's got caught in a mine. Don't let him know where he's goin' till y'u get him out of town. Bring him to me—I'll do th' talkin' after that."

"What do I get out of the kale you got from the dame?" Nollie's attempt at punks was squashed. Big Scar shoved him from the tunnel. "Beat it, bo! Y'u'll get y'urs! Bring that blacksmith—with tools. Files, a brace an' drills, anythin' that'll pry open this boot. Got that?"

"Y—es."

"An', bo, before y'u wake th' blacksmith up—stop at that all-night drug store an' get another pint of alcohol. I'll need a bracer, I will, when th' doctor gets busy on me leg."

Nollie was almost out of earshot when Big Scar sent after him a final demand: "Bring back a lead pencil with y'u, bo. An' an envelope an' some writing paper."

"Anything else?"

"No! Blow!"

Big Scar's instructions to the blacksmith that Nollie brought up the hill to the tunnel were delivered in a pleading tone, like a man who wanted a favor done. "First we'll drink up," he said. "Nollie, mix th' drinks. Next, I'm a poor miner who got his foot caught in a trap—a bear trap. I'm goin' to take off these bandages. Set y'ur tools down there. Don't try to beat it away—when y'u see what I'm goin' to show y'u. 'Cause y'u came up here for fifty bucks an' y'u've got to earn it."

The blacksmith had a poverty-stricken look. He dropped his bag of tools and kept one hand tightly clutched around a roll of green bills.

"Since th' automobiles put th' horses an' stage-coaches out of business," suggested Big Scar shrewdly, "th' pickin's not so good, eh?"

"Can't say it is—but I get along." The smith's eyes began to widen when Big Scar exposed the Oregon boot. "Jus' stand there!" the yegg threatened. "My friend, who brought y'u, has a gun. He's tryin' to help me out. D'y'u see this boot? It's a souvenir. Can y'u break them locks without breakin' me leg?"
The blacksmith recoiled.
"None of that!" snarled Big Scar. "Y'u took m' money—now do y'ur job. Nollie, give him that drink—an' keep him covered while he's workin'."

It took a half hour of filing, prying, drilling and expanding before the sweating smith opened the uppermost lock. Big Scar stared at his tormentor through red-rimmed eyes. "Go on," he said drunkenly. "Bust th' lower one. I can stand it. Next time I want any of these things taken off—I'll send for a real mechanic. Y'u may be all right on a horse—but y'ure hell on a human man."

Nollie, standing at the entrance of the tunnel, heard the boot drop from Big Scar's leg, finally. The yegg got up and staggered around, in pain. He touched his toes to the timber and tried to walk. "Give me m' crutch! M' leg is full of needles."

The blacksmith wiped blood from his hands. He gathered up his tools. "See here, bo," Big Scar said to him, "me an' me friend here are goin' to let y' go to y'ur shop an' go to work. I had an idea I'd tie y' up with those bandages—so to hold y' for awhile. Y'u don't look like a man given to talkin'. I know them kind."

"It's none of my business how you got that thing on your leg."

"Right!" declared Big Scar. "Y'ur business was to get it off. Me gang will burn y'ur shop an' set fire to y'ur house—while y'ure sleepin'—if y'ever tell what y' did this mornin'. We'll watch y' an' see if y' squeal."

The curdling threat sent the blacksmith swiftly downhill.

"He may think it over," said Big Scar, "an' maybe there's a reward notice for me posted at th' depot. Gimme th' pencil an' paper, Nollie. Or y' do better scratch a word or two to that kid. Y' can leave it at th' house when we're passin' out of th' town. I ain't goin' to wait for that bank president to shell out two thousand to th' kid. He's had all night to think it over. An' they do a lot of thinkin', when it comes to small-town money—those birds do. I figure this burg will be too hot for me—around about noon. I got away from th' bulls when I only had one leg—I guess I can do it again with two."

"What shall I say in th' scratch?" queried Nollie Matches. "What do I get out of the sixty that's left?"

"We'll split fifty-fifty. Y' stuck to me, tighter than that boot."

"What'll I say in the note to her?"

Big Scar upended the bottle and wiped his heavy lips with the back of his hand.

"Tell her it ain't true that I'm th' father she never saw. Tell her her old dad is still in th' penitentiary—where he's doin' it all. That's life! Scratch her a word or two, Nollie, 'bout me bein' her father's cellmate at th' Big House with th' bars. Bein' cellmates, as it were, I heard all about her, an' where she lived an' her name, etc. Bein' took with th' gout, I jus' blew in for some change—an' blew away again."

"Tell her that Convict No. 86317 was well, last I saw him. That's her old man. Y' can put th' rest on y'urself, bo. Don't tell her I escaped an' came to Snowshoe Junction for blackmail. When I need money I'll get it out of a strong-box, not from a kid whose father's doin' time. Eh, Nollie?"

"Sure, pal."

"Well, scratch th' note an' we'll blow. I hear a whistle, Nollie. There's an extra goin' West."

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Big Scar will appear soon in "The New Warden"
He swung his banjo and brought it down with a crash

THE JOKER

By Edgar Wallace

STUPENDOUS AND APPALLING ACTS THAT BAFFLED ALL LONDON FAILED TO AMUSE ANY ONE BUT THE SPLENDID HARLOW, MYSTERY MAN

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

STRATFORD HARLOW, an eccentric London multimillionaire of dubious reputation, has a clandestine meeting with Arthur Ingle, revolutionary and actor, following Ingle’s release from prison for fraudulent acts. Later Mrs. Gibbins, Ingle’s charwoman, is found dead, near her an unmailed letter written by Ingles to Harlow. Detective Inspector Jim Carlton and his aid, Elk, are working on the case. Ingle’s niece, Aileen Rivers, in love with Carlton, showed him a scrap of

Continued at bottom of following page

CHAPTER XXXIII

BITES THE FEEDING HAND

R. ELLENBURY had his home in a large, gaunt house between Norwood and Anerley. It had been ugly even in the days when square, box-shaped dwellings testified to the strange mentality of the Victorian architects and stucco was regarded as an effective and artistic method of covering bad brickwork.

It was in shape a cube, from the low center of which, on the side facing the road, ran a long flight of stone steps confined within a plaster balustrade. It had oblong windows set at regular intervals on three sides, and was a mansion to which even Venetian blinds lent an air of distinction.

Royalton House stood squarely in the center of two acres of land, and could

This story began in FLYNN’S WEEKLY for October 23

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boast a rosary, a croquet lawn, a kitchen garden, a rustic summerhouse and a dribbling fountain. Scattered about the grounds there were a number of indecent statues representing famous figures of mythology—these had been purchased cheaply from a local exhibition many years before at a great weeding-out of those gods chiseled with such anatomical faithfulness that they constituted an offense to the eye of the young person.

In such moments of leisure as his activities allowed, Mr. Ellenbury occupied a room gloomily papered, which was variously styled "The Study" and "The Master's Room" by his wife and his domestic staff. It was a high and ill-proportioned apartment, cold and cheerless in the winter, and was overcrowded with furniture that did not fit.

Round tables and top-heavy secretaries; a horsehair sofa that ran askew across one corner of the room, where it could only be reached by removing a heavy card table; there was space for Mr. Ellenbury to sit and little more.

On this December evening he sat at his rollop desk, biting his nails thoughtfully, a look of deep concern on his pinched face. He was a man who had grown prematurely old in a lifelong struggle to make his resources keep pace with ambition.

He was a lover of horses; not other people's horses that show themselves occasionally on a race track, but horses to keep in one's own stable, horses that looked over the half door at the sound of a familiar voice; horses that might be decked in shiny harness shoulder to shoulder and draw a glittering phaëton along a country road.

All men have their dreams; for twenty years Mr. Ellenbury's pet dream was to drive into the arena of a horse show behind two spanning bays with nodding heads and high knee action, and to drive out again amid the plaudits of the multitude with the ribbons of the first prize streaming from the bridles of his team. Many a man has dreamed less worthily.

He had had bad luck with his horses, bad luck with his family. Mrs. Ellenbury was an invalid. No doctor had ever discovered the nature of her illness. One West End specialist had seen her and had advised the calling in of another.

The second specialist had suggested that it would be advisable to see a third. The third had come and asked questions. Had any of her parents suffered from illusions? Were they hysterical? Didn't Mrs. Ellenbury think that if she made an effort she could get up from her bed, for, say, half an hour a day?

The truth was, that Mrs. Ellenbury having, during her life, experienced most of the sensations which are peculiar to woman-kind, having walked and worked, directed servants, given little parties, made calls, witnessed theatrical entertainments, played croquet and tennis, had decided some twenty years ago that there was nothing quite as comfortable as staying in bed.

So she became an invalid, had a treble subscription at a library and acquired a very considerable acquaintance with the rottenness of society, as depicted by authors who were authorities on misunderstood wives.

In a sense Mr. Ellenbury was quite content that this condition of affairs should be as it was. Once he was satisfied that his wife, in whom he had the most friendly interest, was suffering no pain, he was satisfied to return to the bachelor life. Every morning and every night—when he returned home at a reasonable hour—he went into her room and asked:

"How are we to-day?"

"About the same—certainly no worse."

"That's fine! Is there anything you want?"

"No, thank you—I have everything."

This exchange varied slightly from day to day, but generally it followed on those lines.

Ellenbury had come back late from Ratas after a tiring day. Usually he directed the Rata Syndicate from his own office; in—

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paper she rescued from Harlow's waste basket while she was taking dictation at his home. The scrap of paper was signed by Saul Marling, a missing man, who is supposed to have died years ago, but whom Harlow and his housekeeper, Mrs. Edwins, are concealing in Harlow's house. Carlton is now preparing to interview Ellenbury, Harlow's business associate, likewise of uncertain reputation.
deed, he had never before appeared visibly in the operations of the company.

But this new coup of Harlow's was on so gigantic a scale that he must appear in the daylight, and his connection with a concern suspected by every reputable firm in the city must be public property. And that hurt him.

He, who had secretly robbed his clients, who had engaged in systematic embezzlement and might now, but for the intervention and help of Mr. Stratford Harlow, have been an inmate of Dartmoor, walked with shame under the stigma of his known connection with a firm which was openly described as unsavory.

He was the creature of Harlow, his slave. This sore place in his self-esteem had never healed. It was his recreation to brood upon the ignominy of his lot. He hated Harlow with a malignity that none, seeing his mild, worn face, would suspect.

To him Stratford Harlow was the very incarnation of evil, a devil on earth who had bound his soul in fetters of brass. And of late he had embarked upon a novel course of dreaming. It was the confused middle of a dream, having neither beginning nor end, but it was all about a humiliated Harlow; Harlow being dragged in chains through the Awful Arch; Harlow robbed at the apotheosis of his triumph.

And always Ellenbury was there, leering, chuckling, pointing a derisive finger at the man he had ruined, or else he was flitting by midnight across the Channel with a suit case packed with fabulous sums of money that he had filched from his master.

Mr. Ellenbury bit at his nails.

Soon money would be flowing into Ratas—he would spend days indorsing checks, clearing drafts, drafts.

You may pass a draft into a bank and it becomes a number of figures in a pass book. On the other hand, you may hand it across the counter and receive real money. Sometimes Harlow preferred that method, dollars into sterling, sterling into Swiss francs, Swiss francs into florins, until the identity of the original payment was beyond recognition.

Drafts?

In the room above his head, his wife was lying immersed in the self-revelations of a fictional countess. Mrs. Ellenbury had a little money of her own. The house was her property. He could augment her income by judicious remittances.

Mauve and blue and red. "Pay to the order of—" so many thousand dollars, or rupees, or yen.

Harlow never interfered. He gave exact instructions as to how the money was to be dealt with, into which accounts it must be paid, and that was all. At the end of a transaction, he threw a thousand or two at his assistant, as a bone to a dog.

Ellenbury had never been so rich in his life as he was now. He could meet his bank manager without a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach—no longer did the sight of a strange man walking up the drive to the house fill him with a sense of foreboding.

But he had grown accustomed to prosperity; it had become a normal condition of life and freed his mind to hate the source of his affluence.

A slave—at best a freed man. If Harlow crooked his finger he must run to him; if Harlow, on a motor tour, wired "Meet me at—" any inaccessible spot, he must drop his work and fly. He, Franklin Ellenbury, an officer of the High Court of Justice, a graduate of a great university, a man of sensibility and genius.

No wonder Mr. Ellenbury bit at his nails and thought of drafts and sunny cafés and picture galleries and, after he was sated with the novelty of travel, a villa near Florence with orange groves and masses of bougainvillea clustering between white walls and jade-green jalousies.

"A gentleman to see you, sir."

CHAPTER XXXIV

SKILLFUL FENCING

ELLENBURY arose himself from his dreams with a painful start.

"To see me?" The clock on his desk said fifteen minutes after eleven. All the house save the weary maid was asleep. "But at this hour? Who is he; what does he want?"
“He’s outside, in a big car.”
Automatically he sprang to his feet and ran out of the room.

Harlow!
How like the swine, not condescending to alight, but summoning his Thing to his chariot wheels!

“Is that you, Ellenbury?”
The voice that spoke from the darkness of the car was his.

“Yes, Mr. Harlow.”
“You’ll be getting inquiries about the Gibbins woman—probably to-morrow. Carlton is certain to call—he has found that the letters were posted from Norwood. Why didn’t you post them in town?”

“I thought—er—well, I wanted to keep the business away from my office.”

“You could still have posted them in town. Don’t try to hide up the fact that you sent these letters. Mrs. Gibbins was an old family servant of yours. You told me once that you had a woman with a similar name in your employ—”

She’s dead,” began Ellenbury.

“So much the easier for you to lie!” was the answer. “Is everything going smoothly at Ratas?”

“Everything, Mr. Harlow.”

“Good!”
The lawyer stood at the foot of the steps watching the carmine rear light of the car until it vanished on the road.

That was Harlow! Requesting nothing—just ordering. Saying “Let this be done,” and never doubting that it would be done.

He went slowly back to his study, dismissed the servant to bed, and until the early hours of the morning was studying a continental time-table—Madrid, Munich, Cordova, Bucharest—delightful places all.

As he passed his wife’s bedroom she called him and he went in.

“I’m not at all well to-night,” she said, fretfully. “I can’t sleep.”

He comforted her with words, knowing that at ten o’clock the previous night she had eaten a supper that would have satisfied an agricultural laborer.

Mr. Harlow had timed his warning well. He had the general’s gift of foretelling his enemy’s movements. Jim called the next morning at the lawyer’s office in Theobald’s Road, and when the door clerk denied him an interview he produced his card.

“Take that to Mr. Ellenbury. I think he will see me,” he said.

The clerk returned in a few seconds and ushered him into a cupboard of a place which could not have been more than seven feet square. Mr. Ellenbury rose nervously from behind his microscopic desk and offered a limp, damp hand.

“Good morning, inspector,” he said. “We do not get many visitors from Scotland Yard. May I inquire your business?”

“I am making inquiries regarding the death of a woman named Gibbins,” said the visitor.

Mr. Ellenbury was not startled. He bowed his head slowly.

“She was the woman taken out of the Regent’s Canal some weeks ago. I remember the inquest,” he said.

“Her mother, Louise Gibbins, had been drawing a quarterly pension of thirteen pounds, which, I understand, was sent by you?”

It was a bluff designed to startle the man into betraying himself, but, to Jim Carlton’s astonishment, Mr. Ellenbury lowered his head again.

“Yes,” he said, “that is perfectly true. I knew her mother, a very excellent old lady who was for some time in my employ. She was very good to my dear wife, who is an invalid, and I have made her an allowance for many years. I did not know she was dead until the case of the drowned charwoman came into court and caused me to make inquiries.”

“The allowance was stopped before these facts were made public,” challenged Jim Carlton, and again he was dummfounded when the lawyer agreed.

“It was delayed—not stopped,” he said, “and it was only by accident that the money was not sent at the usual time,” he said. “Fortunately or unfortunately, I happened to be rather ill when the allowance should have been sent off. The day I returned to the office and dispatched the money I learned of Mrs. Gibbons’s death.

“It is clear that the woman, instead of informing me of her mother’s death, sup-
pressed the fact in order that she might benefit financially. If she had lived and it had come to my notice I should naturally have prosecuted her for embezzlement.”

Carlton knew that his visit had been anticipated, and the story cut and dried in advance. To press any further question would be to make Harlow’s suspicion a certainty. He could round off his inquiry plausibly enough, and this he did.

“T think that is my final question in the case,” he said with a smile. “I am sorry to have bothered you, Mr. Ellenbury. You never met Mrs. Annie Gibbins?”

“Never,” replied Ellenbury, with such emphasis that Jim knew he was speaking the truth. “I assure you I had no idea of her existence.”

CHAPTER XXXV
LION FACES TIGER

ROM one lawyer to another was a natural step: more natural since Mr. Stebbing’s office was in the vicinity, and this interview at least held one pleasant possibility—he might see Aileen.

She was a little staggered when he entered her room.

“Mr. Stebbing—why on earth”—And then, penitently: “I’m so sorry! I am not as inquisitive as I appear!”

Mr. Stebbing, who was surprised at nothing, saw him at once, and listened without comment to the detective’s business.

“I never saw Mr. Marling except once,” he said. “He was a wild, rather erratic individual, and, so far as I know, went to the Argentine and did not return.”

“You’re sure that he went abroad?” asked Jim.

Mr. Stebbing, being a lawyer, was too cautious a man to be sure of anything.

“He took his ticket and presumably sailed; his name was on the passenger list. Miss Alice Harlow caused inquiries to be made; I think she was most anxious that Marling’s association with Mr. Harlow should be definitely broken. That, I am afraid, is all I can tell you.”

“What kind of a man was Marling? Yes, I know he was wild and a little erratic, but was he the type of man who could be dominated by Harlow?”

A very rare smile flitted across the massive face of the lawyer.

“Is there anybody in the world who would not be dominated by Mr. Harlow?” he asked, dryly. “I know very little of what is happening outside my own profession, but from such knowledge as I have acquired I understand that Mr. Harlow is rather a tyrant. I use the word in its original and historic sense,” he added.

Jim made a gentle effort to hear more about Mr. Harlow and his earlier life. He was particularly interested in the will, a copy of which he had evidently seen at Somerset House, but here the lawyer was adamantine.

He hinted that if the police procured an order from a judge in chambers, or if they went through some other obscure process of law, he would have no alternative but to reveal all that he knew about his former client; but otherwise—

Aileen was not in her room when he passed through, and he lingered awhile, hoping to see her, but apparently she was engaged—to her annoyance, it must be confessed—with the junior partner; he left Bloomsbury with a feeling that he had not extracted the completest satisfaction from his visits.

At the corner of Bedford Place a shining limousine was drawn up by the sidewalk, and so deep was he in thought that he would have passed, had not the man who was sitting at the wheel removed the long cigar from his white teeth and called him by name. Jim turned with a start. The last person he expected to meet at this hour of the morning in the prosaic environment of Theobald’s Road.

“I thought it was you,” Mr. Harlow’s voice was cheerful, his manner a pattern of geniality. “This is a fortunate meeting.”

“For which of us?” smiled Jim, leaning his elbow on the window opening and looking into the face of the man.

“For both, I hope. Come inside, and I’ll drive you anywhere you’re going. I have an invitation to offer and a suggestion to make.”
Jim opened the door and stepped in. Harlow was a skillful driver. He slipped in and out of the traffic into Bedford Square, and then:

"Do you mind if I drive you to my house? Perhaps you can spare the time?"

Jim nodded, wondering what was the proposition. But throughout the drive Mr. Harlow kept up a flow of unimportant small talk, and he said nothing important until he showed his visitor into the beautiful library. Mr. Harlow threw his heavy coat and cap onto one of the red settees, twisted a chair round, so that it revolved like a teetotum, and set it down near his visitor.

"Somebody followed you here," he said.
"I saw him out of the tail of my eye. A Scotland Yard man! My dear man, you are very precious to the law." He chuckled at this.

"But I bear you no malice that you do not trust me! My theory is that it is much better for a dozen innocent men to come under police surveillance than for a guilty man to escape detection. Only it is sometimes a little unnerving, the knowledge that I am being watched. I could stop it at once, of course.

"The Courier is in the market—I could buy a newspaper and make your lives very unpleasant indeed. I could raise a dozen men up in Parliament to ask what the devil you meant by it. In fact, Mr. Carlton, there are so many ways of breaking you and your immediate superior that I cannot carry them in my head!"

CHAPTER XXXVI
CARLTON HAS CAUSE TO WORRY

AND Jim had an uncomfortable feeling that this was no vain boast.

"I really don't mind," Harlow went on. "It annoys me a little, but amuses me more. I am almost above the law! How stupid that sounds!" He slapped his knee and his rich laughter filled the room.

"Of course I am; you know that! Unless I do something very stupid and so trivial that even the police can understand that I am breaking the law you can't touch me."

He waited for some comment here, but Jim was content to let his host do most of the talking. A footman came in at that moment pushing a little basket trolley, and, to Jim's surprise, it contained a silver tea service, in addition to a bottle of whisky, siphon and glasses.

"I never drink," explained Harlow. "When I say 'never' it would be better if I said 'rarely.' Tea drinking is a pernicious habit which I acquired in my early youth." He lifted the bottle. "For you—"

"Tea also," said Jim, and Mr. Harlow inclined his head.

"I thought that was possible," he said, and when the servant had gone he carried his tea to the writing table and sat down.

"You're a very clever young man," he said abruptly, and Jim showed his teeth in a skeptical smile. "I could almost wish you would admit your genius—I hate that form of modesty which is expressed in self-deprecation. You're clever. I have watched your career and have interested myself in your beginning. If you were an ordinary police officer I should not bother with you; but you are something different."

Again he paused, as though he expected a protest, but neither by word nor gesture did Jim Carlton approve or deny his right to this distinction.

"As for me, I am a rich man," Harlow went on. "Yet I need the very help you can give to me. You are not well off, Mr. Carlton. I believe you have an income of two hundred a year or thereabouts, apart from your salary, and that is very little for one who sooner or later must feel the need of a home of his own, a wife and a family—"

Again he paused suggestively, and this time Jim spoke:

"What do you suggest to remedy this state of affairs?" he asked.

Mr. Harlow smiled.

"You are being sarcastic. There is sarcasm in your voice! You feel that you are superior to the question of money. You can afford to laugh at it. But, my friend, money is a very serious thing. I offer you five thousand pounds a year."

He rose to his feet the better to emphasize the offer, Jim thought.
“And my duties?” he asked quietly.

Harlow shrugged his big shoulders; the ample skirt of his frock coat swirled back as he put his hands deep into his trousers pockets.

“To watch my interests.” He almost snapped the words. “To employ that clever brain of yours in furthering my cause, in protecting me when I go—joking! I love a joke—a practical joke.

“To see the right man squirming makes me laugh. Five thousand a year, and all your expenses paid to the utmost limit. You like play-going? I’ll show you a play that will set you rolling with joy! What do you say?”

“No,” said Jim simply; “I’m not keen on jokes.”

“You’re not?” Harlow made a little grimace. “What a pity! There might be a million in it for you. I am not trying to induce you to do something against your principles, but it is a pity.”

It seemed to Jim’s sensitive ear that there was genuine regret in Harlow’s tone, but he went on quickly:

“I appreciate your standpoint. You have no desire to enter my service. You are, let us say, antipathetic toward me?”

“I prefer my own work,” said Jim.

Harlow’s smile was broad and benevolent.

“There remains only one suggestion: I want you to come to the dinner and reception I am giving to the Macedonian delegates next Thursday. Regard that as an olive branch!”

Jim smiled.

“I will gladly accept your invitation, Mr. Harlow,” he said, and then, with scarcely a pause: “Where can I find Marling?”

The words were hardly out of his lips before he cursed himself for his folly. He had not the slightest intention of asking such a fool question, and he could have kicked himself for the stupid impulse which, in one fraction of a second, had thrown out of gear the delicate machinery of investigation.

Not a muscle of Stratford Harlow’s face moved.

“Marling?” he repeated. His black brows met in a frown; the pale eyes surveyed the detective blankly. “Marling?” he said again. “Now, where have I heard that name? You don’t mean the fellow who was my tutor? Good God! What a question to ask! I have never heard of him, from the day he left for South Africa or somewhere.”


“Was it the Argentine? I’m not sure. Yes, I am—Pernambuco—cholera—he died there!”

The underlip came thrusting out. Harlow was passing to the aggressive.

“The truth is, Marling and I were not very good friends. He treated me rather as though I were a child, and I cannot think of him without resentment. Marling! How that word brings back the most uncomfortable memories!”

“The succession of wretched cottages, of prim, neat gardens, of his abominable Greek and Latin verses—differential calculi, the whole horrible gauntlet of so-called education through which a timid youth must run. Why do you ask?”

Jim had his excuse all ready. He might not recover the ground he had lost, but he could at least consolidate himself against further retirement.

“I have had an inquiry from one of his former associates.” He mentioned a name, and here he was on safe ground, for it was the name of a man who had been a contemporary of Marling’s and who was in the same college. Not a difficult achievement for Jim, who had spent that morning looking up old university lists. Evidently it had no significance for Harlow.

“I seem to remember Marling talking about him,” he said. “But twenty-odd years is a very long time to cast back one’s memory. And very probably I am an unconscious liar! So far as I know”—he shook his head—“Marling is dead. I have no absolute proof of this, but if you wish I will have inquiries made. The Argentine government will do almost anything I wish.”

“You’re a lucky man.” Jim held out his hand with a laugh.

“I wonder if I am?” Harlow looked at him steadfastly. “I wonder! And I wonder if you are, Mr. Carlton?” he added slowly. “Or will be!”
Jim Carlton was not in a position to supply an answer.

His foot was on the doorstep when Harlow called him back.

"I owe you an apology," he said.

Jim supposed that he was talking about the offer he had made, but this was not the case.

"It was a crude and degrading business, Mr. Carlton—but I have a passion for experiment. Such methods were efficacious in the days of our forefathers, and I argued that human nature has not greatly changed."

Carlton was listening in bewilderment.

"I don't quite follow you—"

Mr. Harlow showed his teeth in a smile and for a moment his pale eyes lit up with glee.

"This was not a case of your following me—but of my following you. A crude business. I am heartily ashamed of myself!"

Jim was halfway to Scotland Yard before the solution of this mysterious apologie occurred to him. Stratford Harlow was expressing his regret for the attack that had been delivered by his agents in Long Acre.

Jim stopped to scratch his head.

"That man worries me!" he said aloud.

CHAPTER XXXVII

BUSINESS AT THE PARTY

The news that Mr. Stratford Harlow was entertaining the Macedonian delegates at his house in Park Lane was not of such vital importance that it deserved any great attention from the London press.

A three-line paragraph at the foot of a column confirmed the date and the hour. For Jim this proved to be unnecessary, since a reminder came by the second post on the following day, requesting the pleasure of his company at the reception.

"They might have asked you to the dinner," said Elk. "Especially as it's free. I'll bet that bird keeps a good brand of cigar."

"Write and ask for a box; you'll get it," said Jim, and Elk sniffed.

"That'd be against the best interests of the service," he said virtuously. "Do you think I'd get 'em if I mentioned your name?"

"You'd get the whole Havana crop," said Jim. "I've got a pick. Anyway, there'll be plenty of cigars for you on the night of the reception."

"Me?" Elk brightened visibly. "He didn't send me an invite."

"Nevertheless you are going," said Jim definitely. "I'm anxious to know just what this reception is all about. I suppose it's a wonderful thing to stop these Macedonian brigands from shooting at one another, but I can't see the excuse for a swagger London party."

"Maybe he's got a girl he wants to show off," suggested Elk helpfully.

"You've a deplorable mind," was Jim's only comment.

He was not the only hard worked man in London that week. Every night he walked with Elk and stood opposite the new Rata building in Moorgate Street. Each room was brilliantly illuminated; cable messengers came and went.

And he learned from one of the extra staff whom he had put into the building, that even Ellenbury, who usually did not allow himself to be identified publicly with the business, was working till three o'clock every morning.

Scotland Yard has many agencies throughout the world, and from these the full extent of Rata's activities began dimly to be seen.

"They've sold nothing, but they're going to sell," reported Jim to his chief at the Yard; "and it's going to be the biggest bear movement that we have seen in our generation."

His chief was a natural enemy to the superlatives of youth.

"If it were an offense to 'bear' the market I should have no neighbors," he said icily. "Almost every stockholder I know has taken a flutter at some time or other. My information is that the market is firm and healthy. If Harlow is really behind this coup, then he looks like losing money. Why don't you see him and ask him plainly what is the big idea?"
Jim made a little face.

"I shall see him to-night at the party," he said, "but I doubt very much whether I shall have a chance of worming my way into his confidence!"

Elk was not a society man. It was his dismal claim, that not in any rank of the Metropolitan police force was there a man with less education than himself.

Year after year, with painful regularity, he had failed to pass the examination which was necessary for promotion to the rank of inspector. History floored him; dates or royal accessions and expedient assassinations drove him to despair. Sheer merit eventually secured him the rank which his lack of book learning denied him.

"How'll I do?"

He had come up to Jim's room arrayed for the reception, and now he turned solemnly on his feet to reveal the unusual splendor of evening dress. The tail coat was creased, the trousers had been treated by an amateur cleaner, for they reeked of petrol, and the shirt was soft and yellow with age.

"It's the white weskit that worries me," he complained. "My young woman servant says you only wear white weskits for weddin's. But I'm sure the party's goin' to be a fancy one. You wearin' a white weskit?"

"I shall probably wear one, too," said Jim soothingly. "And you look a peach, Elk!"

"They'll take me for a waiter, but I'm used to that," said Elk. "Last time I went to a party they made me serve the drinks. Quite a lot never got by!"

"I want you to fix a place where I can find you," said Jim, struggling with his tail coat. "That may be very necessary."

"The bar," said Elk laconically. "If it's called a buf-fit, then I'll be at the buf-fit!"

There was a little crowd gathered before the door of Harlow's house. They made a lane clear of the striped awning beneath which the guests passed into the flower-decked vestibule. For the first time Jim saw the millionaire's domestic staff in the glory of fine raiment, with their powdered hair, their Silken calves, and glittering aiguillettes. A gorgeous creature took his card and did not question the presence of Elk, who strolled nonchalantly past the guardian.

"White weskits!" he hissed. "I knew it would be fancy!"

The wide doors of the library were thrown open, and here Mr. Harlow was receiving his guests. Dinner was over and the privileged guests were standing in a half circle about him—a dark-faced Bulgarian with a sweeping black mustache the most conspicuous of the group.

"White weskit," murmured Elk, "and the bar's in the corner of the room."

Harlow had already seen them, and though Mr. Elk was an uninvited guest, he greeted him with warmth. To his companion he gave a warm and hearty hand.

"Have you seen Sir Joseph?" he asked.

Jim had seen the foreign secretary that afternoon to learn whether he had made any fresh plans, but had found that Sir Joseph was adhering to his original intention of attending the reception only. He was telling Harlow this, when there was a stir at the door, and, looking round, he saw the foreign secretary enter the room and stop to shake hands with a friend at the door.

He wore his black velvet jacket, his long black tie straggled artistically over his white shirt front. Sir Joseph had been pilloried as the worst dressed man in London, and yet, for all his slovenliness of attire, he had the distinctive air of a grand gentleman.

He fixed his horn-rimmed pince nez and favored Jim with a friendly smile as he made his way to his host.

"I was afraid I could not come," he said in his husky voice. "The truth is, some foolish newspaper has been giving prominence to a ridiculous story that went the rounds a few weeks ago, and I have to be in my place to answer a question."

"Rather late for question time, Sir Joseph," smiled Harlow. "I always thought they were taken before the real business of Parliament began."

Sir Joseph nodded in his jerky way.

"Yes, yes," he said, a little testily, "but when questions of policy arise, and a member gives me private notice of his intention
of asking such a question it can be put at any period."

He swept Parliament and vexatious questions out of existence with a gesture of his hand.

Jim watched the two men talking together. They were in a deep and earnest conversation, and he gathered from Sir Joseph's gesticulations that the minister was feeling very strongly on the subject under discussion.

Presently they strolled through the crowded lobby into the vestibule, and after a decent interval Jim went on their trail. He signaled his companion from the buffet, and Mr. Elk, wiping his mustache hurriedly, joined him as he reached the door.

The guests were still arriving; the vestibule was crowded, and progress was slow. Presently a side door in the hall opened, and over the heads of the crush he saw Sir John and Mr. Harlow come out and make for the street. Harlow turned back and met the detective.

"A short visit," he said, "but worth while!"

Jim reached the steps in time to see the foreign minister's car moving into Park Lane, and he had a glimpse of Sir Joseph as he waved his hand in farewell.

"He stayed long enough to justify a paragraph in the morning newspaper—and the uncharitable will believe that that was all I wanted! You're not going?"

It was Harlow speaking.

"I'm sorry, I also have an engagement—in the House!" said Jim, good-humoredly, and Mr. Harlow laughed.

"I see. You were here on duty as well, eh? Well, that's a very wise precaution. I now realize that not only are you a lucky but you are a short-sighted young man!"

"Why?" asked Jim, so sharply that Harlow laughed.

"I will tell you one of these days," he said.

The two detectives waited until a taxicab had been hailed; they drove into Palace Yard at the moment Sir Joseph's car was moving back to the rank.

"I don't see why you pulled me away from that party, Carlton," grumbled Elk.

"Look on this picture and look on that! Look at gay Park Lane and dirty old Westminster!" And then, when his companion did not reply, he asked anxiously: "Something wrong?"

"I don't know. I've only a sort of feeling that we're going to see an earthquake—that's all," said Jim emphatically, as they passed into the lobby.

Sir Joseph was in his room and could not be disturbed, a messenger told them. Jim had signed tickets and they passed into the chamber and took a seat under the gallery.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE MINISTER BEHAVES STRANGELY

HE House was well filled, except the government benches, which, save for the presence of an under secretary deeply immersed in the contents of his dispatch box, were untenantable.

Evidently some motion had been put to the House and the result announced just before the two visitors arrived, for the clerk was reading the terms of an interminable amendment to a water and power bill when Sir Joseph strode in from behind the speaker's chair, dropped heavily on the bench, and, fixing his horn-rimmed pince-nez, began to read a sheaf of notes which he carried.

At that moment somebody rose on the opposition front bench.

"Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask the right honorable gentleman a question of which I gave him private notice. The question is:

"Has the right honorable gentleman seen a statement published in the Daily Megaphone to the effect that relations between his majesty's government and the government of France are strained as the result of the Bonn incident? And will he tell the House whether such a statement was issued, as is hinted in the newspaper account, with the knowledge and approval of the foreign office?"

Sir Joseph rose slowly to his feet, took off his glasses and replaced them again, nervously gripped the lapels of his coat, and, leaning forward over the dispatch box, spoke.
"The right honorable gentleman is rightly informed," he began, and a hush fell on the House.

Members looked at one another in amazement and consternation.

"There does exist between his Britannic majesty's government and the government of France a tension which I can only describe as serious. So serious, in fact, that I have felt it necessary to advise the Prime Minister that all naval and military Christmas leave shall be stopped, that the defense of the realm act shall be reintroduced, and that all naval reserves shall me immediately mobilized."  

A moment of deadly silence. Then a roar of protest. There were hurled at the government benches a hurricane of indignant questions. Presently the speaker secured silence, and Sir Joseph went on, in his grave, husky tone:

"I am not prepared to answer any further questions to-night, and I must ask honorable members to defer their judgment until Monday, when I hope to make a statement on behalf of his majesty's government."

And with that, unheedful the calls, he turned and walked behind the speaker's chair and out of sight.

"Good God!"

"Jim was white to the lips."

"That means war!"

Elk, who had fallen into a doze, woke with a start, in time to see his companion flying out of the House. He followed him along the corridor to Sir Joseph's room and knocked at the door. There was no answer. He turned the handle and walked in.

The room was in darkness and empty. Rushing out into the passage, he waylaid a messenger.

"No, sir, I've not seen Sir Joseph. He went into the House a few minutes ago."

By the time he got back Jim found the lobby crowded with excited members. The prime minister was in the West of England; the first lord of the admirably and the secretary of war had left that afternoon to address a series of public meetings in the North; and already the telephones were busy seeking the other members of the cabinet.

He found nobody who had seen Sir Joseph after he left the House until he came upon a policeman who thought he had recognized the foreign minister walking out into Palace Yard. Jim followed this clue and had it confirmed.

Sir Joseph had come out into the yard, taken a taxi—though his car was waiting—a few minutes before. The detectives almost ran to Whitehall Gardens, and here they had a further shock. The minister had not arrived at his home.

"Are you sure?" asked Jim incredulously, thinking the butler had orders to rebuff all callers.

"Positive, sir. Why, is anything the matter?" asked the man in alarm.

Jim did not wait to reply. They found a cab in Whitehall and went beyond legal speed to Park Lane. There was just a chance that the foreign minister had returned to Harlow's.

When they reached Greenhart House, there came to them the strains of a jazz band; dancing was in full swing, both in the library and in the large drawing-room overlooking Park Lane. They found Harlow, after a search, and he seemed the most astonished man of all.

"Of course he hasn't come back here. He told me he was going to the House and then home to bed. What has happened?"

"You'll see it in the newspapers in the morning," said Jim curtly, and drove back to parliament in time to find the members streaming out of the house, which had been adjourned.

CHAPTER XXXIX
TUMULT AND PANIC!

While he was talking with a member he knew a car drove up and the man who alighted was instantly hailed. It was the chancellor of the exchequer, a broad-shouldered man with a stoop, the most brilliant member of the cabinet.

"Yes, I've heard all about it," he said, in his thin, rasping voice. "Where is Sir Joseph?"

He beckoned Jim, who was known to
him, and, pushing his way through the crowd of members, went back with him along the corridor to his room.

"Were you in the House when Sir Joseph spoke?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Jim.

"Just tell me what happened."

Briefly, almost word for word, Jim Carlton repeated the astonishing speech.

"He must be mad," said the chancellor emphatically. "There is not a word of truth in the whole story, unless—well, something may have happened since I saw him last."

"Can't you issue a denial?"

Mr. Kirknoll bit his lips.

"In the absence of the prime minister I suppose I should, but I can't do that until I have seen Sir Joseph."

A thought struck Jim.

"He is not what one would describe as a neurotic man, is he?"

"No man less so," said the chancellor emphatically. "He is the sanest person I've ever met. Is his secretary in the House?"

He rang a bell and sent a messenger in search, while he endeavored to get into touch on the long distance phone with the absent ministers.

The secretariat of Downing Street were evidently engaged in a similar quest, with the result that until one in the morning neither had managed to communicate with the head of the government.

"We can't stop this getting into the newspapers, I suppose?"

"It is in," said the chancellor laconically.

"I've just had a copy of the first editions. Why he did it, Heaven only knows! He has certainly smashed the government. What other results will follow I dare not think about."

"What do you think will be the first result of Sir Joseph's speech?"

The minister spread out his hands.

"The markets of course will go to blazes, but that doesn't interest us so much as the feeling it may create in France. Unhappily the French Ambassador is in Paris on a short visit."

Jim left him talking volubly on the Paris wire, and at three o'clock in the morning he read a verbatim report of Sir Joseph's remarkable lapse. The later editions carried eight lines in heavy type:

We are informed by the chancellor of the exchequer that the Bonn incident has never been before the cabinet for discussion, and it is not regarded as being of the slightest importance. The chancellor informs us that he cannot account for Sir Joseph Layton's extraordinary statement in the House of Commons.

All night long Jim literally sat on the doorstep of Whitehall Gardens waiting without any great hope for Sir Joseph's return. He learned that the prime minister was returning from the west by special train, and that a statement had already been issued repudiating the statement of the foreign minister.

The opening of the stock exchange that morning was witnessed by scenes which had no parallel since the outbreak of the Great War. Stocks declined to an incredible extent, and even the banks reacted to the panic. It was too early to learn what had happened in New York, the British being five hours in advance of Eastern American time, and only at four o'clock that afternoon was the position on Wall Street revealed.

Heavy selling, all gilt-edged stocks depreciated; the failure of a big brokerage house and a suicide of two were the first consequences observable in the press. In France the bourse had been closed at noon, but there was heavy street selling, and one famous South African stock, which was the barometer in the market, had dropped to its lowest level.

At five o'clock that evening a statement was issued to the press over the signatures of the prime ministers of Britain and France:

There is no truth whatever in the statement that a state of tension exists between our two countries. The Bonn incident has been from first to last regarded as trivial, and the speech of the British Foreign Minister can only have been made in a moment of regrettable mental aberration.

For Jim the day's interest had nothing whatever to do with stock exchanges or the fall of shares; nor yet the fortune which he knew was being gathered, with every
minute that passed, by Harlow and his agents. His interest was solely devoted to the mystery of Sir Joseph Layton's disappearance.

CHAPTER XL
INGLE APPEARS IN THE TEMPEST

There had been present at Harlow's reception a very large number of notable people, many of whom were personal friends of the missing minister. They were empathic in declaring that he had not returned to Park Lane, and they were as certain that Harlow had not left the house after Sir Joseph's departure.

More than this, there were two policemen on duty at the door, and they were equally certain that Sir Joseph had not returned. The suggestion was made that the minister had gone to his country house in Cheshire, but when inquiry was set on foot it was learned that the house and the shooting had been rented by a rich American.

After the prime minister had returned from Paris, to which city he went immediately by airplane on his arrival in London, Jim saw him, and the chief officer of state was a greatly worried as well as a very tired man.

"Sir Joseph Layton has to be found!" he said, thumping his table. "I tell you this, Carlton, as I have told your superiors, that it was impossible, unless Sir Joseph went mad, that he could have stood up in the House of Commons and said something which he knew to be absolutely untrue, and which he himself would repudiate! Have you seen this man Harlow?"

"Yes, sir," said Jim.

"Did he tell you what was discussed by any chance? Was it the so-called Bonn incident?"

"Harlow says that they just talked about Macedonia and nothing else during the few minutes the foreign minister was in his house. And really, sir, I don't see how they could have had any very lengthy discussion; they were not together more than a few minutes.

"Apparenty Sir Joseph went into a little room which Harlow uses for his more confidential interviews, and drank a glass of wine. They then talked about the reception and Sir Joseph congratulated him upon bringing the warring Macedonian elements together. It seems to have been, according to Harlow's account, the most uninteresting talk."

The prime minister walked up and down the room with long strides, his chin on his breast.

"I can't understand it, I can't understand it," he muttered. And then, abruptly: "Find Sir Joseph Layton."

That terminated the interview for Jim.

He was rattled, badly rattled, and in his distraction he could think of only one sedative. He rang up Aileen Rivers at her office and asked her to come to tea with him at the Automobile Club.

Aileen realized from the first that Jim was directly occupied by a mystery that was puzzling not only the country, but the whole of the civilized world. But she understood also the reason he had sent for her, and the thought that she was being of use to him, was a very grateful one.

He had hardly met her before he plunged straight into the story of his trouble.

"He may have been kidnapped, of course, and I should say it was very likely, though the distance between Palace Yard and Whitehall Gardens is very short; and Whitehall is so full of police that it hardly seems possible. We have advertised for the taximan who drove him away from the House, but so far have had no reply."

"Perhaps the taximan was also kidnapped?" she suggested.

"Perhaps so," he said, a little drearily. "I do wish foreign ministers weren't so god-like that they have to travel alone! If he'd only waited a few minutes I would have joined him." And then, with a smile: "I'm laying my burdens upon you and you're withling visibly."

"I'm not," she affirmed stoutly.

She considered a moment before she asked:

"Could I not help you?"

He stared at her in amused wonder.

"How on earth could you help me? I'm being a brute, I know, but I can't exactly see—"
She was annoyed rather than hurt by his skepticism.

"It may be a very presumptuous thing to offer assistance to the police," she said with a faint hint of sarcasm, "but I think what may be wrong with you now is that you want—what is the expression—a new angle?"

"I certainly want several new angles," he confessed ruefully.

"Then I'll start in to give you one. Have you seen my uncle?"

His jaw dropped. He had forgotten all about Arthur Ingle, and never once had he associated him with the minister's disappearance.

"What a fool I am!" he gasped.

She examined his face steadily, as though she were considering whether or not to agree. In reality her mind was very far away.

"I only suggest my uncle because he called upon me this morning," she said. "At least, he was waiting for me when I came out to lunch. It is the first time I have seen him since the night he came back from Devonshire."

"What did he want to see you about?"

She laughed softly.

"He came with a most extraordinary offer, that I should keep house for him. And really, he offered me considerably more than the salary I am getting from Stebbing, and said he had no objection to my working in the daytime."

"You refused, of course?"

"I refused, of course," she repeated, "but he wasn't at all put out. I've never seen him in such an amiable frame of mind."

"How does he look?" asked Jim, remembering the unshaven face he had seen through the window.

"Very smart," was the surprising reply. "He told me he had been amusing himself with some of the big films that had appeared since he went to prison. He had hired them and bought a small projector. He really was fond of the pictures, as I know," the girl went on, "but it seems a queer thing to have shut oneself up for days just to see cinema plays! And he asked after you." She nodded.

"Why should he ask after you, you are going to say, and that is the question that occurred to me. But he seems to have taken for granted that I am a very close friend of yours. He asked who had introduced me, and I told him your wretched little motor car on the Thames Embankment!"

"Speak well of the dead," said Jim soberly. "Lizzie has cracked a cylinder."

"And now," she said, "prepare for a great shock."

"I brace myself," said Jim.

"He asked," the girl went on, a twinkle in her eyes, "whether I thought you would object to seeing him. I think he must have taken a sudden fancy to you."

"I've never met the gentleman," said Jim, "but that is an omission which shall be rectified without delay. We'll go round together! He will naturally jump at the conclusion that we're an engaged couple, but if you can stand that slur upon your intelligence—"

"I will be brave," said Aileen.

Mr. Arthur Ingle was only momentarily disconcerted by the appearance of his niece and the man who had filled his mind all that afternoon. Jim had met him once before, but only for a few seconds, when he had called to make an inquiry about Mrs. Gibbins. Now he was almost joyial.

CHAPTER XLI

AN UNWISE WARNING

"HERE'S friend Elk?" he asked with a smile. "I understood you never moved without one another in these perilous times, when lunatic ministers are wandering about the country, and no man knows the hour or the day when he will be called up for active service! So you are Mr. James Carlton!"

He opened a silver cigar box and pushed it across to Jim, who made a careful selection.

"Aileen told you I wanted to see you, I suppose? Well, I do. I'm a bit of a theorist, Mr. Carlton, and I have an idea my theory is right. I wonder if you would be interested to know what it is?"
He pointedly ignored the presence of the girl except to put a chair for her.

"I've been making inquiries," said this surprising ex-convict, "and I've discovered that Sir Joseph is in all sorts of financial difficulties. This is unknown to the prime minister or even to his closest friends, but I have had a hint that he was very short of ready money and that his estates in Cheshire were heavily mortgaged, almost to the limit.

"Now, Mr. Carlton, do you conceive it as possible that the speech in the House was made with the deliberate intention of slumping the market, and that Sir Joseph was paid handsomely for the part he played?"

As he was speaking, he clasped his hands before him, his fingers intertwined; he emphasized every point with a little jerk of his clasped hands, and, watching him, the mist rolled from Jim Carlton's brain, and he instantly solved the mystery of those private cinema shows which had kept Mr. Ingle locked up in his flat for a week. And to solve that was to solve every mystery save the present whereabouts of Sir Joseph Layton.

He listened in silence while Ingle went on to expound and elaborate his theory, and, when the man had finished:

"I will bring your suggestion to the notice of my superiors," he said conventionally.

It was evidently not the speech that Mr. Ingle expected. For a moment he looked uncomfortable, and then, with a laugh, he replied:

"I suppose you think it strange that I should be on the side of law and order— and the governing classes! I felt a little sore when I came out of prison. Elk probably told you of the exhibition I made of myself in the train. But I've been thinking things over, Carlton, and it has occurred to me that my extremism is not profitable either to my pocket or my mind."

"In fact," smiled Jim, "you're going to become a reformed character and a member of the good old Tory party?"

"I don't know that I shall go so far as that," demurred the other, amused, "but I have decided to settle down. I am not exactly a poor man, and all that I have got I have paid for—in Dartmoor."

Only for a second were the old harsh cadences audible in his voice. He nodded toward Aileen Rivers.

"You'll persuade this girl to give me a chance, Mr. Carlton? I can well understand her hesitation to keep house for a man liable at any moment to be whisked off to durance, and I fear she does not quite believe in my reformation."

He smiled blandly at the girl and then turned his eyes upon Jim.

"Could you not persuade her?"

"If I could persuade her to any course," said Jim deliberately, "it would not be the one you suggest."

"Why?" challenged the other.

"Because," said Jim, "you are altogether wrong when you say that there is no longer any danger of your being whisked off to durance. The danger was never more pressing."

Ingle did not reply to this. Once his lips trembled as though he were about to ask a question, and then with a laugh he walked to the table and took a cigar from the box.

"I guess I won't detain you," he said. "But you're wrong, Carlton. The police have nothing on me! They may frame something to catch me, but you'll have to be clever to do even that."

As they were passing out of the building:

"I seem to spend my days giving warnings to the last people in the world who ought to be warned," said Jim bitterly. "Aileen, maybe you'll knit me a muzzle in your spare moments? That will help considerably!"

The outstanding feature of this little speech, from the girl's point of view, was that he had called her by her name for the first time. Later, when they were nearing her lodgings, she asked:

"Do you think you will find Sir Joseph?"

He shook his head.

"I doubt very much if he is alive," he said gravely.

But his doubts were to be dispelled, and in the most surprising manner. That night a drunken black-faced comedian hit a
policeman over the head with a banjo, and that vulgar incident had an amazing sequel.

CHAPTER XLII
BLACK IS WHITE

Here is a class of entertainer which devotes its talents to amusing the queues that wait at the doors of the cheaper entrances of London's theaters. Here is generally to be found a man who can tear paper into fantastic shapes, a ballad singer or two, a performer on the bones, and the inevitable black-faced minstrel.

It was eleven o'clock at night, and snow was lightly falling, when a policeman on point duty at the end of Evory Street, saw a figure staggering along the middle of the road, in imminent danger from the returning theater traffic, which at this time of night is fairly thick in Mayfair.

The man had obviously taken more drink than was good for him, for he was howling at the top of his voice the song of the moment, and making a clumsy attempt to accompany himself on the banjo which was slung around his neck.

The London police are patient and long-suffering people, and had the reeling figure been less vocal he might have passed on to his destination without interference. For drunkenness in itself is not a crime, according to the law; a man must be incapable or create a disturbance, or obstruct the police in the execution of their duty, before he offends.

The policeman had no intention of arresting the noisy wayfarer. He walked into the middle of the road to intercept and quiet him, and then discovered that the reveler was a black-faced comedian with extravagant white lips, a ridiculous Eton collar and a shell coat. On his head was a college cap, and this completed his outfit with the exception of the banjo, with which he was making horrid sounds.

"Hi, hi!" said the policeman gently. "A little less noise, young fellow!"

Such an admonition would have been sufficient in most cases to have reduced a midnight songbird to apology, but this street waif stood defiantly in the middle of the road, his legs apart, and invited the officer to go to a warmer climate, and, not satisfied with this, he swung his banjo and brought it down with a crash on the policeman's helmet.

"You've asked for it!" said the officer of the law, and took his lawful prey in a grip of iron.

By a coincidence, Jim Carlton was at Evory Street station when the man was brought in, singing not unmusically, and so obviously drunk that Jim hardly turned his head or interrupted the conversation he was having with the inspector on duty, to look at the charge.

They made a rapid search of the man, he resisting violently, and at last, when they had extracted a name—he refused his address—from him, he was hustled between a policeman and a gaoler into the long corridor off which the cells are placed.

The door of Cell Number 7 was opened, and into this he was pushed, struggling to the last to maintain his banjo.

"And," said the gaoler when he came back to the charge-room, wiping his perspiring brow, "the language that bird is using would turn a soldier pale!"

The reason for Jim's presence was to arrange a local supervision of Green Hart House and to obtain certain assistance in the execution of a plan which was running through his mind, and that task would have been completed when the black-faced man was brought in, but that the officer he had called to see was away.

Jim lingered a little while, talking police shop, before he paid his last visit to Sir Joseph's house. He had the inevitable reply: No news had reached Whitehall Gardens of the foreign minister.

The man he came to see at Evory Street was due to appear at the police court in the rôle of prosecutor, and Jim strolled down to the court next morning, arriving soon after the magistrate had taken his seat, where he met the inspector from Evory Street. Before Jim could broach the subject which had brought him, the inspector asked:

"Were you at the station when that black-faced fellow was pulled in last night?"
"Yes, I remember the noisy gentleman," said Jim. "Why?"
The inspector shook his head, puzzled. "I can't understand where he got it from. The sergeant searched him very carefully, but he must have had it concealed in some place."
"What is the matter with him?" asked Jim only half interested.
"Dope," said the other. "When the gaoler went and called him this morning it was as much as he could do to wake him up. In fact, I thought of sending for the divisional surgeon. You never saw a sicker-looking man in your life! Can't get a word out of him. All he did was to sit on his bed with his head in his hands, moaning. We had to shake him to get him into the prison van."
The first two cases were disposed of rapidly, and then a policeman called "John Smith," and there tottered into court the black-faced comedian, a miserable object, so weak of knee that he had to be guided up the steps into the steel-railed dock.

Gone was the exhilaration of the night before, and Jim felt an unusual thrill of pity for the poor wretch in his absurd clothes and black-shining face.

The magistrate looked over his glasses. "Why wasn't this man allowed to wash his face before he came before me?" he asked.
"Couldn't get him to do anything, sir," said the gaoler, "and we haven't got the stuff to take off his make-up."

The magistrate grumbled something and the assaulted policeman stepped into the box and took his oath to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. He gave his stereotype evidence, and again the magistrate looked at the drooping figure in the dock.
"What have you to say, Smith?" he asked.

The man did not raise his head. "Is anything known about him? I notice that his address is not on the charge sheet."
"He refused his address, your worship," said the inspector.
"Remanded for inquiries!"
The gaoler touched the prisoner's arm, and he looked up at him suddenly; stared wildly round the court, and then:

"May I ask what I am doing here?" he asked in a husky voice, and Jim nearly swooned.

For the black faced man was Sir Joseph Layton!

CHAPTER XLIII
THE APPEARANCE OF A CARD

Even the magistrate was startled, though he did not recognize the voice. He was about to give an order for the removal of the man when Jim pushed his way to his desk and whispered a few words.
"Who?" asked the magistrate. "Impossible!"
"May I ask"—it was the prisoner speaking again—"what is all this about? I really do not understand."

And then he swayed and would have fallen, but the gaoler caught him in his arms.
"Take him out into my room." The magistrate was on his feet. "The court stands adjourned for ten minutes," he said, and disappeared behind the curtains into his office.

A few seconds later they brought in the limp figure of the prisoner and laid him on a sofa.

"Are you sure? You must be mistaken, Mr. Carlton!"
"I am perfectly sure of him—even though his mustache has been shaved off," said Jim, looking into the face of the unconscious man. "This is Sir Joseph Layton, the foreign minister. I could not make a mistake; I know him so well."

The magistrate peered closer. "I almost think you are right," he said, "but how on earth—"

He did not complete his sentence, and soon after went out to carry on the business of the court. Jim had sent an officer to a neighboring chemist for a pot of cold cream, and by the time the divisional surgeon arrived all doubt as to the identity of the black-faced man had been removed with his make-up.

His white hair was stained, his mustache removed, and so far as they could see, not
one stitch of his clothing bore any mark which would have identified him.

The doctor pulled up the sleeve and examined the forearm.

"He has been doped very considerably," he said, pointing to a number of little punctures. "I don't exactly know what drug was used, but there was hyosine in it, I'll swear."

Leaving Sir Joseph to the care of the surgeon, Jim hurried out to the telephone and in a few minutes was in communication with the prime minister.

"I'll come along in a few minutes," said that astonished gentleman. "Be careful that nothing about this gets into the papers. Will you please ask the magistrate, as a special favor to me, to make no reference in court?"

Fortunately only one police court reporter had been present, and he had seen nothing that aroused his suspicion, and his curiosity as to why the prisoner had been carried to the magistrate's room was easily satisfied.

Sir Joseph was still unconscious when the premier arrived. An ambulance had been summoned and was already in the little courtyard, and after a vain attempt to get him to speak, the foreign secretary was smuggled out into the yard, wrapped in a blanket, and dispatched to a nursing home.

"I confess I'm floored," said the prime minister in despair. "A nigger minstrel assaulting the police! It is incredible! You say you were at the police station when he was brought in. Didn't you recognize him then?"

"No, sir," said Jim truthfully. "I was not greatly interested—he seemed just an ordinary drunk to me. But one thing I will swear: he was not under the influence of any drug when he was brought into the station. The inspector said he reeked of whisky, and he certainly found no difficulty in giving expression to his mind!"

The premier threw out despairing hands.

"It is beyond me; I cannot understand what has happened. The whole thing is monstrously incredible. I feel I must be dreaming."

As soon as the premier had gone Jim drove to the nursing home to which the unfortunate minister had been taken. The Evory Street inspector had gone with the ambulance, and he had an astonishing story.

"What do you think we found in his pocket?" he asked.

"You can't startle me," said Jim recklessly. "What was it—the Treaty of Versailles?"

The inspector opened his pocketbook and took out a small blank visiting card, blank, that is, except for a number of scratches, probably made by some blunt instrument. But the writer had attempted to get too much on so small a space, for writing it was Jim saw when he examined the card.

Two words were decipherable, "Marling" and "Harlow," and these had been printed in capitals. He took a lead pencil, scraped the point upon the card and sifted the fine dust over the scratches until they became more definite. The writing was still indecipherable, even with such an aid to legibility as the lead powder afforded. Apparently the message had been written with a pin, for in two places the card was perforated.

"The first word is 'whosoever,'" said Jim suddenly. "'Whosoever ___ ___ please' is the fourth word, and that seems to be underlined."

He studied the card for a long time.

"'Harlow' is clear and 'Marling' is clear. What do you make of it, inspector?"

The officer took the card from his hand and examined it with a blank expression.

"I don't know anything about the writing or what it means," he said. "The thing I am trying to work out in my mind is how did that card come in his pocket. It was not there last night when the sergeant searched him—he takes his oath on it!"

CHAPTER XLIV

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

BRIEF paragraph appeared in the morning newspapers.

Sir Joseph Layton, Secretary of the State for Foreign Affairs, is seriously ill in a nursing home.

It would take more than this simple paragraph to restore the markets of the
world to the level they had been when the threat of a monstrous war had sent them tumbling like a house of cards.

The principal item of news remained this world panic, which the foreign secretary's speech had initiated. A great economist computed that the depreciation in gilt-edged securities represented over one hundred million pounds sterling, and while the downward tendency at least of some stocks was recovering, a month at least must pass before the majority reached the pre-scare level.

One newspaper, innocent of the suspicion under which the financier lay in certain quarters, published an interview with Mr. Harlow:

"I think," said Mr. Stratford Harlow, "that the effect of the slump has been greatly exaggerated. In many ways such a panic has ultimately a beneficial result. It finds out all the feeble spots in the structure of finance, breaks down the weak links, so that in the end the fabric is stronger and more wholesome than it was before the slump occurred."

"Is it possible that the slump was engineered by a group of market riggers?"

Mr. Harlow scoffed at the idea.

"How could it have been engineered without the connivance or assistance of the foreign secretary, whose speech alone was responsible?" he asked. "It was certainly an amazing statement for a responsible minister to make. Apparently Sir John was a very sick man when he addressed the House of Commons. It is suggested that he was suffering from overwork, but whatever may have been the cause, he and he alone brought about this slump."

"You knew Sir John?"

Mr. Harlow agreed.

"He was in my house in this very room less than a quarter of an hour before the speech was made," he said, "and I can only say that he appeared in every way normal. If he was ill, he certainly did not show it."

Reverting to the question of worldwide depreciation of stock values, Mr. Harlow went on to say—

Jim read the interview with a wry smile. Harlow had said many things, but he had omitted many more. He did not speak of the feverish activity of Rata, Limited, whose every window had been blazing throughout a week of nights—not by one word had he suggested that he himself would benefit to an enormous extent through the tragedy of that unhappy speech.

The man puzzled him. If he was, as Jim was convinced, behind the scare, if his clever brain had devised and, by some mysterious means, had brought about the financial panic, what end had he in view? He had been already one of the three richest men in England.

He had not the excuse that he had a mammoth industry to benefit. He had no imperial projects to bring to fruition. Had he been dreaming of new empires created out of the wild bushlands of unpopulated Africa?

Were he a great philanthropist who had some gigantic enterprise to advance for the benefit of mankind, this passionate desire for gold might be understood if it could not be excused.

But Harlow had no other objective than the accumulation of money. He had shown a vicarious interest in the public weal when he had presented his model police station to the country; he had certainly subscribed liberally to hospital appeals.

But none of these gifts belonged to a system of charity or public spirit. He was a man without social gifts—the joys or sufferings of his fellows struck no sympathetic chord in his nature. If he gave, he gave cold-bloodedly and yet without ostentation.

True, he had offered to build, on the highest point of the Chiltern Hills, an exact replica of the Parthenon as a national war memorial, but the offer had been rejected because of the inaccessibility of the chosen spot. There was a certain freakishness in his projects, and Jim suspected that they were not wholly disinterested. The man baffled him; he could get no thread that would lead him to the soul and the mind behind those cold blue eyes.

For six hours that night he sat by the bedside of the unconscious foreign minister. What strange story could he tell? Jim wondered. How came he to be perambulating the streets in the guise of a drunken mountebank, whose wanderings were to end in a vulgar brawl with a policeman and the cheerless lodging of a prison cell? Had
he some secret weakness which Harlow had learned and exploited?

Did he live a double life?—Jim thought only to reject the thought. Sir Joseph’s life was more or less an open book; his movements for years past could be traced day by day from the information supplied by the diaries of his secretary.

While he kept his vigil he made another attempt to decipher the writing on the card, but he got no further. Jim was taking turn and turn about with Inspector Wilton of Eovy Street in watching beside the bedside. The doctor had said that at any moment the minister might recover consciousness, and though he took the gravest view of the ultimate result of the drugging, his prognosis did not exclude the chance of a complete recovery.

It was at a quarter after three in the morning that the sick man, who had been tossing from side to side, muttering disjointed words which had no meaning to the listener, turned upon his back and, opening his eyes, blinked round the dimly lighted room. Jim, who had been studying the card in the light of a shaded lamp, put the pasteboard into his pocket and came to the side of the bed.

Sir Joseph looked at him wonderingly, his wide brows knit in an effort of memory.

"Hello!" he said faintly. "What happened? Did the car smash up?"

"Nothing serious has happened, Sir Joseph," said Jim gently.

Again the wondering eyes wandered round the bare walls of the room, and then fell upon a temperature chart.

"This is a hospital, isn’t it?"

"A nursing home," said Jim.

There was a long silence before the sick man spoke.

CHAPTER XLV

A FANTASTIC THEORY

"My head aches infernally. Can you give me a drink, or isn’t that allowed?"

Jim poured out a glass of water and, supporting the shoulders of the minister, put the glass to his lips. He drank the contents greedily and then sank back with a sigh upon the pillow.

"I suppose I am a little light-headed, but I could swear that your name is Carlton," he said.

"That is my name, sir," said Jim, and the minister pondered this for a little time.

"Anything broken?" he asked. "It was the car, I suppose? I told that stupid chauffeur of mine to be careful. The road was like glass."

"Nothing is broken at all, Sir Joseph," said Jim. "You have had a little shock."

He had already rung for the doctor, who was sleeping in a room below.

"Shock, eh? I don’t remember. And Harlow!" His eyebrows lowered again. "A decent fellow, but rather overdressed. I went to his house to-night, didn’t I; those Macedonian people? Yes, yes, I remember. How long ago was it?"

Jim would not tell him that the visit to Harlow’s had happened days before.

"Yes, yes, I remember now. Where did I go after that, to the House I suppose? My mind is like a whirling ball of wool!"

The doctor came in, a dressing gown over his pyjamas, and the minister’s mind was sufficiently clear to guess his profession.

"I’m all in, doctor. What was it, a stroke?"

"No, Sir Joseph," said the doctor. He was feeling his patient’s pulse, and seemed satisfied.

"Sir Joseph thinks he might have been in a car collision," suggested Jim with a significant glance at the doctor.

The man was terribly weak, but the brightness of his intellect was undimmed.

"What is the matter with me?" he asked irritably, as the medical man put the stethoscope to his heart.

"I’m wondering whether you have ever taken drugs in your life?"

"Drugs!" snorted the old man. "Good God! What a question! I don’t even take medicine! When I feel queer I go to my osteopath and he puts me right."

The doctor grinned, as all properly constituted doctors grin when an osteopath is mentioned, for the medical profession is the most conservative and the most suspicious of any.
"Then I shan't give you drugs." He had a nimble turn of mind to cover up an awkward question. "Your heart is good and your pulse is good. And all you want now is a little sleep."

"And a little food," growled Sir Joseph. They brought him some chicken broth, hot and strong, and in half an hour he had fallen into a gentle sleep. The doctor beckoned Jim outside the room.

"I think it is safe for you to leave him," he said. "He is making a better recovery than I dreamed was possible. I suppose he said nothing about his adventures?"

"Nothing," said Jim, and the man of medicine realized that, even if Sir Joseph had explained the circumstances of his arrest and appearance at the police court, it was very unlikely that he would be told.

Early the next morning Jim called at Downing Street and saw the prime minister.

"He is under the impression that he was in a motor car accident after leaving Park Lane. He remembers nothing about the speech in the House, the doctors will not allow him to be told until he is strong again. I have very grave doubt on one point, sir, and that I want to clear up. And to clear it up it may be necessary that I go outside the law."

"I don't care very much where you go," said the prime minister, "but we must have the truth! Until the facts are known, not only Sir Joseph, but the whole Cabinet is under a cloud. I will give instructions that you are to have carte blanche."

With this confident assurance Jim went on to Scotland Yard to prove the truth of a theory which had slowly evolved in the dark hours of the night; a theory so fantastical that he could hardly bring himself to its serious contemplation.

CHAPTER XLVI

COLLECTING THE SPOILS

Our hundred and fifteen cablegrams were put on the wire in one morning and they were all framed in identical terms:

Remit by cable through Lombard Bank, Carr Street Branch, all profits taken in Rata

Transaction 17 to receipt of this instruction. Acknowledge. RATA.

This message was dispatched at three o'clock in the morning from the G. P. O.

The foreign department manager of the Lombard Bank was an old friend of Mr. Ellenbury, and had done business with him before. Mr. Ellenbury drove to the bank the following afternoon and saw the head of the foreign department.

"I am expecting some very extensive cable remittances through the Lombard," he said, "and I shall want cash."

The sour-looking manager looked even more sour.

"Rata's, I suppose? I'm surprised that you are mixed up with these people, Mr. Ellenbury. I don't think you can know what folks are saying in the city."

He was a friend and was frank. Mr. Ellenbury listened meekly.

"One cannot pick and choose," he said. "The war made a great deal of difference to me; I must live."

The war was an unfailing argument to explain changed conditions and can be employed as well to account for adaptable standards of morality. The manager accepted the other's viewpoint with reservations.

"How much has Harlow made out of this swindle?" he asked again, exercising the privilege of friendship.

"Some day I will tell you," said the lawyer cryptically. "The point is, I expect very large sums."

"Sterling or what?"

"Any currency that is stable," said Mr. Ellenbury.

That evening came the first advice—from Johannesburg. The sum remitted was not colossal, but it was large. New Orleans arrived in the night and was delivered to Mr. Ellenbury with Chicago, New York, Toronto, and Sydney. The cable advices accumulated; Mr. Ellenbury took no steps to draw the money that was piling up at the Lombard Bank until the second day.

On the morning of that day he walked round his bedraggled demesne before going to the city. He had grown attached to Royalton House, he discovered, and almost wished he could take it with him. It was
ugly and dreary and depressing. Even the vegetable garden seemed decayed. Pale ghosts of cabbages drooped like aged and mourning men amid the skeleton stalks of their departed fellows.

Across the desolation came the gardener, his shoulders protected from the drizzle by a sack.

"I've got a load of stuff to fill the pit," he said. "Camelyesterday."

The pit was an eyesore and had been for thirty years. It was a deep depression at the edge of the kitchen garden and Mr. Ellenbury had stited many dreams upon it. An ornamental pond, surrounded by banked rhododendrons.

A swimming pool with a white-tiled bed and marble seats, where, hidden from the vulgar eye by trellised roses, a bather might sit and bask in the sun. Now it was the end of dreams—a pit to be filled. He stood on the edge of it. An unlovely hole in the ground, the bottom covered with water, the rusty corner of a petrol tin showing just above the surface.

By the side was a heap of rubbish, aged bricks and portions of brick, sand, gravel, sheefishpit emptings.

"I will fill it in—I have promised myself that exercise," said Mr. Ellenbury, forgetting for the moment that by to-morrow he would be filling in nothing more substantial than time.

The slimy hole held his eyes. If he could put Harlow there and see his big white face staring up from the mud—that would be a good filling!

He felt his face and neck go red, his limbs tingling. Presently he tore himself away and walked back to the house. The car that Ratas hired for him was waiting—the driver bade him a civil good morning and said the weather was the worst he had ever known.

Mr. Ellenbury went in to breakfast with out replying. The sight of the car was suggestive.

There was a garage known to Mr. Ellenbury where a car could be hired and no inconvenient questions asked. Stated more clearly, there are many people in London engaged in peculiar professions, to whom money was not an important consideration. They could not buy loyalty, but they were willing to pay for discretion.

Nova's Garage had a tariff that was considerably higher than any other, but the extra cost was money well spent. For when the police came to Nova's to learn who was the foreign-looking gentleman who had driven away from a West End jeweler with the diamond ring he had bought and the row of pearls that had disappeared with him, Nova's were blandly ignorant.

Nor could they recognize the lady who had driven the rich Bradford merchant to Marlow and left him drugged and penniless in the long grass of the meadows.

CHAPTER XLVII
ELLENBURG PLANS A TRIP

In the afternoon the car came; the chauffeur was a burly man with a black mustache who chewed gum and had no interest in anybody's business but his own.

In this Mr. Ellenbury drove to the bank, taking his two suit cases, and went into the manager's room and checked the cable advices.

"Immense," said the manager soberly. He referred to the total. "And more to come, I suppose? It is so big that it almost breaks loose from the standards."

"Standards?"

Mr. Ellenbury did not know what he was talking about.

"Right and wrong, like taking a foot-rule to measure St. Paul's."

Ellenbury, something of a dialectician, could not resist the challenge.

"Moral conduct isn't a matter of arithmetic, but a matter of proportion. You can't measure it with a yard-stick, but by its angle. Ten degrees out of the perpendicular is as much a fault in a gatepost as in the Leaning Tower of Pisa. I make this American total a hundred and twelve thousand."

"And ten," added the manager. "The exchange is against us."

Mr. Ellenbury made five bundles of the notes and fitted them into the suit case.

"Now we will take the South American
remittances,” said the manager, painfully patient, a sigh in his every sentence, disapproval in every wag of his penholder. “I suppose you’re right, but it does seem to me that a man’s offense against society is in inverse ratio to the amount of money he pouches.”

“Pouches!” murmured Mr. Ellenbury in protest.

“’Pockets’ then; when you reach the million mark you’ve got to a point beyond the comprehension of a jury. They look at the man and they look at the money and they say ‘not guilty’ automatically.

“There ought to be a new set of laws dealing with property—starting with penalties for pinching a million, and working up to the place where you can indict a government for wasting nine figures. And the jury should be made up of accountants and novelists, who’ve never seen real money, but think in billions—eighty-seven thousand nine hundred I make it.”

Mr. Ellenbury performed a rapid calculation, consulting the little ready-reckoner which bank clerks employ to find exchange values.

“Right,” he said. “You have clearly perverted principles, my friend. Whether a man steals ten cents or five million dollars—”

“Bank of Yokohama”—the manager sorted his papers. “The yen is at 1 shilling 8 5/16 pence, and it only seems yesterday that it was on the twenty-four mark. Curious! Way down in the bowels of the earth, a ledge of rock slips over, a superheated packet of steam blows up, and the effect on the money market is disastrous! There is a lot of earthquake in Harlow; he has got into the Acts of God class—I’m giving you dollars for this—United States dollars.”

“Quite O. K.,” said Mr. Ellenbury, checking the bundles that were handed to him.

It was growing dark when he carried out his suit cases and placed them inside the car. They were very heavy. It was strange how heavy paper money could be—and how bulky.

He drove to his office in Theobald’s Road and was glad that many years before, when offered the choice between a small suite on the ground floor, and a larger one on the first floor, he had chosen the former.

He had sent his clerk home early. It was a Friday and the man had been given a fortnight’s holiday and had had his salary in advance. Opening the outer door with his key, he tugged the two suit cases into his private room. Here was a brand-new trunk and a passport. A few weeks before, Harlow had ordered him to procure a passport for a “Mr. Jackson” whose other name was Ingle.

He sat down with the two bulging grips before him and with a feeling of growing unease. Not that his conscience was troubling him. The bedridden Mrs. Ellenbury never once entered his mind; the injustice he was doing to his employer, if it occurred to him at all, was a relief to his distress.

The weight and the bulk of paper money—

The customs would search his suit case at Calais or Havre, and the money would attract attention. He might put it at the bottom of the trunk and register it through. But the thefts of baggage on the French railways were notoriously frequent.

He might, of course, travel by the Simplon Express or by the Blue Train—hand baggage was subject to a perfunctory examination on the train and if he were bound for Monte Carlo the carriage of such wealth might be regarded as an act of madness by the customs officials and excite no other comment.

But both the Simplon and the Riviera Express are booked up at this season of the year.

There remained only one alternative. To carry half the money in his trunk, distribute as much as he could among his pockets and post the rest to himself at various hotels throughout France and Spain. And this would be a long and a tedious job. He went into the outer office and brought back a packet of stout envelopes. He must not register them—these Latin post offices made the collection of a registered letter a fussy business.
"Pa, there's a dead woman in our yard"

WAS HE GUILTY?

By Simon Magee

CROPINGS IN THE DARK RECESSES OF THE HUMAN MIND SUGGEST PERHAPS A TRAVESTY OF JUSTICE IN A STRANGE TWENTY-YEAR-OLD CHICAGO CASE

A Story of Fact

On January 13, 1906, the front pages of the Chicago newspapers were blackened by the ugliest of words: Murder. At once those sanguine syllables flew from lip to lip. A morbid spectre stalked the streets of the city, haunted its alleys, and threw its population into a frenzy.

On January 13, 1906, the front pages of the Chicago newspapers were blackened by the ugliest of words: Murder. At once those sanguine syllables flew from lip to lip. A morbid spectre stalked the streets of the city, haunted its alleys, and threw its population into a frenzy.

CHURCHWOMAN, OUTRAGED, SLAIN; YOUNG MAN CONFESSIONS

Youth Calmly Admits Wanton Murder of Choir-singer Found Mutilated in Barnyard This Morning

Thus and similarly ran the headlines. The story which followed contained the confession, and an account of a crime so disgusting and brutal that even in our own days—blase as we have become in such matters when every twenty-four hours gives us a new horror—we should still be aghast.

The entire country was moved to protest and wrath and outcry. Within the week there arose a great national clamor. Public sentiment cried out in indignation for better protection to our wives and daughters. Vigilantes and anti-crime organizations were born.

The Chicago police force was increased by one thousand men in answer to the demand. And, what is strangely significant in view of our present-day thinking, the license fees for saloons were automatically doubled in cost.

The police did their best to serve the public.
The trial was prompt, precise, even hurried, and the young man was briskly convicted by a jury composed of "average citizens," sentenced, and hanged—be it avowed to the very great satisfaction of several million people.

And there, one would say, the matter ends.

Quite the contrary: our story begins at this point, for this very zeal displayed by the police, the eagerness to stamp out by drastic example any repetition of such lust-mad criminality, may have led the department into one of the most deplorable errors conceivable.

"So Ma Won't Worry"

At least the case has become a mystery which will be forever unsolved—in all probabilities—and which, more than any other one fact, marks the first entrance of psychological and psychiatrist knowledge into American criminal courts.

It's a story of hypnotism—that mysterious, half unbelievable science—or at least that is the explanation offered and may well be true. But whatever, let the future explain if it will; we shall be concerned only with the facts.

The case outlines as follows:

At about seven o'clock, Thursday, January thirteenth, of the year mentioned, a young man named Richard Glines Ivens went to his father’s barn on Belden Avenue to begin the "chores" which were his morning task. He fed and watered the horses and set about cleaning their stables.

Looking out of the window into the yard he saw the body of a woman lying face downward on the dung hill where the barn's refuse was habitually thrown. He went out to her, turned her over, found her dead and hurried to report the matter to his father.

He was very calm and quiet about it, and even displayed a certain thoughtfulness which was characteristic of him.

"Pa," he is reported to have said, "listen. There's a dead woman out in our yard. I just seen her. Better tell the police, only don't say nothin' to ma, because she might worry over it."

And so, leaving his father to attend to the business of going to the police station, he returned to his work.

The police came.

They found evidences and lack of evidences. Her purse, her muff, and one glove were missing. A piece of copper wire was about her neck, loosely drawn. Her face and her arms were bruised; her hair was disarranged. But there were no signs of a struggle about the place.

The body was brought to the morgue, where the autopsy revealed that this young woman had been outraged and the victim of peculiarly brutal handling before having been strangled to death.

Inspector Lavin, who was in charge of the immediate investigation, sought a clew in every direction. He was determined to leave nothing unprobed. He remarked at once that it could be considered odd that young Ivens should have allowed his father to walk to Halsted Street police station to report the matter rather than go himself. And so he questioned this young man with severity.

"Now look here, you know something about all this, don't you? You'd better come clean or you'll get into trouble. What about it, now?"

The Third Degree

But Ivens, with the fetishlike awe of uneducated persons for the blue uniform of the law, was reticent and confused in his answers.

"No, sir," he said stumblingly, "I don't know nothin' about it. I just found her there and told pa. I didn't do nothin'. I don't know nothin' about it, like I told you."

And so the questioning went on. Ivens became more and more confused and incoherent. He was distinctly a boy with a less than normal intelligence. And he had about him that morning the look of one who had slept badly.

Inspector Lavin remarked these things, and quite naturally took this increasing confusion as an indicator of suspicious reticence. So young Ivens was taken along to the station for closer examination.

In later developments of the case an account of Ivens's first moments in the Hal-
sted Street station is given by Captain Healy, who was then on duty:

"The inspector—Lavin—stood on one side of Ivens and the chief—Assistant Chief Scheuttler—on the other. The inspector got round in front of him then and said: 'Now, young man, you look worried. There's something on your mind. There's been a terrible crime committed here, and if you know anything about it, or if you took any part in it, we want to know all about it.'"

"Then Ivens kind of hung his head. Then the inspector said to him, 'Well, Dick, perhaps you might want to talk to the chief alone. Eh? 'That's right,' said the chief. 'You fellows step out.'"

**From Leading Questions**

"So we went out for about half an hour, and when we came back the chief said, 'Well, Dick, you've told me all about it. Don't you want to tell the rest of the fellows, too?' And he answered 'Yes,' and then he told us the story.'"

Immediately after this account the document known later as the "First Confession" was written. I shall reproduce it here, making the omissions which are required by decency and the ethics of publication.

About six thirty or six forty-five I took her in the alley. I wrestled with her and I guess I lost my senses. I was a little intoxicated. She wanted to run away, but I—Then we went into the barnyard. I got afraid and got over the fence. I may have put the wire on her then. I may have—This is the truth.

(Signed) RICHARD IVENS.

This, or a simplification of it, was published in the newspapers. A second more detailed confession followed the next day. The trial began within the month. Ivens was kept at Halsted Street for a week, then moved to jail. It was only a short time, however, when complications began and the newspaper-reading public was given the excitement of a very heated discussion.

There was a certain Dr. John Sanderson Christison, a resident of Chicago, and a man deeply schooled in the functionings of the human mind, who remarked what he thought to be some extraordinary and unnatural features of the case.

First of all, he was struck by the wording of the confession printed above. He subjected it to a most scrutinious examination—perhaps in the nature of what we to-day would term psycho-analysis—and was convinced that it was not an open confession, but resulted from suggestive leading questions.

Disturbed by this, and fascinated from a purely scientific point of view, Dr. Christison commenced an investigation of his own, quite unlike that of the police of twenty years ago.

He soon became possessed of the idea—or shall we, out of fairness to the Chicago police, say "obsessed with"?—that Ivens was innocent and that he had confessed only because he was a peculiarly constituted person whose mind was unusually subject to forceful suggestion.

Dr. Christison used the word hypnotized. He proclaimed his theory in the newspapers, and you may well imagine that it was like setting fire to a short fuse of a bomb.

Booed, hissed, threatened, mocked, ridiculed, scoffed at, even mobbed by an overwrought public, Dr. Christison held nevertheless to his idea. By this time Richard Ivens had repudiated his confessions, and he was struggling to save his life.

**What the Professors Said**

Dr. Christison enlisted his scientific colleagues in his cause. He prepared literature on the case and sent it in pamphlet form to the world's foremost psychologists.

Among them were such great men as Professor William James of Harvard, Charles Richet of Paris, Professor Hugo Munsterberg of Harvard, Professor Josef Jastrow of the University of Wisconsin, Professor Pillsbury of Ann Arbor, and ten others, many of whose names, like those herein noted, have since been connected with the most important discoveries and advanced work in their field.

Spectacularly Professors Munsterberg and James thundered to battle. A fragment of James's letter, printed in several Chicago journals, will show their attitude:

The collateral evidence, so far as I know, makes the confessions absurd. If one rules out the collateral evidence and takes the
Ivens utterances alone I think one stands between the horns of a psychological dilemma; and either horn is so antecedently improbable that I can excuse any ordinary judge for ignoring it.

I mean that whether guilty or not guilty, Ivens must have been in a state of dissociated personality so exceptional that only an expert could be expected to treat it as credible. If guilty, he was in that state before the crime and during the confession, and it is a well known fact that this state is often followed by amnesia, so that his forgetting afterward is also to be expected.

Imagine such an opinion offered to a public which was quite ready to lynch Ivens, crying out for his execution! Professors James and Munsterberg were literally deluged with letters, threatening, damning, abusing them.

**The Victim's History**

A typical editorial will reflect the public's mind at the moment. It is taken from the *Chicago Evening Journal*:

Ivens is guilty as hell, whatever vagaries these "experts" and theorizing university professors may be led into. The long distance impudence of Professors James and Munsterberg has no effect whatever other than to make themselves and their science ridiculous.

The *Chicago Chronicle* of June twenty one is even more irate, but the article is too long for our use. The entire country, already scandalized by the fact, was thrown into hysteria at the very thought of Ivens escaping his justly merited punishment for an almost unbelievable atrocity.

Still Dr. Christison persisted in face of all this outburst. He became what a fiction writer might call the "psychological dick." He devoted himself to the work as any detective might do, using deductive methods that would credit *Sherlock Holmes*, and he made some revelations which, when considered calmly in our days, leaves us wondering.

Let us, as nearly as we may, follow his exact methods of analysis, returning to the case, and, playing detectives ourselves, examine with him all the evidence which is preserved in the court records.

First of all, let us look at the victim's history.

Her name was Mrs. Bessie M. Hollister. She was thirty-five years of age, five feet tall, and weighted one hundred and fifteen pounds. It is interesting to learn that she was a member of the Calvary Baptist Church, and a leading chorister in its parish.

She was widely known and respected in the immediate neighborhood of Belden Avenue, and had many, if not all, of her friends among the church people. Her character was beyond question or suspicion.

Dr. Christison made a personal visit to the Hollister home and came into possession of some facts worthy of pondering. He asked Mr. Hollister about his wife's actions the day of the murder.

"Bessie went out about nine o'clock in the morning," said the bereft man. "She was going to the jeweler's with a clock to be fixed, and to do some shopping."

"Did she do those things?" was the query.

"Well, Schmidt, the florist, says she ordered flowers at nine thirty, and then the grocer on Montana Street says she ordered fish there a little later. But she didn't get to the jeweler's until three in the afternoon."

"How big was the clock?" Dr. Christison inquired.

**Stopped Before Noon**

"A pretty big mantle clock. Maybe five pounds."

"Did anybody see her after the jeweler?"

"No, and the jeweler wasn't sure it was her. He said he thought it was an older and stouter woman that Bessie."

"Were you surprised when she didn't come home in the morning?"

"No, she had to sing at a funeral service at one-thirty. I knew that, and then she had an appointment with a dressmaker."

"And did she keep those appointments?"

"No. Nobody saw her after nine-thirty."

And that, Dr. Christison learned, was the end of that. It is true that the police had this information also, and that they pursued as far as they could the possible clue of the "woman with the clock." But it led nowhere; the jeweler was not of a positive opinion; he could identify no one.
Then the coroner’s inquiry revealed something that ties closely with this last story of Mr. Hollister. A post mortem analysis of her stomach showed it contained particles of bread and orange. Her husband had already advised the police that she had breakfasted on tea, toast, and orange at eight o’clock. And here was what seemed fairly conclusive proof that her digestion was stopped either by shock or by death before noon on January twelve.

Next Dr. Christison visited the Ivens family.

There were only three besides Richard—a brother named William, his mother and father. Then there was a kindly old nurse, Mrs. Apil, who boarded with them.

**Good But Dumb**

The mother’s account of her boy is rather pathetic.

“He was a good boy, sir,” she told Dr. Christison, “the kind that’s always good to his mother. He was somehow closer to me than Will is. Perhaps because he never had any chums and he didn’t do the things most boys his age do.”

“Just what do you mean by that, Mrs. Ivens?” Dr. Christison asked.

“I mean he didn’t like baseball and football or running out nights. He always liked things he could do alone. He used to go fishing on week-ends. He’d go off on his bicycle too, always alone. And I don’t believe he’s been to the theater more than three or four times in all his twenty-four years.”

“How long was he in school?”

“We took him out at fifteen because his voice was changing, but he used to study home. He never was bright in school, though.”

“You say he wasn’t bright in school. Was he bright in other ways?”

“No,” admitted the mother a little wistfully. “Dick was sort of a stupid boy. It took him a long time to catch onto things. The boys used to kid him about that.”

“Did he object to this ‘kidding?’” asked the psychologist. “Did he ever fight over it?”

“Oh, no, sir,” the mother answered. “Dick never had a fight in his life. He would just grin. He used to say that he knew he was ‘thick.’ He didn’t mind the kidding.”

“Did he drink much, Mrs. Ivens?”

“No, I wouldn’t say he did, except beer. We all drink beer at home. Always have. But Dick never goes into saloons. And he doesn’t like liquor.”

“You said he was the kind who is always good to his mother. Just what do you mean by that, Mrs. Ivens?”

“Well, for one thing, he used to turn over all his money to me. Said he wanted me to have it, and then he would ‘borrow’ from me whenever he wanted any. And then—you know how I mean, he was close to me. We were sort of pals.”

So it seemed from all the information that could be got about Richard Ivens. He was distinctly a “good boy.” There was nothing of the criminal about him. But it was generally admitted “that he was “dumb,” and “thick.” Also, he had lived in that neighborhood all his life; he had even been born there. Once only in his life, at the age of twelve, he had been seriously ill with typhoid. Mr. Ivens, senior, stated that Dick had been delirious for twenty-two days at that time.

**Confessions That Don’t Jibe**

It is important to the rest of this odd affair that Dick had an established reputation for day sleeping and day dreaming. “He could always go to sleep standing up,” his father said of him, “but he wasn’t a bit lazy at work. You just had to be after him a bit and direct him. He didn’t think very well for himself. Sort of depended on other people.”

In all Dr. Christison interviewed eleven persons in young Ivens’s behalf, only to corroborate the stories of his parents.

Then he began in earnest and more directly.

Other confessions had been obtained from Ivens, especially a second one in writing. It will be necessary to reproduce a part of this here in order to follow Dr. Christison’s reasoning:

At about seven fifteen o’clock last night, January 12, I left my home and went to father’s barn at 368 Belden Avenue and took
care of the horses. Then I left the barn and started up the alley north. I came back again on the Belden Avenue side east of father's shop and down over the street to the southeast.

I met a woman walking west. I ran into her and said . . . She started to run away. I grabbed her and she hollered a few times, so I choked her with my hands. I forced her to go with me and took her through the wooden gate leading to our barn on Belden Avenue. Then I made her go to the back of barn, et cetera.

First of all we notice the discrepancy in time; so did Dr. Christison. Confession number one places the time at six forty-five for the latest, whereas in number two it is seven fifteen.

Next the psychologist was struck by the phrase "I guess I lost my senses," which appeared in both written statements. He made a great point of this, stating that the last thing to expect of a temporarily demented person was consciousness of the moment of derangement.

An Alibi for Ivens

Another thing, Ivens seemed remarkably vague regarding the indecencies he had committed, and most striking of all was the fact that he employed certain vulgar expressions in describing his misdeeds which were never before heard in his vocabulary. He was known as a "clean-mouthed" boy among all his acquaintances.

What was the deduction.

Simply that these confessions were a composite of ideas thrust or foisted upon Ivens's impressionable mind by the zealous policemen, and expressed in their language.

And just about this time, when the doctor was growing warm to his trail, the newspapers published a statement which exploded like a bomb. It was a complete alibi for Ivens.

Seven credible and unimpeachable witnesses testified in court to his being at home after suppertime about seven fifteen. These witnesses were his father, mother, brother, Mrs. Apil the nurse, Mr. George White, a table-boarder, a Mr. Goodman who was visiting, and a dressmaker, Mrs. Owsley, who testified further that she had left at seven twenty, having an appointment at seven thirty, and that Dick Ivens was still reading his newspaper when she went out.

The alibi was complete with the testimony of a Mrs. Evans and daughter, friends of the Ivens family, who met the young man on their doorstep as they were leaving for the theater at seven thirty. He came in and spent the rest of the evening with Mr. Evans. It must be noted that the walking distance from the Ivens's house to the Evanses is eight minutes.

You may well imagine the effect of this alibi.

Chicago newspapers were deluged with maddened letters. "Ivens must not escape!" seemed to be a public slogan, for every one was convinced of his guilt. The alibi was discredited by the journalists, and, in view of what happened the very next day it appeared that they were right.

The Wire on the Neck

The thing that "happened" was a letter—a most awkward and unfortunate letter written by Ivens to this same Mr. Evans with whom he had spent the evening of the alleged murder. Here it is, just as it was published in the newspapers after being intercepted by the police:

County Jail,
64 Dearborn Street, Chicago.

Mr. Fred Evans:
I have been going to write to you for quite a long while, but will now. I am very sorry to hear Miss Pearl—Evans's daughter—is very sick, which, I hear from my mother, also which is bad news for me to read that she is not any better since I last seen her on Thursday eve and Saturday morning when I got the tools I had left there Friday evening, after which I took away Saturday morning.

Now Mr. Evans, you know yourself that I had the pliers which Os was kind enough to give me that Friday eve when I fixed the wash bench to surprise Mrs. Evans, with me, for I used them at that time. The police have them now, and I told them I did not have them on Friday evening when I was up at the house Friday evening.

Now you may tell that I did not have them along with me if you are asked, Mr. Evans, at the trial, which is set for March 5, as I suppose you will have to be down there at that time.

This will be a great favor to me if you
do so. I think my folks do not know I had them, as I have not told them so.
I will also state that I have not seen Tony Lehmann since I was changed—meaning from the station house to the jail—and so as I have no more to write to you I will close. Thanking you very much if you will do that for me which I have just asked you.
Best regards as ever, Dick.

Now this is the most obvious deception one could imagine. And what a commentary on Ivens's mind! It concerned the wire which was found round the victim's neck. A considerable point had been made of this in the cross-questioning, and an attempt had been made to show that these pliers had been used.

**In His Own Way**

Whatever significance the letter may have, it certainly shows that Ivens was a sub-normal person—a simpleton. The public seized upon this document as most incriminating evidence. These statements of Mrs. Owsey and the others which made it impossible for Ivens to have accomplished his evil deeds in the few minutes they left him, were set aside. Again a great clamor for the death of this "monster" was lifted.

But Dr. Christison still pursued his quest. And it must be remembered that Ivens denied all confession—forgot them, it seemed—as soon as he was transferred to the county jail. This very amnesia made the psychologist more opinionated. Just before the trial he had an interview with Assistant Chief Scheuttler, the man who had secured Ivens's first statement of the crime.

It was not satisfactory. But the official admitted that he "told the defendant that he believed him to be guilty as soon as he looked at him." Later, after the trial, Scheuttler refused to discuss the circumstances under which he had obtained the confession on the grounds that "it might lead to a new trial."

And so we—as did Dr. Christison—may think what we please.

Perhaps the most interesting of all the material collected by this indefatigable psychiatrist is the stenographic report of the coroner's examination. The inconsistencies and discrepancies are startling. Fragments are reproduced here.

The questioner is Mr. Thomas J. Healy, State attorney.
"I heard part of your talk with the lieutenant," he began as he in his turn took up then, with Ivens, "but I didn't catch it all. Now I want you to tell me in your own way just how this occurred."
"I was feeling pretty good," the young man said, mechanically. He had used this expression several times.
"But tell me, first, when was that?"
"Last night," which meant the night of January twelve.
"About what time?" was the query.
"About a quarter of seven when I left the house," Ivens answered. We note at once thirty minutes' difference from the testimony of Mrs. Owsey and the family's guests.

After pursuing the morbid description of a most disgusting assault upon Mrs. Hollister, the attorney asked:
"Have you been in good health right along?"
"Yes, sir," Ivens assured him. "Right along!"
"You were never laid up to any extent?"

**Intoxicated or Not?**

"Well, I was laid up once for six weeks," he admitted.
"What was the trouble?"
"I sprained my wrist."
"I see. But you never had any real sickness you can remember?"
"No, sir," affirmed the young man. But it is not without some significance that we learn of the typhoid already mentioned, when he had been delirious for three weeks. Ivens's memory was certainly faulty.

Later in the questioning we have reason to wonder whether Ivens was really intoxicated or not. His answers are most confusing. Healy had just been examining as to the entire day of January twelve.
"So you worked until five o'clock, and then you went to Montana Street. Whereabouts?"
"Twelve thirty-nine Montana," he answered quickly.
"Whom did you call on there?"
"Mrs. Evans."
"Is she a relation of yours?"
"No, sir."
"Is she a friend?"
"A personal friend of mine." He seemed quite positive of this.
"You called on her in person?" asked Healy.
"Well, I took my tools up there. I was going to work there last night. They were gone to the theater when I got there. That was about nine or nine thirty. Here we must recall that Mrs. Evans had met Richard at her door at about seven thirty. But look at his very next statement!
"Well, what then?"

Richard Cracks Jokes

"I had supper and sat down and read the paper until seven o’clock. Then I went to the shop and watered the horses, and started up the alley again. I was feeling pretty good."
"Were you drunk?"
"Yes."
"How many drinks did you have?"
"I don’t know. Maybe half a dozen glasses of beer all afternoon."
"And how many after you quit?"
"Four."
"And nothing besides beer?"
"Yes," he admitted finally. "I guess I had one whisky and three beers."
"Did you consider yourself drunk then?"
"No, sir," said Ivens this time, quite in denial of his statement a few lines above.
"I wasn’t drunk, but maybe a little out of the head. Whisky always has that effect on me."

Still later on in the examination he described how he had held Mrs. Hollister’s mouth to keep her from crying out, and then her struggle with him. Scheuttler, the assistant chief, interrupted this account.
"May I ask one question?" he said.
"While you was taking her in the yard did you choke her? Did she holler?"
"I held my hand over her mouth," answered Ivens, repeating what he had just said.
"She hollered twice, didn’t she?" was Scheuttler’s leading question.
"Two or three times; that’s all she had a chance." There is an example of the remarkable vein of levity—or at least of the absence of gravity—which seems to pervade all of Ivens’s testimony. We are informed also that he indulged in "cracking jokes" with the policemen of the Halsted Street station. He seems to have had no realization of the seriousness of his position until he was removed from this place and installed in the county jail.

During this same questioning Ivens made some answers to Mr. Healy which more than suggest that his mind was not functioning normally. For instance, asking about Richard’s frequenting of the opposite sex, came the query:
"And is that the only girl you have?"
This refers to Mr. Evans’s daughter, a music teacher whom he knew in a casual manner only.
"Yes, sir," he answered, "the only one I associate with, and when I have not worked for father I have driven a wagon for a box factory." Such a non sequitur is significant, but the following is even worse:
"You are sure you have always been in good health?"

Was It Possible?

"Yes, sir. I worked in half a dozen places since I left school. If necessary to mention them I can tell you."

In fact, Ivens seems quite convinced of his own inability to recall facts as they are, and certainly the following passage of the testimony indicates his acceptance of the police opinion:
"What did you do when you got home?"
The question refers to coming home after his evening with Mr. Evans.
"Father was in bed," he replied, "and mother was going upstairs. While I had my coat on I asked her if everything was all right—if the doors were locked? She said they were. Then I went in and put my coat on the rack and then I went upstairs. But my recollection must be very bad according to the inspector’s report."

Finally, when confronted with the time sequences of both his own statements and the testimony of Mrs. Owsley, his parents and the others he admits the unlikelihood of his own crime.
"Now, Richard," said Mr. Healy, "you
say you left the house Friday night about seven and you met Mrs. Evans and daughter just as they were going to the theater? People generally go about seven-thirty. Is it possible for you to have done these things and get over to the Evans's house by then?"

"No, sir," he admitted. "I don't think so, sir."

So much for the case and testimony. I have dwelt upon what Professor James referred to as "collateral evidence" in his letter to Dr. Christison and have omitted a mass of material whose length and character alone would forbid me to print it here. But I think I have cast some light upon the difficulties which confronted the court.

**A State of Hypnosis**

What to accept? What to reject? We cannot, even at this remote date, align ourselves with the psychologist and proclaim that Ivens has been railroaded through a trial and to his death—we can only hope that no error was made.

But we must admit the importance of the points which Dr. Christison published in recapitulation just before the hanging, and in light of these we marvel that a new trial was not granted even in the face of the public's agitation against the young man.

The "points" are these:

First of all the alibis, and in fairness we must remark that stress was removed from them because of the unfortunate letter to Mr. Evans which would presuppose a too kindly interest in the accused on the part of this entire family and family-like group.

Secondly—and this has not yet been mentioned—that there was no sound of a struggle in the neighborhood at the time mentioned. Three persons who were within a few rods of the scene of the crime testified to this.

Thirdly, the autopsy showed evidences of horrible brutality upon the body of Mrs. Hollister, whereas Ivens's own testimony in his confessions would suggest no such fiendishness of attack. Also, as it has already been noted there was no evidence of struggle on the scene, nor were Mrs. Hollister's clothes torn nor stained with blood—a peculiar thing in the face of several wounds upon her body which had bled freely at some time.

Fourth, the nature of the crime is incongruous to Ivens's character and reputation.

Fifth—and this is the crux of Dr. Christison's position—Ivens's reactions, his facial expressions, his bizarre wandering, his eager, almost gay account of the crime and his amnesia after his confessions, all indicate that he was in a state known to science as *abstraction*, or, in less exact if more glowing language, *hypnosis*.

In this state, avows Dr. Christison and his colleagues, it would be a simple matter for a vigorous bombardment of "leading questions" to make him confess to any sort of crime whatever. And then, to dwell for a moment upon this "hypnotic hypothesis," it is most interesting of all to review the opinion of still another psychologist who was called in for the case.

This is Dr. Herbert A. Parkyn, the founder of the Chicago School of Psychology, and the author of several works on therapeutics and hypnotism.

**Beyond the Reach of Science**

"Ivens," he avows, "is what we may term a *hypnotic somnambulist*. That is to say, an individual who has so little voluntary attention, and whose ability to associate his old impressions with new ones is so limited that when he is in a *suggestible* or *concentrated* condition a state of mental laziness is present, and he finds it easier to acquiesce than to refute any statement made by the suggestor."

Dr. Parkyn went far in his study of the Ivens case. He supported this definitive opinion of his with excerpts from Ivens's life and from an analysis of the very examination we have reported here, pointing out, as we have done, the inconsistencies and lapses.

"I am certain," he wrote to Dr. Christison during the weeks of the trial, "that not a small percentage of people who walk the streets of Chicago to-day could be made to make similar incriminating confessions, even at this late date, under conditions which confronted Ivens when his alleged 'confessions' were made."
But of course it is all very fine for us to review the case thus “at long distance.” It remains none the less a problem, regardless of even the more direct methods of applying science to analyze the minds of criminals which are common in the law courts of 1926.

In digest, and for the sake of speculation only, we may still agree with the twelve citizens who found Ivens guilty. It seems very likely that this poor young man may have been a criminal, but in our time, when even the layman in the street is aware of modern knowledge in criminal psychology which, in 1906, was cloaked in mystery, we may be sure that he would have been sentenced, not to be hanged, but to pass his days in the care of physicians.

We may, I say, believe him guilty, or we may concede that Dr. Christison’s claim of “hypnotism” is founded on sound possibility. But it seems more than likely that this state of dissociation began in Ivens’s mind before the crime, and that he was entirely irresponsible when he made the attack upon Mrs. Hollister.

To the present day student it would seem that we have a case of dementia precoex—one of the most common forms of insanity.

At any rate, here’s a strange and pathetic case. It is most doubtful if the boy knew what his trial was about, clearly. It is one of those pitiful chapters in the Book of Justice, of which there are only too many, which leaves us the uncomfortable riddle: “Accused, tried, sentenced, hanged—but, after all, was he guilty?”

The answer can only be known when we have learned the secret of clairvoyance, mind reading, and other occult mysteries which we now accept as being, in a word, “the bunk.”

EARLIER in this issue there have been announcements of a few of the features in Flynn’s Weekly for November 13.

To be mentioned with them is “Inside the Tank,” by Arthur Morrison. This is the first of those recently discovered lost manuscripts by that master of short fiction who wrote “Tales of Mean Streets.” In the course of a few weeks we will have printed six separate stories dealing with The Dorrington Deed-Box. “Inside the Tank” is the beginning of the series.

In the same number will be
“‘The Accusing Head,’” a fact story by Robert W. Sneddon;
“‘The Radio Fiend,’” in which Douglas Greer solves a mystery, by Peter Perry;
“‘The End of the Corridor,’” a complete novelette by Jack Bechdolt;
And Charles Somerville’s astonishing feature, “$10,000,000 the Stakes.”

There will also be stories and articles insofar as space will permit by Joseph Gollomb, Roland Johnson, M. E. Ohaver, Edgar Wallace, and Tom Curry.
As we reached the top of the short flight of steps which ran from the sidewalk to our small suite of rooms, Ruggles suddenly thrust me back and added a sharp gesture of silence.

"Wait," he whispered tensely, "don't unlock the door!"

With my key still in my hand I stopped short, listening intently, then I turned to Ruggles, saying: "What's wrong? Think you heard something? I didn't."

"There's something going on in there," he said in a still lower whisper. He put his eye to the peep-hole in our front door, then stepped back, whispering in my ear with increased caution: "Look in there, to the right on the floor, but don't make a sound at what you see!"

His warning came just in time to prevent my exclamation of horror. For on the floor of our living room the body of a man lay huddled in a heap, his now motionless hands still fixed in their clutch on his left side—death seemed to have been instantaneous.

"I'll go round and come in at the back door," Ruggles whispered. "In one minute by the watch on your wrist throw this door open and spring in; our man will jump for one of our back windows and I'll be ready for him."

"What man do you mean? There's only the body on the floor."

"No, there's the man who put him there. Watch and you'll see him."

With a swiftness no one would have expected in one of his bulk and height, Ruggles disappeared down the short alley which connected with the back of the house, and I put my eye to the peep-hole again.

As I did so a man stepped quickly be-
which dodged, with amazing activity, the blows of the poker
tween me and the body on the floor. For a moment he bent over it as if determined to make the end doubly sure; then, instead of adding wanton ferocity to what he had already done, he placed a small bit of paper in those unresisting fingers, let the hands fall again, and stood erect, on his handsome features such an expression of cold cruelty as I had never seen.

At the same instant I saw Ruggles creeping up behind him with the soundless tread of a great cat. But, just when Ruggles’s powerful arms would have closed about the man, he whirled with the alertness of an animal, evaded Ruggles’s rush with the uttermost coolness, thrust his open hand against Ruggles’s breast as if putting a curse on him, then whipped a long, heavy-bladed knife from his excellently fitting coat.

As I tore the door open and dashed into the room the man hurled the knife at me with so sure an aim that it would have been fatal if I had not had the good luck to slip at that moment on the waxed floor. The keen point of the heavy blade buried itself in the hard wood above our fireplace and hung there, quivering.

Preserving the same extraordinary coolness, the man vaulted our table, overset it, lamp and all, as we rushed in again; and before we could recover ourselves he had darted through the front door and away.

“Never saw better cut clothes or more unshakable nerves,” Ruggles said. “But I’ll get my hands on him next time to stay!”

We quickly lifted the body to the couch and Ruggles’s practiced hand went to the man’s wrist. Then, pressing aside the man’s clenched hands, Ruggles listened to his heart.

“It’s no use,” I said. “He’s dead.”

“No,” Ruggles said. “Though his pulse is not stronger now than the idest sway of a butterfly’s wing, it is regular—he’ll come out of this in a little and be able to tell us something. I wish I know how long he’s been lying here.”

“What I want to know,” I said, “is why that other man, so much younger and stronger, and—different in every way, attacked him; and why, after reducing him to a state so near death, the younger man did not kill him?”

“He came here, as others have, for our help, Crane, and the other did not want him to receive it. For your second question: this man has serious heart trouble which may cause his death at any moment, but which, in this instance, saved his life probably.”
"How?"
"Why, surely you must see it, Crane. In a struggle which must have been brief and could not have been violent—for his clothing is not so much as disarranged—he collapsed as if struck a death blow, and that, as I said, saved his life, for his enemy, believing him dead, did not press the attack to its designed conclusion."

"The other fellow put a piece of paper in his hands—"

"Yes, I saw that from the back, as I came in immediately after leaving you. He'll be conscious in a moment or two, from the way his pulse is improving."

"He can give us some line on the other chap when he comes to!"

"Not necessarily," Ruggles replied in a lowered voice and speaking quickly. "The way I reproduce the thing is this: our man here preceded the other into this room; the other stealthily followed; Mrs. Watts, impressed by the first man's years and his obvious respectability, let him in and told him he might come in if he liked and wait our return."

"Mrs. Watts, though an excellent housekeeper, has, as we know, the bad habit of leaving our street door on the latch; she did that in this case. The other man crept in on his victim from behind and he collapsed without so much as seeing who had attacked him. Now for that bit of paper!"

Ruggles lifted the small bit of paper, which had fallen from between the man's fingers, and stared at it—stared at it with eyes which dilated and became more and more fixed in their gaze.

"Can it be?" I heard him say with a strange, quick-drawn ejaculation which expressed more than any word could his utter amazement.

"What is it, Ruggles?" I asked.

He did not hear me. "I must make a tracing of this," he said, still talking to himself. He darted to his desk and in an instant was working swiftly with tracing paper and a pencil. "There—a perfect copy." He sprang up and thrust the bit of paper back into our unconscious guest's hand.

"I wish you'd let me see it first," I said.

"But you've got the tracing."

"Yes," Ruggles said, "the tracing of as devilish a thing as ever haunted a man in a nightmare. We've seen some tough sights, but this one, I'm bound to admit—Moving, eh?" he broke off abruptly. "And conscious at last," as the man opened his eyes and looked at us with the dumb bewilderment of one who has just come back from the very brink of the great abyss.

"Has—has my son come,—yet?" the man asked faintly. "How long have I been here? He—was—to arrive in a—few moments."

"Your son has not come," Ruggles replied. "You have had what we feared was a serious attack—"

"I am subject to them," the other said, "and 1 know that each may be the last."

"Do you need a stimulant? I have some very excellent—"

"Nothing, thank you. I always carry with me a small bottle of medicine prepared by my doctor—This! How did this—"

For the first time he became aware of the small bit of paper in his hand. He lifted it, looked at it shuddering, and his left hand went again to his side.

"What is it?" Ruggles asked.

"My death warrant," the other said, his eyes still fixed on the small bit of paper. He rose weakly to a sitting posture, walked with unsteady feet to the fireplace, let the bit of paper fall on the blazing logs, and, leaning on the mantel, watched the paper writh and wither into an undecipherable crisp.

"My death warrant," he repeated as he came slowly back and sank again on the couch. "Well, I have not long to live—they can come for me and make an end of me as they see fit. Not even you, Mr. Ruggles, can save me from Scarella's hand! But you can protect those who mean more to me than my very life."

"Your wife and children," I said.

"My wife is dead," he said coldly. "I refer to—" He paused.

"Let me urge you to be as frank as possible with us, Mr. Mortimer," Ruggles said, "or we may lose valuable time. A murderous attack has been made on you. Why was it made, and who made it? And why do you ask me now to protect your son, Hector, and Miss Gertrude Wetherell, whom he is engaged to marry? How long ago were you
"I realize that now," Mortimer went on, "but I had come far to see the ruins which remained of the early Spanish occupation. I accused myself of nervousness, reflected that we had nothing to fear from Scarella, and we set out."

"With your own guides or his?" Ruggles asked.

"Wait," Mortimer said. "I have told you he was a dictator. He was more than that. He kept about him a band of half-castes and Indians, and Negroes who had so terrorized the people of San Pedro that no one had dared so much as hint to us of the danger we ran in entering Scarella's domain. Under the guise of protecting us from what he termed these men's depredations, Scarella appointed himself our guide, bringing with him a dozen of these men themselves."

"Had you brought any one with you—all servants, Mr. Mortimer?"

"I had two porters from the hotel who I planned should help Hector and me in what excavating we did among the ruins. I had expected to come back for three or four hands from the yacht, but, as I have said, we did not return to San Pedro after gaining Scarella's permission, but set out for the ruins immediately."

"So that there were only four men of you: you, your son, and the two porters from the village?"

"Yes. And we had proceeded only a few hours up through the foothills when the two porters came to me and told me, with chattering teeth, that they could accompany me no farther. They had been warned, they said, by Scrella and his band, and they showed me what meant nothing to any of the rest of us at the time—a bit of paper on which had been sketched the crude but hideous outline of a spider. I am wrong. Steenis, my valet I had brought with me, had received the warning as well, but, of course, laughed at it."

"Your two porters left you?"

"That afternoon. We camped at sunset, for I was exhausted. Steenis I found dead in his blanket the next morning."

"There was no sign of any wound," Ruggles said. "I mean, was there?"

"No," Mortimer said, looking at Rug-
gles in surprise. "Though how do you know that?"

"Go on with your narrative, if you will," Ruggles said. "There was no sign of any wound, but extreme muscular contraction in the region of the abdomen, and every evidence of intolerable agony—"

"Yes," Mr. Mortimer went on, "and that, if anything had been needed, made Steenis's death all the more terrible, for I had had him with me almost from a boy."

"You decided to return to San Pedro at once?"

"All of us: Hector, Gertrude, Ella, her maid, and myself. But when I told Scarella of our decision he opposed it with such unexpected intensity that Hector ordered him to leave us. In an instant the two men who, in spirit, had been enemies from their first meeting, were at each other's throats, Scarella drawing his knife as he sprang.

"But Hector, who, though smaller, is very athletic, drew his heavy revolver, which had served him so well in France, and with its butt struck Scarella a blow on the head which laid the Spaniard unconscious. Hector then bound him and gagged him!"

"Yes. What then?"

"Luckily none of Scarella's men had seen the encounter. We placed the Spaniard in his tent, drew the flap and made it fast. Then, with his men believing him drunk and not daring to rouse him, we escaped unmolested to the harbor and the yacht. We believed we had left our troubles and dangers behind us, but Ella, Gertrude's maid, who had become hysterical during our return through the hills, died on the yacht that very evening after confessing to us that she too, had received the warning, as Steenis had."

"The outline of the spider?" Ruggles asked quickly.

"Yes. And she died precisely as Steenis had died."

"Has any one else?"

"Yes, Mr. Ruggles. The servant I secured after returning here—yesterday he received the warning and died within a few hours, as the rest had died. We know now that we have been marked down by an implacable enemy, and that the sign of the spider is the symbol of unescapable destruction."

"You have made a deadly enemy," Ruggles said, "and he has shown he will stop at nothing, but I differ with you when it comes to the point of unescapable destruction. You must believe—"

But Mortimer did not hear; his eyes had fixed themselves in a wild stare, and he put his hands to his throat as if choking. "I have brought it on you," he gasped out to Ruggles, who, to reach his pencil, had taken a handkerchief from the outside breast pocket of his coat.

"It is there—the warning," Mortimer panted, "on your handkerchief; the sign of Scarella's band, the spider—the death sign—"

And with that, our visitor, Henry Mortimer, the great financier, who had the misfortune to have archaeology as his hobby, toppled backward on the couch in a faint so profound as to resemble closely death itself.

"Look through his pocketbook for his home address and his telephone number," Ruggles said. "It's probably a private wire and not in the book, and don't worry; he's not dead, though he looks very much like it. Remember, he said he was subject to these attacks—his heart has withstood many of them, I imagine, and will bring him through this one. If only I had not let that man escape! Of course, he was one of them and had followed Mortimer here from the West Indies! One of the band!"

"What's to be done, Ruggles?"

"Phone Hector Mortimer his father is here and to stay in his house and be sure Miss Wetherell does. Tell young Mortimer who we are and say we're coming with his father!"

"We can tell him, when he is conscious," I said, "that the piece of paper in your handkerchief needn't have scared him so, for it's only the tracing you made—"

"It wasn't the tracing," Ruggles said evenly; "it was another I did not know was there. Steady, Crane!" as I caught the edge of the table for support. "It will be all right. We've come through some holes that looked almost as bad as this. Now we're going to find this band and come to grips with them before they
have time to make their next move. We've got to!" He took from an inner pocket the sheet of paper on which he had made the tracing, and held it beside the other which had come from his breast pocket. They were identical. "The warning," he said, "given by Scarella's band—to me."

"When?" I asked hoarsely. "And how?"

"The man who was here with Mr. Mortimer when we came in—the man I allowed to escape," Ruggles repeated bitterly.

"Why, instead of forcing this small bit of paper into your pocket," I asked, "didn't he try to kill you when he was here? And why did he throw his knife at me instead of you?"

"Remember," Ruggles said, "we are dealing here with a highly organized band of criminals—the man who came here, though an active member of the gang, perhaps Scarella himself, was not their executioner. As we found in the Santa Clara case, each member of this band, like the members of that brotherhood, is responsible to an inexorable chief for a definitely apportioned part of the work of the band; and undoubtedly here, as in the case of the brotherhood, are allowed to perform only those appointed acts.

One locates and keeps strict track of the victims marked down for destruction; another acts as look-out; still another stands ready with cash if an officer comes in and must be corrupted; another, possibly Scarella himself, delivers the warning, and yet another has the charge of the strange, inhuman executioner."

"I see," I said; "but tell me why any warning is given. Why does not the band kill outright, instead of wasting time giving a warning?"

"We are dealing here," Ruggles said again, "not with Anglo-Saxons who proceed in fairly straight lines in anything they do, but with Latins, who have a different psychology. Scarella prefers to strike terror first in those he marks down—he begins with the unimportant victims and gradually works up to the most important one.

"You see, he first killed Steenis, Mr. Mortimer's valet, then Ella, Miss Wetherell's maid, then the valet Mr. Mortimer hired after returning to New York, to take the place of Steenis. It was not Hector first, though for more reasons than one, of course, Scarella hated young Mortimer most—it was the no-account first; and now Scarella undoubtedly will run the rest off in quick order if we do not stop him, for, as we know, Mr. Mortimer has received his warning, and I venture to say that his son and Miss Wetherell have.

"I forgot, Crane; they evidently believe old Mortimer to be dead, and that leaves only Hector and Gertrude Wetherell, besides myself. We have even less time than I thought."

III

Ruggles bent over Mortimer again, listening. "He breathes," Ruggles said, "but, for all that, he is held to this world by only the weakest thread. It is as if he were clinging to life for the performance of some destiny. I wonder what that destiny is and whether or not he will live to perform it. Is it related to this tragedy into which he and those he loves, stepped so unwittingly—some final act of devotion which this crippled heart of his will beat long enough to let him perform?"

Ruggles was walking back and forth across the room, stopping every now and then to glance at Mortimer, then resuming his restless pacing of the room.

"We're losing time, when not an instant of time should be lost," he broke out again.

"He's not fit to be moved an inch, Mortimer isn't, and won't be for some time even after he's come to. Wait—we've forgotten the bottle of medicine he said he always carried. Inside pocket, didn't he say?" Ruggles rapidly searched the unconscious man's clothing, then turned away again in new disappointment and impatience. "He was mistaken—nothing there—no pills or medicine or any restorative of any kind; we've got to wait for him, that's all. Call up Hector Mortimer now and tell him. Give me that match-box on your way, will you? Thanks. Tell young Mortimer—"
Again Ruggles broke off abruptly, but this time it was to stare not at Mortimer, but at the match-box I had handed him. It was an old-fashioned tin box with a tightly fitting cover. Ruggles was holding it to his ear and listening intently.

"What's the matter?" I demanded.
"Ruggles!"

He warned me to silence with a short gesture, then listened again, holding the tin cover down tight. Then he went quickly to the tiled hearth before our open fire, placed the tin box there, and crushed the thing with repeated blows from our poker.

The concussion brought the tin cover off. "Now watch," he cried, "but keep well back."

As the cover flew off, the matches ignited and among them I saw a black something—a something jet black, which darted from the blazing matches and dodged with amazing activity the multiplied blows from Ruggles's poker. Then he lashed out again, this time with the short broom we kept by the fireplace, and this time there remained, among the scattered matches, only a motionless black body between long, heavy, hairy black legs—the thing had turned on its back, and those hairy legs kicked and quivered, then were still.

Ruggles, still holding the broom ready, leaned closer to the black thing, and nodded. "Yes," he said under his breath, "the scarlet dot on the abdomen, as I expected. Not even the flames, it seemed, would touch it while it had any atom of life left!" With the heavy poker he flattened the thing past any possibility of life, then thrust the body into the very heart of the flames where, this time, it was consumed.

"You see now," he said, turning to me, "the thoroughness with which Scarella and his men work. They knew that I smoked, and the one of them delegated to the task put this deadly creature in the only match-box in the room. I was to open it and put my hand in for a match—if I had, Crane, that terrible executioner of theirs would have done his work instantly, and not our combined efforts and applications could have been sure of saving me, though in our medicine chest, there off the bath

room, is almost every antidote known to civilized and uncivilized man. The poison secreted by the small teeth of this creature is so virulent that—"

"Good God, Ruggles," I interrupted him, "what an escape!"

"Yes. You see now why Scarella's men use this symbol when they issue and serve their death warrants. You see, also, why that fellow threw his knife at you instead of me. He had planted for me in my match-box something far more fatal than a stick of dynamite; with good cause, he figured me dead already, so he stung his knife at you."

"That's clear now."

"We must not lose another moment. You must stay here with him, Crane, while I go to the aid of Hector Mortimer and Miss Wetherell." He looked at the card I had laid face-up on the table by the telephone. "435 Central Park West, the address is. That's not far from Seventy-Fifth Street. You will be here—"

"No, I'm going with you," I said. "Once you get into that house, you're going to run into you don't know what, in the way of numbers, and you'll be glad of my gun, when the shooting starts."

Ruggles looked down at me from his great height with a graver face than I had ever seen him wear. "It's bad business, Jim," he said slowly. "It's all in the day's work for me; but there's no reason why you should be brought into it."

"What's the use of talking that way?" I scoffed.

"It's not so bad, in the ordinary case that comes to us," he went on as if I had not spoken, "for there the criminal's main object is plunder, and if he uses his automatic, we can use ours—both sides are equally well armed and each has a fighting chance. But, in the present case, Scarella and his band are bent not on plunder, but on the murder of the Mortimers and Miss Wetherell—"

"And yourself," I supplied.

"Yes."

"But why should he wish to kill Miss Wetherell?"

"Just now, in his way, Scarella is in love with her; but it is unrequited love,
THE DEATH WARRANT

which is worse than frankest hate to a man like this Spaniard. After I have settled things with him and his band to-night, she will not come into the matter at all,” Ruggles said significantly. “Judging from her photographs, which have appeared frequently in the best of our illustrated periodicals—and that, of course, is how I recognized Mr. Mortimer and was posted on his family’s movements—Gertrude Wetherell must be a very beautiful woman.

“I can readily believe young Hector Mortimer and Scarella were at each other’s throats in spirit from the moment of their first meeting. The girl’s disdain fanned his flame and he revealed himself as the fiend he was—this tragedy followed, Scarella summoning to his aid a fiendish creature even more implacable than himself.”

“So did Ram Singh,” I reminded Ruggles, “in the affair of The Garlic Bulbs. That bamboo rod of his, with the tiny snake he kept in the hollowed out end of it, was as deadly as a cobra—and nearly got us, too! You remember that night in the tunnel which led into Hathaway’s house—”

“Yes,” Ruggles said, “they nearly got us, but, in the end, we got both of them. That, however, was not one of our ordinary cases!”

“Neither was the case of the Bali Kris—we had, in addition to that ancient Malay weapon, with the probabilities of poison in its hilt or on the blade, a three-foot copperhead to deal with, hiding somewhere in Hawkins’s room, after it had bitten our client—”

“Whose life we saved,” Ruggles went on, “and who, for his sins, on that same night committed suicide. Yes, I know, Crane. But that, too, wasn’t an ordinary case.”

“What case of ours is ordinary?” I asked. “A month ago, in the ruined shack by the stagnant lagoon, we saved Roger Sterling, the inventor, from the clutches of Quin Lash, the alligator hunter, and Stanfield, theactive head of that branch of what you said was the highest paid syndicate of criminals in central Europe.”

“And to-night we are fighting Antonio Scarella and his gang and this beetle, or whatever the deadly animal is, brought here by them from the West Indies as their terrible executioner. What ordinary case we ever had, Ruggles, and what we’ll be working on next month, next week, or to-morrow, God alone knows!”

“That is it,” he said. “That’s what you get for working and living with a man who’s a near-crook, though he wears better. About to-night, Crane, I want you to stay here with Mr. Mortimer. He is not fit to be moved to his own home; much less is he fit to meet the danger, or share in the physical struggle, desperate and to the end, which must begin at that house of his, or wherever the battleground proves to be, if the web which Scarella has spun around Hector Mortimer and Gertrude Wetherell is to be broken in time to save their lives.”

“I am going with you, when you go at that web,” I said firmly.

“You are needed here, Crane, to take care of Mr. Mortimer.”

“He must take care of himself.”

“You say that, realizing how he is?”

“Yes.”

“Have it your own way,” Ruggles said unwillingly. “I have warned you not to come. Look at him again! Is he rousing, do you think?” Ruggles bent over him.

“There may be something in our medicine cabinet.”

“Could a doctor—”

“A doctor,” Ruggles interrupted me, “would insist on being obeyed. If we refused to obey him, he would call in the police.”

“He may die here, as it is.”

“And the other two surely will die to-night without my aid. I’ll look through our medicines. Telegraph—I mean telephone—Hector Mortimer at his house at 435 Central Park West. You have the number on that card, lying there. If the line’s busy or central tries to put you off, saying it’s a private wire, keep at her; and if a servant tries to take the message, insist on talking only to young Mortimer or to Miss Wetherell. It may take you some moments, but it is the only way we can be sure of the message getting through as you give it.”

He turned in the direction of the bathroom at the rear of our little apartment
where our medicine cabinet was, and I felt sure that, in our very comprehensive little cabinet, there would be something to help us rouse Mr. Mortimer from his alarmingly long stupor.

Though not, so far as I knew, a graduate of any medical school, Ruggles had an extraordinary knowledge of medicines, drugs, and chemicals. When, in the early days of our association, I had congratulated him on this and asked him if it were a hobby of his, he had replied that, in view of the fact that sixty-seven men and women of the underworld, with whom at one time or another he had had professional dealings, had sent him word from their different penitentiaries that they would ultimately succeed in poisoning him, it was only natural that he should learn how to compound and administer to himself all the scientifically sound antidotes.

On the same theory, I suppose, he had acquired a surgeon’s wisdom and skill in treating all manner of wounds and concussions—and this information and as much of his skill as I could master, he had made me painstakingly acquire.

Still more astonishing to me was his knowledge of the criminal’s viewpoint. How Ruggles had been able so perfectly to master this I never could fathom.

What he meant when he said, as he more than once had, that he was in fact a near-crook, I was probably never to know—I never tried to turn back the earlier pages of his adventurous and unparalleled life. Beyond the bare statement that, in other days, he had done what he would give years of his life to undo, I did not ask him to go.

Whatever his past had been, I had found him from the first the refuge of those who, though innocent, were unable to prove their innocence; he was the strong defense of those whom organized vice and crime had afflicted and terrorized. His photographic memory made of his eager brain a veritable storehouse of information on every subject under the sun, and he combined with this a resourcefulness, a daring, a power to make final decisions instantly and wisely, such as I had never known before or since in any one.

All this went through my mind as, sitting at the telephone in our living room beside a motionless man whom, it seemed, only the last trump could rouse, I kept telling a sulky operator that Mr. Henry Mortimer’s private line, Endicott 4100, was not busy and not out of order, and that they would answer if she would keep ringing them.

I could not get them. It had taken the best part of five minutes to find that out.

“Ruggles,” I called, “they don’t answer.”

He did not reply. I listened, waited a few moments longer, then called out to him again. Then, when the silence lengthened, I turned and realized for the first time that his coat and hat were gone from the hat tree in the hall at my back.

IV

DARTED to the front door and saw the car, from which we had stepped only to enter the tragedy waiting us here in our rooms, was gone. I snatched up the card I had taken from Henry Mortimer’s inner pocket and read again,

435 Central Park West

The card slipped from my fingers, turning over as it fell, and, for the first time, I saw what was written on the back:

In case of accident to myself, notify my son, Hector Mortimer, or my ward, Gertrude Wetherell, both at—

The address, which had followed, had been lined out heavily with ink then scratched out with a penknife.

It was clear that Henry Mortimer and his household had secretly vacated the house at 435 Central Park West and hidden themselves away, where they hoped Scarella and his gang of cutthroats could not find them. This was proved by Henry Mortimer’s scratching out the new address after he had written it in.

Ruggles had not discovered the writing on the back of the card, and he had gone to the house on Central Park West.

I could not help feeling a certain gratification at catching Ruggles in a mistake. But the first thing to do was for me to
repair his error. Where were Hector Mortimer and Gertrude Wetherell and how could I warn them in time?

I sprang to the medicine cabinet and ran through our list as fast as I could without finding anything I dared to administer to him in the way of a restorative. Then I hurried back to where he still lay on our couch and cried in his ear:

"I must get word to them," I cried, "your son and ward! Where are they?" I demanded, keeping my face close to his ear.

He did not move or open his eyes. I put my hand under his head and lifted it, then, when he did not respond in the least, I thrust my arm under his shoulders and raised him to a sitting posture.

"Tell me where your son and ward are," I commanded, and still Mortimer sagged on my arm, a dead weight.

Then, just as I was about giving up hope of getting the information which was so needed, our front doorbell rang and Mrs. Watts bustled in a moment later with a card which bore the name

HECTOR MORTIMER

printed in old English script.

"Bring him in at once," I said with a thankfulness I found impossible to describe. "Bring him in, for God's sake," and she bustled in again, this time with a man of fine athletic build. Then, with evident unwillingness, she bustled out again.

"How is he now?" was the quick question. "Mr. Ruggles just told us—" He bent over the sufferer. "Yes, this is one of his more severe attacks."

Hector Mortimer lacked the aristocratic bearing and features of his father, and his voice was much less agreeable than I had been prepared to find it; but he had the strikingly dark eyes and the clear olive skin I had noted in the elder Mortimer, which showed a strong foreign strain somewhere among the Mortimer ancestors. Young Mortimer—he was rather older than I had thought from the way his father spoke of him—was powerfully built, as I have said. What was more, he had the look of a man very dangerous when crossed. Gertrude Wetherell might find him not always an affable husband, but she would find in him a protector whom few would care to trifle with.

"I know what to do when he has these attacks," young Mortimer said. "Of course the first thing is to get him home. I have a taxi at the door. If you will help me carry him, then be kind enough, as Mr. Ruggles said you would, to accompany us—"

"Of course," I said. "Just a minute while I get on my hat and coat. It's not snowing, is it? That's good—don't care about skidding with a sick man in the car, do we?" I put on my things as I spoke, and we carried Henry Mortimer down the steps. "I'm so thankful you've come," I said, as we settled ourselves in the car. "I couldn't have managed this alone, even if I'd known where to take him to."

"We have to use every precaution," he answered as he signaled the driver to start. "We have been through a hideous experience—bad enough for Gertrude and me, but far worse, of course, for my father."

As I felt Mr. Mortimer's body sag against mine I said:

"I hope we haven't far to go."

Hector Mortimer said nothing. Perhaps he did not hear me, for the taxicab was bouncing and rattling over the cobbles up Amsterdam Avenue. As we passed one street after another in our rapid course northward, the relief I had felt at Hector Mortimer's coming and taking things in his own hands, gave way first to disquiet and presently to anxiety, for the taxicab now was carrying us deeper and deeper into the worst district of Harlem.

Any thought I had had that the driver had lost his way was dispelled by Hector Mortimer leaning out of the window and directing him to drive on, heading as he was.

I had reason to know this locality—to know it only too well, and to know it was to distrust it. Here, after a pursuit which had led us from New York City to Montreal, then southward to the Rio Grande, back then to Manhattan again, we had at last cornered and captured the Carrington family doctor, one of the most cold-blooded as well as one of the cleverest criminals with whom we had ever had to deal.
In a basement on the next alley we had taken, alive, Runsford, the blackmailer, and that lovely pagan, his wife, turning over to the English authorities a pair for whom Scotland Yard had combed British territory from Athabasca to Brisbane.

The underworld had no deeper jungles and no denizens more dangerous than those about us now.

"Who persuaded you to take refuge here?" I asked Hector Mortimer glancing at the hulking brute who slouched in the driver’s seat. "Human life is cheaper than you realize here; that fellow driving us now! I know his sort, and he'd cut your throat or mine for ten dollars. If you have brought Miss Wetherell here—"

"She is here," young Mortimer said. In response to a quick knock on the glass the chauffeur brought the cab to a halt before a black pile of a building, where there showed not a single light.

"You're not going into this hole," I remonstrated.

"I am and you are!" Fingers of iron clutched my throat, and I looked into the blue muzzle of an automatic.

"There's ten dollars in it for you if you tie this fellow's hands behind him then do what I tell you to," the man I had thought was Hector Mortimer said to the chauffeur.

"Lemme see th' ten first," the other said craftily, putting his hand hard on my neck and standing so close to me that I caught the reek of his clothing. He bound my hands painfully tight. "Now, chief!"

In a moment there was the sharp glare of a flash light, with the words: "You saw it, didn’t you. All right. Let us understand each other. Put your hand in your pocket or under your arm and I'll drop you. Do what I tell you to, and you get the ten. Want it?"

"Yeh. Wh'm I goin' to do?"

"Go ahead of me with that fellow into this house—keep on ahead of me up four flights of stairs—then to a room at the back. I'll be behind you with the other man. Make up your mind!"

"I'll be a long time for me to leave that cab o' mine by th' curb."

"Here's the ten now, and you get another as soon as you've finished the job."

The money changed hands. Then the chauffeur seized me and said hoarsely to me as he shoved me along ahead of him up the steps and into the house: "I'll bust you in two if you make a sound!"

There was no chance for resistance or escape. The light from a pocket flash, subdued but sufficient, played over the chauffeur as we walked ahead of the other; he, in his turn, carried Mr. Mortimer as if the latter had been a child.

I abandoned at once the hope of being able to bolt into any of the rooms which opened, black as pits, off those dreary corridors.

On we climbed up flight after flight of stairs, so steep and so unsteady that it was like scaling a ladder supported at the top only by jet-black night and midair.

"I don't like this," the chauffeur growled.

"I'll do the talking," said the voice at our backs. "Now down this hall to the back—you'll see light shining through a broken door. No, I'll change that. Stay here with this man. I'll go down to the other end of the hall first, then come back."

"Better slip me that ten, boss, before you change your mind again," the chauffeur said sullenly.

As if he had not heard, the man behind us said quietly:

"Mr. Mortimer, you know into whose hands you have fallen?"

He turned the full glare of the electric flash into the older man’s eyes and I realized then for the first time that Henry Mortimer had recovered consciousness.

"Do you know me?" the man asked Henry Mortimer.

"Hector! Hector! Gertrude!" old Mortimer cried weakly. "Where am I? Do you hear me, Hector—Hector?"

"They hear you," that inexorable voice went on, "but they are as powerless to help you as you are to help them. They, like you, have received the warning, and must face the executioner."

The man had lowered Mortimer to the floor of the corridor. Despair gave him strength. He rose to his feet and stood trembling but erect.

"Who are you?" he cried hoarsely.

"You ask that?" The man turned the
light from his electric torch on his stern and gloomy features. "Look!"

"Antonio Scarella," Mortimer gasped. "God in heaven help us now!"

"N"OTHING can help you," Scarella said in his emotionless voice. He turned off his electric torch; the darkness fell again with the chill and dismal dampness of a tomb. "Stay here," he said, turning on his torch again and addressing the chauffeur in a tone of inflexible command, "and keep this man with you! I shall come back for him in a moment."

"I want th' rest o' my money now," the chauffeur said. "Come across, or I'll yell an' have th' cops here."

"Do so, if you like! Shout yourself hoarse—call until your eyeballs start from their sockets! You realize your position very imperfectly. These tottering walls and untenanted rooms will suck up the sound as water is taken up by a sponge. Your howling would be heard only by men of mine from whom even I might be unable to save you, if they knew I had brought you so near.

"It was only while we were coming from your cab into this building that I insisted on quiet. To what I have said, apply what brains you have, until I return. If this man here eludes you, while I am gone, and escapes, I shall turn you, in his place, over to my wolf pack. Come, Mr. Mortimer." Without so much as glancing again at the chauffeur, Scarella turned, his arm steadying the older man down the corridor.

The light from his flash died again, and darkness, such as it seemed to me I had never known before, settled down again.

As if even his fierce, vindictive spirit had been broken down by the cold savagery of the Spaniard, the chauffeur said not a word, did not move, and seemed scarcely to breathe. In that awful and significant silence the only sound that came to us was the passage of Mortimer and his captor away from us down the corridor to that distant room of which Scarella had spoken; then even that sound ceased.

The chauffeur's huge hands brushed me as he pawed about the floor in the dark; then he clutched me and held, and again I caught the fetid smell of his filthy coat.

"Steady now, Crane," he whispered. It was Ruggles. "No, not a word, old man," as I sank weakly back against the wall. "I'll tell you the whole thing later, but now we've no time for talk. Where are your wrists? All right," as he cut the cords. "Now work your arms until the circulation's all right!"

"Ruggles—"

"I'm sorry, Jim, but I say, not a word now! We've got to get into that room Scarella's taking Mortimer to now—there at the end of the hall. You can just make it out, when they don't happen to be in the way, a faint ray of light coming through a hole in the door. Come on, now, and quiet if you ever were in your life!"

"Do you believe what Scarella told Mr. Mortimer? That his son and Miss Wetherell are in that room?"

"Yes, I am sure they are there, lured undoubtedly by a faked telegram they believed sent them by Mr. Mortimer—and once they entered this trap, escape through any means of theirs was impossible. Here's your gun; I got it out of your pocket when we first came in here—thought Scarella might go over you himself. I've mine, of course. Slowly, until they've got into the room and closed the door!" We crept down the hall slowly, our eyes on that faint ray of light at the distant end of the corridor.

Then the door was opened—there was a flare of light, a cry of love and anguish, drowned in a fierce, guttural chorus, and the door was thrown to with a crash.

"Quick now," Ruggles whispered. Then, as we raced along: "Keep close to the wall, for this is one of the oldest tenements in Manhattan, condemned and about to be torn down, so weak now from cellar to roof that any part of it may go any minute. Gun ready? Don't fire except as a last resort! Remember, most of these men are half-breeds probably and use their knives well, so don't let them close with you! And it's their spiders, of course, we've got to fear even more than their knives!"
At the memory of that black and deadly demon they had put in Ruggles’s matchbox, my hair felt stiff on my head and my clothes seemed to me alive with spiders, fierce, black, and fatal, such as we should find, Ruggles had said, in that room we were about to enter.

Then we were at the door, through whose broken panel came the ray of light which had guided us, and through that broken panel we looked and saw what will haunt my brain until my dying day:

Watched by seven men, who represented every degree from the Spaniard to the swarthiest Indian, sat Henry Mortimer, and next to him a young man and a young woman who, we knew, could be no other than Hector Mortimer and Miss Wetherell. The arms and ankles of these two latter were bound to their chairs with the unbreakable coils of a lariat; Mr. Mortimer was held motionless by a villainous-looking brute.

But, painful as that grip must have been, old Mortimer seemed not to feel it; he was staring with desperate, hopeless eyes at his son, whose arms, we saw, were lashed in front of him so that he could not move a particle, and over Hector Mortimer’s clenched hands there was crawling now a spider, large and jet-black and terrible as that which Ruggles had killed in our own rooms.

Young Hector’s lips were set; he swept his captors with a proud and unflinching glance, then turned until he met the eyes of the woman he loved.

“In God’s name,” old Mortimer groaned as we watched fascinated, “have mercy!”

His enemies gave no sign that they had heard. At a sign from Scarella, one of them got to his feet from where he had been squatting on the floor, and with a thin wand of wood began to irritate the spider.

At the same instant, Ruggles’s gun cracked, the man crumpled on the floor, and the door went in before Ruggles’s shoulder.

In the first moment of our rush, we had the advantage, for they could not tell how many of us they had to reckon with. But Scarella rallied them with a roar of fury and they came in at us from every side.

We dropped to the floor, as Ruggles had taught me to do, and, firing from there, we brought two more of them down, disabling a third, and they broke and fled to the fire escape, for Ruggles and I had blocked the door, and they were desperate for any kind of cover.

Only Scarella himself remained now for us to deal with. He had not been wounded. His gun, like ours, was empty, but he had his knife. It came like a javelin and pinned Ruggles’s shoulder to the jamb of the door.

He followed his knife like a Ghurka. I tried to meet his rush and break it, but before I could so much as put up my hands in defense, he struck me once with his huge fist, sending me across the room.

From our dash into the room until now, had taken only a moment. He now snatched up the willow wand from the floor and thrust it at the spider which, for the instant, huddled motionless on the back of Hector’s hand.

“The execution will proceed,” Scarella said, goading the great spider to fury with the wand.

For the instant, his back was turned to Ruggles, who tore the knife from the wound and sprang in, catching Scarella about the knees and whirling in a circle and flinging him, large as he was, crashing headlong on the floor.

“Knock the spider off with the wand,” Ruggles cried as he righted himself from the heave. “No, wait; I’ll do it!”

But another was before him; old Mortimer, with his last remaining strength, sprang across the space which separated him from his son and with his bare fingers tore the spider from the back of Hector’s hand; then he toppled face down on the floor, crushing the spider to death between his unprotected palms.

“Yes,” Ruggles said, as he cut the coils of the lariats which bound Hector and Miss Wetherell and we all bent over all that remained of Henry Mortimer, “he was bitten by the spider, but he did not feel it—his heart, which had kept him up for this supreme act of love and devotion, had done its all, then ceased to beat. It was his destiny—”
Ruggles's voice was drowned by a harsh, rending sound and cries of wildest fear. Unnoticed by us, one of Scarella's half-breeds had reached in from the fire escape, across the window sill, and by this time, with the help of two of his fellows, had drawn the Spaniard's inert body almost completely out upon the fire escape.

It was their doom, for under the added weight of Scarella's great bulk, the supports under one side of the rusty and neglected structure had given way. As we rushed to the window sill there was another harsh, rending sound and the grinding of metal; then in the light from our flashes we saw the loosened mass sink, turn on its side, and plunge down, story after story, carrying down with it everything in its wild course, crushing its distracted human freight to instant death.

"The end of Antonio Scarella and those who served him," Ruggles said. "Turn off your flash, Crane, and you, too, Hector Mortimer. We must get away from here before the police come and compel us to make an explanation."

VI

"But you have got to explain to me," I said to Ruggles an hour later, when, his shoulder cared for by me under his own expert direction, he lounged back on our couch before the fire, thankful he had sustained only a flesh wound, but smarting under the fact that he had not killed the spider himself and thus made unnecessary Henry Mortimer's heroic act.

"Explain to you?" he asked. "Why, Crane, surely it's all clear by now to you!"

"No, it's not. Tell me first how you happened to be driving that taxicab and wearing a coat with a smell I won't get out of my nose for a month—"

"When I went out," Ruggles replied, "leaving you here with Mr. Mortimer, I went out by the back way, going through to the next street, then turned back here and saw that a man, who was visible only when a car rounded the corner and the headlights played on him for an instant, had climbed over our piazza railing and was looking in, through that window there, at you and Mr. Mortimer.

"I hoped he was the man who had escaped us when we came in and found him here with Mortimer, but, if not that man, I was still sure he was one of Scarella's band; if he was, he would know where Hector Mortimer and Gertrude Wetherell were, and sooner or later would go there.

"Remember, I had noticed this fellow only by chance—it was Scarella himself, of course—and I figured he thought himself perfectly safe and would stay where he was for a bit. So I hurried to the garage in the next block but one, paid a whacking heavy deposit for the worst used taxicab they had in their shop, including a coat they kept to throw under a car when all the 'creepers' were in use, found an old felt hat stuffed in the pocket, and, realizing my good luck, started my rattle-trap of a taxi with a jerk, then bumped down past here, driving her slowly, see?"

"Our man was still there, skulking behind a pillar of the piazza, but when my old taxi shambled up, he stepped out and told me to wait. You know the rest of it."

"But how did you know, just from the outline of the spider—"?

"That we had the famous and deadly Black Widow to deal with? I suspected it was that species of spider the instant I saw the one Scarella's man placed in my matchbox here, but I had to make sure. As it died, it turned on its back and, looking closely, I saw that it was indeed the Black Widow."

"How could you be sure?"

"Quite easily. I have made a study of spiders, and I had studied this one, not in its habitat, the West Indies, but in the most authoritative books. So I knew that the Black Widow was a coal black spider distinguishable not only by its size and its dead-black color, but also by a scarlet or yellow dot on its abdomen. In Florida there's a black spider that's been given the same name, but it is much smaller and less deadly; the scarlet mark on its abdomen, by the way, is in the shape of an hour glass, making possible its easy identification."

"The spider put in my match-box, however, was the genuine West Indian Black
Widow and, knowing what I did of the deadliness of its bite, I knew, I mean I had reason to feel absolutely sure, that the band of criminals who used its outline as their symbol, and had killed two men and one woman without leaving a scar, a bruise, or a detectable abrasion of the skin, were using the terrible Black Widow as their executioner.

"Another fact made me sure of this: they had not murdered me when they could have, by a shot or a stab, when I struggled with that man of theirs in this room. They had given me the warning, marked me, that is, for death, by their characteristic means, and I looked around for their executioner and found him.

"From that point on, our task was to find Hector Mortimer and Miss Wetherell and save them before the spider could be set on them and bite them, for, after that, it would be too late. Authorities on zoology agree that the bite of this insect is fatal to man; in fact, the Indians in the West Indies are so well aware of the deadliness of the Black Widow that they use the mashed bodies of these spiders as poison for their arrows."

"Do you think that Henry Mortimer knew for a moment the spider was to be set on him?"

"No," Ruggles said; "though he had seen his servants and his ward's maid die in agony after receiving the warning, he still did not suspect the agent which had killed them, for apparently he had never seen one of the spiders. But he, as clearly, had been warned against them when in the West Indies and had heard enough about it to recognize it the moment he saw it crawling over his son's hand."

"So he realized that it meant his own death if he touched it?"

"Beyond any doubt he knew that, Crane. When our time comes, may we meet it half so well!"

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Hardly a book-length novel has appeared in Flynn's Weekly that has not later seen publication between boards in a two-dollar edition. In that respect we have made rather an enviable record. We have bought serials that seemed good, and your approbation has gone a long way to make the book publishers consider them a good risk in a more substantial, higher-priced binding.

Many of the short stories and many of the articles that you have enjoyed in Flynn's Weekly have received the same honor. When you buy Flynn's Weekly you are assuring yourself of an earlier reading at one-twentieth of the price of the same material that fills the detective shelves of the book stores.

Now seems an opportune time to announce the names of three men whose latest novels will appear soon on these pages.

You will save money and read the stories earlier if you watch Flynn's Weekly for coming novels by William Johnston, Owen Fox Jerome, and Roy W. Hinds.
HE BLEW UP STEAMSHIPS

By Joseph Gollomb

WHEN HIS COLD, RUTHLESS MIND, NO LONGER ABLE TO ENDURE, LOST ITS GRIP, HE BETRAYED HIS SECRET IN HIS DELIRIUM

A Story of Fact

For good and sufficient reasons we humans feel that life is the most precious thing in the universe, that murder is the capital crime, that all the money in the world should not have the power to purchase the death of the lowliest human being that walks. To most of us our own lives or those of our nearest and dearest form the real center of the universe.

Ask a mother if she had to decide between the extinction of the sun and the death of her child, which would she choose?

That is why the murderer shocks us so; he, so to say, smashes our universe. And when he does this for a frivolous reason, he not only shocks—but fascinates.

That is the way I feel about the story of W. K. Thompson. Then, too, his story has plot, complication, suspense, explosion and a kind of crude, fierce, poetic justice working, apparently through blind accident, but a justice that sends savage exultation through us; a feeling of which theoretically we should be ashamed, but which we cannot help.

We first hear of him when, some years ago in Liverpool, a dock worker by the name of Sullivan was going to his home after a day's work. Near the river front he was stopped by a stranger.

"I beg your pardon," said the man, "I just arrived in Liverpool and am looking for a room which I can also use as a sort of workshop. Perhaps you know of one?"
It so happened that Sullivan had rented the whole of a little house in a workingmen’s quarter; it was a hard pull for him to pay the rent; there was a large garret he did not need and which he had wished he could rent out. He took a good look at the stranger.

The man was apparently educated and his manner was quiet. He was tall and thin, slightly stooped, as if his days were spent in bending over his work. He had a dark, bloodless face, sunken cheeks, a prominent chin and a secretive mouth. The man’s eyes revealed little to Sullivan, who was no keen judge of character.

**Thompson’s Invention**

If he were, he would have found something disturbing in the man’s black eyes. They were small, but startling in their keenness; in the rare moments when you caught their look directly on you, the effect was as if something had jabbed a nerve.

But Sullivan judged a man by his clothes and the stranger was well dressed; and the fact that the man’s speech was polite and grammatical was enough for Sullivan.

He said: “I have a garret myself I’d like to let out. The only trouble with it is that two skylights are the only windows it has. There’s nothing to look out on, but the sky. Though, of course,” he added “no one can see in on you, neither.”

“I’ll take a look at it,” said the stranger.

Sullivan took him home and showed him the garret. It was as Sullivan had said, not much of a place, a square room with little more than space enough for a bed and a table. It was lit by two small skylights. But the stranger seemed highly pleased with the privacy.

“T’ll take it,” he said, “and I’ll pay you two weeks in advance.” He took out his wallet. “How much?”

Sullivan was a little impressed by the fact that the stranger had not even asked how much the rent would be. Humanly enough Sullivan took advantage of the fact and asked somewhat more than he intended. The stranger paid without a word.

“My name is W·K. Thompson,” he told Sullivan. “I’m an electrical engineer and am working on an invention which I hope will eventually be used in connection with steamships. I want a quiet place to work where I will not be disturbed. In return I’ll try not to disturb you people.”

He moved in on the following day. A single traveling bag held all his personal effects. There came a cot, a work bench, boxes of tools, and a small case about three feet each way, which he handled with the utmost care. Sullivan decided that this was the model of his invention. He was right.

From the moment Thompson moved in he began to work, and worked early and late. Mrs. Sullivan and her children heard him filing, hammering, tapping—all on metal. It wasn’t that his work was so noisy, but the Sullivans were curious, and they would steal up to his door to listen.

After a week or so the invention seemed to have progressed enough so that they heard a new and curious sound. It was such a sound as might be made by some tightly wound up mechanism, the spring of which had been suddenly released and set up an intense whirring.

No one came to see Thompson. He seldom went out, except late at night, or to buy provisions to eat while he worked.

One day all sounds in his room ceased for a time. One of the Sullivan children came down from his spying and told his mother that Mr. Thompson seemed to have gone to sleep, everything was so quiet.

**Wrong With the Chemicals**

If so, he did not sleep long. For suddenly over their heads a great dull boom sounded and the whole house shuddered. Mrs. Sullivan and the children ran screaming into the street, expecting walls and ceilings to collapse.

But the house remained intact; only the garret suffered. A policeman went upstairs to see what had happened. In Thompson’s garret were fumes and smoke. But most of it had passed out by way of the two smashed skylights.

On the cot sat Thompson, still partly stunned. When he saw the uniform of the constable, however, he came back to full consciousness. Indeed he seemed to be painfully on edge.
“I’m awfully sorry,” he stammered. “You see, I’m working on an invention that will automatically feed ships’ lights. And something seemed to have gone wrong with my chemicals.”

The policeman saw the work bench wrecked. He knew very little, that policeman, about inventions, chemicals or human beings; if he had, this story would have ended differently.

**Lock, Stock, and Barrel**

But he did make a thorough investigation of the contents of the room. In a small cupboard he found a tin trunk. In it were packages of some soft substance, each one carefully wrapped in a thick coat of absorbent cotton. The stuff was oily and smelled vilely. He asked Thompson what it was.

“A kind of oil cake I want to use for my automatic lamp feeder,” Thompson said shakily. “My machine will contain several of these, and as the oil for the lamp is needed, these cakes will dissolve and feed the lamp.”

The policeman saw no reason to doubt the man’s words. Like Sullivan, he judged people by their dress and speech—and measured by these standards the man seemed all right. But he felt he ought to say something.

“It’s your fault that the skylights are broken,” he said to Thompson. “You ought to be made to pay for ‘em.”

“Gladly!” Thompson exclaimed; and his gladness seemed genuine.

He did pay the Sullivans for the broken windows, and even gave them a generous advance toward his next month’s rent, although it was as yet not due.

Which surprised the Sullivans all the more when next day they found that during the night the man had moved out lock, stock and barrel, without leaving word or trace of him. Later it came out that he next rented a cellar in the dirtiest and most disreputable part of Liverpool. Here he worked at his invention for some weeks more.

Evidently he finally succeeded in building his model exactly as he wanted it. Again he moved out. This time, instead of bringing his effects in one small cart, as when he moved into the Sullivan garret, he hired two carts. On one he loaded his personal effects. There was more than room enough left on the cart to accommodate the rest. But no, Thompson would not have it so.

He insisted on using the second cart exclusively for the box, which measured three feet in each direction. He had previously arranged that two thick mattresses be laid in the bottom of the cart. He then told the moving man: “I want you to be very, very careful when you help me load my model on to the cart. If you should slip and let the model fall—well, it will spoil everything.”

The moving man could easily have carried the box himself. But when Thompson helped him carry it, the inventor seemed literally in a dew of anxiety. When the box was finally laid on the mattresses in the cart, Thompson drew a deep breath.

“Now be sure to drive slowly,” he cautioned.

Eventually Thompson got his box safely on board a train and finally down to the docks at Southampton. Here he stored it in a warehouse, engaging a small room especially for his invention. It was no longer marked “Machinery.” The stencil on the box now read, “Glass Antiques. Fragile.”

W. K. Thompson was a changed man now, changed in name, dress, manner and alleged occupation. He came to the best hotel in Southampton, smartly dressed, his clothes unmistakably of American tailoring, and there was something studiedly aesthetic about his necktie, hat and general manner.

**Bits of Ancient Glassware**

He registered as “Norman S. Winton” of New York. He still preserved a kind of aloofness, but his manner was more affable than it had been in Liverpool. He let it be known at the hotel that he was a New York art dealer, arrived in Europe to buy paintings, statuary and fine antiques for wealthy customers in America. Already in England, he said, he had secured some practically priceless bits of ancient glassware, which he was taking with him to Germany, whence he would ship to America the things bought in Europe.
This purchase was so valuable, he went on to say, that he would not feel easy until he had secured heavy insurance on it for its trip to the Continent and then back to America. Could the clerk of the hotel tell him of a reputable insurance company?

The clerk could and did. Winton went to the offices of this company and explained that he wanted to insure heavily a valuable box which he was taking to the Continent. The company sent a clerk with him to the warehouse where the box was kept.

**Two Mysteries of the Sea**

The insurance company did not ask as to the contents of the box. They only recorded the value which Winton set upon it. He said it was worth to him seventy-five thousand dollars. Insurance is, in a way, a gamble; the insured pays a premium in proportion to the amount for which he is insured; if he is willing to pay a heavy premium the company is usually willing to insure him for a correspondingly heavy sum.

The clerk did venture to ask a glimpse of the contents of the box. But Winton said that the packing had been such a delicate job he didn’t want to go through it again. Whereupon the clerk made out the policy, collected the heavy payment on it and went back to his office.

“What can there be in that box that he is willing to pay such a whacking big premium on?” asked a fellow clerk. “He is to ship the box by the steamship Mosel of the North German Lloyd which leaves Bremerhaven on December twelfth and touches Southampton on her way to New York. The Mosel is one of the steadiest passenger steamers afloat. There will probably be a couple of hundred passengers on board. If all these people aren’t afraid to travel on her, why is Winton so nervous about his blooming box?”

The clerk who had seen the box shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know much about art objects, and he was a little cagey about letting me get a peep. But as long as he is willing to pay like a fool just to insure the safe arrival of a big ship like the Mosel, it would be foolish to pester him with questions.”

This conversation was later recalled to the speakers with painful intensity.

How infinitely tangled are the skeins the fates weave of our lives! Here were two clerks chatting of a bit of office mystery, neither of them particularly interested in the answer. Little did they dream that their casual talk would, in the near future, link up a great tragedy to come with two other tragedies, or, rather, baffling and tragic mysteries, that had excited shipping circles for several years prior.

Let me touch on these mysteries while Winton is making his journey across the Channel, with his precious box most carefully stowed away in a specially reserved space in the hold of a Channel steamer. For these two mysteries of the sea, destined to be illuminated and solved by the light of a coming catastrophe, are part of the tangled pattern of our present story.

Four years prior to Winton’s present trip the freight steamer Ella left London on its customary voyage to Hamburg. She was a fine, sturdy, modern product of the shipyards, built by the Germans.

Her captain was a veteran of thirty years’ experience, who could be trusted as completely as the engines of the ship itself. Her crew was ample in number and carefully selected. She had every equipment with which to make a safe journey. Even if some unforeseen marine disaster were to overtake her, the captain and the crew were assured of survival by the number and stoutness of her lifeboats and rafts. So that the insurance rates for freight on that boat were as low as such rates went.

**Why Was the Ella Late?**

She carried a varied cargo. The most valuable item in her freight hold was a shipment of five boxes containing, according to the invoice, “rare paintings.” The price or value set upon these paintings was so high that the insurance premium for the voyage was also exceptionally high.

The Ella sailed down the Thames and out into the Channel. The weather had been excellent and kept on being excellent. Not a storm was reported during the few days the Ella should have taken to reach Hamburg.
Yet from Hamburg there began to arrive at the London office of the company that owned the Ella, inquiries as to what made the ship so late. The London office replied they didn’t know, but felt sure that at worst only some accident to the machinery was delaying the ship.

The Mosel’s Next Voyage

But more days passed—then weeks. And still not any word of the Ella. Now the owners became anxious indeed and started a search for the ship. Not the slightest trace of her was found. After months of further waiting, the company was forced to declare that undoubtedly the ship and her crew of twenty-two had gone down without a trace.

Whereupon the insurance companies and the ship owners had not only the loss of the vessel to pay for, but also for the freight shipped on it. Among those who received heavy insurance was a man registered as “Hans von Winkle,” the owner of the boxes of “rare paintings.”

The fate of the Ella was still an agitating mystery in shipping circles when, only a year and a half later, another similar mystery made some people forget the first, while others linked up the two with a great question mark. This time it was the Scorpio, a steam freighter plying between Cardiff and Charente.

The Scorpio was also a ship so sturdy and so well run that it commanded minimum insurance rates on its cargo. On it, too, was a consignment of boxes containing what were described as “valuable curios.” This consignment was also insured to an impressive extent. The man who paid the premium on it was on the records as “Gaston Lacroix,” a French art collector.

As with the Ella, the Scorpio was reported long overdue, and finally as missing. Again the shipping world pondered as to what could have happened. For the Scorpio, like the Ella, had vanished without a trace and without any bad weather on which to base the least explanation.

But to return to our story:

Arrived at Bremerhaven with his precious box, Winton had it brought to the hotel room where he put up. Waiting for him in the city were several other boxes variously stenciled as “paintings,” “statuary,” “antiques,” and “rare glassware.”

Winton went to the Bremerhaven office of the English insurance company which had already given him a policy on his box of “glass antiques.” Here in the same way, without unpacking his other cases, he took out costly policies on the other boxes of his shipment, insurance against the loss of the whole shipment by the steamship Mosel, leaving for New York on her next voyage out.

On the morning the Mosel was to sail the weather, which had been alternating between rain and frost, decided to do both and nearly at the same time. First the rain came down, then with a sharp drop in temperature came the frost. The streets especially about the docks became veritable ice-rinks.

Down to the Mosel came its passengers, mostly steerage travelers, eagerly looking forward to reaching America. The time for the boat’s leaving was still two hours off; most of the passengers were on the quay by the side of the ship chatting with their friends. Meanwhile drays loaded with freight and provisions for the steamer were making their way cautiously over the ice-clad gutters to the side of the ship.

Winton’s Confidence

At his hotel, Winton was having his precious boxes, which he would not trust to any warehouse, brought down to the curb. He had, that morning, gone out and engaged two trucks and three men. He had one of the trucks lined with mattresses. He himself helped carry down the box marked “Glass Antiques.” As they crossed the slippery sidewalk the man who was helping him carry the box felt his foot unsteady on an icy spot.

Winton cried out with such high-strung voice that the other man was astonished. “For God’s sake, steady! Do you want to—”

The other man was flustered. “Do I want to what?” he demanded sullenly. “You act as if your whole life depended on this box!”

Winton did not reply to that. But the
look he gave tempted the other to answer with a blow.

The box had the mattress-lined cart to itself. Winton went ahead to the ship by street car, getting to the quay some twenty minutes ahead of his freight.

It was a remarkable tribute Winton, or Thompson, paid to his confidence in his own handiwork when he engaged passage on the Mosel. It came out later that he meant to debark at Southampton. But for him to have lived with his box so long and to venture even a short cross-Channel trip on the same boat with it, displayed a belief in his own infallibility as a builder.

**The Box on the Quay**

From the deck of the Mosel he watched for his two carts to arrive. On the quay below him the steerage passengers still stood chatting with friends who had come to see them off. Past them streamed a procession of carts and porters carrying cargo and baggage on board the Mosel.

Then Winton saw his two carts coming down the slightly inclined river front street toward the boat. The one containing the box alone came first. The horse that pulled the cart must have had worn-out shoes, for he kept slightly slipping and sliding. When he came to the incline the horse had still more trouble.

Winton, in spite of the frost in the air, seemed to be sweating with anxiety. He was mopping his brow and moistening his lips as he watched the unsteady progress of the horse. Momentarily he expected to see him fall.

Now the cart had arrived on the pier and the worst of the trip seemed to be over. It was now opposite the crowd of chattering steerage passengers and only some twenty feet away from the side of the freighthold into which it was to be swung by means of pulley and tackle.

Suddenly the horse, who had somehow managed to negotiate the slippery incline, slipped just as the job was practically done. And as if some sinister fate had designed coincidences by means of which to strike the spark of catastrophe, the horse fell and his two rear hoofs kicked against one of the front wheels.

The nut that held the wheel on its axle must have had but little tenacity, for off went the wheel and down tipped the cart.

The box toppled over, and kept toppling until it escaped the edge of the cart and crashed to the quay.

What followed belongs in the annals of major marine disasters, although the Mosel was still moored to its pier. The moment the box touched the quay the earth seemed to open up with a hideous roar. The brunt of the force came in the very midst of the unfortunate steerage passengers and their friends. The whole scene was enveloped in a welter of smoke and flying chaos; the echo of the explosion kept rolling like a clap of thunder. It was whole minutes before the minds of the survivors came to them sufficiently to note what had happened.

The quay for a distance of forty feet about the place where the cart had broken down was a smoking hole, at the bottom of which churned the water of the harbor. All along the dock were strewn wreckage and writhing, bleeding men and women.

The side of the Mosel toward the dock was badly smashed. Of the drivers of the two of Winton’s carts, the carts themselves and their horses, there was no sign.

On board the steamer even the well disciplined crew was thrown into panic that lasted several minutes. Then order was restored and the crew rushed out on deck and took positions for disaster emergency. One of the stewards had occasion, several minutes later, to go down among the first class cabins. As he passed a closed door he was startled to hear several revolver shots ring out on the inside. Through the keyhole there drifted a wisp of smoke.

**By His Own Machine**

Alarmed, he knocked at the door. No one bade him enter, but he heard a man groan in pain. He called a ship’s officer and together they broke in the door. On the cabin floor lay Winton, in his hand a still smoking revolver. From his breast flowed blood from three different wounds.

They tried to get him to tell what had happened. He was alive and would obviously have been able to say something
were he so inclined. But all he did was cry out with the agony that seemed to come not alone from his bullet wounds.

He was taken to a hospital, the wards of which were crowded with more than a hundred men and women injured in the explosion.

And in an extemporized morgue were more than eighty dead.

Winton lingered on. In his ears rang the groans and moans of others about him. Finally he could no longer endure reality and he lost grip on that cold, ruthless mind of his. He began to rave in delirium.

At first the doctors paid no more heed to him than to the victims of the explosion. Some of his disjointed utterances, however, attracted the attention of a nurse. She called two of the doctors to listen. These in turn called in the police.

For Winton, in delirium, was betraying his secret. For four days the police noted down the scattered bits of the secret the broken mind could no longer hide. And on the fifth day that rough poetic justice which I spoke of in connection with Winton's story, drove home the finishing stroke and killed the man in the very midst of his victims.

Starting with what they had gathered from his ravings, the police built up investigations which eventually turned light on two other mysteries no one ever any longer expected to solve.

They found a trail leading to a clockmaker in Dernburg by the name of Fuchs. He readily volunteered his story, since he was in no way criminally complicated. It seems that several years prior to the Mosel disaster Winton had come to him with plans and specifications for a bit of clockwork, the exact purpose of which Fuchs was never able to determine.

Winton had told him it was to be part of an invention which he wanted to keep secret; the rest of it was being made in another country. Fuchs made the machine after the pattern given him and was struck by its ingenuity and power. Among the things that machine could do was to release a powerful trigger at any moment within ten days after it had been wound up, the moment for its release being exactly determinable by the person who set the mechanism. Also the machine, at the moment of release, could exert a force equal to the blow of a hammer thirty pounds in weight descending from the height of a foot.

Fuchs was so impressed with the bit of machinery that he built himself an exact duplicate merely out of interest. This duplicate the police found. The original model Winton had ordered delivered to him in London a short time before the Ella had departed on the voyage it would never finish.

Over a year later, Winton sent Fuchs word to build him another such machine. This was delivered to Cardiff, the time also shortly before the departure of the Scorpio on its ill-fated voyage to Charente.

The whole thing was clear now. "Hans von Winkle," who had collected a big sum of insurance for his "rare paintings" lost on the Ella; "Gaston Lacroix," who had collected insurance for the "valuable curios" that perished with the Scorpio; and "Winton," who would have reaped another harvest had the poor horse not slipped on the ice, were one man.

It is cheerless to think that along with the highly developed intelligence that constructed clever mechanisms there could subsist a quality that calmly consigned to death hundreds of human beings in order to steal mere dollars.

But is there nothing akin to his spirit in the gloating most of us catch in ourselves at the thought of how this creature was, to all purposes, destroyed by the very machine he himself had created?

Look for "Queen of Fake," by Joseph Gollomb
I had a momentary vision of a flying figure, closely pursued

THE TRAIL OF BEHEMOTH

By R. Austin Freeman

FOR MONEY MANY CRIMES ARE PLANNED, BUT PASSION TAKES A HEAVIER TOLL OF VIOLENCE AND DARK MYSTERY

Of all the minor dissipations in which temperate men indulge, there is none, I think, more alluring than the after-breakfast pipe. I had just lit mine, and was standing before the fire with the unopened paper in my hand when my ear caught the sound of hurried footsteps ascending the stair. Now, experience has made me somewhat of a connoisseur in footsteps.

A good many are heard on our stair, heralding the advent of a great variety of clients, and I have learned to distinguish those which are premonitory of urgent cases. Such I judged the present ones to be, and my judgment was confirmed by a hasty, importunate tattoo on our small brass knocker. Regretfully taking the much-appreciated pipe from my mouth, I crossed the room and threw the door open.

"Good morning, Dr. Jervis," said our visitor, a barrister whom I knew slightly. "Is your colleague at home?"

"No, Mr. Bidwell," I replied. "I am sorry to say he is out of town. He won't be back until the day after to-morrow."

Mr. Bidwell was visibly disappointed. "Ha! Pity!" he exclaimed; and then, with quick tact, he added: "But still, you are here. It comes to the same thing."

"I don't know about that," said I. "But, at any rate, I am at your service."

"Thank you," said he. "And in that case I will ask you to come round with me at once to Tanfield Court. A most shocking thing has happened. My old friend and neighbor, Giles Herrington, has been—well, he is dead—died suddenly, and I think there can be no doubt that he was killed. Can you come now? I will give you the particulars as we go."
I scribbled a hasty note to say where I had gone, and having laid it on the table, got my hat and set forth with Mr. Bidwell.

"It has only just been discovered," said he, as we crossed King's Bench Walk. "The laundress who does his chambers and mine was battering at my door when I arrived—I don't live in the Temple, you know. She was as pale as a ghost, and in an awful state of alarm and agitation.

"It seems that she had gone up to Herrington's chambers to get his breakfast ready as usual; but when she went into the sitting room she found him lying dead on the floor. Thereupon she rushed down to my chambers—I am usually an early bird—and there I found her, as I said, battering at my door, although she has a key.

"Well, I went up with her to my friend's chambers—they are on the first floor, just over mine—and there, sure enough, was poor old Giles, lying on the floor, cold and stiff. Evidently he had been lying there all night."

"Were there any marks of violence on the body?" I asked.

"I didn't notice any," he replied, "but I didn't look very closely. What I did notice was that the place was all in disorder—a chair overturned and things knocked off the table. It was pretty evident that there had been a struggle, and that he had not met his death by fair means."

"And what do you want us to do?" I asked.

"Well," he replied, "I was Herrington's friend; about the only friend he had, for he was not an amiable or a sociable man; and I am the executor of his will.

"Appearances suggest very strongly that he has been murdered, and I take it upon myself to see that his murderer is brought to account. Our friendship seems to demand that. Of course, the police will go into the affair, and, if it turns out to be all plain sailing, there will be nothing for you to do.

"But the murderer, if there is one, has got to be secured and convicted, and if the police can't manage it, I want you and Thorndyke to see the case through. This is the place."

He hurried in through the entry, and up the stairs to the first-floor landing, where he rapped loudly at the closed "oak" of a set of chambers above which was painted the name of "Mr. Giles Herrington."

After an interval, during which Mr. Bidwell repeated the summons, the massive door opened, and a familiar face looked out; the face of Inspector Badger, of the criminal investigation department. The expression that it bore was not one of welcome, and my experience of the inspector caused me to brace myself up for the inevitable contest.

"What is your business?" he inquired, forbiddingly.

Mr. Bidwell took the question to himself, and replied: "I am Mr. Herrington's executor, and in that capacity I have instructed Dr. Jervis and his colleague, Dr. Thorndyke, to watch the case on my behalf. I take it that you are a police officer?"

"I am," replied Badger, "and I can't admit any unauthorized persons to these chambers."

"We are not unauthorized persons," said Mr. Bidwell. "We are here on legitimate business. Do I understand that you refuse admission to the legal representatives of the deceased man?"

In the face of Mr. Bidwell's firm and masterful attitude, Badger began, as usual, to weaken. Eventually, having warned us to convey no information to anybody, he grudgingly opened the door.

"I have only just arrived, myself," he said. "I happened to be in the porter's lodge on other business when the laundress came and gave the alarm."

As I stepped into the room and looked round, I saw at a glance the clear indications of a crime. The place was in the utmost disorder. The cloth had been dragged from the table, littering the floor with broken glass, books, a tobacco jar, and various other objects.

A chair sprawled on its back, the fender was dislodged from its position, the hearth rug was all awry; and in the midst of the wreckage, on the space of floor between the table and the fireplace, the body of a man was stretched in a not uneasy posture.
I stooped over him and looked him over searchingly; an elderly man, clean shaved and slightly bald, with a grim, rather forbidding countenance, which was not, however, distorted or apparently unusual in expression.

There were no obvious injuries, but the crumpled state of the collar caused me to look more closely at the throat and neck, and I then saw pretty plainly a number of slightly discolored marks such as would be made by fingers tightly grasping the throat. Evidently Badger had already observed them, for he remarked:

"There's no need to ask you what he died of, doctor. I can see that for myself."

"The actual cause of death," said I, "is not quite evident. He doesn't appear to have died from suffocation, but those are very unmistakable marks on the throat."

"Uncommonly," agreed Badger; "and they are enough for my purpose without any medical hairsplitting. How long do you think he has been dead?"

"From nine to twelve hours," I replied, "but nearer nine, I should think."

The inspector looked at his watch.

"That makes it between nine o'clock and midnight, but nearer midnight," said he.

"Well, we shall hear if the night porter has anything to tell us. I've sent word for him to come over, and the laundress, too. And here is one of 'em."

II

It was, in fact, both of them, for, when the inspector opened the door, they were discovered conversing eagerly in whispers.

"One at a time," said Badger. "I'll have the porter in first;" and having admitted the man, he unceremoniously shut the door on the woman. The night porter saluted me as he came in—we were old acquaintances—and then halted near the door, where he stood stiffly with his eyes riveted on the corpse.

"Now," said Badger, "I want you to try to remember if you let in any strangers last night, and if so, what their business was."

"I remember quite well," the porter replied. "I let in three strangers while I was on duty. One was going to Mr. Bolter in Fig Tree Court; one was going to Sir Alfred Blain's chambers, and the third said he had an appointment with Mr. Herrington."

"Ha!" exclaimed Badger, rubbing his hands. "Now, what time did you let him in?"

"It was just after ten fifteen."

"Can you tell us what he was like, and how he was dressed?"

"Yes," was the reply. "He didn't know where Tanfield Court was, and I had to walk down and show him, so I was able to have a good look at him. He was a middle-sized man, rather thin, dark hair, small mustache, no beard, and he had a long, sharp nose with a bump on the bridge. He wore a soft felt hat, a loose light overcoat, and he carried a thickish rough stick."

"What class of man was he? Seem to be a gentleman?"

"He was quite a gentlemanly kind of man, so far as I could judge, but he looked a bit shabby as to his clothes."

"Did you let him out?"

"Yes. He came to the gate a few minutes before eleven."

"And did you notice anything unusual about him then?"

"I did," the porter replied, impressively. "I noticed that his collar was all crumpled and his hat was dusty and dented. His face was a bit red and he looked rather upset, as if he had been having a tussle with somebody.

"I looked at him particularly and wondered what had been happening, seeing that Mr. Herrington was a quiet, elderly gentleman, though he was certainly a bit peppy at times."

The inspector took down these particulars gleefully in a large notebook and asked: "Is that all you know of the affair?" And when the porter replied that it was, he said: "Then I will ask you to read this statement and sign your name below it."

The porter read through his statement and carefully signed his name at the foot. He was about to depart when Badger said: "Before you go, perhaps you had better
help us to move the body into the bedroom. It isn't decent to leave it lying there."

Accordingly the four of us lifted the dead man and carried him into the bedroom, where we laid him on the undisturbed bed and covered him with a rug. Then the porter was dismissed, with instructions to send in Mrs. Runt.

The laundress's statement was substantially a repetition of what Mr. Bidwell had told me. She had let herself into the chambers in the usual way, had come suddenly on the dead body of the tenant, and had forthwith rushed downstairs to give the alarm. When she had concluded, the inspector stood for a few moments looking thoughtfully at his notes.

"I suppose," he said presently, "you haven't looked round these chambers this morning? Can't say if there is anything unusual about them, or anything missing?"

The laundress shook her head. "I was too upset," she said, with another furtive glance at the place where the corpse had lain; "but," she added, letting her eyes roam, "there doesn't seem to be anything missing, so far as I can see. Wait! Yes, there is. There's something gone from that nail on the wall; and it was there yesterday morning, because I remember dusting it."

"Ha!" exclaimed Badger. "Now what was it that was hanging on that nail?"

"Well," Mrs. Runt replied, hesitatingly, "I really don't know what it was. Seemed like a sort of sword or dagger, but I never looked at it particularly, and I never took it off its nail. I used to dust it as it hung."

"Still," said Badger, "you can give us some sort of description of it, I suppose?"

"I don't know that I can," she replied. "It had a leather case, and the handle was covered with leather, I think, and it had a sort of loop, and it used to hang on that nail."

"Yes, you said that before," Badger commented sourly. "When you say it had a case, do you mean a sheath?"

"You can call it a sheath if you like," she retorted, evidently ruffled by the inspector's manner. "I call it a case."

"And how big was it? How long, for instance?"

Mrs. Runt held out her hands about a yard apart, looked at them critically, shortened the interval to a foot, extended it to two, and, still varying the distance, looked vaguely at the inspector.

"I should say it was about that," she said.

"About what?" snorted Badger. "Do you mean a foot or two feet or a yard? Can't give us some idea?"

"I can't say no clearer than what I have," she snapped. "I don't go round gentlemen's chambers measuring the things."

It seemed to me that Badger's questions were rather unnecessary, for the wall paper below the nail gave the required information. A colored patch on the faded ground furnished a pretty clear silhouette of a broad-bladed sword or large dagger, about two feet six inches long, which had apparently hung from the nail by a loop or ring at the end of the handle. But it was not my business to point this out. I turned to Bidwell and asked:

"Can you tell us what the thing was?"

"I am afraid I can't," he replied. "I have very seldom been in these chambers. Herrington and I usually met in mine and went to the club. I have a dim recollection of something hanging on that nail, but I have not the least idea what it was or what it was like. But do you think it really matters? The thing was almost certainly a curio of some kind.

"It couldn't have been of any appreciable value. It is absurd, on the face of it, to suppose that this man came to Herrington's chambers, apparently by appointment, and murdered him for the sake of getting possession of an antique sword or dagger. Don't you think so?"

I did, and so, apparently, did the inspector, with the qualification that "the thing seemed to have disappeared and its disappearance ought to be accounted for," which was perfectly true, though I did not quite see how the "accounting for" was to be effected.

However, as the laundress had told all that she knew, Badger gave her her dismissal, and she returned to the landing, where I noticed that the night porter was still lurking. Mr. Bidwell also took his de-
parture, and happening, a few moments later, to glance out of the window, I saw him walking slowly across the court, apparently conferring with the laundress and the porter.

III

As soon as we were alone Badger assumed a friendly and confidential manner and proceeded to give advice.

"I gather that Mr. Bidwell wants you to investigate this case, but I don't fancy it is in your line at all. It is just a matter of tracing that stranger and getting hold of him. Then we shall have to find out what property there was on these premises.

"The laundress says that there is nothing missing, but, of course, no one supposes that the man came here to take the furniture. It is most probable that the motive was robbery of some kind. There's no sign of anything broken open, but then there wouldn't be, as the keys were available."

Nevertheless he prowled round the room, examining every receptacle that had a lock and trying the drawers of the writing table and of what looked like a file cabinet.

"You will have your work cut out," I remarked, "to trace that man. The porter's description was pretty vague."

"Yes," he replied, "there isn't much to go on. That's where you come in," he added with a grin, "with your microscopes and air-pumps and things. Now if Dr. Thorndyke was here we would just sweep a bit of dust from the floor and collect any stray oddments and have a good look at them through his magnifier, and then we should know all about it. Can't you do a bit in that line?"

"There's plenty of dust on the floor. And here's a pin. Wonderful significant thing is a pin. And here's a wax vesta; now that ought to tell you quite a lot. And here is the end of a leather boot lace—at least that is what it looks like.

"That must have come out of somebody's boot. Have a look at it, doctor, and see if you can tell me what kind of boot it came out of and whose boot it was."

He laid the fragment, and the match and the pin, on the table and grinned at me somewhat offensively. Inwardly I resented his impertinence—perhaps the more so since I realized that Thorndyke would probably not have been so completely graveled as I undoubtedly was.

But I considered it politic to take his clumsy irony in good part, and even to carry on his elephantine joke. Accordingly, I picked up the three "claws" one after the other and examined them gravely, noting that the supposed bootlace appeared to be composed of whalebone or vulcanite.

"Well, inspector," I said, "I can't give you the answer offhand. There's no microscope here. But I will examine these objects at my leisure and let you have the information in due course."

With that I wrapped them with ostentatious care in a piece of notepaper and bestowed them in my pocket, a proceeding which the inspector watched with a sour smile.

"I'm afraid you'll be too late," said he.

"Our men will probably pick up the tracks while you are doing the microscope stunt. However, I mustn't stay here any longer. We can't do anything until we know what valuables there were on the premises, and I must have the body removed and examined by the police surgeon."

He moved toward the door, and as I had no further business in the rooms I followed, and, leaving him to lock up, I took my way back to our chambers.

When Thorndyke returned to town a couple of days later I mentioned the case to him. But what Badger had said appeared to be true. It was a case of ascertaining the identity of the stranger who had visited the dead man on that fatal night; and this seemed to be a matter for the police rather than for us.

So the case remained in abeyance until the evening following the inquest, when Mr. Bidwell called on us, accompanied by a Mr. Carston, whom he introduced as an old friend of his and of Herrington's family.

"I have called," he said, "to bring you a full report of the evidence at the inquest. I had a shorthand writer there, and this is a typed manuscript of his notes. Nothing fresh transpired beyond what Dr. Jervis
knows and has probably told you, but I thought you had better have all the information in writing.”

“There is no clew as to who the suspicious visitor was, I suppose,” said Thornyke.

“Not the slightest,” replied Bidwell. “The porter’s description is all they have to go on, and, of course, it would apply to hundreds of persons. But, in connection with that, there is a question on which I should like to take your opinion. Poor Herrington once mentioned to me that he was subjected to a good deal of annoyance by a certain person who from time to time applied to him for financial help.

“I gathered that some sort of claim was advanced, and that the demands for money were more or less of the nature of blackmail. Giles didn’t say who the person was, but I got the impression that he was a relative. Now, my friend Garston, who attended the inquest with me, noticed that the porter’s description of the stranger would apply fairly well to a nephew of Giles’s whom he knows slightly and who is a somewhat shady character.

“And the question that Carston and I have been debating is whether these facts ought to be communicated to the police. It is a serious matter to put a man under suspicion on such very slender data, and yet—”

“And yet,” said Carston, “the facts certainly fit the circumstances. This fellow—his name is Godfrey Herrington—is a typical ne’er-do-well! Nobody knows how he lives. He doesn’t appear to do any work. And then there is the personality of the deceased. I didn’t know Giles Herrington very well, but I knew his brother, Sir Gilbert, pretty intimately, and if Giles was at all like him, a catastrophe might easily have occurred.”

“What was Sir Gilbert’s special characteristic?” Thornyke asked.

“Unamiability,” was the reply. “He was a most cantankerous, overbearing man, and violent at times. I knew him when I was at the Colonial Office with him and one of his official acts will show the sort of man he was. You may remember it, Bidwell—the Bekwè affair.

“There was some trouble in Bekwè, which is one of the minor kingdoms bordering on Ashanti, and Sir Gilbert was sent out as a special commissioner to settle it. And settle it he did with a vengeance.

“He took up an armed force, deposed the king of Bekwè, seized the royal stool, message stick, state sword, drums, and the other insignia of royalty and brought them away with him. And what made it worse was that he treated these important things as mere loot; kept some of them himself and gave away others as presents to his friends.

“It was an intolerably high-handed proceeding, and it caused a rare outcry. Even the Colonial governor protested, and in the end the Secretary of State directed the governor to reinstate the king and restore the stolen insignia, as these things went with the royal title and were necessary for the ceremonies of reinstatement or the accession of a new king.”

“And were they restored?” asked Bidwell.

“Most of them were. But just about this time Gilbert died, and as the whereabouts of one or two of them were unknown, it was impossible to collect them then. I don’t know if they have been found since.”

IV

ERE Thornyke led Mr. Carston back to the point from which he had digressed.

“You are suggesting that certain peculiarities of temper and temperament on the part of the deceased might have some bearing on the circumstances of his death.”

“Yes,” said Carston. “If Giles Herrington was at all like his brother—I don’t know whether he was—” here he looked inquiringly at Bidwell, who nodded emphatically.

“I should say he was, undoubtedly,” said he. “He was my friend and I was greatly attached to him; but to others, I must admit, he must have appeared a decidedly morose, cantankerous, and irascible man.”

“Very well,” resumed Carston. “If you
imagine this cadging, blackmailing wastrel calling on him and trying to squeeze him; and then you imagine Herrington refusing to be squeezed and becoming abusive and even violent, you have a fair set of antecedents for—for what, in fact, did happen."

"By the way," said Thorndyke, "what exactly did happen, according to the evidence?"

"The medical evidence," replied Bidwell, "showed that the immediate cause of death was heart failure. There were marks of fingers on the throat, as you know, and various other bruises. It was evident that deceased had been violently assaulted, but death was not directly due to the injuries."

"And the finding of the jury?" asked Thorndyke.

"Willful murder, committed by some person unknown."

"It doesn't appear to me," said I, "that Mr. Carston's suggestion has much present bearing on the case. It is really a point for the defense. But we are concerned with the identity of the unknown man."

"I am inclined to agree with Dr. Jervis," said Bidwell, "we have got to catch the hare before we go into culinary details."

"My point is," said Carston, "that Herrington's peculiar temper suggests a set of circumstances that would render it probable that his visitor was his nephew, Godfrey."

"There is some truth in that," Thorndyke agreed. "It is highly speculative, but a reasonable speculation cannot be disregarded when the known facts are so few. My feeling is that the police ought to be informed of the existence of this man, and his possible relations with the deceased. As to whether he is or is not the suspected stranger, that could be settled at once if he were confronted with the night porter."

"Yes, that is true," said Bidwell. "I think Carston and I had better call at Scotland Yard and give the assistant commissioner a hint on the subject. It will have to be a very guarded hint, of course."

"Was the question of motive raised?" Thorndyke asked. "As to robbery, for instance."

"There is no evidence of robbery," replied Bidwell. "I have been through all the receptacles in the chambers and everything seems intact. The keys were in poor Giles's pocket and nothing seems to have been disturbed; indeed, it doesn't appear that there was any portable property of value on the premises."

"Well," said Thorndyke, "the first thing that has to be done is to establish the identity of the nocturnal visitor. That is the business of the police. And if you call and tell them what you have told us, they will, at least, have something to investigate. They should have no difficulty in proving either that he is or is not the man whom the porter let in at the gate; and until they have settled that question there is no need for us to take any action."

"Exactly," said Bidwell, rising and taking up his hat. "If the police can complete the case, there is nothing for us to do. However, I will leave you the report of the inquest to look over at your leisure, and will keep you informed as to how the case progresses."

When our two friends had gone, Thorndyke sat for some time turning over the sheets of the report and glancing through the depositions of the witnesses. Presently he remarked:

"If it turns out that this man, Godfrey Herrington, is not the man whom the porter let in, the police will be left in the air. Apart from Bidwell's purely speculative suggestion, there seems to be no clue whatever to the visitor's identity."

"Badger would like to hear you say that," said I. "He was very sarcastic respecting our methods of research," and here I gave him an account of my interview with the inspector, including the "clues" with which he had presented me.

"It was like his impudence," Thorndyke commented smilingly, "to pull the leg of my learned junior. Still, there was a germ of sense in what he said. A collection of dust from the floor of that room, in which two men had engaged in a violent struggle, would certainly yield traces of both of them."

"Mixed up with the traces of a good many others," I remarked.

"True," he admitted. "But that would not affect the value of a positive trace of
a particular individual. Supposing, for instance, that Godfrey Herrington were known to have dyed hair; and suppose that one or more dyed male hairs were found in the dust from the floor of the room. That would establish a probability that he had been in that room and also that he was the person who had struggled with the deceased."

"Yes, I see that," said I. "Perhaps I ought to have collected some of the dust. But it isn't too late now, as Bidwell has locked up the chambers. Meanwhile, let me present you with Badger's clews. They came off the floor."

I searched in my pocket and produced the paper packet, the existence of which I had forgotten, and having opened it, offered it to him with an ironical bow. He looked gravely at the little collection, and, disregarding the pin and the match, picked out the third object and examined it curiously.

"This is the alleged boot-lace end," he remarked. "It doesn't do much credit to Badger's powers of observation. It is as unlike leather as it could well be."

"Yes," I agreed; "it is obviously whalebone or vulcanite."

"It isn't vulcanite," said he, looking closely at the broken end and getting out his pocket lens for a more minute inspection.

"What do you suppose it is?" I asked, my curiosity stimulated by the evident interest with which he was examining the object.

"We needn't suppose," he replied. "I fancy that if we get Polton to make a cross section of it, the microscope will tell us what it is. I will take it up to him now."

As he went out and I heard him ascending to the laboratory where our assistant, Polton, was at work, I was conscious of a feeling of vexation and a sense of failure. It was always thus. I had treated this fragment with the same levity as had the inspector, just dropping it into my pocket and forgetting it.

Probably the thing was of no interest or importance; but whether it was or not, Thorndyke would not be satisfied until he knew for certain what it was. And that habit of examining everything, of letting nothing pass without the closest scrutiny, was one of the great secrets of his success as an investigator.

When he came down again I reopened the subject.

"It has occurred to me," I said, "that it might be as well for us to have a look at that room. My inspection was rather perfunctory, as Badger was there."

"I have just been thinking the same," he replied. "If Godfrey is not the man, and the police are left stranded, Bidwell will look to us to take up the inquiry, and by that time the room may have been disturbed. I think we will get the key from Bidwell to-morrow morning and make a thorough examination."

"And we may as well adopt Badger's excellent suggestion respecting the dust. I will instruct Polton to come over with us and bring a full-sized vacuum cleaner and we can go over what he collects at our leisure."

GREEABLY to this arrangement, we presented ourselves on the following morning at Mr. Bidwell's chambers, accompanied by Polton, who, however, being acutely conscious of the vacuum cleaner, which was thinly disguised in brown paper, sneaked up the stairs and got out of sight. Bidwell opened the door himself, and Thorndyke explained our intentions to him.

"Of course you can have the key," he said, "but I don't know that it is worth your while to go into the matter. There have been developments since I saw you last night. When Carston and I called at Scotland Yard we found that we were too late. Godfrey Herrington had come forward and made a voluntary statement."

"That was wise of him," said Thorndyke, "but he would have been wiser still to have notified the porter of what had happened and sent for a doctor. He claims that the death was a misadventure, of course?"

"Not at all," replied Bidwell. "He states that when he left Giles was perfectly
well, so well that he was able to kick him—Godfrey—down the stairs and pitch him out on to the pavement.

"It seems, according to his account, that he called to try to get some financial help from his uncle. He admits that he was rather importunate and persisted after Giles had definitely refused.

"Then Giles got suddenly into a rage, thrust him out of the chambers, ran him down the stairs and threw him out into Tanfield Court. It is a perfectly coherent story, and quite probable up to a certain point; but it doesn't account for the bruises on Giles's body or the finger-marks on his throat."

"No," agreed Thorndyke. "Either he is lying, or he is the victim of some very inexplicable circumstances. But I gather that you have no further interest in the case?"

Bidwell reflected. "Well," he said, "I don't know about that. Of course, I don't believe him, but it is just possible that he is telling the truth. My feeling is that, if he is guilty I want him convicted, but if by any chance he is innocent—well, he is Giles's nephew, and I suppose it is my duty to see that he has a fair chance. Yes, I think I would like you to watch the case independently—with a perfectly open mind, neither for nor against. But I don't see that there is much that you can do."

"Neither do I," said Thorndyke. "But one can observe and note the visible facts, if there are any. Has anything been done to the rooms?"

"Nothing whatever," was the reply. "They are just as Dr. Jervis and I found them the morning after the catastrophe."

With this he handed Thorndyke the key and we ascended to the landing, where we found Polton on guard with the vacuum cleaner, like a sentry armed with some new and unorthodox weapon.

The appearance of the room was unchanged. The half dislodged tablecloth, the litter of broken glass on the floor, even the displaced fender and hearthrug, were just as I had last seen them. Thorndyke looked about him critically and remarked:

"The appearances hardly support Godfrey's statement. There was clearly a prolonged and violent struggle, not a mere ejectionment. And look at the tablecloth. The uncovered part of the table is that nearest the door, and most of the things have fallen off at the end nearest the fireplace.

"Obviously, the body that dislodged the cloth was moving away from the door, not toward it, which again suggests something more than an resisted ejectionment."

He again looked round, and his glance fell on the nail and the discolored silhouette on the wall paper.

"That, I presume," said he, "is where the mysterious sword or dagger hung. It is rather large for a dagger, and somewhat wide for a sword, though barbaric swords are of all shapes and sizes."

He produced his spring tape and carefully measured the phantom shape on the wall. "Thirty-one inches long," he reported, "including the loop at the end of the handle, by which it hung; seven and a half inches at the top of the scabbard, tapering rather irregularly to three inches at the tip. A curious shape. I don't remember ever having seen a sword quite like it."

Meanwhile Polton, having picked up the broken glass and other objects, had uncovered the vacuum cleaner and now started the motor—which was driven by an attached dry battery—and proceeded very systematically to trundle the machine along the floor. At every two or three sweeps he paused to empty the receiver, placing the gray, felt-like mass on a sheet of paper with a penciled note of the part of the room from whence it came.

The size of these masses of felted dust and the astonishing change in the color of the carpet that marked the trail of the cleaner suggested that Mrs. Runt's activities had been of a somewhat perfunctory character. Polton's dredgings apparently represented the accumulations of years.

"Wonderful lot of hairs in this old dust," Polton remarked as he deposited a fresh consignment on the paper, "especially in this lot. It came from under that looking glass on the wall. Perhaps that clothes brush that hangs under the glass accounts for it."

"Yes," I agreed, "they will be hairs brushed off Mr. Herrington's collar and shoulders. But," I added, taking the brush
from its nail and examining it, "Mrs. Runt seems to have used the glass, too. There are three long hairs still sticking to the brush."

As Thorndyke was still occupied in browsing inquisitively round the room, I proceeded to make a preliminary inspection of the heaps of dust, picking out the hairs and other recognizable objects with my pocket forceps and putting them on a separate sheet of paper. Of the former, the bulk were pretty obviously those of the late tenant—white or dull black male hairs—but Mrs. Runt had contributed quite liberally, for I picked out of the various heaps over a dozen long hairs, the mousy brown color of which seemed to identify them as hers.

The remainder were mostly ordinary male hairs of various colors, eyebrow hairs and eyelashes, of no special interest, with one exception. This was a black hair which lay flat on the paper in a close coil like a tiny watch-spring.

VI

"WONDER who this negro was?" said I inspecting it through my lens.

"Probably some African or West Indian law student," Thorndyke suggested. "There are always a good many about the Inns of Court."

He came round to examine my collection, and while he was viewing the negro hair with the aid of my lens, I renewed my investigations of the little dust heaps. Presently I made a new discovery.

"Why," I exclaimed, "here is another of Badger's boot laces—another piece of the same one, I think! By the way, did you ascertain what that boot lace really was?"

"Yes," he replied. "Polton made a section of it and mounted it, and furthermore, he made a magnified photograph of it. I have the photograph in my pocket, so you can answer your own question."

He produced from his letter case a half plate print which he handed to me, and which I examined curiously.

"It is a singular object," said I, "but I don't quite make it out. It looks rather like a bundle of hairs embedded in some transparent substance."

"That, in effect," he replied, "is what it is. It is an elephant's hair, probably from the tail. But, as you see, it is a compound hair; virtually a group of hairs agglutinated into a single stem. Most very large hairs are compound.

"A tiger's whiskers, for instance, are large, stiff hairs which if cut across, are seen to be formed of several largish hairs fused together; and the colossal hair which grows on the nose of the rhinoceros—the so-called nasal horn—is made up of thousands of subordinate hairs."

"It is a remarkable-looking thing," I said, handing back the photograph; "very distinctive—if you happen to know what it is. But the mystery is how on earth it came here. There are no elephants in the Temple."

"I certainly haven't noticed any," he replied; "and, as you say, the presence of an elephant's hair in a room in the middle of London is a rather remarkable circumstance. And yet, perhaps, if we consider all the other circumstances, it may not be impossible to form a conjecture as to how it came here.

"I recommend the problem to my learned friend for consideration at his leisure; and now, as we have seen all that there is to see—which is mighty little—we may as well leave Polton to finish the collection of data from the floor. We can take your little selection with us."

He folded the paper containing the hairs that I had picked out into a neat packet which he slipped into his pocket. Then, having handed the key of the outer door to Polton, for return to Mr. Bidwell, he went out and I followed. We descended the stairs slowly, both of us deeply reflective.

As to the subject of his meditations I could form no opinion, but my own were occupied by the problem which he had suggested; and the more I reflected on it, the less capable of solution did it appear.

We had nearly reached the ground floor, when I became aware of quick footsteps descending the stairs behind us. Near the
entry our follower overtook us, and as we stood aside to let him pass, I had a brief vision of a shortish, dapper, smartly-dressed colored man—apparently an African or West Indian—who carried a small suit case and a set of golf clubs.

"Now," said I, in a low tone, "I wonder if that gentleman is the late owner of that negro hair that I picked up? It seems intrinsically probable as he appears to live in this building, and would be a near neighbor of Herrington's."

I halted at the entry and read out the only name painted on the doorpost as pertaining to the second floor—Mr. Kwaku Essien; which, I decided, seemed to fit a gentleman of color.

But Thorndyke was not listening. His long legs were already carrying him, with a deceptively leisurely air, across Tanfield Court in the wake of Mr. Essien, and at about the same pace. I put on a spurt and overtook him, a little mystified by his sudden air of purpose and by the fact that he was not walking in the direction of our chambers.

Still more mystified was I when it became clear that Thorndyke was following the African and keeping at a constant distance in rear of him. But I made no comment until, having pursued our quarry to the top of Middle Temple Lane, we saw him hail a taxi and drive off. Then I demanded an explanation.

"I wanted to see him fairly out of the precincts," was the reply, "because I have a particular desire to see what his chambers are like. I only hope his door has a practicable latch."

I stared at him in dismay. "You surely don't contemplate breaking into his chambers!" I exclaimed.

"Certainly not," he replied. "If the latch won't yield to gentle persuasion, I shall give it up. But don't let me involve you, Jervis. I admit that it is a slightly irregular proceeding."

"Irregular!" I repeated. "It is house-breaking, pure and simple. I can only hope that you won't be able to get in."

The hope turned out to be a vain one, as I had secretly feared. When we had reconnoitered the stairs and established the encouraging fact that the third floor was untenanted, we inspected the door above which our victim's name was painted; and a glance at the yawning keyhole—diagnostic of an old-fashioned draw latch—told me that the deed was as good as done.

"Now, Jervis," said Thorndyke, producing from his pocket the curious instrument that he described as a "smoker's companion"—it was an undeniable pick-lock, made by Polton under his direction—"you had better clear out and wait for me at our chambers."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," I replied. "I am an accessory before the fact already, so I may as well stay and see the crime committed."

"Then, in that case," said he, "you had better keep a lookout from the landing window and call me if any one comes to the house. That will make us perfectly safe."

I accordingly took my station at the window, and Thorndyke, having knocked several times at the "oak" without eliciting any response, set to work with the smoker's companion. In less than a minute the latch clicked, the outer door opened, and Thorndyke, pushing the inner door open, entered, leaving both doors ajar.

I was devoured by curiosity as to what his purpose was. Obviously it must be a very definite one to justify this most extraordinary proceeding. But I dared not leave my post for a moment, seeing that we were really engaged in a very serious breach of the law, and it was of vital importance that we should not be surprised in the act.

I was, therefore, unable to observe my colleague's proceedings, and I waited impatiently to see if anything came of this unlawful entry.

I had waited thus some ten minutes, keeping a close watch on the pavement below, when I heard Thorndyke quickly cross the room and approach the door. A moment later he came out on the landing, bearing in his hand an object which, while it enlightened me as to the purpose of the raid, added to my mystification.

"That looks like the missing sword from Herrington's room!" I exclaimed, gazing at it in amazement.
"Yes," he replied. "I found it in a drawer in the bedroom. Only it isn't a sword."

"Then, what the deuce is it?" I demanded, for the thing looked like a broad-bladed sword in a soft leather scabbard of somewhat rude native workmanship.

By way of reply he slowly drew the object from its sheath, and as it came into sight, I uttered an exclamation of astonishment. To the inexpert eye, it appeared an elongated body about nine inches in length, covered with coarse, black leather, from either side of which sprang a multitude of what looked like thick, black wires. Above, it was furnished with a leather handle, which was surmounted by a suspension loop of plaited leather.

"I take it," said I, "that this is an elephant's tail."

"Yes," he replied, "and a rather remarkable specimen. The hairs are of unusual length. Some of them, you see, are nearly eighteen inches long."

"And what are you going to do now?" I asked.

"I am going to put it back where I found it. Then I shall run down to Scotland Yard and advise Miller to get a search warrant. He is too discreet to ask inconvenient questions."

VII

MUST admit that it was a great relief to me when, a minute later, Thorndyke came out and shut the door; but I could not deny that the raid had been justified by the results. What had, presumably, been a mere surmise, had been converted into a definite fact on which action could confidently be taken.

"I suppose," said I, as we walked down toward the Embankment en route for Scotland Yard, "I ought to have spotted this case."

"You had the means," Thorndyke replied. "At your first visit you learned that an object of some kind had disappeared from the wall. It seemed to be a trivial object, of no value, and not likely to be connected with the crime.

"So you disregarded it. But it had disappeared. Its disappearance was not accounted for, and that disappearance seemed to coincide in time with the death of Herrington. It undoubtedly called for investigation.

"Then you found on the floor an object, the nature of which was unknown to you. Obviously, you ought to have ascertained what it was."

"Yes, I ought," I admitted, "though I am not sure that I should have been much forwarder even then. In fact, I am not so very much forwarder even now. I don't see how you spotted this man Essien, and I don't understand why he took all this trouble and risk, and even committed a murder to get possession of this trumpery curio. Of course, I can make a vague guess. But I should like to hear how you ran the man and the thing to earth."

"Very well," said Thorndyke. "Let me retrace the train of discoveries and inferences in their order. First I learned that an object, supposed to be a barbaric sword of some kind, had disappeared about the time of the murder—if it was a murder.

"Then we heard from Carston, that Sir Gilbert Herrington had appropriated the insignia and ceremonial objects belonging to the king of Bekwè; that some had subsequently been restored, but others had been given to friends as curios.

"As I listened to that story, the possibility occurred to me that this curio which had disappeared might be one of the missing ceremonial objects. It was not only possible; it was quite probable.

"For Giles Herrington was a very likely person to have received one of these gifts, and his morose temper made it unlikely that he would restore it. And then, since such an object would be of great value to somebody, and since it was actually stolen property, there would be good reasons why some interested person should take forcible possession of it.

"This, of course, was mere hypothesis of a rather shadowy kind. But when you produced an object which I at once suspected, and then proved, to be an elephant's hair, the hypothesis became a reasonable working theory.
"For, among the ceremonial objects which form what we may call the regalia of a West African king, is the elephant’s tail which is carried before him by a special officer as a symbol of his power and strength. An elephant’s tail had pretty certainly been stolen from the king.

"Well, when we went to Herrington’s chambers just now, it was clear to me that the thing which had disappeared was certainly not a sword. The phantom shape on the wall did not show much, but it did show plainly that the object had hung from the nail by a large loop at the end of the handle.

"But the suspension loop of a sword or dagger is always on the scabbard, never on the hilt. But if the thing was not a sword, what was it? The elephant’s hair that you found on the floor seemed to answer the question.

"Now, as we came in, I had noticed on the doorpost the West African name, Kwaku Essien. A man whose name is Kwaku is pretty certainly a negro. But if this was an elephant’s tail, its lawful owner was a negro, and that owner wanted to recover it, and was morally entitled to take possession of it.

"Here was another striking agreement. The chambers over Herrington’s were occupied by a negro. Finally, you found among the floor dust a negro’s hair. Then a negro had actually been in this room. But from what we know of Herrington, that negro was not there as an invited visitor.

"All the probabilities pointed to Mr. Essien. But the probabilities were not enough to act on. Then we had a stroke of sheer luck. We got the chance to explore Essien’s chambers, and seek the crucial fact. But here we are at Scotland Yard."

VIII

THAT night, at about eight o’clock, a familiar tattoo on our knocker announced the arrival of Mr. Superintendent Miller not entirely unexpectedly, as I guessed.

"Well," he said, as I let him in, "the colored nobleman has come home. I’ve just had a message from the man who was detailed to watch the premises."

"Are you going to make the arrest now?" asked Thorndyke.

"Yes; and I should be glad if you could come across with me. You know more about the case than I do."

Thorndyke assented at once, and we set forth together. As we entered Tanfield Court we passed a man who was lurking in the shadow of an entry, and who silently indicated the lighted windows of the chambers for which we were bound.

Ascending the stairs up which I had lately climbed with unlawful intent, we halted at Mr. Essien’s door, on which the superintendent executed an elaborate flourish with his stick, there being no knocker. After a short interval we heard a bolt withdrawn; the door opened a short distance, and, in the interval, a black face appeared.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" the owner of the face demanded gruffly.

"You are Mr. Kwaku Essien, I think?" said Miller, unostentatiously insinuating his foot into the door opening.

"Yes," was the reply. "But I don’t know you. What is your business?"

"I am a police officer," Miller replied, edging his foot in a little farther, "and I hold a warrant to arrest you on the charge of having murdered Mr. Giles Herrington."

Before the superintendent had fairly finished his sentence, the dusky face vanished, and the door slammed violently—onto the superintendent’s massive foot. That foot was instantly reinforced by a shoulder, and for a few moments there was a contest of forces, opposite but not equal.

Suddenly the door flew open, and the superintendent charged into the room. I had a momentary vision of a flying figure, closely pursued, darting through into an inner room; of the slamming of a second door—once more on an intercepting foot.

And then—it all seemed to have happened in a few seconds—a dejected figure, sitting on the edge of a bed, clasping a pair of manacled hands and watching Miller as he drew the elephant’s tail out of a drawer in the dressing chest.
“This—er—article,” said Miller, “belonged to Mr. Herrington, and was stolen from his premises on the night of the murder.”

Essien shook his head emphatically. “No,” he replied. “You are wrong. I stole nothing, and I did not murder Mr. Herrington. Listen to me and I will tell you all about it.”

Miller administered the usual caution, and the prisoner continued: “This elephant brush is one of many things stolen years ago, from the king of Bekwè. Some of those things—most of them—have been restored, but this could not be traced for a long time.

“At last it became known to me that Mr. Herrington had it, and I wrote to him asking him to give it up, and telling him who I was—I am the eldest living son of the king’s sister, and, therefore, according to our law, the heir to the kingdom. But he would not give it up or sell it.

“Then, as I am a student of the inn, I took these chambers above his, intending, when I had an opportunity, to go in and take possession of my uncle’s property. The opportunity came that night that you have spoken of. I was coming up the stairs to my chambers, when, as I passed his door, I heard loud voices inside as of people quarreling.

“I had just reached my own door, and opened it, when I heard his door open, and then a great uproar, and the sound of a struggle. I ran down a little way and looked over the banisters; and then I saw him thrusting a man across the landing and down the lower stairs.

“As they disappeared, I ran down, and finding his door ajar, I went in to recover my property. It took me a little time to find it, and I had just taken it from the nail and was going out with it when, at the door, I met Mr. Herrington coming into the room.

“He was very excited already, and when he saw me he seemed to go mad. I tried to get past him, but he seized me and dragged me back into the room, wrenching the thing out of my hand. He was very violent.

“I thought he wanted to kill me, and I had to struggle for my life. Suddenly he let go his hold of me, staggered back a few paces, and then fell on the floor. I stooped over him, thinking that he was taken ill, and wondering what I had better do.

“But soon I saw that he was not ill; he was dead. Then I was very frightened. I picked up the elephant brush and put it back into its case, and I went out very quietly, shut the door, and ran up to my rooms. That is what happened. There was no robbery and no murder.

“Well,” said Miller, as the prisoner and his escort disappeared toward the gate, “I suppose, in a technical sense, it is murder; but they are hardly likely to press the charge.”

“I don’t think it is, even technically,” said Thorndyke. “My feeling is that he will be acquitted if he is sent for trial. Meanwhile, I take it that my client, Godfrey Herrington, will be released from custody at once.”

“Yes, doctor,” replied Miller, “I will see to that now. He has had better luck than he deserved, I suspect, in having his case looked after by you. I don’t fancy he would have got an acquittal if he had gone for trial.”

Thorndyke’s forecast was nearly correct; but there was no acquittal, since there was no trial. The case against Kwaku Essien never got farther than the grand jury.

“The Naturalist at Law,” will be the next John Thorndyke story
Always a face was watching her from the window, but she did not know of the horrible harvest she was to reap.

Chapter XVII
A Strange Boarder

As we rocked up the muddy lane from the highway to the Elliot house, I was shocked at the decay and evidence of poverty around me. I loved the outdoors and saw with a pang that most of the timber had been cut, even in the yard, almost to the front door. There had been lovely beeches there. I had played beneath them as a child. Now they were gone and no effort had been made even to clear away the chips, left in a circle about the stumps.

I was heartily ashamed of myself. I recalled the three years since I had been inside this gate. There is an instinctive sort of sympathy for those in trouble or in poverty, and it is simple cowardice in those of us who prosper, not to consider those less fortunate.

It's all very well for me to write of it at this late day, but that did not help Nancy in her years of struggle, during her mother's complete dependence on her daughter.

Mrs. Elliot had never had any sense. She had a pretty face, though, and a frivolous manner as a young woman, when I first remembered her. She was the sort of woman who kept chocolate drops and "Trilby" by her bedside, reading and eating them continually, poor thing.

I sent my footman to knock on the door. I knew their only servant was away, but still I thought I'd try. I saw it was no use, so I decided to leave the things with a note. Scribbling an apology and regret at not

This story began in Flynn's Weekly for October 30.
seeing them, on the back of my visiting card, I got out of the car with the packages and walked around to the back of the house. People like Mrs. Elliot always leave their kitchen door open and I intended placing the things on the table with my card.

The house, in its day, had known great dignity. It was of white stucco over brick and had an inclosed back porch with an open fireplace and square brick columns. From the ceiling the plaster, once painted blue, was falling away, while the hand hewn laths were like so many ribs. Five finger jack hung wherever it could cling, already showing clusters of blue berries and yellowing leaves.

In the soft haze of the autumn sunlight the whole place lay dreaming in its decay. I stood in the side yard looking about me. The woodpile had crept nearer the door as the years went by and was now almost on the porch. I bit my lip at the squalor of it all. I hated disorder of any sort. But then I had never lived in a tumbled down old house with only one servant.

At that moment I saw something which interested me. By the side of the saw-horse was a painted tin wagon, a toy, recently abandoned, as there were some bits of wood and sticks neatly piled within.

I looked at it, wondering. There was no child in the Elliot household as I recalled. Then, at that moment, from inside, I heard a high piping baby voice singing. It was the tone of a child left alone, singing to keep its courage up. I climbed the rotting steps of the side porch and went to the door, knobless and tied shut with a blue calico string. I knocked upon the panel.

Immediately the singing stopped. Somewhere inside I could hear some one moving about, and then small trotting footsteps toward the door.

"Who's dare?" manfully from inside. I bent lower so my voice would carry through the keyhole.

"I'm a friend of Nancy's. I have a present for her."

I could hear a fumbling at the string and the door gave a little, swung open, and before me stood a sturdy golden-haired boy of perhaps four years old. He was clad in a pair of faded blue cotton rompers and looked up at me with dark round eyes.

"What yo' want?" he said.

"May I come in?" I asked. I dropped to my knee and held out my arms to him. I love children, and suddenly my heart yearned over this little boy, left alone in the sagging old house.

"What is your name?" I asked.

He looked at me seriously for awhile, then putting his hands behind him said: "Elly." Or at least that was what I could make of it.

"Is there anybody at home, except you?" I asked when I saw he was coming no nearer to me.

"Aunt Nancy an’ Granny gone," was all he would say. "They be back soon," he added hopefully, "an if I don’t try an’ go out in the yard An’ Nancy goin’ to make me sugar cakes."

So the child was Nancy Elliot’s nephew. I fell to wondering. If she’d any brothers and sisters I’d never heard of it. Still she might—

"I’m bo’rdin’!" the young gentleman suddenly announced.

"Oh, you are, are you? And do you love Aunt Nancy?"

His reply was a vigorous bobbing up and down of his head.

I began to see it all. In their pitiful fight against poverty, they had taken a child to board to piece out their tiny income from the farm—the farm that Nancy worked herself.

"Will you let me put these packages on the kitchen table and you give them to Aunt Nancy when she comes home?" I asked.

"Anysing for me?" he said anxiously.

I felt like crying. I racked my brain for something to give him, but I had nothing, absolutely nothing. I knelt on the porch and coaxed his warm little body to me saying:

"No, dear. These are for Aunt Nancy. But I’m coming again, and when I do, I’ll bring you a present. What would you like?"

"Aunt Nancy like shoes. I like a gun." He seemed very definite on that point. I led the way to the kitchen and placed the
packages on the table with my card on top. I was glad there was no fire in the stove. The idea of leaving him, anyway! As I opened the door onto the porch "Elly" was immediately behind me. I turned and shook hands with him.

"Good-by, young man," I said. He placed his hand in mine gravely.

"Will 'ou bring my wagon to me? I can't go out. I promised."

I liked this, and went to the woodpile and brought the little wagon in my arms and placed it, chips and all, on the hall floor for him. At that moment he gave a squeal of pleasure.

"Dare's my glove. Get it! Please, get it!" He pointed to something gray upon the yellow chips. I walked over and picked it up. And that afternoon in the Elliot's backyard I stood frozen. The glove was the other—the mate to the one I'd given Big Livery.

There was no possibility of doubt. For fully ten seconds I dared not turn it over. Save for a little wear which might have been accounted for by the child's playing with it, the glove was clean. Inside were some pebbles and a little toad.

"It's my pretty," he said boastfully.

I watched while he shook the pebbles into his wagon and slipped the poor toad into his pocket. I went over to where he stood and asked as steadily as I could:

"And where did you get your 'pretty?'" He was evidently very much attached to it. He was cramming his tiny fist into its depth and took no notice of me. Then he looked up, beaming.

"An' Nancy she gives me all my singin', 'cause I'm bo'rdin'."

I wondered why he said that. It even dawned upon me that he might have been told to say that he was "boardin'."

"Well," I said after a moment, "give my love to your aunt and granny. They will soon be home now." And despite the toad I held out my hand. Immediately he dropped the glove upon the floor and came over to me and shook hands.

"By," he said as I closed the door, his voice sounding wistful, it seemed to me. Perhaps it was the first time he had ever been left alone. Again I remembered the day I was first left alone and that same sinking beneath the heart his voice implied. How I should have liked to take him for a drive. Well, for once I knew when something was none of my business, so feeling more distressed than I would admit, I got into my car and ordered "home."

All the way back the manly little figure seemed before me, the grayish glove with its silver thread upon his tiny fist. So Nancy had given it to him. And where had Nancy found it, I wondered?

There was the name the negroes call her—perhaps without knowing it were she—Red Nance—so had she frightened them away. I remembered, before I left, looking about the dining room, as I passed through to the kitchen. It was dark, with mildew on the walls, while the windows evidently had not been opened for months. Did the Elliot's and their "boarder" have their meals in the kitchen?

Yet Nancy gave him everything—even the glove. I kept coming back to it. I might give them a cow. That would help about the boarder. I had plenty, a herd of them.

Well, the mental selecting of the animal gave me something to do until I reached home, and saw my overseer and told him my intention.

CHAPTER XVIII

HER INJURED HAND.

ABOUT five Bertha and Prince came driving up the road. Despite the heavy suffering at his heart, Prince looked almost gay. Ah, love is wonderful to the young. One smile from Bertha's eyes, a pressure of her hand—and murder and mystery flew out of the window, leaving Prince as the day I'd seen him bending over her, the pink color of a sea shell flooding into her face.

While I gave them tea Prince explained that he must stay with his uncle this night, the last before the funeral. In Miss Sylvia's day people had "sat up" with their dead. So even after death she governed the custom, in this instance.

I offered my services in this occupation,
homing I would be refused. The bodies, after a final examination, were placed in their caskets and sealed. I supposed they would be brought back to Mount Holly that evening.

Anice entered just then to say Nancy Elliot was in the drawing-room asking to see me. I bade Prince and Bertha leave me temporarily. I felt Nancy would rather see me alone and I told Anice to make up the fire while I rang for fresh tea; then she showed her up.

Nancy wore the blue gown Bertha had sent and despite a drawn look about her mouth, was never handsomer.

"Forgive my intruding upon you, Miss Elen," she said, brushing my face with her cheek, "but I couldn't let a moment pass by without thanking you. Mother and I had gone to leave our cards at the Hollys and I must apologize at there being no one to answer the door."

I bade her sit beside me and poured her tea and insisted on her having something to eat. "And you are to take a box of cake back to your 'boarder,' who received me so politely," I smiled.

For some unaccountable reason Nancy looked relieved. The anxiety I had noticed faded from her eyes and she relaxed. When she had had some tea we would talk.

But before she had finished the cup I had another surprise. I had got so used to them that I was prepared for anything, anything except this. Nancy was holding her cup in her left hand in such an awkward position that it made me nervous. I'd just had the room done over in a shade of brocatelle, difficult to match, and if she spilled the tea—but it was when I offered her the toast that I was surprised. Looking up, she smiled and held up her right hand, gloved, yet unmistakably bandaged.

"I hurt my hand, Miss Elen," she said simply.

"I'm sorry," I replied. "I hope not seriously."

"No, oh, no!" she answered. "Only it makes me awkward with the tea things."

There was a moment's silence and Nancy set down her cup and I saw suddenly her eyes swimming with tears.

"What is it, my child?" I asked her.

"Oh, Miss Elen, you have been so good to me. And to-day, when you left the things. We'd got out the old rockaway—mamma would go and call upon our neighbors when they were in trouble—and so I made him bring me on to you. But I stopped and put on the dress. At—at the other place—of course, we did not get out."

"It was kind of your mother to go. I am so sorry I missed you as I did. I wished you to take my car for the ride. There was no reason for taking your carriage, with my car there all ready for your use."

For some reason I found this speech more difficult than I had planned. Instinctively Nancy held out her right hand to me and I saw her wince with pain.

"But I—I came to explain, Miss Elen. About the shawl—everything. Forgive me, please, for speaking, but to-day I must. For years things have grown harder and harder for us, and mamma will hold on to the old place, and in a way she has a right. We can hide our poverty more easily there. But we had to live on something, and I tried to work the farm—but, Miss Elen, I was ashamed. I used to sleep in the day and at night I'd harness the old horse and go into the fields and plough. I'd harrow and plant and in that way I'd raise a little crop. But, Miss Elen, pride is dreadful. Mamma would never hold up her head if she knew. So we took the little boy to board. He is not my nephew. You know I have no brothers or sisters, but we heard of this—this child, whose father wanted it given a home and we took him in."

"It pays a little and gives mamma something to do, besides sitting by the front window day after day as the years come and go, having her tea at the same hour. She sits there saying again and again: 'Suppose some one would call, my dear. We've no fit chair for them to sit on and no bit of food for them to eat!' As though any one ever called upon us, or as though it mattered if they did! One look at the house and they'd understand. I'd go in town and work—yet it's five miles each way, and even if I found a position, I could not walk that distance in the winter and see it that mother has her tea."

The bitterness of it all! While here each
year I'd been sending enough to foreign missions to make the Ellotts comfortable. My mind went back to the negroes' name for Nancy—the night she dropped her shawl—then I stopped suddenly. For some reason I was thinking of the fear in the pale blue eyes of Miss Sylvia that day she looked about her garden, and, afterward, past me through her window—that window which had been found open to the dawn!

Nancy was so miserable I could only think of the cow I intended sending. When I broached the subject the light on her beautiful, distressed face was pitiful.

"Of course," she said; "I can't tell you how I think you. A child should have—" but here she stopped short. "We do not keep a cow, Miss Elen, and having butter and cream again will please mamma so."

She rose to go and again noticing her difficulty with her right hand I helped her adjust her cloak.

I lifted her hand gently. "I wish you would let me see to this," I said smiling. "I've a medicine chest downstairs. Are you sure you've done the right thing for it? What did you say happened to your hand?"

"I—I hurt it trying to cut something." Then she smiled up at me. "I'm afraid I'm not as good a farmer as I should be. And thank you—thank you more than I can say for the flowers for mamma, the shawl, the dress and now the cow—oh, thank you, Miss Elen, for everything."

When I heard her rickety old rockaway crawling down the drive, I sat looking into the fire. What the child had told me of their poverty had been the truth. But why had she come so quickly? I looked deeper into the flames; many things troubled me. Were there some things—should I sit there listening to the wind blowing down the chimney and imagining things? I knew enough already.

As I convinced myself of this, some one tapped at the door and Prince entered.

"Miss Elen," he said in a low voice, "I couldn't tell you this with Bertha here." He bent nearer. "Last night some one tried to get into the boarded up room, from the outside. One of the coroner's men was sleeping in the room above, and heard a noise and looked out. Some one was stand-

ing on a flower pot, trying to get through the window. The assistant had a long oak stick in his hand and struck down at them. There was a cry, which sounded like a boy, and a slim figure jumped down and got away into the night."

That was all. Soon after he went away for the night, explaining that to-morrow he wished Bertha and me to wait after the funeral—"to bring him home" as he put it.

Afterward I looked deeper into the fire than ever, and for many minutes was oblivious to everything.

I felt myself growing pale—it's a deathly feeling, this creeping under one's breast bone.

"That hurt upon Nancy's strong young hand. That could have been caused by a blow."

Yet when Anice reminded it was time to dress, I was ashamed of myself.

I had once stood upon that flower pot myself. Suppose some one had struck out of the window at me with a stick. Would that have implicated me in the murder of Miss Sylvia Holly?

CHAPTER XIX

I DECIDE ON A SEARCH

HE next afternoon was the funeral. I had sent a note asking Nancy to go with us, and at half past three we stopped at her house. I had a package of sweets and toys for their "boarder," Nancy brought him forward, and he evidently remembered me.

"Wher's 'at gun?" I was confronted with. I had to confess there'd been little time to secure one, but I would do so to-morrow, and I offered the box I'd brought as a peace offering.

At a little before four we three drove in to Mount Holly. I was surprised at the number of cars already crowding the yard. From above came the whirring of two airplanes, circling the house like vultures.

Shading my eyes, I looked up and caught the triumphant grin of the pilot's companion, rapidly turning the crank of a motion picture camera. He grinned broadly and turned the machine directly upon me.
I was furious, remembering the family's orders regarding photographs, and, without realizing, shook my fist at him. That accounts for the picture of me in the newsweekly shaking my fist at the man.

There were people there from all over the State. I was glad that so many friends respected the family's sorrow by their presence. One old gentleman, a business acquaintance of Miss Sylvia, had traveled all the way from Atlanta to press Hal Holly's hand.

"I have come to tell you how sorry I am." That was all he said, yet I shall always remember him. He made me distinctly proud of the South.

There were the silent numbers sitting all over the house, so I did not go in immediately. The place was suffocating with the scent of roses and I couldn't bear it. They were still arriving, from friends all over the surrounding country.

I stood on the porch with Nancy and Bertha, thinking of Miss Sylvia's simplicity in her love of flowers—a handful of tea rose buds, lavender and musk—and now, all these!

The Racing Association had sent a special design for Farnsworth, an enormous purple horse of violets jumping over a fence of smilax, the whole inclosed in a giant horseshoe, the nails represented by red carnations.

I looked at my watch and, seeing there was still fifteen minutes till the service would begin, I left Bertha and Nancy whispering to a group of friends and walked around to the side of the house.

It was the second time I had seen Miss Sylvia's window since the murder. Now firmly across the shutters were nailed two heavy oak boards, while tipped back in a chair, his head resting against the stone wall of the house, was the coroner's assistant who had made such a fool of himself the morning the murders were discovered. At sight of me he rose and looked uneasy. But I approached him with a smile.

"Good afternoon," I said as pleasantly as I could. Then, remembering that people, the poor especially, love to think themselves martyrs, I continued: "You must be very tired sitting here all day. And doubtless every one is asking the same questions of you."

"Miss Chandler," he said, "you spoke the truth for once. I been here since—" then dropping his voice to a confidential pitch—"You heard about somebody tryin' to get in here last night and me superseding um?"

"No!" I exclaimed. "And you prevented them. Splendid!"

The fellow was smiling all over his face. "Tell me about it," I urged.

His story was word for word what Prince told me.

"So they got away?"

He nodded. "But not till I'd busted um across the hand with this oak stick."

"Have you any idea why they wanted to get inside?" I asked.

"Yes um. Plenty," he answered immediately. "I bin readin' up on murderers an' there's always prowlers and souvenir hunters." I tried to imagine a souvenir hunter at work at three A.M., but failed.

"So," I said, "if they are willing to pay for a souvenir with a crack such as you must have given them with that stick of yours, it seems as though they almost deserved something. They'll have a swollen hand or arm to remember it by."

The man was absurdly happy. "I sure give him a good'n," he admitted.

Then I asked: "Did you tell some one it sounded like a boy?"

"Yes, I believe I did. Nobody could have helped yellin' from the lick I can hit. Yes, ma'am, show me the feller I can't handle, leavin' me this stick."

"Let me see where they tried to enter." And I walked over to the window.

With pride he pointed to where some instrument, possibly a chisel, had pried under the board nearest the ground. There were clear cuts, and I looked at it critically for a moment.

"Thank you very much," I said. "I am glad they have such a strong person to guard the house. I don't think you need bother about the window any more."

The assistant was so pleased he walked to the front of the house with me.

"Are you coming inside?" I asked.

"I don't see why not," he said. "Sides
I wouldn’t like to miss a fun’al big as this one. May never see the like again. Look a yonder at them flowers!”

He was soon lost to sight in the crowd, growing bigger each moment. I found Bertha and Nancy and suggested going into the house. On our way we had to elbow into the hall, and I recall an unpleasant incident. The girls were before me, and as I tried to gain an open space, who should be standing there, purposely blocking the way it seemed, but Sarah, my butter woman. She had on an absurd green hat, very new, and across her salmon colored cotton dress a pink scarf was worn, very suitable for a funeral!

But it was not her clothing which I resented. As the girls passed I saw her nudge her companion, who ran a cold drink, stand for tourists, and say something under her breath. The friend leaned forward peering after the girls, saying:

“Sho’ nuf, Mis’ Sary?”

Sarah saw me, and force of habit caused her to draw back.

“What did you say?” I asked as icily as possible.

“I never said nothin’, Mis’ Elen,” Sarah answered, abashed.

“If you were referring to my niece, perhaps it is just as well,” I continued, passing into the house.

“I wasn’t sayin’ nothin’ about Mis’ Bertha, Mis’ Elen,” Sarah protested. And I could see she was very angry. At least her face was red; that is as angry as she lets herself get with me.

“I suppose you think I ain’t got no right here, like I hadn’t the morning of the killin’,” she burst forth. I was intensely annoyed. To discuss such a thing at such a time, and with Sarah, whom—fortunately there were no friends about, just men waiting on the porch as they still do at a country funeral.

“Leastways I got as good a right here at the fun’al as she has.” And Sarah nodded toward Nancy’s vanishing figure. I was really angry.

“What are you talking about?” I demanded. Sarah was chewing gum with her snaggled front teeth.

“Jes’ wait awhile. That’s all I got to say. Not meanin’ a thing for Miss Bertha. Trouble is you order folks out before you are sure they are in.”

In spite of my anger, Sarah’s philosophy amused me, and I continued on my way into the house.

At last I found myself seated between the two girls, and just in front were Hal and Prince.

There was a tremendous crowd, and so poor were the facilities of the local undertaker that it was almost a quarter to five before the service began. I lowered my veil, worn out of respect to the family, and while the preacher was reading the service I made no attempt to follow him, but looked about the room.

When we stood up I could see upon the mantlepiece a pair of three-pronged crystal candlesticks with yellow wax candles similar to those in Miss Sylvia’s room. I had time for thought while the sniffing and snuffling was going on round about me, and I determined to secure one of the candles.

I recalled the candle in Miss Sylvia’s room was burned down four inches or more; how long had that taken? Could she have lighted it herself and then been struck by the assassin? I suddenly went cold all over at what this clew might lead to.

Had the assassin been known to her? Was it not possible that she had been struck a sudden blow? But who, who, I kept saying over and over to myself—then I remembered the negro, simple-minded and gentle. He had come to make her fire. Her door was open. Well, that was simple enough. Any one knew where the key was.

“On the j’ycne beam,” I remembered Sam saying, which meant the top of the heavy door frame. Perhaps half the servants in the house knew where she kept it.

All through “Rock of Ages” I was pondering. But what about Big Livery? He figured in it, far more than he intended, poor man. And Vanish? Why should he have? But that was an accident. I, myself, could have prevented his death by picking up an apple which rolled in the straw.

My eyes wandered to the windows at the other end of the room. They were heavily curtained, but above the people’s heads I saw the fading light. Would the preacher
never finish? Would we never be walking the quarter of a mile through the garden, up a hill into the stone-walled inclosure? There for generations Hollies had been buried. And a Holly tree marked the grave of each. This had long been a custom in the family.

When the quartet was singing “Asleep in Jesus,” softly and sweetly, and the pallbearers rose and were lifting their burdens from the stands upon which they rested, a sudden idea came to me.

I looked across the room and saw the coroner’s assistant standing by the window, his mouth open and his head bowed. I wondered if he thought they were still praying or that he must hold that position till the room had cleared. Yet it was not until I saw him join the procession to the grave that my determination began to shape itself.

CHAPTER XX
THE BOARDED-UP ROOM

WHEN we came out on to the front porch it was growing dark, and it was a weird sight I saw! That long, black funeral train winding past trees and hedges through Miss Sylvia’s garden, thence to the burying ground upon the hill.

I held back, bidding the girls go forward. I was in no hurry. When the doctor passed I had a moment in which to whisper something into his ear. The look he gave me was enough.

“Shall I stay with you?”
“No,” I answered steadily. “It would cause suspicion.”

I hesitated. “If you have a pistol in your pocket,” I whispered. He gave a start, and after a slight maneuver, handed me something under cover of my coat.

“Has it occurred to you,” I whispered, “this may be the time some one might choose to enter the boarded-up room?”

At that minute the doctor’s wife drew him into line; so slipping into a chair inside the library, I waited.

At last when the house was quiet I rose and went quickly upstairs, stopping long enough to secure a yellow wax candle I wanted, and thrust it in my coat pocket. I hurried on to the second floor. I remember leaning over the balcony and listening. There was not a sound in the house.

I went up to the window from which the coroner’s assistant had seen the intruder of the night before and, opening the blind a little, looked down. It was almost dark, but I could clearly see the ground beneath.

Far across the field was the black cluster of people on the hillside before those open graves. There were words there, and softly chanting voices—the preacher and bishop who had come for the service—“Ashes to ashes,” he would be saying. The wind was from the hillside and it brought, through the dusk, the scent of roses borne with the brother and the sister to the place of their eternal rest.

Faintly I heard the quartet: “How Firm a Foundation,” the hymn Miss Sylvia had loved through all her hard, calculating, distrustful, busy life. I stood there in the darkness and my mind drifted across the space between us to the open grave.

Suddenly, directly from beneath me, there came a sound. I held my breath and carefully opened the window shutter a tiny bit more and looked down. There, crouching beneath me was the figure of a man, or a boy, little more than a child, it seemed, as I looked directly down at him.

In his hand I saw he was holding something which sent a faint gleam. It was not large enough for a hatchet. From time to time he would turn his head quickly, looking behind him. I saw him prying with all his strength, even hearing him breathe, as he wrenched at the board. I heard a nail give way as I saw him thrust the instrument farther under the plank.

Slipping down the stairway I hurried through the hall and out into the yard. I approached the board carefully.

Then, without a moment’s hesitation, I sprang from the corner of the house, my pistol pointing directly in his face.

“Throw up your hands!” I demanded.

There came a sudden snap, as though some metal had broken, and a gasp of terror. Then with a spring like lightning, he knocked me flat upon the ground, and I felt
the pistol fly out of my hand, and the intruder was gone.

For the first few seconds I was too surprised and angry to move. Had I not had on my fur cloak I might have been severely injured by the onslaught. In my wrist was an intolerable pain, and I felt it swelling rapidly. That was where his foot had struck me.

Groping in the dark I found the pistol and slipped it back inside my pocket. Had I had the thing to do over again I should have put a bullet through him. Something was the matter with my eye. It was exceedingly painful, and from the first I couldn’t open it.

I went to the window. There he had braced a plank against the wall and tried desperately to pry loose the boards which closed the room.

That he was no expert thief was clear. Below me, in the grass, was something dark. It was a man’s hunting knife; one of those with so many things, tweezers, screw, etc. The heavy blade was broken off short at the hilt, and seeing it gleam in the grass, I secured it.

I picked my way into the house and sat there for a long time, staring at the pieces in my hand.

It was a knife I’d never seen before. Then came another thought—one more to the point—

What did, whoever it was, want in the boarded-up room?

This was the second attempt to enter it in two days.

CHAPTER XXI
THE NIGHT GUARD

The funeral party was a long time on the hill, it seemed to me. My nose had stopped bleeding, yet a plum-colored bruise was rapidly closing my right eye, so I dropped my veil and waited. I wanted a handkerchief soaked in vinegar and water to place over the injured member, and how I wanted Anice!

The coroner’s assistant was the first to return to the house and, seeing my closed eye, had the audacity to wink at me in return. When I recovered I drew him none too gently into the drawing-room and pointed to a chair.

“Young man, do you realize while you and the entire staff of servants were at the grave, a second attempt was made to enter the boarded-up room?”

I had lighted a lamp as I said this, and catching sight of my torn gown, my muddy bonnet and discolored eye, he turned pale.

“For the love of Peter, don’t tell the coroner I was off the job,” he begged.

Then he had the manners, or fright, I’ve never known which, to inquire about my eye and ask if he mightn’t call the doctor, and suggested hot water for my wrist. I did not care for his ministrations, but his suggestion gave me an idea.

The doctor was the person I wished to see.

“Look here!” I said harshly. I was in great pain and while in a way I’d sent him off to the grave, I hadn’t reckoned on being knocked to the ground and trampled. “You go and fetch Dr. Armstead, and if you can single out my maid, Anice, from among the ‘pleasure seekers,’ send her to me immediately.”

He was very servile, as such persons are apt to be when caught in a trap, which, in a way, they have set for another.

While I waited I wondered if Bertillon measurements or finger-prints—they are all the same to me—had secured Sam Sawyer’s release. I had seen him with the rest on the way to the grave, and he appeared greatly relieved.

Fortunately most of the friends who had come to pay their respects to the Holly’s did not reenter the house. From the yard came the chug of motors, the brilliant then dimming shafts of light, as they turned down the drive.

Quicker than I should have given him credit for, the assistant returned. I told him as swiftly as I could what had happened, then I drew from my pocket the knife and broken blade.

“Have you ever seen that before?” I demanded.

The man carried it over to the lamp and examined it carefully. “No’m,” he said. “The blade’s fresh and it cost six or seven
dollars." So saying he tried to slip it into his pocket.

"Wait a moment, if you please. It is exceedingly painful for me to move, so kindly come over to where I am sitting and place that knife and the broken blade in the pocket of my cloak." I think he would have hesitated had he dared.

"I tell you what," I said at last, "you and I have been at odds since the beginning of this. Now I'm willing to bury the hatchet if you are." Such was the man's relief that, before I knew it, he had wrung my hand, my sprained one, and I could have struck him.

At all events I screamed, and at that instant Bertha and Nancy ran in from the hall, with Prince after them. I think the spectacle of the detective holding my hand and my screaming must have been too much. Prince strode forward and the man jumped back against the wall.

I explained and asked the children to find Anice for me. Then they quickly left the room.

"Now," I said, "if you've control of your faculties, there is one thing I wish you to do."

He was all humility.

"I want you, not some substitute, to guard the outside door to the boarded-up room, and an assistant to sit near the window through the night. I am going to help. I feel sure the intruder will come again."

The man was now altogether humbled.

"Course your being on the ground first, so to speak, gives you an advantage the rest of us ain't got."

I wanted to remind him that a little brains went farther than being on the ground, but desisted.

"You can't think what a help it'll be. Here's the Hollys tryin' to git us to leave; they say the thing's done and they want to be left in peace. I got a feeling things ain't all over. Nothin's been explained. There's sure to be an investigation by the State of these here murders. What surprises me is I ain't been ordered to board up the stall where Vanish and the nigger were killed."

He was getting his self assurance after my offer to help, so, in memory of Big Livery and his race, I felt it my duty to say:

"Remember, there's another door you'd have boarded up if you'd had the chance. That of poor Sam Sawyer. I feel it my duty to remind you that you were all very stupid that morning, and your one anxiety was to fasten the crime on some one before the State took a hand. Sam, because of his faithfulness in telling the truth, a thing you seem unable to distinguish from murder, did what he could to spread the news of the crime.

"Had you tried such a thing on one of my Negroes I doubt if it would have gone so easily with you." Then, as my wrist gave me a particular stab of pain: "There are verdicts higher than those of a coroner's jury."

He was so humbled by my thrust I was actually ashamed of myself. As he rose to go I held out my good hand:

"Remember, we're friends from now on. And if you want me, come for me night or day."

The fellow turned very red.

"I dunno so much about nights," he said; "but some afternoon I might be able to slip out—fact is I'm a married man myself, Miss Chandler."

I burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, which looked no better in a house of death to the children entering with Anice than did my scream at his clasp of my hand. The man scurried away.

Of course Anice was all attention, and after secreting the flowers she had taken for some design, insisted on bandaging my wrist and getting hot applications for my eye, Bertha had been weeping. I think she felt, in a way, already connected with the Hollys, and it took most of Prince's time to comfort her.

In reality it was Nancy who did what was done for me. While she was binding my wrist and wetting it with arnic, the doctor entered. He replaced Nancy's bandage with a more comfortable one and made a sling from Bertha's scarf.

It was well past six, and I asked Prince to call the car, and, bidding the doctor stop on his way to town to attend my eye I made ready to go.
It was then Hal Holly came in, and I have never seen a man look more ghastly! He looked ten years older. I thought of the youthful looking man with whom I had talked the day before the murder, the well groomed gentleman who had arrived at my ball in time to claim Nancy for supper!

I saw him nod to the coroner, then speak a few words to two old servants standing against the wall. One was Sam. Another was an old Negress, Miss Sylvia’s personal maid long before I could remember.

“You were the best friend she had, Parthenia,” I heard him say to the shattered old woman, wringing her hands beneath her starched apron.

“’She quarrel wid de worl’,’ Parthenia said, “but she ain’t never give me her harsh word in her life.”

Hal patted her on the shoulder, and she looked up with dignity in her faded old eyes.

“When you’ goin’ ter gib de order fo’ dat po’ white trash ter tek dis hyr boad away, Mars Hal? ’Tain’t nobody been in dat room since dey carry her out yonder. Hits de fust time in sixty years her room ain’t fixed lik’ she want it, and seem like I can’t leave till I gets ma wurk done.” A younger woman helped her along the hall, and I could hear Parthenia’s strangled sobbing.

When she’d gone I went over to where Hal stood. It had all been too much for him, and at the touch of my hand he sank down on a little sofa and buried his face in his hands.

“Hal,” I said, “can’t you come home to-night with me? Prince is coming, and it will be easier—indeed it will.”

But Hal, after a moment, lifted his face, with deep hollow circles beneath his eyes.

“No,” he said, “but I thank you with all my heart, Miss Elen. If there were one person on earth I could go to at this time it would be you. But I want Prince to stay here to-night. We mustn’t be quitters, and we have to stay together.”

Hal was cast iron to my pleadings.

“No, my dear Miss Elen,” he said. “I want Prince to stay here till we get used to it... Of course he may do as he chooses. But his place is here with me to-night.”

A look passed between them. And then Prince, with an imploring smile at Bertha, who was on the verge of tears, came over to his uncle and stood beside him.

“Of course I’ll stay,” he said.

As we started for the car I saw the coroner sitting at the top of the stairs, which ended in the balcony running round the square of the hall, the bedroom doors giving from it. In the hall I saw the deputy who had been sworn in the day of the murder, with his chair tilted back against the door of the boarded-up room. Outside there was a half moon, and Hal assisted myself and the girls into the car.

When we rounded the circular drive I looked back. The doctor’s car was standing at the door, and I saw him bidding Prince and Hal good night.

But I saw something else.

Beneath the window of the boarded-up room sat the coroner’s assistant, his chair tipped back against the wall. His feet and legs were bundled in a blanket, and in his hands he held the heavy oak staff.

“Well,” I thought, hoping the doctor would not be long, for my wrist was very painful, “the boarded-up room of Miss Sylvia’s is guarded for one night at least.”

As we turned into the highroad I heard the doctor’s runabout behind us.

CHAPTER XXII

A CALL FROM MOUNT HOLLY

While I was driving sedately homeward, my wrist throbbing, my eye almost closed, a yellow wax candle in my coat, I began to marshal my forces and prepare my plans.

In the first place, I would ask the doctor and his wife to dine with me. This would give Bertha something to do, entertaining the doctor’s wife. In fact, I intended the minute we had our coffee to complain of the pain in my arm and ask the doctor to change the dressing. If that didn’t give us time to discuss the new development in the Holly case, then my blackened eye must serve. I had some dim idea of having hot politices continually until we finished talking.
When we reached Chandler's Folly the house was sending forth a welcome. I have never known my servants to fail. If I have been with the sick, at a funeral, or even on a call at the hospital, I'm sure to find the fires blazing, the lamps lighted, and a general air of cheer pervading.

Yes, it was with a feeling of content that I ushered in my guests.

I was pleased to note how cheerful the doctor and his wife became over our ginger ale. And before we went in to dinner the doctor told me my eye would be well in the morning. I also noticed his wife openly feeling the quality of my brocante.

Bertha came down dressed in black; very theatrical. She wasn't married to Prince, and if he failed to stop with us one night I saw no reason for going into mourning because of it. She was pensive throughout the meal, and once, when addressing the doctor, she called him Prince instead of Dr. Armstead.

When we had first arrived at my house I went upstairs to remove my bonnet and cloak. I had looked at my clock.

It stood exactly at six.

Drawing forth the yellow candle and placing it in a silver holder on my desk I lit the wick. I wanted to see how far a candle burned in four hours. I thought of the burned candle in the boarded-up room, and, however long the room stayed boarded up, intended securing it, to prove my point, namely, when the candle was lit, as it was still burning after sunrise.

I was grateful to Bertha before the night was through. She talked in her high-bred, refreshing way to Mrs. Armstead who, due to the drive and my dinner, was nodding like a poppy.

When the doctor and I were alone in my morning room, the first thing I did was to remove the bandage from my eye, and, producing the knife, asked the doctor if he'd ever seen it before. He was greatly interested, and I asked him why.

"In the first place, Miss Elen, there are few people who carry knives as expensive as this. Whoever owned it was a fool to think he could pry off a board nailed to the side of a house with its blade. Does that mean anything to you?"

"Yes," I said, "it does. The person who tried to enter the boarded-up room did probably two things. The first night he came with no implement at all. From this we may deduce that he did not know the window was boarded and thought he could easily gain entrance. Secondly, he had no knowledge of nails, boards, et cetera, and returned next night with a most unsuitable instrument. I would have little knowledge as to what it takes to draw a nail. Bertha, for example, would probably bring along a pair of tweezers."

The doctor laughed.

"We're not getting very far, are we? Tell me exactly what happened to you. By the way, hats off for thinking of staying behind while all the rest left you alone in the house. Why didn't you use the pistol?"

"I am not a murderer, doctor, and even if I were, I should not want to kill a fool."

"Same reason you wouldn't let 'em railroad poor Sam Sawyer the morning of the inquest?"

"Exactly," I said. Then: "Since we are sure two attempts have been made to enter the room, what are we to do about it?"

The doctor made a long pause.

"I think, Miss Elen, that you are a very clever woman, and, unless you get ahead of me, we will apprehend the murderer together. But there is one thing you may have missed."

I am sure my face, black eye and all, demanded his theory. He dropped his voice.

"Has it occurred to you there might be two people interested in getting into that room?"

I put out my bad arm, not realizing how it hurt.

"But what—what can they want in the boarded-up room?" I whispered. "Hal and Prince told us the thirty thousand in gold was upstairs under Farnsworth's iron bed. If Miss Sylvia was in the habit of keeping large sums in her house she kept them in the safe. That had not been touched!"

"Where was this safe?" the doctor demanded.

I thought a moment. "At the right side of her bed, as I recall it, between the bed and the door. But how could she have known the boys had won this money, much
less that they had in the house? You know her views on racing. She would have been the last person in the world to know of their secret."

The doctor sat for a long time staring into the fire. Mechanically he had taken a fresh bandage from his pocket and sat rolling and unrolling it without so much as a glance at my wrist.

"Let me ask you something, Miss Elen. What would have happened if Miss Sylvia Holly had known the money was in the house?"

There was a silence as we sat on either side of the fire looking at one another. Once, from a piece of wood, there came a thin white puff of smoke into the room, then the wood caught fire and burned fiercely for an instant. While the wind blew around the house and rumbled in my old-fashioned chimney a breath of ashes was blown across the highly polished floor.

"Why," I said at last, "I do not know. If she were angry enough she might carry out her threat of cutting them out of the will." I leaned closer to him. "Doctor, have you ever seen a woman made angry at a man's winning money? I never have!"

"I've never seen one who had the chance," he answered. "Whenever I win a two dollar mutual I never let my wife know it. Buy her a hat or something, but tellin' her where I got the extra! That's another thing. Suppose she started bettin' herself?"

"I'm sure she could pick the horses with as much discretion as you show," I said calmly. Even a doctor can be a fool about a woman's intelligence.

"By the way," I said, "has there been time for a report on the apples?"

"Yes," he said. "The Negro doctor was right when he said Big Livery died of 'spasms,' also the horse. The apples contained enough cyanide of potassium to kill a dozen horses."

I confess I gripped the arm of the sofa until my injured wrist stung. And for three days those golden apples of death had been lying in the window of Big Livery's room. If Big Livery had taken one on his way to bed and bit into it after he had rolled up in his blanket, I did not know why the apples were poisoned. If, when they lifted him, part of the apple fell in the straw, where later Vanish took it into his mouth, I did not know who had a motive in poisoning either of them.

I actually felt faint when I thought how near Prince must have been to the apples that day. Suppose he had been hungry.

I think it was that final knowledge of the apples that caused me to make up my mind. The doctor had told us he gave the poison to Big Livery to destroy a pest of dogs. It is the most merciful way to kill an animal.

Still the end of it all brought us nowhere.

I asked Dr. Armstead when the will was to be read. He told me he knew the lawyer, Mr. Collins, in Fairview. He had drawn my will and that of my father before me, and many times when I had been troubled I had gone to him. When Bertha came to live with me there had been other questions, her father's money, her legal adoption. I had had plenty of business with Mr. Collins, and I am pleased to say all of certain investments doubling my fortune were made at his direction.

"Do you know," the doctor said, crossing his legs and looking into the fire, "I've an idea we're none too welcome at Mount Holly just now. Witness Hal's wanting Prince to stay there to-night." He leaned nearer. "It is as if they watched for something; something they do not want a woman to share." His voice dropped lower. "It is as though they feared a second crime!"

I sat with clenched fists, forgetting my wrist.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do," he continued. "Two attempts have been made to enter the boarded-up room in the past two nights. I'm going to stop off at Mr. Collins's when I get to town and tell him of the apples and end with the murder, and ask for his advice. It can't do any harm now. Look at it as though you and I were criminals. What would we do? The first night some one was struck with an oak stick?"

"Yes; the assistant told me that."

"And to-night you had sense enough to stay in the empty house with a pistol while the rest went tracking off to the funeral. At any rate," he went on, "some one was
trying to get in, and if the knife blade hadn't broken off in the plank, it probably would have broken off in you."

"That is just possible. But as it did not happen and as I bear only a black eye and an untreated sprain for my adventure I think I got off fairly well."

The doctor was too preoccupied with his plan to notice my gibe at his lack of attention to my hand.

"The question is, what will happen next? The fellow will go back with better instruments and try again to-night. I tell you, Miss Ellen, there is a powerful reason for some one's wanting to get into that room. And there's a reason for the coroner's wanting disinterested parties to keep out of the way. This means you, since you entered the detective field."

"When I've fixed your arm," he hurried, "I'm going to the lawyer and get him out here and see if we can't do this out some way between us. Even—" and here he dropped his voice to a low pitch—"even if we get inside the house without their knowledge and see what may be seen."

The thrill of the adventure sent a shiver down my spine. I was altogether fearless now, and Bertha's happiness was entirely wrapped up in Mount Holly.

At half past ten I went upstairs. I saw the yellow candle on my desk had burned, perhaps, four inches. The candle in Miss Sylvia's room had burned that long. I sat for a moment, thinking. The murder must have been committed near twelve o'clock. Well, it got me no nearer than I had been before.

If Miss Sylvia Holly and her brother had been killed at the same time, the candle had burned through it all till daylight. Certainly she had not gone to sleep with a light shining in her face. I recalled her fright the day before her murder. Could it have been her custom to sleep with a light burning? It was possible.

So snap went another thread of my reasoning. Yet why was she afraid with three strong men in the house?

I had rescued Bertha at ten, and the doctor had taken his sleepy little wife away. I gave her an armful of fine giant chrysanthemums, with which they were delighted. My head was splitting. I heard Bertha say from my sofa:

"I wish that Prince—" But I was tired of love and mystery and sudden death, so I kissed her good night, and rang for Anice. Half an hour later Bertha, charming in her pink crepe nightgown in the flickering red of my fire, came back to bring me a bottle of lavender. She bathed my forehead, smoothing my brow until I went sound asleep for the first time in three nights.

At half past three I was awakened by Anice flying down the hall and flinging herself against the door.

I turned on my light and sat waiting.

"Mis' Ellen!" she yelled. "Dar's a man telephoned dat somebody broke into Mount Holly an' kill Mr. Prince!"

And at that moment Bertha came running down the hall.

She must have heard Anice, for she crumbled up into a little ball at my feet.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CORONER'S STORY

BERtha had heard too much for me to keep her at home, so when she was conscious I ordered Anice to help her dress, while I quickly got into some clothes myself.

I had, by ringing repeatedly, roused the servants and sent them scurrying on different errands. One to summon my car; another to phone the doctor to come to Mount Holly as quickly as he could.

Then I sat for a moment, frozen, one slipper half on. I recalled the doctor's feelings that we were not wanted at Mount Holly. Well, desired or not, they would see us, and that very shortly. I gave my wrist an ugly twist in handling my shoe horn. It made by determination more intense.

We were gathered at the front door, Anice openly bemoaning the folly of such an adventure into the jaws of death. Bertha was trembling with fear, and I was none too formidable myself, with one useless hand and a swollen eye.

I don't think the three of us spoke while we drove the four miles. It was pitch dark
and the lights from the car sent their beams down the road before us. The night was frosty and clear, yet as we neared the river I saw the long, slim wraiths of fog creeping over and settling in the hollows along the road. Halfway there I thought of Nancy Elliot. It was the spot where I had come upon her so unexpectedly.

Bertha was leaning against me, not saying a word, or moving. I saw Anice glance toward the roadside and draw back quickly. There was a curve in the road and for a moment the light shone into the pines.

"Is yo' slippers fastened tight, Mis' Elen?" she asked. Bending down to inspect my foot, she said in a low voice: "Dat'un's all right, Mis' Elen, did yo' see Red Nanc' standin' yonder by de fence— I sho' will buttin dis hyr one."

I gave a start. More at Anice's cleverness in not alarming Bertha, than at her news. I looked toward the fence. Standing not fifty feet away, her hand resting on the branches of a low tree, was Nancy Elliot. I had only a glimpse of her, before the light veered away.

My heart gave a sudden bound of pity. Had she arisen early to look after her crop of potatoes which would grow in no other part of their farm than the river bottom land? Had she come to dig them for the winter where no eye would see her poverty?

When we reached Mount Holly the front door stood open, and a yellow light from the hall cut an oblong in the mist creeping up from the river. Hal stood at the foot of the steps. He wore no hat, and when I placed my hand on his arm, his coat was wet with the mist.

"Tell me!" I gasped. My words were confused, meaningless. At sight of the open door Bertha sprang past me through the crowd of servants and dropped on her knees beside a sofa, where Prince lay still as death, a clumsy wad of bandage laid over a wound in his forehead. He was unconscious and as I watched I saw a trickle of blood creep from under the cloth down into his eyes. I was amazed at how quickly Bertha took command.

"Tear up a fine sheet," I heard her call, then bade another empty the ghastly-looking basin by the sofa, and bring fresh water. I saw her hovering over him, her fingers feeling his pulse.

Hal said he had phoned for the doctor. "I've been waiting for him. I don't think Prince is in danger," he said.

Hal was too shaken to tell me what had happened, so I hurried to Bertha's side. She took no more notice of me than if I'd not been there. I tried to direct her as to not having his head too low while the wound was bleeding, but she said:

"Please, Aunt Elen—" and something about his seeing her when he woke. I looked up and saw the coroner standing near. He beckoned me over to him and I went.

"Same thing, Miss Chandler, boarded-up room again." I could smell whisky on his breath, but his words were perfectly coherent.

"Tell me," I said, "exactly what has happened."

"Well, last night, after you'd gone, we had a bit of supper, mine sent me here in the hall; Prince, Mr. Hal and my assistant eating in the dining room. We had a fire for awhile, but about ten it went out and I wrapped a blanket around me and sat facing the door. Young Prince and Mr. Hal went upstairs about nine o'clock. There's no love lost between us, since we had them bodies sent to town, but they were civil and offered me a drink. Happened, though, I had my own, so I told him I never drank on duty.

"My assistant sat outside in the yard, comfortable as I could make him. The detective was on the steps where he could see upstairs and down. At eleven thirty Mr. Hal come down the stairs dressed like you see him now. Said he couldn't sleep for thinking of it all and guess he'd take a walk to steady his nerves.

"When he'd gone, I told the detective to slip in and see if young Prince was sleepin', or if he was nervous, too. We weren't takin' no chances. He reported Prince was sleepin' like a baby and I slips out to make sure the guy was watching by the window. He was all right; he said he'd seen Mr. Hal walk down the drive, smoking a cigar. Well, I told the lad to keep his eye open, that everybody was under suspicion till
we'd got the murderer. That's how things stood then.

"At twelve o'clock Mr. Hal come back and remarked it was blowin' up colder. I asked him if his nerves was better an' he said they were. Then: 'By the way,'" he says, 'that fellow in the yard is likely to freeze. Why not make some coffee and send it out to him?' I took it pleasant as it was meant, an' 'bout half past one made the coffee myself and the three of us had a swig. That's one thing I can swear on a Bible. The house was quiet and all of us watchin' in our places.

"I offered to trade posts with the fellow outside the window, but he said no, the coffee had fixed him up and he'd set there till mornin'.'

"'Sleepy?' I asked. 'No!' he says. 'Sides I couldn't sleep if I wanted to, with a pint of black coffee inside of me, strong as lye.'"

The man's story was intensely interesting, and I leaned closer.

"At three o'clock, an' as God is my judge, I heard two sounds. Whack! Whack! They come so quick and so plain I thought for a second they was from the boarded-up room, yonder. Sounded like somebody hittin' with the butt end of a heavy whip on the leather seat of a carriage.

"Well, I whipped out my pistol, upsetting my chair, and run for the front door. I flung it wide open and the light shone into the yard. I was down them steps and startin' for the corner of the house, when what do you suppose I fell over?"

I clenched my hands till my wrist stung.

"The body of the assistant I'd left out in the yard. I drug him into the light and saw there was an awful welt on his head. It hadn't broke the skin, but he was dead to the world. I dropped him on the grass and ran to the window. I lit my flash light and there was young Prince lyin' across the top of a flour barrel some one had rolled there, his arms and legs hanging limp and that gash you see Miss Bertha dressin' in his forehead.

"I picked him up and carried him into the hall and put him on the sofa where you see him now. Then I hollered for Mr. Hal and the detective and they come run-
in' from the stairs yonder. Mr. Hal was heavy with sleep, the detective was wide awake. Said he had heard the sounds like I heard, but the hall was dark.

When Mr. Hal saw young Prince lying there like he was dead, he acted like he'd lost his mind. Wrung his hands and carried on terrible. Then he come to, took a drink, telephoned the doctor, then to you. That's all I can tell you till the assistant comes to.'"

"And where is this boy who was knocked in the head along with Prince?" I demanded.

"He's lyin' inside the library door. Looks like he's more hurt than Prince. He just got a cut in his forehead, while the other there looks like he had concussion of the brain. I don't know much, but you can tell something by his breathing."

It was fortunate at that moment that the doctor's car should turn into the yard. He ran up the steps into the hall. Hal was at his side and I tried, with partial success, to get Bertha away from the sofa.

CHAPTER XXIV

DR. ARMSTEAD'S PLAN

The hall was very quiet while we were waiting for the examination. The doctor felt around, peeped under eyelids, looked critically at the wound, listened to his breathing and after feeling his hands and feet, produced a stethoscope. Dr. Armstead straightened up in a moment, and said that except for a severe concussion Prince would regain consciousness shortly and eventually be all right. There was no fracture, but that he had been struck a terrific blow with some blunt instrument.

When he examined the coroner's assistant he was not so hopeful, listening to the man's heavy strangling breath, a sigh, a blubbing from his lips. He looked grave.

"There appears to be a fracture," he said at last. "I can tell better in a few hours."

"Don't you think," I said to Hal, "you should have a room made ready for that poor man?"
He agreed immediately and within ten minutes another unconscious form was carried through Mount Holly's hall. This time the body being still alive, I had some feeling of hope.

By the time the coroner's assistant was in bed, Prince began to recover consciousness, first raising one hand and then the other toward the bandages.

By five o'clock it was broad daylight, and as Prince was fully conscious, but forbidden to speak, Hal asked us to have some breakfast. I was completely exhausted, and although Bertha would not leave Prince, I went into the dining room with Hal and the doctor. I could smell the cooking in the kitchen and once when the food did not appear as fast as Hal thought it should, he temporarily left us alone.

"I talked with the lawyer last night," the doctor said hurriedly. "Try to get Prince home with you. We must talk with him and I'll explain the rest. The will has been opened and I want you to know its contents."

There wasn't time for any more. Hal came back and resumed his place at the table.

It was like the past generation, our host seeing to it that we had the best his house provided. Poor Hal. The sunlight shone through the eastern window and I had never seen a face so ravaged by sleeplessness and anxiety!

Bertha sat slowly waving a fan, she had found somewhere, over Prince, who was sleeping, and this faintly irritated me. It was cold there in the hall. Why do people instinctively snatch up a fan when there is illness?

At last Hal persuaded her to go and have some breakfast. "You'll need your strength to nurse him, you know," he said with the ghost of his old smile as she scurried into the dining room.

I asked if he would allow me to take Prince home to be nursed. To my surprise he consented readily. "Of course, if the doctor consents," he said hurriedly. A fire had been laid in the fireplace and he put a match to it.

"Why, no," he said straightening up, "I see no reason why you should not. He'd be vastly better off with you. I tell you, Miss Elen, I am losing my mind. I can't stand it much longer. I used to think I was made of iron, that nothing could hurt me, but it can—it can. There's no use my pretending. I hated my sister, Sylvia, as I loved my brother, Farnsworth. And now for Prince—" Suddenly he gave a cry:

"What do they want, somebody, in that boarded-up room? There's nothing there to see, save the V shape splash of blood upon the hangings of her bed, where some one split her head in two. Do*they want to look at that! If they do, why not go before the court of justice that gives everything to an old woman to crush her brothers, and get a permit or a key or a judgment, or whatever in God Almighty's earth they need to pull away the boards, and see the place where she died?"

I should never have known Hal Holly then, frantic—beside himself. His eyes were sunken and bloodshot and he hadn't shaved for three days.

I was thankful we were alone. The sudden tirade had drawn from him two great sobs. When he had brushed away the tears he was calmer.

"I wish—" I said slowly—woman's consolation, unless she happens to be the woman, is of little worth at such a time—"I wish you would let me ask the doctor to give you a double bromide, then you go upstairs and try to sleep."

I don't think he even heard me.

It was well past ten before the doctor said Prince might be moved. A pillow was placed in the tonneau and with Anice in front, Bertha holding his head, and I steadying him, and the doctor following, we departed for my house.

CHAPTER XXV

WE RETURN TO MOUNT HOLLY

SOME one was waiting in the parlor. After seeing Prince safely in the big four-poster of my guest room, with Bertha on one side and Anice by the door to play propriety, I descended to the drawing-room.

It was the lawyer, Mr. Collins. After
I'd thanked him for coming and asked him to stay for lunch he told me why he had come.

"Late yesterday afternoon, as was my duty in such cases, I drove out to Mount Holly to acquaint Prince with the contents of his aunt's, Miss Sylvia Holly's, will. It was not necessary to summon Hal for the reading. He was not a beneficiary in the document."

"Mr. Collins!" and I half raised myself from my chair.

"The estate, together with the money and property, real and personal, is left, without a string, to her nephew, Prince Holly."

The room was very still for a moment. I leaned back in my chair and looked steadily at my friend, the lawyer, so faultlessly dressed from his tortoise-shell glasses to his shining patent leather boots. His kind eyes from behind the lenses of his glasses, which magnified them slightly, beamed at me like benevolent moons.

"But what?" I said, bewildered. "What will Hal Holly do? His only means of living was his interest in the horse!"

"I have said, Miss Elen, that the property, real and personal, goes entirely to the nephew, Prince. Now there is one provision, one calculated, if possible, to cause a breach between the nephew and the uncle."

"Miss Sylvia has directed that should Prince Holly give, bequeath, or, in any manner, supply her brother with money or monies derived from her estate, he does so at the direct disobedience of her wishes, incurring, as she puts it, her displeasure."

I flushed angrily. "But if Prince is willing to share with his uncle in the estate, the old—I mean Miss Sylvia—is dead!"

The lawyer looked quizzical for an instant.

"You do not know Hal Holly. He's not the man to take a woman's money, knowing how she hated him, even that a dead woman."

While I was thinking this over, Dr. Armstead came in and said the wound on Prince's head amounted to little, and that he had ordered some broth for him. After that we might talk to him about last night.

So, perhaps half an hour later, the four of us, Bertha, Mr. Collins, the doctor and I, gathered round his bed to hear his story.

"I remember going to bed at one o'clock," he began. "I had been under a strain, so did not sleep heavily, dreaming constantly. It seemed all through my dreams I heard some one sobbing, some one now inside, now outside the house. There were many things besides these murders which will cause my family never to hold up its head again. Mr. Collins read my aunt's will, and while it was all for me, I could not bring Hal to see it made no difference. We'd shared in Vanish and we would share in the will."

"He would not hear to my even discussing it, and spent the early part of the night walking up and down the hall. After I'd gone upstairs he came and sat on the side of my bed and told me he was sorry for the way he'd talked. 'It's losing Vanish and you at the same time,' he said; 'it's a shock.' I remember him saying that."

"About one thirty I heard some one in the kitchen. I got up and went half way down the servants' stairs and saw the coroner making coffee. I was glad he was. So I went back and lay down again. But what Hal had said kept me awake."

"About three I was restless, so I dressed myself and went down the back stairs into the yard and stood talking with the coroner's assistant, who was watching the window. I told him how I felt. He's a nice chap, no brains, just nice, so I asked him to show me the places where some one had tried to get into the boarded-up room. Well we rolled up a barrel and, taking out a flash light, we were examining the marks on the shutter when I heard a blow, something striking his head. Before I could turn something smashed me over the head, and that is the last I remember."

"When I woke up, she," and he looked at Bertha, "was pressing something cold on my forehead."

The doctor and I went into the hall and sat on a sofa, where the afternoon sun shone warm upon us.

"How do you feel as to nerves?" he asked after awhile.

"Very well," I answered. "Do I appear
more unmanageable than the rest of the persons mixed in this horrible murder?"

I regretted this. I'm only like that when something is giving me pain, a headache—my wrist. Besides I could go to bed and sleep for a week, if the happenings at Mount Holly were at rest.

"Now," the doctor said, "since your nerves are all right I am going to tell you something. To-night the lawyer, you and I must sit up at Mount Holly. I have reasoned it out with Mr. Collins, and he says he'd like you to come along."

"Don't you two men dare let me miss it!" I exclaimed. It was like men to lead me thus into the crime, then leave me in the lurch. Furthermore, I determined to take Anice.

"This reading of the will was a sort of last straw," he said. "What we know is that some one has made repeated efforts to enter the boarded-up room. What they want there we intend to find out.

"The first time it seems to have been a boy, a boy struck across the arm with an oak stick. The next, the person who caught his knife blade in the shutter.

"It is obvious there is something there which must be found, and it is evident that some one is in terrible haste to find it. There are two persons less guarding that room to-night, Prince and the coroner's assistant.

"What we plan is this: I asked Prince their supper hour and he has told me seven. I do not wish any one, not even Hal, to know we are in the house. There is a third floor where we can wait. Hal's room opens off the balcony, and Prince is to send word to Sam Sawyer, whose neck you saved, to watch for us just after seven.

"The detective and the coroner already know of our intention. If nothing happens so much the better, but if this enemy to the family, possibly as anxious for Hal's death as he was for Prince's, is abroad to-night a desperate effort will be made to get into the room."

For many minutes I sat staring at him in the late afternoon sunshine. Suddenly I half arose.

"Do you think it could be—"

But placing his hand across my lips the doctor looked about the hall. We had not been overheard.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MAN IN THE FIELD

OR a long time I sat watching the dying red sunset in the west. Growing cold from the air around the window, I rose and placed a shawl about my shoulders and resumed my place, thinking. And while I was at this vigil something occurred to me.

What if our plan failed and we were discovered secretly entering another man's house. Were we not classing ourselves with the criminals who had certainly been there before? Suppose we hid in the third story, what could I do if anything happened: a woman with her arm in a sling and a bloodshot eye?

While these thoughts were running through my brain the doctor, who had gone into Prince's room, returned to say he had sent Bertha away and had told Prince that he feared the boldest attempt so far to enter the boarded-up room would be made that night.

Prince gave his consent to our entering the house, and seemed to care little whether his uncle knew or not.

At five, the doctor told me to be ready, and I rang for Anice, who got me into a black poplin dress as quickly as she could, not forgetting the hat and veil that went with it, a costume I reserved for funerals.

I felt terror arising within me at the sight of this dress. There were the stains from the Mount Holly garden where the villain had stepped upon my wrist after knocking me flat, his elbow in my eye. My expression to Anice for not having properly cleaned the gown steadied me. Perhaps she thought she'd inherit it along with the red velvet.

At a quarter past five the doctor came to my door and said it was about time to start.

"Are we going to walk?" I demanded.

"Certainly," he said. "Did you fancy, Miss Chandler, we would motor to Mount Holly's doorway making a call of condolence?"
I didn’t like this, but I had sense enough to hold my tongue. I knew the doctor’s nerves were fraying, as were my own, and it did not help me any when I saw him take two pistols from his coat and offer one to the lawyer. I could not associate Mr. Collins with this midnight adventure. But his confidence in handling the pistol caused me to change my mind.

I bade Bertha good-by; forever, it seemed to me, in the moment before we opened the front door. I could hear the wind blowing around the house, the mournful creaking of the pines and, most of all, there was the coming darkness stretching before us, save for the long, fading lines of gray and yellow through the trees across the river.

I think the doctor read my thoughts, for he said:

“Bertha’s a brick, I tell you, Miss Elen!”

“Why?” I snapped. I had on silk stockings and already my ankles and knees were numbing. If I’d only dared take time to change to woollen stockings—but, of course, I wouldn’t mention them, even to a doctor.

“Because,” he said, “she knows what we’re about and has offered to stay where we’ve agreed upon, without the slightest objection.”

“I wonder,” I replied, catching at Anice as I stumbled into the bed from which my dahlia had been dug, “if some one had the decency to tell old Susan to sit outside in the upper hall till I returned.” But again the thought that possibly we might not return silenced me.

We walked for perhaps a half hour, stumbling across the furrows of a plowed field. I was completely lost in the darkness and did not know whether it belonged to me or not. I thought, however, I saw a faint mist hanging above the river. It seemed actually homelike, that mist.

Dr. Armstead fell back a pace and took my arm. It was a great comfort. I wondered why he did not think of it before. Then I bade Anice, who was behind me, muttering, to walk more quickly.

“What is that you are trying to say?” I demanded.

“Shiss—sl!” from the lawyer. I had not realized my voice carried so.

“I was jest prayin’ to Gaud I wouldn’t famish fo’ no drink to keep me from freezin’.” Anice was too well trained to have said this under ordinary conditions, still her hinting gave me the opportunity for which I had been looking.

“Perhaps your temporary discomfort will serve to remind you of your neglect of my poplin; you know I save it for funerals.” I had ceased to fear the dark.

“Good Gaud, Mis’ Elen,” she said, “is we goin’ ter a fun’al?”


Immediately I was ashamed of myself, so drawing my arm through hers, I bade her guide me as best she could, and on the morrow I would give her the poplin if she wanted it. I felt absurdly generous.

At a snake fence, the rails covered with poison oak, I saw the doctor bend over, light a match and look at his watch. It must have been later than he expected, for in his haste, he tore his trousers and his flesh, too, I learned later, in hurrying over the fence. We were crossing a corner of the Elliot place; they could afford no other kind of fencing. The men increased the pace, and I wondered if I should be able to keep up.

We passed within, perhaps, a quarter of a mile of the house, and in the kitchen window a light was burning. I pointed this out to my companions, reminding them whose house it was.

Suddenly they stopped in their tracks. The lawyer fell to his knees in the thicket, and the doctor, catching Anice by one hand and me by the other, drew us down beside him.

For a moment we held our breath. Once I heard a faint sound in Anice’s throat and bending my lips close to her ear, I ordered her to be silent.

By parting the bushes I managed to see across the open field. The men were doing the same thing and immediately I saw the reason. A hundred yards away a man was walking toward us, his head bent against the wind. He seemed in no hurry nor was he anxious to be secretive.

He passed within twenty yards of where we lay, yet not till I saw him making for
the Elliot house did I draw a free breath. While we looked after him I saw the kitchen door of the Elltots open.

But it was not until I saw his powerful figure silhouetted against the light in the kitchen that I recognized him. It was Hal Holly.

I watched till the door closed and the lawyer turned his head.

"See that, Miss Elen?"

"Yes," I said distinctly; "it was Hal Holly."

"Can you think what would take him to the Elltots at this hour?"

"No," I replied, "I cannot. So far as I know he has only the slightest acquaintance with them."

"Is it possible, being neighbors, they would have asked him to supper, knowing of his trouble at home?" This from the lawyer.

I hesitated a moment. "I think not," I said finally. "I fear Nancy too rarely has enough for herself and her mother to invite a guest. Besides they would not welcome him at the kitchen door."

After that we walked on faster. Nearing the Holly house we approached it from the back. By the fence which separated the yard from the acres in cultivation a man was standing. I pointed him out to the doctor and he stopped.

It was Anice who recognized him.

"'Tain't nothin' but Sam Sawyer," she said. "I'd know de set of dat nigger's head if I seen him in Paris." Anice occasionally reminds me of Paris. Once I took her there and she likes to remind me.

The lawyer approached Sam Sawyer, beckoning us to follow.

"Sam says Hal didn't leave word when he would return. The coroner and his detective are having some supper in the dining room. We could not ask a better time."

I turned to Sam. "Has the house been quiet to-day?" I asked.

"Yas, um," he said at last. "De rats is wosser dan dey been 'cep' fo' dat we's a paffect house ob mo'nin'."

The two men walked forward, and I fell back with Sam.

"What do you mean by rats?" I demanded.
I felt absurdly confident in a cellar. I loved housekeeping, and looked about me by the light of Sam’s candle as we walked. Passing beneath a rafter some four feet above my head, Sam paused and held his candle aloft. There directly in the center a hole was bored up into the floor. On the bricks were the borings as Sam had said. We three stood looking as Sam held the candle close.

Then I asked a question. And I confess my voice shook tremulously till I heard his answer.

“If,” I said slowly, “the hole reached far enough; where would it come through?”

Sam dropped his head in thought. And frankly, till he spoke, I held my breath.

He looked around the space before and behind us.

“Dat air’s de hall. I remembers when Mis’ Silvy made us prop the flo’, whar she thought it saggin’. Yonders de beam. Mis’ Ellen, dis hyr hole would retch right up into Mis’ Silvy’s room. Rite whar dat do’ don’ boded up.”

I think my voice was steady when I spoke:

“Show me the room where the jellies and preserves are kept, Sam.” A moment later we disappeared around an old-fashioned furnace, its ghostly tin pipes stretching like the arms of an octopus in every direction above our heads, some curving sharply up into the floor above, others stretching away until they were lost in the darkness.

“I wish the key to that room, and afterwards I will not trouble you.”

Sam led us perhaps twenty feet farther, to a door with a ventilator at the top. Inside were rows of shelves with preserves of every description. I saw their dim reds and browns in the jars of green glass, each marked with its label, written in Miss Sylvia’s firm upright hand.

“Plum”—“Raspberry, sun cooked”. Below on other shelves rows of earthen jars marked “Branded Peaches.” In one corner, shelved carefully to itself, I found, “Mince meat, Christmas, ’23.” Poor Miss Sylvia. She had loved this room. From the rafters hung skeins of cobweb, black with the dust of years. Once a mouse squeaked and scurried along the rafters, and once a spider of gigantic proportions dropped from the ceiling on his “thin silver thread, drawn by the flicker of the candle in Sam’s hand.

“If you will bring me a box to sit on, Sam, and a candle or two, together with some matches, that is all I want.” How I wished for my electric torch!

He left the candle and went shuffling away.

“For Gaud’s sake, Mis’ Ellen, is we gwine to stay down hyr all night?” I could hear Anice’s heart thumping in her side.

“Yes,” I said severely, “and you are to keep your mouth shut—whatever happens.”

Then I remembered saying, what afterward must have sounded quite ridiculous: “We may never have as splendid a chance like this again.”

When Sam returned he brought a bench for Anice and a chair for me and a blanket for us both.

“Peers like dey all quit up yonder,” he said. “When I went ter de blanket chist I never heard nothin’.”

We were really quite comfortable, and while I knew we could not sit in the light, it was a relief to have the candles near.

“Go, Sam,” I said as he was leaving, “and find the gentlemen who accompanied me here and say I am all right and know how to reach them if there should be need—by the servants’ stairway.”

I confess my heart sank when I blew out the candle and heard old Sam’s footsteps shuffling away.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THERE BEHIND THE FURNACE

From the length of time it had taken us to walk to Mount Holly I knew it must be well past seven o’clock. I knew also our policy of watchful waiting. I must say I confessed to a distinct feeling of fear when the shuffling footsteps of old Sam had died away. Then I took hold of myself. In the first place, should my nervousness communicate itself to Anice, already near hysterics, I didn’t know what the consequences would be; also I was none too sure of myself.
Here I was, hidden away like a thief, in the cellar of a neighbor, in whose house the most frightful and revolting crime had been committed, without, as far as I could tell, any exact motive, though, of course, there might have been fifty.

Big Livery had known of the gold, yet had he known it was hidden in the house? He could have told an accomplice. But Big Livery was found dead and so was the horse he loved as much as he did his masters. Had he poisoned the apples? Was he drunk when he ate one by mistake? A tramp might have committed the murder, but what was his motive, unless he knew of the gold?

There came to me a vision of Georges Phillipps’s frightened face. His sudden disappearance with Prince. Both of them had been away for fully an hour the night of the murder. What of Hal Holly and what of the others? It was a boy, and a lively one into the bargain, who had flung me violently to the ground.

While these thoughts were racing through my mind I realized how comfortable it was to know that by a dash to the servants’ stairs I could reach the doctor at his post of watching on the third floor.

Sitting there, I drew the blanket closer about me and wrapped it around my feet. I put out my hand in the dark and laid it on Anice’s to quiet her. I could feel her trembling. She almost jumped out of her skin and succeeded in knocking a jar of some pungent pickle off a shelf, shattering it upon the floor.

I shook her severely by the wrist and bade her keep her place. Then, as the night grew colder, I ordered her, in a whisper, to lift my blanket and draw it well over the back of my head. From far away upstairs I could hear the grandfather clock boom out the hours. Up there I heard the detective who was watching the door of the boarded-up room rise and go into the dining room, and when the clock had struck eleven I heard the sound of voices talking in the hall above.

Finally I recognized the persons. They were Hal Holly and the coroner. Evidently they had grown used to one another, for I heard distinctly the pop of a cork and later the faint crash as a glass was accidently dropped on the floor. After that all was still. An hour passed and I heard the slow creak of Hal’s footsteps climbing the stairs to his room. After that I was left alone with the deep booming grandfather clock, the faint scurry of mice, and the deep breathing of Anice.

She had gone to sleep trying to mutter a prayer I had taught her as a child. “Now I lay me—” I felt myself smiling. If she called it laying herself down to sleep, all well and good; to me, sitting in a damp cellar rolled in a blanket smelling of moth balls, was as far from it as one well could get.

She was snoring faintly, and I drew the blanket closer and began to think again. I refused to admit how foolhardy I had been in first not telling the doctor and Mr. Collins why I had decided to stay in the cellar, nor why I had not asked for a weapon of some sort. My theory might be nothing, probably was, still I was determined to solve the mystery which hung above Mount Holly. Besides the place was Prince’s, and nothing I could say would prevent his marriage to Bertha.

I must have dozed myself, for suddenly I sat bolt upright, clutching at Anice. A door had stealthily opened and closed somewhere. I sat there erect, listening; the clock upstairs struck three. As its last tone died away I cautiously gave Anice another shake.

“Don’ do dat, Mis’ Elen,” she breathed. “I’s awake.” From the terror of her whisper I could not doubt her.

The doorway leading up the servants’ stair was like those found in many houses of that date. Wide and set slanting against the house. There was an iron ring for one to lift it open; the door lying back against the side of the house when open. Was it the opening and the closing of this door which wakened me?

Dislodging myself from the blanket and avoiding the broken jar, I crept to the door and on tiptoes listened through the ventilator in its top. At first I heard nothing. Then as I listened, from far away I heard footsteps of some one walking along the stone passage, through which Sam had led
me. They were certain footsteps. Some one familiar with the ground.

Now, here, I have always contended I did a very clever thing! Bertha contends I should have hidden myself in the corner behind the mince meat jars. But what I did was to open the door of the storeroom and quietly slip outside. I stood there some seconds, listening as the steps came nearer and nearer. And suddenly, at the farther end of the cellar where the passage opened into the furnace room, I saw a light spring up. Before me was the huge old-fashioned furnace. At that moment I heard Anice breathing at my side, and I slipped my hand in hers. Anice behaved splendidly that night. I shall never forget it.

Slowly, a tiny bit in front myself, I led her to the shadow of the furnace. Then, cautiously, I peeped around it. There, perhaps thirty feet away, his back to us, a man was kneeling on the floor. He had placed a candle some distance from him and was unwinding something which looked like heavy cord. After a moment I saw him take out his knife, cut this in two, scraping one end with the blade. Occasionally, to make sure of his work, he would hold the cord toward the light.

At last he seemed satisfied and moved a bench directly under the hole bored in the ceiling, and, with a small rounded stick, he carefully inserted something into the hole; a yellow greasy looking cylinder. I had not the faintest idea what he was doing. If I had—right there was his gigantic shadow waverin along the ceiling. He seemed in no hurry. I saw him sifting something into a bit of heavy paper and twisting it tight. Then he inserted it into the rafter. Next with the rounded stick he rammed this into the hole. When he finished he got down from the bench and looked at his watch. He put it back into his vest pocket and lifted up the candle.

Even at that distance I saw his hand was trembling violently. And next, when he held the candle to the dangling end of cord, the light fell directly on his face.

It was Hal Holly. But I had never seen the look which shone from his eyes that night!

Instinctively I covered my face with my hands. When I looked up the candle was swiftly disappearing down the corridor toward the stairway. For a second I stared at the place where he had stood. Then, from the ceiling, I saw sparks of fire hissing and sputtering down upon the floor.

I do not know why I stood there frozen. The next thing I remember was a smell of burning paper and Anice dragging me to the storeroom and slamming the heavy door. Next she whirled me about, flinging me face downward on the floor.

CHAPTER XXIX
FUTILE FLIGHT

THINK I lay there ten seconds when there came a roar like thunder, a deafening explosion leaving us for the moment unconscious. I heard Anice scream, and, catching me by the hand, we staggered toward the furnace. The place seemed growing light. We ran forward and looked up. Above us, torn through the floor, was a tremendous hole.

Red flames were licking upward in the room above. Something hot and flaming fell upon the cellar floor, and I saw Anice stamp it out. Above the light was growing fiercer. Staring in mortal terror as in a nightmare I saw the body of a man leap past the gaping hole of flame and disappear across the room.

Somehow we reached the upper hall. I shall never forget the spectacle which met us there. Where the door of the boarded-up room had been was a yawning hole into the cellar. Half into this was the wreck of Miss Sylvia’s bed and the stand which stood beside it. Above was a tangled mass of fiercely burning hangings.

As I looked the flames leaped, crawling over the bed, catching the curtains and bed clothing. All about were blazing spots of oil. Already the room was black with smoke. Inside, through the fierce red, licking flames I saw the man tearing at the burning wreckage in his path. There came a sudden crash and a fiercer leap of flames up to the ceiling of the room.

The whole household was gathered there. The doctor recovered first and ordered the
Negroes to the cellar with buckets of water, bidding them fling it upon the ceiling and against the floors. In less time than it takes to tell it there was a bucket brigade formed from the kitchen, though the dining room, and they began to fight the fire. I was too frightened to move, and could only stand and stare.

Then I heard an unusual sound. The steady smashing of an ax, resounding blows being struck faster and faster. I could not place them; they seemed to come from the heart of the flames. Through the smoke a window, heavily quilted, caught fire and a spurt of flame rushed to the top. The glass lamp by Miss Sylvia's bed was shattered, the kerosene spattering about the room from the explosion. The blows came louder and louder still.

I rushed to the lawyer, nearly upsetting him with his pail of water, and cried:

"Give me your pistol, for God's sake! Quick!" Then as I snatched it from his hands: "Come into the yard! Come quick, or it will be too late!" This last I flung over my shoulder as I dashed through the door. I was not one moment too soon.

Standing on a barrel, the flames from the room licking around her, was Nancy Elliot. The sleeves of her white waist were blazing to her elbow, her black hair streaming down her back. One after another she rained furious blows upon the shutters and boards across the window. At last one gave with a crash and she stood in a glare of blinding light. Bending her head to the flames she tore with her hands at the remaining shutter, and with a final blow of the ax the window was opened, the red flaring light streaming across the yard. She called into the fire.

"Hal!" she screamed. "Hal!"

I saw her spring down from the barrel as his figure appeared in the window. His clothing was on fire from head to foot. With one arm he shielded his eyes from the flames and with the other he held, as though very heavy, against his breast, Miss Sylvia Holly's silver urn. I saw Nancy try to steady him. I saw him stagger upon the barrel and then leap to the ground. I saw him stumble, saw Nancy's arms about him, saw them, in the light of the fire, half reel across the yard. Clinging together they made for the garden and the road.

Perhaps a hundred feet from the house they collapsed. Hal, staggering, tried to lift Nancy. He gave a frightful cry, his lungs were filled with smoke, and slipped to the ground himself. There in the light from the burning window I saw him thrust his hand inside the silver urn.

When I reached him he was unconscious and Nancy barely able to speak. She had extinguished the flames and was leaning over his unconscious form, whispering incoherently.

Leaning over, I drew away his hand. The silver urn rolled heavily against his side.

Hal was dying, and I screamed to Anice to fetch the doctor. As I lifted his hand something came back to me. Why I should have noticed it beside the dying man I do not know. From his blackened hand there came the sweetness of the potpourri the day Miss Sylvia held it forth beneath my face.

"Our lives were like a potpourri at dusk, Breathing dead rosemary, lavender and musk—"

CHAPTER XXX
HER WHIRLWIND

ND so with the cry of anguish with which Nancy fell across Hal's lifeless body in the early dawn, I come to the end of my story.

For years Hal had been secretly married to Nancy, and the child I had encountered was their son. He had fought to keep the home for Nancy and her mother and her child. But the hardships of her life grew more unbearable to Hal.

He knew his wife's pride—that pride which caused her to plough the farm at night—and Hal Holly's heart grew black against his sister. Night after night he worked in the fields with Nancy. When their baby came, there was a further drain upon their small resources.

But the night when Vanish won his race, relief had seemed in sight. Poor Nancy! It was her habit to watch for Hal from a treetop, from which she could see Mount
Holly. She hated Miss Sylvia and should she demand Hal's presence, her anger knew no bounds.

The day of the race the boys carried their gold to the stable where Big Livery saw it and rejoiced. Later Farnsworth hid it in his bed out at Mount Holly.

That night Georges Phillips told Prince of his shortage at the bank. Prince had ridden to Mount Holly to get his share to help his friend. But Farnsworth refused to let him have it for such a purpose, and while they wrangled Miss Sylvia lighted a candle, called Prince down and demanded to know the cause of the trouble. He told her the truth about their money and implored her to lend him some to help his friend.

Miss Sylvia, to taunt him, said when she had money she kept it in the silver urn. Prince thrust his hand down into the bottom of the potpourri. It came out empty, and he, seeing the laughter in her eyes, came back empty-handed to my dance.

Miss Sylvia had lain beneath the hangings of her bed in the dim candle light, and her rage at the deception gathered. She must have climbed the stair, demanded the money, and so complete was her power over Farnsworth, he gave it to her, and she had hidden it deep in the silver urn.

Hal had had a violent scene with Nancy that afternoon, though he loved her better than his life. That she must accept a gown from us before she could attend my dance was more than Hal could bear. So after he had watched his turn with Vanish, he took the cyanide the doctor had given him, injected it into the apples, planning to destroy Vanish for the insurance. But his sportsman heart had failed him. He could not see Vanish die before his eyes, so he had placed the apples in the window, hoping that Big Livery would give one apple to the horse. Big Livery's death alone with Vanish has already been told.

Hal went to Mount Holly at half past twelve and when his brother told him he had given the money to his sister, Hal flew into a rage, knowing they would never see it if this were true, and accused him of stealing it. There had been a fearful fight. Hal secured an ax and crushed his brother's skull. He locked the door and as he crept away downstairs, Miss Sylvia called him. Smooth of voice, with narrow eyes, she looked and saw the blood upon his hands. Then she told him he would hang for it!

Perhaps she had not reckoned on the ax, still in Hal Holly's hands. There she sat hugging her knees close to her bony body; the little yellowish curls like painted ones on a doll. He raised the ax and split her skull through past her ears. So she had slowly fallen backward, propped as she was with the great pillows of her bed.

He flung the weapon from him, and washed himself and changed clothes, then came so gayly, happily, I had thought, to my ball at Chandler's Folly. Doubtless he knew the money would revert to him.

So these are the major facts of the tragedy of the silver urn. Nancy told me them herself. Hal had told Nancy of his guilt, and that when they could secure the money, they would fly together. That first night Nancy had tried to enter the boarded-up room, she was dressed as a boy, and on the second night as poor Georges Phillips. The night Prince examined the window with the coroner's assistant, Hal clouted them over the head, certain it was, though, that he had not known who bent close to the shutter in the dark.

Nancy, knowing the money was still hidden in Miss Sylvia's room, determined to enter, yet her courage had failed after she had begged the pistol of Prince.

Then came the reading of the will. Hal's heart was torn at the poverty ahead of Nancy and his child, and so his rage had burst. He knew his child must be acknowledged. Nancy often was forced to take brandy because there was no food. Then came the servants' talk, the gossip of the egg and butter woman, Sarah, who somehow found out a child was born. Small wonder was it that poor Hal's heart would break.

Ah, well, these are the facts as they came to light. Nancy is living in her old home. Prince gave her the contents of the silver urn—some thirty thousand dollars. My lawyer now has charge of her affairs.

It was not until a winter afternoon, months later, though, that Nancy came to
see me and told one last fact of which I had never been quite clear. Hal brought Big Livery’s gloves that night, to throw suspicion on their owner. One he had dropped at her house without his knowing it, and hence the child’s delight the day I found him playing there alone.

Of course, Prince and Bertha were married. I was in bed for a week after the wedding, such were her ideas of elaborateness.

I gave Anice a holiday of two days—all I could spare her. She is much sobered since our adventures.

There are one or two things of which I am not certain, shall never be. Their answer lies buried with poor tragic Hal. It must have been he who was hidden in the stable room and fired at us that night. Despite his crimes, I have a spark of belief in him still. I believe he feared the poisoned apples and went there to destroy them. That we should have met there in the dark is only another of the unexplainable coincidences of life. He fired the shot hoping to frighten us away.

Nancy herself told me one day that it had been her appearance about the place, seeking a word of comfort from her husband, that frightened Miss Sylvia. I have always wondered how much Miss Sylvia knew. Ah, well, it was the harvest of fear she’d sown in the hearts of her brothers since they were children, and truly she had reaped her whirlwind.

Bertha and Prince restored the place, and I trust have no associations with its grim past. The house is very beautiful. One would never recognize it as the same grim place upon the hill, where I called upon Miss Sylvia that afternoon in September, and first saw the silver urn.

By the way, I’ve never asked what they did with it. It was very beautiful. No, as much as I’d like to know, I shall never ask. Possibly they have buried it somewhere with the past. Certain I am, though, it will never appear again at Mount Holly.

THE END

In the last two or three issues of Flynn’s Weekly we have asked our readers a couple of times just what disposition they would like to see made of these odd blank spaces occasioned by the ending of a story on the middle of a page.

Letters have already been pouring in. We hope soon to be able to formulate from them a policy which will be pleasing to you and advantageous to the magazine.

William J. Flynn
A NEPHEW BY PROXY

By W. Carlton Davis

AT THE PROPER TIME, CHAPPIE SIMPLY LIFTED THE FLOOD-GATES AND LET THE SLIME OF A LIFE OF CRIME POUR OUT

This is a story of a confiding and culpable woman who talked too much; of a crook who was a capable opportunist. The woman who was too glib and too confiding furnished the opportunity—an opportunity that only such a man as Chappie Moran could turn to account.

Let those readers who profess to believe that no special mental equipment is required to be a high-grade crook, ask themselves if they could have got away with it.

The woman in the case was a very wealthy guest at one of New York's exclusive hotels. To every one she met in a social way, she related the story of a long-lost nephew who had disappeared when a small child. She had been greatly attached to the little chap, and his disappearance had grieved her greatly. He was in her mind all the time, and talking about him, possibly in the hope of getting some sort of a clew to his whereabouts, became an obsession with her.

Moran, one of the most brilliant members of the stock game mob, got wind of her. If the lady had need for a nephew, Chappie would supply her one, made to order. He was a very good-looking fellow, of about average height or better; light hair and blue eyes and a fair complexion. He exhibited unusual taste in his dress, was polished in manner, and a splendid entertainer.

Chappie didn't rush precipitously into this little matter. He didn't knock at the lady's door, call her "auntie" right off the bat, and fall into her willing and yearning arms. Mr. Moran was a patient and con-
scientious workman, and very thorough. In his particular line he could be classed as a master mechanic. He laid his plans with consummate skill, and with singular cunning and ability he "built up" the lady with the dough. For several months he worked carefully upon the case. During the period of watchful waiting he sent many of his close friends—male and female—to listen to her story, gather data and absorb the necessary information calculated to make of him a nephew capable of undergoing the acid test of scrutiny.

**What Chappie Revealed**

Finally, after much painstaking effort, and without disclosing himself or his plans, Chappie acquired an intimate and detailed history of the life of the rich woman, from her infancy up. He had a perfect background for his nephewsip. He made a close study of his facts, until he determined that the stage was all set for the nephew to do his stuff and be resurrected with becoming dramatic effects. Mind you, all this time, the woman had not set eyes on Moran. She did not even dream that he existed.

Moran waited several days along Thirty-Fourth Street for the old lady to happen along. All things come to him who waits. The aged dupe came to Chappie. He saw her walking toward him. Rushing to her he threw his arms about her, called her his long-lost aunt, and kissed her with passion and precision.

The old lady was greatly surprised, of course. She didn't fall for the resurrection so easily as might be supposed. But Chappie convinced her. As a convincing the plausible Chappie was a resourceful person. Speaking rapidly, his voice trembling with repressed emotion, he told her he had been kidnapped when a mere lad.

But he remembered his aunt's face—her dear face, from a photo in a small locket depended from his neck when he was stolen. He had lost the locket, but the image of that dear old face was graven in his heart. Oh, Chappie pulled the tremolo stop to the utmost limit. He recalled scenes of his childhood days, and gave just enough of the names of a number of relatives, especially the given names, to make the play good.

Soon the old dame became thoroughly convinced that Chappie was her lost nephew, now restored to her by the hand of Providence, to soften and soothe her declining years. Whereupon she clasped him to her breast and wept tears of joy over his neck and shoulders.

Immediately she escorted the restored one to her apartments in the fashionable hotel. There Chappie told her his life history from the time he was kidnapped and torn from the kindly and loving surroundings of his youth.

Chappie's story was to the effect that the people who took him away were a gambler and his wife. He declared he had been brought up in a school of crime from his earliest childhood. Mark the cunning of the man. He withheld nothing. No father confesser ever heard a more truthful confession of sin and shame. He recounted the various crooked schemes in which he had been involved; he tore the veil from his criminal career and held himself up for her to scan.

Chappie didn't have to draw upon his imagination. Naturally of a somewhat boastful nature, and not a little proud of his chicanery, he lifted the flood-gates and let the slime of a life of crime pour out.

**White on Black**

The old lady was becomingly shocked, of course, but Chappie knew what he was about. He knew the bulls would tell her the story at the first opportunity, with colorful amplification, and he just naturally "beat them to the punch," in the parlance of the ring.

Having painted himself a hideous black, it then became necessary to apply the whitewash. So Chappie expressed his undying regret that he had lived such a low and debased life. He laid it to the environment in which he had been thrown by the gambler and his wife. They had never given him a chance to know that there was goodness in the world.

But now he was through with sin. Since seeing his dear auntie again, the scales had fallen from his eyes, and the shackles of
wickedness and crime had been stricken loose from his soul. With her dear help he felt that he could look the world in the face, a saved soul.

Chappie played his part with such consummate skill and told his tale with such a fine air of probability, that when the police tried to disclose the fraud which Chappie was practicing upon her, auntie refused to listen to them. She told them that the dear boy had made a complete confession, and that there was nothing the minions of the law could tell her. There wasn’t, actually.

The bulls saw that they were wasting their time, so they departed and left Chappie a clear field, knowing full well that she would never learn her lesson until she made some discoveries on her own hook.

Chappie had boasted that he proposed to “clean up” the old girl, which he proceeded to do in the most complete fashion. First he showered upon her all the attentions and courtesies that he so well knew how to perform.

One of his strong plays was to insist that he didn’t want a cent of her money or any share of her wealth. This further enhanced his standing, naturally. What he hoped to do, he said, was to get into business or some honest employment, at some place where he could live down his past.

Chappie work? He liked work with the same intense love that a small boy manifests for castor oil. The only difference was, that a boy could be made to take castor oil; but nobody could make Chappie Moran work.

But auntie insisted upon giving Chappie a half million of her money. Chappie took it with great reluctance. You may have seen an elephant reach for a peanut. An elephant reaching for a peanut typifies the reluctance with which Chappie took that half million.

With the money Chappie organized the firm of Daugherty & Company, a firm which many bankers of New York will remember to their deep and lasting regret. This was where Chappie overplayed his luck. He got into a number of financial tangles of a very shady character, and the end came, as it does to all crooked games, when bankers throughout the country made a squeal concerning the firm’s illegitimate operations.

It was shortly after this that the bulls were able to convince auntie that her “nephew” was putting over the old games in the old way.

Chappie and his “aunt” finally parted, much to the regret of Chappie, for he had to give up his luxurious apartments which she had supplied him at her hotel. However, there was no great occasion for him to worry, as he and his partner—one other than the redoubtable Larry Summerfield—had added several hundred thousand dollars to the bankroll supplied by auntie dear.

Chappie’s decline began shortly after, as one of his lady friends taught him the baneful habit of smoking opium—one of the shortest of the roads to ruin.

Auntie never quite got over the affair, and she passed away a few years later, broken-hearted.
BENEFICIAL FIRES

By Edward Parrish Ware

SUDDENLY BLAZING CRIMSON AGAINST THE BLACK SKY WAS THE FIRST WARNING, AND WHILE MEN CURSED THE INCENDIARY SLUNK AWAY

The Kaw Valley Detective Bureau, of which I, Tug Norton, am founder, owner, manager, and chief operative, was, early in its third year of existence, going through one of those periods of inactivity which always cause me to feel as if I'm slipping into the hands of receivers. Even the husbands and wives of Kansas City were walking in paths straight and narrow, else they were all remarkably adept at covering up.

At any rate, nobody seemed to want anybody watched; all the old mysteries had been solved, else gone into the limbo of the unsolvable; and the crooks seemed to have declared a benevolent protectorate for the benefit of K. C.

I sat at the desk in my private workshop, studying things over, and wondering which three or four of my half dozen high-priced assistants I should drop, or, indeed, whether I hadn't better drop them all off the pay roll and myself out the window—when, without the customary warning of a card, Jared B. Hatton walked in.

"Nobby," the boy who generally hangs around in the outer office, was burying a relative—for the tenth time that season—out at Muelebach Field, the Blues and the Colonels officiating at the sad rites, and that accounts for Jared walking in unannounced.

My feelings were not hurt; I exhibited no least symptom of indignation over the invasion of my privacy; I did not, because I didn't feel that way. In fact, I felt jubilant. For, if I knew the earmarks, Jared B. Hatton was a blood brother to Ready Money.

After the introduction:
"I am a resident of Bonner Springs, Kansas," Mr. Hatton stated, "and as the
case—or rather the cases—I want investigated will take you to that place or its vicinity, I want to say in the beginning that I and my associates, are prepared to find your fee a reasonably large one. Expenses to be paid by us, too, of course.”

I bowed. “When the Kaw Valley accepts a case outside of the city,” I assured him, “the fee must of necessity be large. Expenses are never padded, certainly, but they must be paid, no matter what they total. Our record for honesty is your guarantee.”

Mr. Hatton bowed also. “I accept your terms. Now it is for you to decide whether you will accept the commission.”

That was already decided!

“Proceed, Mr. Hatton.”

“The farmers in the Bonner Springs section have, for the past six months, suffered greatly from fires—all of them of unknown, or, perhaps I should say, unaccountable origin. In some cases residences have been destroyed, but in the majority of instances barns have been lost.

“Now, Mr. Norton, the loss of a barn may mean very little or it may mean a great deal. That is according to the size and contents of the building itself. Now, in each and every case of the destruction of a barn, in our district, the loss has been great. Many fine cattle and horses have burned, and much grain, hay, and equipment also. It appears that only the most prosperous of the farmers have suffered. That is what seems to me unaccountable.”

“Horses and cattle, huh?”

I pondered that—and my gorge began to rise. Ever hear a horse voice his terror and agony when the flames—

But enough of that. I have, and my hard and fast belief is this: a man who will destroy an animal that way, would take keen pleasure in murdering women and babies.

“Yes, horses and cattle, and many of them,” Hatton broke in on my thoughts to affirm. “That’s what runs the total of the losses up so high. Fine stock, Mr. Norton, in each case.”

“Insurance?” I queried.

“Oh, yes. That, of course. But insurance upon farm buildings and stock is never very high. Inadequate fire protection in the rural districts accounts for that. No loss, in the fires I speak of, was more than half covered by insurance.”

“That lets the owners out—even if common sense didn’t,” I commented.

“Meaning?”

“One or two farmers in a community might burn their own stuff for the sake of
the insurance premium, but to think that a dozen or so would do so is all bosh. Poor reasoning. Now," I went on, "you doubtless have a theory as to the origin of those fires?"

Mr. Hatton nodded thoughtfully for a full moment—and I studied him in the interim.

He was a massive man, all bone and muscle, and appeared to be about fifty years old. His eyes were gray, large, and overshadowed by bushy, iron-gray brows. Hair that color, too—iron-gray. He was clean-shaven, and the color of his skin testified that whatever else he might be, he was a farmer along with it. One of the prosperous ones, at that.

"I have two theories," he said after a bit. "One is that an insane person—in sane with the incendiary form of insanity—is responsible for the fires."

He paused, eying me, and evidently expecting a comment.

"That theory has its drawbacks," I told him. "Such persons set off fires merely for love of watching them burn. They do not discriminate. Your 'bug' does discriminate. Hence he is not insane, over fires, at least."

"Exactly!" exclaimed Hatton, pleased at what was patently an agreement with his own ideas. "I did not hold to that theory very tenaciously. At first it seemed likely, but later I was forced to seek another. The fires are being set by some person who vindictively hates either the entire community, or has it in for those particular men who have suffered."

"Now you are coming close to the mark," I approved. "Still, a man would need a large capacity for hating, to fill the bill. Know any such person?"

He shook his head negatively. "He certainly is outside of my knowledge."

"Any other theories?"

"None whatever."

"What about your own officers—county and others? What have they done?"

"They've done everything they seem able to think of. Used bloodhounds, kept watch over barns in the vicinity, followed everything which remotely resembled a clue—and have given up."

"Humph! Don't blame 'em! Looks like one of those 'give-it-up' cases."

Mr. Hatton's face fell.

"But I'll take it!" I assured him hastily. "It's in my line. When others fall down, the private agency comes into its own. That is always the way. Now, as to the retainer?"

"Name it."

I did—and got it, then and there. "You mentioned associates. Just whom, besides yourself, am I working for, Mr. Hatton?" I asked, as an afterthought when he was preparing to leave.

"I forgot to mention that I am president of the farmers' grange organization in our district," Hatton explained. "At a meeting, two days ago, it was unanimously voted to employ a private agency to go to the bottom of things. You are the employee of the organization, Mr. Norton, but if you wish my guarantee—"

"Oh, no!" I exclaimed, waving away the thought. "The grange association of your county is plenty guarantee for me. Merely wished to know just what backing I had. That's all."

"Very well." Mr. Hatton was on his feet again.

"You may not hear from me for several days, Mr. Hatton," I informed him when he was in the act of departing. "But I will be on the job. When necessary, or advisable, I will communicate with you in Bonner Springs. Good day, sir."

When he had gone I sat down to think things over. The more I thought, the hotter I got. It seemed like one of those horse-destroying fires was burning right in my office.

Presently that fire seemed to get right under my chair—and I got up and went into action.

ONNER SPRINGS lies in the hills of Kansas, twenty-four speedometer miles from the Missouri line. It is a small town and perches on a hillside above the Kaw River. There is much wealth, however, in Bonner and itstrade section, the country being peculiarly well
adapted to fruit growing and to stock raising.

In a motor boat, accompanied by Jim Steele, my right-hand man, I set out up the Kaw on the morning following Hatton's visit. We did not linger in Bonner, but, in our character of fishermen, bought some supplies and later made camp a mile above the place, on the river bank. Then we proceeded to fish.

In the meantime, Joe Benson, another operative, had registered at the hotel in the Springs. Joe arrived wearing a derby hat, square-toed shoes, blue serge suit, and a suspicious look. He sported a black, stubby mustache under which a black cigar reposed.

Joe is, in fine, my stock detective. Whenever I want a dick to show up on a job and do it so the whole country will see and know in spite of clumsy efforts at secrecy, Joe does his stuff.

In the present instance his job was to pose, and ask questions. He was to query everybody in the town, make a great show of activity—while Steele and I did the work.

If he learned anything of value, which was improbable, we had means of intercommunication.

"What's to do, chief, besides loaf around camp?" Steele asked, after we had got located and had our hooks wet.

"Jim," I answered, "there is no way to get at this thing, that I can see, except to wait until another fire occurs. That's bad, since it means the sacrifice of more horses and cattle, to say nothing of barns and other things. But we've got to have a starting point, and a fresh fire is the only thing I figure can give it. We've got to watch the skies at night, and be off at the first hint of red. That's all."

We divided the night between us, one watching while the other slept, and continued to divide them for two more nights—then the heavens suddenly were aflame. It happened about two o'clock in the morning.

Jim shook me awake.

"Fire to the west!" he exclaimed.

"Looks to be a mile off! Maybe more! Hustle!"

I did. A moment after I was wide awake we were off in the direction of the blaze, which became greater in volume as each moment passed. It looked like the whole world in that direction was going up in smoke—or, perhaps, like a volcano in full eruption. There is something terrifying about a fire in the country at night.

We ran on across fields, passing farmhouses in which lights were showing and men and women hurrying about. There had been no alarm. Just the great blaze against the sky—and deathly silence. But men in the country have a way of knowing when fires break out—a sort of sensitivity which warns them. Many joined us on our way.

When we reached the scene—Sam Hammond's place, and a large one—the big barn was a mere red skeleton against a background of darkness. In one side a great mass of slowly burning hay glowed; in a corner grain was burning.

Other things were burning, too. In the cow section, where the milkers were kept overnight to avoid seeking them in the pastures before day, and in the horse stalls on the south. Smoldering heaps. Lifeless, thank God, before we arrived.

"Damned murdering devil!"

Steele was speaking.

"You are right! And it's been going on for six months—just like this!"

I looked up and found the speaker to be a squarely built young man, whose red hair made his pale face seem ghastly in the light of fire. His blue eyes had a hunted, harassed look, and there were lines of worry in his face.

"I'm Halsey," he volunteered, walking closer. "Adjuster for the insurance company. If this sort of thing keeps up—well, look at me! I'll be in my grave with worry! Twelve times during the last six months I've been called on to view such as this—to say nothing of having to go into the details later. It's awful!"

"If you don't like your job, why don't you quit?" demanded a jeering voice, and I looked another stranger over.

A tall, long-haired, ill-kept specimen of the human race he was. A hoocher, I could tell at a glance. He was half drunk at the moment, and his red-rimmed eyes sparkled
with vindictiveness while he waited for Halsey to get back.

"On your way, Crump!" snapped the adjuster, turning from him. "The time has passed when I'd be willing to have anybody see me in your company. Go and mix with your kind, and let decent people alone!"

"Decent!" blazed the derelict. "You call it decent to take a man's bread and butter out of his mouth? Huh? You call that decent?"

He moved closer, and I noticed his hard, dirty fists closing and unclosing.

The insurance adjuster was somewhat smaller than Crump, though both were about the same age—thirty, or thereabout. He was a game one, I was to learn.

Before I could make a move to interfere, if I had had a mind to, he was at Crump like a tiger. One cleanly-delivered blow, and the derelict sprawled on the ground.

"Get up, you carrion!" Halsey said vehemently. "I've got more where that one came from!"

A fat man with a star on his vest interposed at that juncture.

"Stop that scrapping!" he ordered authoritatively, taking Halsey by an arm. "You know better than this, George! As for you, Lafe Crump, if you don't take yourself off, right now, I'll clap you in the calaboose! Git!"

"Calaboose! Ha! Ha! Ha! That's Lafe's home, anyhow! Why don't you use some other kind of threat, Joe—one with teeth in it?"

Another citizen was introducing himself. This one was long past middle age—nearly sixty, I'd judge—and if ever I have seen spite, anarchy, deviltry, sarcasm, and impudence bottled up in one human being, he had it. His whiskered face was one big wrinkle of repulsiveness.

"They ain't no call for you to butt in, Tucker!" Joe Hart, the deputy sheriff, cracked back. "Shut up, or I'll lodge you down there, too!"

"Me? Ha, ha, ha, ha! Oh, no, Joe! Not me, Henry Tucker! I've got too much money! I'm rich! The calaboose is for such as Crump—he's poor, since they done took his job away from him!"

"Kicked me out!" cried Crump, getting up, but withdrawing, nevertheless. "Kicked me out, so's to put George Halsey in! But I'll git even! See if I don't!"

"Git!" The deputy started toward the speaker, who took to his heels and disappeared across the road into the darkness.

During all this I had not opened my mouth—but my ears had been wide. My interest was, to put it mildly, enlisted. The fire, as a fire, no longer drew me.

The blaze was dying down, leaving a glowing mass of wreckage, and Steele touched me on the arm.

"Hadn't we better take a look around?" he asked.

"I think I've struck a lead, Jim," I replied. "That ruin can't tell us much—but I think I know somebody who can."

I walked across to Halsey, and drew him aside.

"Does your company keep a man on the ground all the time?" I asked. "Are things that bad?"

"On the ground? Oh, I see, you are a stranger, and don't understand. By the way," he asked, suddenly suspicious, "who are you?"

"I'm Oscar Toombs," I replied. "Me and my friend Askew, yonder, are out for a little fishing. Camped above Bonner. Saw the blaze and ran over."

"Oh!" he said evidently relieved. "That's all right. Strangers naturally arouse my interest, in view of what's been going on. It's like this, Mr. Toombs:

"A couple of years ago the farmers in this section got tired of paying extortionate fire insurance rates, so they got together and organized the Farmers' Mutual Insurance Society. All local farmers. Headquarters, quite naturally, at Bonner Springs. I'm adjuster for the company, and live in town."

"So. Well, who is the gink you clouted."

"Crump? Oh, he's a nobody, now. Used to have the job I've got now. Boozed so much they had to throw him out. He hates the company, and me too, of course."

I pondered that. Then: "And the whiskered bundle of hate and ridicule—who is he?"

Halsey laughed. "You mean old Henry
Tucker. He's the worst old drawback this county ever saw. Independently wealthy, he never has joined the farmers in anything. Never a member of the grange, or the insurance company—anything, in fine, looking to the betterment of the section. Hates everybody and everything. Lives to himself—no family—and is the miser he looks to be. Always comes around in time to knock whatever happens to be afoot. That's Henry."

"Humph! Every community has one, maybe more, but I'll say this section is doubly cursed in that respect. Old Henry has devilry enough for a dozen!"

"You've gauged him accurately."

"By the by, what company used to operate here, before the Farmers' Mutual?"

I asked.

Halsey gave me a quick, searching look. "You betray a lot of interest in our affairs, Mr. Toombs," he said, rather coldly.

I laughed. "I may as well confess it, Mr. Halsey," I said, "I'm a writer—a sort of fiction hound. Things like this help me a lot. I always pry into matters of this kind, and with no other motive than to gather material for future use. Pardon me, if I seem to be too nosey."

Halsey's face relaxed. He smiled. "I as a bit abrupt," he apologized. "Put it down to anxiety and the eternal harassment of my position. The Kansas Midland used to have the business in this section, as well as over a considerable portion of the balance of the State," he explained. "But, as I said, they were almighty high in the matter of rates, and they lost out here."

"Thanks," I replied. "Guess I'll be off and get some sleep. There's a few hours left before dawn. See you again, Mr. Halsey."

III

STEELE and I returned slowly to camp, each of us thinking and keeping his thoughts to himself. Sitting beside our camp fire, newly built up, afterward, Steele suddenly asked:

"Well, which is the bug—Crump or the old devil, Tucker?"

I took my eyes off the coals, where I had been concentrating, and asked:

"Why pick on those two?"

"Looks plain enough to me," Jim asserted. "One hates the company, and wants revenge. The other hates the whole darn community."

"Jim," I broke in, "either of those chaps may be the firebug. I'm not saying they're not. Either would probably be capable of it. But—and mark this—those fires are not 'hate' fires, or 'revenge' fires. Put that down."

"What kind, then?" Jim asked quizically.

"They are what you might call 'beneficial' fires," I returned.

"Just how?"

"Nobody is going around burning all those barns just to satisfy his feelings, be they hate or whatnot. Those fires are benefiting somebody. I mean in a very material way. No doubt about it."

Jim was thoughtful for a long moment. Then he looked up quickly, his face incredulous.

"Tug," he said sharply, "you are not intimating that the Kansas Midland would—"

"Hell, no!" I told him peevishly. "Certainly the Kansas Midland Insurance Company would not stoop to such tactics to get this business back! I'm not turning idiot in my old age, Jim!"

"Well," Jim argued aggrievedly, "here's a situation. All the losers by these fires are, according to the adjuster, Halsey, insured in the Farmers' Mutual. The Mutual has routed the Kansas Midland from the field, causing them a large loss in business. You say the fires are due to cupidity—that they benefit somebody. All right—who?"

I made no answer. The question was an insult.

"Of course, Tug, I don't expect an answer right off the reel," Jim hastened to say, "but that's the question in my mind. Who? And, so far as I'm concerned, it's answered. I'm damned certain either Crump or the old devil, Tucker, is the actual bug—no matter who gets the profit. The Kansas outfit would benefit, and it could hire the dirty work done, couldn't it?"
“Yeah. It could. But it didn’t. As for Crump and Tucker, I grant they are worthy suspects—but as tools only. We’ll watch ‘em both.”

“Hoping they—or one of them—will lead us to the gink higher up—the employer?”

“Nope. To prevent more fires.”

“Damn it!” exclaimed Jim. “Can’t you tell a fellow something?”

“Yeah,” I answered. “Get in the boat and take a letter to Jerry Bidwill, the public accountant, you know. That’s something. I’ll write the letter. You wait for his answer—if it’s a week.”

I went inside the tent, leaving my subordinate glowing from his log. I had an idea—and I didn’t want Jim to see it explode later under my feet, if it should happen to be that kind of idea.

It was after daybreak when Steele departed for Kansas City on the job assigned him, and, two hours later, I was sitting on the front veranda of Jared Hatton’s house. It was a fine place, on a hilltop just outside of the village and overlooking the Kaw.

“It’s like this, Mr. Hatton,” I said, after his cordial greeting was over, “there are two persons hereabouts whom you might have mentioned when I asked you if you knew any one who had hate enough inside him to fit the character of firebug. One is Crump, the other an old devil with whiskers and a grouch. Name of Tucker, I believe.”

Hatton gave me a glance of surprise.

“Surely,” he said, “you don’t suspect either of them? Why, man, Crump is so far gone in liquor he spends half his time sleeping off drunks. On the occasion of at least two fires he was, to my knowledge, in the town jail.”

“And Tucker—well, he’s mean enough, unquestionably. But the man is more given to words than acts. He’s been here ever since I can remember, and nothing criminal has ever been attributed to him. Frankly, I think you are wrong.”

“Maybe so. But Crump has a, to him, very real reason for wanting to injure the Farmers’ Mutual, and there is no telling what might hatch in his liquored brain. Do you happen to know the exact whereabouts of old Tucker, on the nights of those two fires you spoke of, while Crump was in jail?”

“Why, no. I can’t say where he was. At home, probably.”

“Humph. Might not Tucker and Crump be working together, each for the gratification of his own personal grievances?”

“They might, of course. Though I’ll confess I never considered them for a minute.”

“Do you know of anybody, other than Crump, who might have a grudge against the Farmers’ Mutual?” I asked.

Hatton shook his head. “Not a soul.”

“How is the stock in that concern held? Apportioned, I mean?”

“Each of twenty-four original subscribers hold equal shares—one share to a man. When a fire occurs, we all chip in and pay our pro rata of the loss. When a new member enters, he takes a share of stock, then meets his pro rata, when loss occurs, as do the rest. It is not, Mr. Norton, a money making organization. Merely an association of farmers, formed for mutual protection against the high rates of the old insurance companies.”

“I see. You are, of course, a member?”

“One of the original ones, yes.”

“How, may I ask, is the Mutual bearing up under its losses?”

Hatton shook his head ominously. “A few more fires,” he said, “and there will be no Mutual. We are, frankly, fighting with our backs to the wall.”

“Are any of you involved further than your stock?”

“No. But we could easily be, should we continue to operate.”

“Now, Mr. Hatton, who of your acquaintance would benefit by the wrecking of the Mutual?” I asked sharply. “Think. Those fires are benefiting some one in a financial sense. Who? That question has got to be answered.”

Hatton looked at me for a long moment, as though he did not quite understand my drift. Then he saw, or thought he saw, the point, and his face was transformed by a frown.

“Surely, Mr. Norton, you are not thinking that the Kansas Midland, or any of
the old companies, are at the bottom of this thing?"

There was distress in his voice.

"I don’t think any such thing!" I declared. "I’m not fool enough to think that the Midland would employ such tactics. The point I’m making is this: Some individual, or group of individuals, may be attempting to force the Mutual out of the field, to make room for himself. That is one theory. Another:

“If a group of real estate operators—unprincipled, it goes without saying—had their eyes on some land down this way, wanted to get it cheaply, and believed they could force a lot of you fellows into the market by bankrupting your insurance company and destroying your property—do you get the idea?”

Mr. Hatton got it. He came slowly to his feet, his big hands clenched at his sides.

"By the eternal, Mr. Norton!” he cried, a rasp in his voice. "I believe you have put your finger on the spot! Real estate sharks! Why man, they’d do anything! That would account for it all—the theory you have just outlined! It would never have occurred to me!”

I smirked. “My trade, Mr. Hatton, is to figure out things like that. Now, do this: Run over in your mind all the real estate sharks you know of—not local, necessarily—who might be of the stripe to concoct such a scheme, make a list, and let me have it—say to-morrow. I will call here for it, or send. Will you attend to that?”

"I certainly will, Mr. Norton,” he agreed, walking with me to the front gate. "You shall have the list to-morrow. In the meantime, what are you doing to prevent further depredations?”

"I have a plan which I intend to put into execution at once—to-morrow night, most likely,” I replied. "I may need your assistance in that also. If so, I’ll look you up."

With that I departed, having given Mr. Hatton the surprise of his existence.

Down in Main Street I ran across Joe Benson—rather, he ran across me. Joe buttonholed me, a stranger in town, and, in the hearing of a score of natives, pumped me dry—and, incidentally, reported that he had learned nothing whatever of the least importance.

“Watch Lafe Crump, town drunkard,” I imparted, then made my escape.

Shortly after dawn the following morning Steele came up river. He handed me a letter from Jerry Bidwill, public accountant, a friend of mine—and, incidentally, in the know of practically all the big financial transactions going on in Kansas City. What he did not already have knowledge of he had ways of finding out about.

I went inside the tent and read the report. For a long time thereafter I sat thinking, and thinking hard. Then I called Steele in.

IV

A

N hour later I looked up Halsey, the adjuster, in the village.

“How many farmers, belonging to the Mutual, have not yet been burned out?” I asked.

“Twelve—an even dozen,” he replied without hesitation.

“Give me a list of their names.”

He looked at me with a grin. “For one of your fiction tales?” he asked.

“Because I want it,” I replied tersely.

“You know, by now, or ought to know, who I am. If you don’t, then ask Jared Hatton. But, mind you, young man, keep it under your hat.”

He became serious at once. “I do know who you are, of course,” he told me. “That list shall be yours within ten minutes.”

He was as good as his word.

While I talked with Halsey, Steele was in a telephone booth, getting in touch with our office in Kansas City. He was calling for reinforcements.

With the list given me by Halsey in my pocket I climbed the hill to Hatton’s place. Finding him about, I went straight into business.

“Here is a list of six farmers,” I explained, “all of whom are members of Mutual. I have six men at my disposal, including myself—all thoroughly reliable. Now, it is impossible, or impractical, to watch the barns and houses of all the insure, but I am going to watch these six until, sooner or later, the firebug visits one
of them. When he does, his finish has come.”

Hatton nodded approvingly.

“Now, your part is to get word secretly to the six farmers on the list. Tell each that a man will be in his barn to-night, and for several nights to come, probably. Caution them all to keep quiet. That is all. Will you get it done at once?”

“Immediately,” he replied, and indicated his motor car, which stood under a shed. “I’ll do it in person. In the meantime,” he fished a folded slip of paper out of his pocket, “here is the list of real estate sharks you asked for.”

“Thanks. I’ll look it over.”

I took the paper and departed.

After dark three more fishermen joined Steele and me in camp. Later Joe Benson came along.

“Steele has spent the day learning the locations you are each to occupy to-night, boys,” I told them. “He’ll give each of you directions. Now, as to what you are to do, I have only this to say: lay low, keep watch, and if the firebug shows up—get him.”

After the last of my men had departed I struck off for the farm farthest out of all. Reaching the barnyard, I slipped into a shed under which old machinery parts were kept, and took up my vigil.

Just who would receive a visit from the firebug was problematical, but I was willing to bet that he would show up.

Fate willed that I should be the one. It was nearing two o’clock in the morning when I saw a shadow creep from a sheep pen near the barn and flit toward the big structure. Silently I slipped out of hiding and took up his trail. I wanted to catch him in the act.

Among the many pens and sheds in the lot, there were a dozen, I lost him. Cursing myself, I turned back and started a circle of the barn—only to gasp, then start running for the southeast corner, where a blaze suddenly shot up. I could smell oil burning.

Footsteps running rapidly away from the scene, and in the direction of the very shed under which I had hidden, gave me the location, and I sprinted for it.

In the darkness beyond the shed a long tongue of flame suddenly speared a horizontal course toward me, there was the spiteful crack of a pistol, and a bullet whizzed by my head.

The next shot was mine—and I didn’t miss. Just the vaguest outline of a man where that flame had been, but I got him. Running rapidly, calling aloud to those in the farmhouse, I flashed a light into the face of a panting, struggling figure on the ground.

Then I got a shock.

The man I had shot was George Halsey! Halsey, adjuster for the Mutual! Halsey was the firebug—caught in the act!

Excited shouts back of me told me that the farmer was on the job, and I saw at a glance that the fire was being successfully combatted. I bent over Halsey, who was yet alive.

“Can you hear, Halsey?” I asked.

He ceased writhing, after a moment, raised his stricken eyes to me, and asked: “Am—I hit—bad?”

“You are going out—yes,” I answered, for I had seen men die before. “Better come through!”

“Get—pencil—paper—witnesses!” he panted. “Hurry! Man, hurry!”

There, in the light of a lantern held by Roscoe Bell, the farmer, and in the presence of his wife and son, the deposition of George Halsey was taken down.

V

HEN I climbed the hill to Jared Hatton’s house, next morning about seven o’clock, I was accompanied by the president of the Farmers’ Mutual, a member of the grange, and Steele. Mr. Hatton came out and made us welcome.

Outside of a very few persons, my companions included, nothing of the past night’s happenings had become known. There were certain steps to take which required secrecy for a short while longer.

“Mr. Hatton,” I began, after we were seated, “I have some news for you. The firebug has been caught.”

Hatton’s face went blank. He stared at
me, then in turn at the faces of the others present. After a moment he voiced his astonishment.

"Why, this is indeed news!" he declared. "I had not heard that the community had been visited by another fire!" He turned to me.

"I called up each of the men you had me visit yesterday to warn them that their places would be under guard for some time to come—or, at least, until the firebug was taken. Each informed me that the night had passed without incident."

I nodded. "The fire occurred at the home of a farmer not on that list I gave you," I explained. "You see, Mr. Hatton, I hit upon a scheme for protecting the remaining farmers in the Mutual. Those men who were warned were safe. I knew that. Therefore I devoted my attention, and the attention of my men, to the remaining six—who had not been notified that they would be guarded. In doing so I protected all twelve. Do you get the idea?"

"I'll confess that I don't," Jared acknowledged. "But that is not, perhaps, essential. What I should like to know is the identity of the scoundrel who has been setting the fires. Who is he?"

I shook my head negatively. "All in good time," I told him. "Please keep looking until you vision my little plan in all its phases. It is not, I assure you, very abstruse. Think a moment."

Hatton's face grew red. He looked at me with a cold eye.

"I must ask you to explain, Mr. Norton," he said. "I'll confess I'm not good at riddles."

"This is not a riddle," I told him sharply. "Here is the whole thing in a nutshell:

"I knew that the homes of the men who had been notified that they were to be guarded would not be visited by the firebug. I knew it because I knew the bug would have a list of those places before nightfall—as a warning to keep away from them. Also he would know where he might act in perfect safety among the remaining six insured. With me and my men safely stowed away he might carry his torch about with assured immunity. That's why the list was made out—and given to you."

Hatton's face went paler, and his hands clenched tightly. Again his eyes sought the faces of those gathered on the porch. But he could read nothing there. Finally he turned once more to me.

"You—you figured that in some manner your plans would leak out?" he queried, his voice shaky. "That the firebug would get word of them?"

I nodded. "'Yeah," I answered. "I figured you would warn your tool, Halsey, that all was safe in one quarter—and damned unsafe in another. You did just that, Hatton—and Halsey, misled, paid for your mistake with his life."

There was an awful silence on the porch at that announcement—and accusation. Steele, sitting on a balustrade, tensed his long frame, and his eyes were glued to the face of the big man near the door.

All the others watched Hatton closely.

Finally the latter spoke, and his voice rattled like dry leaves.

"Halsey—died?" he asked. "Who—who shot him?"

"I did," I answered.

"Did he talk?"

"More than that. He made a deposition."

"A confession, you mean? He owned up in writing? Before witnesses?"

"Yes, before several of them," I informed him. "The game is up, Hatton. Why keep up the stall?"

I've met a lot of crooks in my time, but none who beat Jared B. Hatton for pure nerve. As I watched a change came over him. The developments so far had shaken him, but when he saw how the wind was blowing he staged as complete a recovery as it has ever been my privilege to witness. He simply froze—became the iciest iceberg on record.

"Perhaps you will explain your meaning, Mr. Norton?" he requested, looking me squarely in the eyes and never batting his. "Your accusation is clear enough, although, in your poor way, you have sought to make it very subtle. You are trying to connect me up, in some way, with Halsey. That is clear. Go on, please."

"I will!" I snapped. Then I read Halsey's deposition.
It set forth that Jared Hatton had employed him, by paying him a large lump sum and promising to make him independent when the Mutual should go out of business, to set fire to the barns of those insured in the latter company. It told a lot more, but that was the gist of the thing.

Hatton laughed coolly. "And do you think that thing would convince a jury?"

"Shut up!" I barked. "I've had all I want out of you, you dirty horse-burning thief! Another word, until I've finished my case against you, and I'll let Steele, there, sap you—like he's itching to do right now. You shut up, and listen, damn you!"

I was mad. Madder, I think, than I have ever been before at a man I had trapped. He'd burned horses, damn him, and done it to add more dollars to the dirty pile he'd amassed! Yeah, I was mad!

Hatton's face went a bit pale, and he appealed to his fellow citizens on the porch to see he got fair play.

"We are going to see to that, Hatton," Lee Narrows, president of the Mutual, assured him. "Just that!"

Jared sat down, and I went on.

"When Hatton came to my office and hired me he did so because the vote of his grange had driven him to do it. He tried to stuff me with the idea that all this burning was the result of hatred on the part of some person. He saw I wouldn't fall for the theory that an insane person was doing it. But he did think I might believe that some person was causing the destruction to satisfy an insatiable hatred.

"Well, I had more respect for Hatton's intelligence. I knew he didn't believe any such rot. I knew that he must know, as I did, that those were beneficial fires—fires that added profits, either actual or potential, to somebody's bank roll.

"I looked Jared up, after he left, learned that he was very wealthy, and that he was regarded as a remarkably good business man. That clinched it.

"Well, I found out what was afoot, after I came here. Somebody was seeking to put the Mutual out of business—and succeeding. Who?

"Not the Kansas Midland. That company would never resort to such tactics. No other insurance company would. Yet that was the aim of those fires—the destruction of the Mutual. Who would benefit?"

"Then it struck me right between the eyes. The Kansas Midland would not stoop to such—but how about a big stockholder in the Midland?

"Don't you see, men? He would not be fighting just this little organization. He would be fighting the idea—an idea which, if successful, would undoubtedly spread over the entire State. What, then, would become of his stock in the Midland?

"Gentlemen, I found that stockholder. My information—and I can verify it—is that the Kaw Valley Trust Company, of Kansas City, holds forty-five per cent. of Kansas Midland stock, nearly a million dollars' worth—as an agent for Jared B. Hatton!"

I ceased, and all eyes were fixed upon the big figure of Jared. He sat quite still.

"That is a damnable lie!" he said coolly.

"A denial of it, if it is proved true, is equivalent to an acknowledgment of guilt in this other matter, Hatton," I reminded him. "And you know it's true."

His face went white at that. He had overlooked a bet.

"I came up here, scared Jared by telling him I thought it might be the work of the Midland—or let him think such was in my mind. Then I gave him a pleasant surprise by cooking up an impossible yarn about a group of real estate sharks being at the bottom of it. He balked at the insinuation that an insurance company might be at the bottom, but cottoned to the other idea instantly.

"Now, gentlemen," I went on, "with the damning evidence of that secretly held stock, and the deposition of Halsey which names Jared B. Hatton as his principal, all back of me, I arrest Jared—"

Hatton leaped from his chair, his arm came up, and a gun flashed in the morning sunlight.

"Damn you—"

Then Steele landed.

Hatton went down the hill to the lock-up, his unconscious form borne between the four of us.
Her name was Flo’ence, she said, and she had been sent by her mother

THE AVENGING ANGEL

By Wolcott Beard

HERE’S A CASE SO UTTERLY WITHOUT PRECEDENT, IT IS BEYOND HUMAN POWER TO MAKE AN INTELLIGENT GUESS AS TO ITS SOURCE

A Story of Fact

It was a man far up in the detective division of the New York Police Department who remarked that, apart from freak robberies and murders, the most puzzling cases nearly always fell into one of two classes. One was the case of such extreme simplicity that every one knew what had happened and why, but not by whom the crime was committed. The other was the sort that afforded any number of clues, but all of them leading in a direction so utterly without precedent that it is beyond human power to make even an intelligent guess at the source from which they come.

The first class, he said, is best exemplified by a case that happened somewhere up-State or in New England. I forget where and when, and it doesn’t matter anyhow; but regardless, it still would be a type.

This was the murder of a storekeeper on Saturday afternoon in a smallish but prosperous town. The dead man was a usurer, hated by pretty much everybody, so the motive, though plain, was shared by so many people that it was impossible to select an individual by that alone. A dozen men were known to have been in the store that afternoon, and a hundred might have been. He was brained by a stick of his own stove-wood, so the weapon was no help, and as the crime was committed in zero weather, when every one wore gloves of some kind,
finger-prints naturally were wholly lacking. So there you were!

As for the other class, they are anything but simple. But serious though they frequently are, they don't always end in tragedies, by any means. There's a strong element of comedy in some of them. There was in the most typical case of its sort that I ever knew, though it happened years ago, just after I had received the gold-plated badge of a detective—and mighty proud of it I was!

A great steamship line, one of the greatest in the world, was shaking in its shoes—if a steamship line can be said to wear shoes. We'll call that line the King, for there's no use in courting an action for libel; and though the line itself didn't, in the end, suffer very greatly, some of its officers might still be sensitive as to the hurt that their otherwise flawless reputations for dignity received at that time. Yet their fears weren't to be wondered at, and certainly they were not discreditable.

The storm had come, as the saying goes, out of a clear sky. It was in the early part of June, and the next sailing day but one promised to see more first-class passengers leaving our shores than on any other one day of our nation's history. The King's crack boat, the Mogul, let's say, the newest, largest, and most luxurious then afloat, was booked to her limit, and had been for weeks.

Her passenger list embodied wealth and social prestige far beyond estimate. Most important of all—to the pair themselves, at any rate—this list included the president of the company and the girl whom he was to marry on the eve of that sailing day; the couple intended to spend their honeymoon in Europe.

The date upon which the Mogul was to sail was ten days in the future when the storm began to gather. Its first manifestation was a letter, so short that I think I can repeat it, even after all these years, pretty much word for word. It ran like this:

You have parted my love and me, and for this you must suffer. Suffer by the loss of money or the loss of your ship. For I solemnly promise that unless you ransom her, the Mogul will never reach England. If you choose the wiser course, insert a "personal" to that effect in the Herald, and further instructions will be given.

The Avenging Angel.

Did the officers of the line get all fussed up over such a crazy screed? They did. It wasn't by any means, of course, the first threatening letter than was received during the half century or more that the line had been in business; and though actual attempts to carry out the threats rarely were made and never had succeeded, such missiles always made the company heads uneasy.

What was to prevent an infernal machine being shipped as freight? To open all packages before stowing is impossible, and there are plenty of contrivances that operate without clockwork to betray them by the ticking, though, for obvious reasons, I won't give details of their construction.

Steamers all burned coal in those days; and how was a sweat-blinded stoker to tell that a lump flung into the furnace was really a battered tin can, filled with high explosive, painted black and sprinkled with coal dust before the paint dried? I'll give anybody one guess to find the answer.

This is a fact. Against a murderous enemy who is absolutely without scruple, who is actuated by a strong enough motive, is sufficiently determined and more than ordinarily intelligent, any passenger steamer was—and is—practically defenseless, despite all that can be done to protect her. The safety of such steamers lies in the further fact that enemies who possess all four of these qualifications are very rare, so rare as to be almost unknown. In the present instance, though, it really seemed as if it were a person of this sort who had written that note.

The officials of the steamship company, though they intended to take no chances, anticipated little trouble in the present case. They entertained no doubt of the letter-writer's identity, which had been disclosed beyond reasonable doubt, they believed, by those first few words: "You have parted my love and me."

It was a woman, of course, whom they suspected. She was an actress who had been a good bit younger, whose box office
value had been much greater, whose vamp-like beauty once owed less to stuff that comes in bottles, and whose past may once have been less lurid—though, if so, I couldn’t remember it. But then, I couldn’t remember so very far back in those days.

She had ended an European tour, and it wasn’t a very successful tour. This fact may have roused her sense of self-preservation to unwonted activity. She discovered that young Wellington Peet—call him that—who had just attained his majority and his dead father’s millions, was a shipmate of hers, as she was returning on the King line steamer Monarch, and promptly she brought the entire battery of her shopworn charms to bear upon him.

The efficiency attained by years of practice amply sufficed to cover all other defects. She would have bagged young Peet, boodle, body and brains—not so much the last-named, to be sure—if the ship’s captain hadn’t butted in and crabbed her game. I don’t know what methods the skipper used, but fancy that they must have been lacking in tact. Anyway, she came ashore in New York openly vowing vengeance.

Those were the facts, and, as far as they went, they were all very well. But there wasn’t a particle of evidence to show that this woman wrote that letter or knew who did write it. Nevertheless, the steamship company’s officials—and especially the president, who didn’t intend to be sunk without trace, in company with his brand-new bride—were so cocksure that there was no mistake that they determined to play the cards as they lay.

Their plan, if it could be called a plan, was this: They had that letter, which was typewritten, presumably by the actress’s private machine. That machine, like all other typewriters, had individual peculiarities that could be identified. Trusting that in this way they would be able to prove that the letter came from her, after gaining admittance to her house, they swore out a warrant for her arrest—on their own responsibility, you may be sure—and I was one of those who was sent to serve it.

She lived on West Twenty-Third Street; we went there one afternoon. I’ve been in many raids, but never another like that, and most sincerely do I hope that I never may be. There wasn’t a typewriter of any sort in the house, and never had been; it was a rad of hers to carry on all her correspondence in long-hand. She proved this by her cook, her housemaid, and her spit-fire little flapper of a secretary.

Housemaid, cook, secretary, and actress took turns in telling us exactly what they thought of us, and why. What they said was a-plenty, especially as we hadn’t a word to say in return.

We took her to the station house, of course; we had to. Along comes Wellington Peet with his lawyers and bails her out, and giving her a chance to throw her hooks into him once more, which she does. She went home and flopped into a long fit of nervous prostration—or that’s what her doctors swore that it was. For she brought an action against the steamship company for false arrest and got a verdict for damages that made her independent of simps like Welly Peet for life.

That came afterward, however. But another letter came the very next morning. It was shorter than the first one, and ran like this:

You are fools. If that “personal” does not appear in to-morrow’s Herald, your ship is doomed without chance of redemption.

THE AVENGING ANGEL.

The steamship line officials were running around in circles now, pawing the air—figuratively speaking—and uttering incoherent cries. But they came to us now, and placed the affair in our hands, as they should have done in the first place.

We told them to insert the “personal,” and they did. Another letter followed promptly, giving the promised instructions. The company was to place one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in a package and give the package to a small boy, eight years old or thereabouts. This child, with the package in hand, was to stand at Broadway and City Hall Park, by the Nathan Hale statue, during the evening rush hours. Somebody, according to the letter, would walk by and take the package. Then, presumably, the somebody intended to vanish into the crowd—but strolling along in that crowd were a
dozen detectives who were there to prevent anything of this sort.

Evidently "The Avenging Angel" suspected this, and very possibly had watched long enough to notice that certain men passed and repassed the Hale statue, crossing Broadway and returning in order to continue an apparently aimless promenade along that one block. At all events, the boy kept his post until Broadway pedestrian traffic thinned almost to the vanishing point, but the package of carefully cut slips of newspaper, with a single bill on top and another at the bottom, remained unclaimed.

The fourth letter indeed, which followed with the usual promptness, intimated very strongly that this was the case, and repeated the threat to sink the Mogul without chance of redemption if this proceeding were repeated. Also it gave other and more elaborately cautious instructions.

The same boy was to appear at the same time and place on the following day. If no one took the package he was to walk along Barclay Street, looking to his right only. If the package still remained in his hand when the river was reached, he was to take the ferry, cross and board the Erie train for Buffalo, which left at six o'clock. He was to seat himself on the right hand side of the car and keep looking out of the window. When he saw a man dressed in white appear by the tracks he must throw out the money—and thenceforward all would be well.

The instructions were followed. The small boy enjoyed a free trip to Buffalo and return, as did sundry detectives, myself among them. So also did the fake package of money, for it went and returned with the rest of us.

The officials of that steamship line had been rattled before, but that was a mere nothing compared to their present state of mind. In spite of their previous consternation they had cherished the belief that the letters were mere empty threats, written probably by an amateur at the game who hoped to scare them into paying, but who would quit as it became increasingly evident that the company was bent upon capturing and punishing the blackmailer. In this belief the police at one time had been rather in-

clined to agree, but not now. The blackmailer's dogged persistence and intelligent caution altered all that.

Whether or not that blackmailer would actually go to the length of shipping an infernal machine by freight or slipping one into the steamer's bunkers was a matter which could be determined only by waiting to find out—and this was the last thing that they wanted to do. Things already were quite bad enough, thank you!

The threat had leaked out. We had done our best to keep it a secret, but had succeeded only in part. Paragraphs appeared in the papers, without details to be sure, but making plain the fact that the Mogul was threatened, supposedly by "anarchists," on her next trip out, and that was quite enough.

Bookings were canceled until her passenger list looked like that of a free-for-all selling race after Zev's name had been entered. Lloyd's rates soared like rockets, and all freight not very fully insured was yanked off the King wharves. And this condition of affairs was not confined to the one steamer. In a slightly lesser degree it applied to everything that flew the King house flag.

Naturally the officers of that line were rattled, and it's not to be wondered at that the president was the most rattled by far. The previous one of those blackmailing letters had been much longer and more explicit than any of the others. It promised definitely that unless the demands were complied with, not only would the Mogul be sunk, but so would any other steamer that carried him and his bride, and if they elected to remain afloat some train that carried them or house that sheltered them would be wrecked.

So the bride-to-be, we heard, was throwing fits, and her prospective groom turning mental handsprings. He had almost determined to pay the blackmailer out of his own ample purse, but we persuaded him to refrain long enough to give us a final chance to make good.

It mustn't be supposed that we police had confined our activities to dancing attendance upon the fantastic demands of that would-be blackmailer, for this wasn't so at
all. We siezed the city for clews, and each
time drew in an empty net. By no means
were we certain that the actress first
suspected was as ignorant as she pretended
of the letters, and we looked into that
matter pretty thoroughly. But nothing came
of it.

One of our men even scraped acquaint-
ance with the buxom housemaid and began
paying her marked attention; and a girl
who confides to her best young man details
concerning a temperamental employer
whom she does not like is about the most
fruitful and reliable source of information
that exists. But she seemed to have nothing
of importance to tell, and her accounts of
the quiet life of the household tallied per-
fectedly with all that we learned elsewhere.
Only one incident of the slightest interest
was brought forth.

This was the fact that Wellington Peet
was slipping fast from the toils of his elderly
chantress. He had gone to the other ex-
treme; that flapper, the actress's secretary,
a little, blonde, square-chinned slip of a
girl not eighteen years old, had him tied
tight to her dainty apron strings, so that
he followed her about as the lamb followed
Mary—when she would lead him. For it
was she who ran their show, and she was a
cautious young woman. As yet she did not
consider that she was quite ready to give
up her situation, so she wisely made very
sure that her employer knew nothing of
what had happened.

Therefore she made a point of absenting
herself from the room whenever Welly
called, as she forced him, more and more
against his will, to do. But in the early
evenings, after her duties were over, she
would slip out of the house, according to
her established custom, ostensibly to go to
the movies. But really she would go down
to the hotel where he had rooms. Always
arriving before he appeared, she would
pretend to occupy herself in the writing
room, which always was sparsely populated
at this hour. There they could talk for
awhile to their heart's content, but nothing
in the very nature of things could be more
proper than these meetings, held in such a
place.

One of our men invariably followed her
there, but a couple of hours of boredom for
him was the sum total of result up to date.
It is difficult to listen-in on a low-voiced
conversation held in such a place without
great risk of detection, and though once or
twice our man had managed to overhear
some fragments of speech, they weren't of
a sort to throw any light upon the threat
to blow up a great ocean liner, and it didn't
interest him.

The conversation of two young people
who have reached the spoony stage of a love
affair will rarely be of enthralling interest
to a hard-bitten cop. So he would loaf in
the lobby, like the sensible man that he was,
until the girl left. Then he would follow
her home, report what had happened, and
go home himself.

It's plain, therefore, that pretty much our
only chance lay in getting hold of whoever
it was that came to collect that money.
The failure of that Buffalo excursion made
us feel reasonably sure that another letter
would speedily be forthcoming, and in this
we were not disappointed.

The writer, it said, had been unable to
catch the train which preceded the one that
left at six o'clock on the night before, and
anyway it still was daylight at that hour,
which wouldn't do at all. So the small boy
must be sent on the next one, which left at
eight-thirty. A light waved beside the track
would be the signal for the money to be
thrown out. Otherwise the arrangements
would remain unchanged.

The steamship company had determined
to take no avoidable chances now, on the
very eve of the sailing day. Our orders
were to spare no expense, and we obeyed.
Besides the detectives on that eight-thirty
train, it was closely followed by a special,
consisting of an engine and two cars, both
of them crammed with men. Eagerly we
watched the right side of the track. Hardly
had we left the Jersey shore, and were just
crossing the Hackensack meadows, when
the waning light appeared.

We pulled the bell cord. Our brake-shoes
screamed as they gripped the wheels, and
long before the cars could come to a stand
we were tumbling out of all four doors. Raising forward, we formed a cordon
embracing as much ground as we could cover
and then drew inward toward the center, and this time we did not fail. Our human drag-net captured the person we sought, with the decoy package in one hand and in the other a lantern, the light of which showed the black face and rolling eye-balls of a scared little darkey girl about twelve years old.

Her name was Flo’ence, she said. She had been sent there by her mother to get a package that was to be thrown off the train for Miss Milly. Her mother and she lived on the edge of those meadows. Did she know Miss Milly? Of co’se she did; her mother did Miss Milly’s washing.

Well, that was about the end, so far as we were concerned. We weren’t so much interested in the domestic details of Florence’s story, but there was one thing that she told that surely did interest us. “Miss Milly’s” other name was Floyd—and Millicent Floyd was the name of that flapper! Now who would ever have thought of such a thing?

We telephoned into the city to arrest her, and this was done just as she was about to leave Welly’s hotel with a letter in her hand, all ready to mail. No, that letter wasn’t another threat to blow up a steamship or a bride and groom. It was addressed to the actress who employed her, and contained the information that she, the secretary, didn’t intend to return, as she was about to marry Mr. Wellington Peet.

That letter served its purpose, however, as well as though it had contained fifty threats. For it was typewritten and done on a machine that showed the same peculiarities as those which had marked the letters that caused all this turmoil. There was no longer any mystery about that machine. It was one of those jitney affairs. You drop a coin into a slot, thereby starting some clockwork which permits you to operate the keyboard for half an hour. It sat in the hotel writing room for the benefit of anybody who would drop the coin in, and our man had seen Milly playing with it nearly every night for a week to occupy the time while she waited for Welly Peet to appear.

I shan’t soon forget the picture she made at her examination, sitting up very straight in the chair that she couldn’t begin to fill, defiant to the end, but finding it hard to keep back the tears—though she did keep them back. She didn’t deny having written those letters. Why should she? The captain of that ship had really behaved abominably—making Welly Peet ridiculous like that—and the company ought to pay. Did anybody suppose that she was going to sit idly by and see him gobbled up by that old harpy of an actress? Well, she wasn’t! She had made up her mind about that before she ever had spoken a single word to him.

Was Welly aware of the fact that she had made up her mind to this effect? Not until lately. But what had that to do with the matter? He knew it now. And no matter how much money he might have, she preferred to have a little of her own when she married him. That was the reason she wrote those letters. Now what were you going to do about it?

This was the substance of her replies. What the judge did was to hold her for trial, of course. He couldn’t do anything else.

And then? Oh, yes. Welly furnished bail, married her the next day and sneaked her off to Europe by way of Boston. They’re living there now, and she’s making something of a man of him, I’m told. And the president of the “King” line was divorced five years ago.

Well—there you are! You never can tell unless you bet—and even then you’re liable to lose. Ain’t it so?

Wolcott Beard will have another article in an early issue
WHERE THERE'S A WILL

By John H. Thompson

MANY ROADS LEAD TO JAIL, AND ONE
CAN'T ALWAYS FIND THE EASIEST WAY

The rough-looking guy stood poised with a brick in his upraised hand, aiming at the big plate glass window of the drug store. Bill and I, seeking a chance to pick up half a dollar for supper, drifted around the corner at an opportune moment.

"Hey!" shouted Bill warningly.

The rough-looking guy glanced around angrily at the interruption.

"Say, bo, better go slow," advised Bill. "If you don't you'll find yourself headed for the lockup so fast that only two wheels of the patrol wagon will be hitting the ground as it turns the corner."

The hand with the brick was lowered.

"That's just what I want," said the rough one brusquely. "What d'ye think I'm doing this for? To hear the tinkle of broken glass?" He spat derisively into the gutter.

"You're the first guy that I've run across that wants his sunlight strained through iron bars," commented Bill. "What's the large idea?"

"Were you ever broke?" demanded the rough one.

"Sure, we're broke now," said Bill. "Well, were you ever both broke and hungry?"

"That's us," said Bill cheerfully, "but you don't see us heaving any cornerstones through plate glass windows. Jim and I may
be drifters, but we are honest and law-abiding."

The rough guy seemed to be favorably impressed. "What you going to do for your next feed?" he inquired.

"Just the same as we did for the last one," replied Bill. "Trust to luck."

"Luck," scoffed the rough one. "It's easier and more certain to bust a window and get a thirty-day sentence. Free room and board for thirty days sounds good to a fellow who's been sleeping in the park for a week and who hasn't had any breakfast since he gave up hopes of getting supper the night before." He tentatively raised the brick again.

"Believe me, boy, you'll earn your free board if you go to jail," advised Bill. "The trouble with you seems to be that you get discouraged too easily. There's always a feed waiting around the corner if a man only knows how to grab it."

"Lead me to it and you can have the brick," said the rough one.

With the comraderie of the drifter, Bill invited the stranger to join us.

"We'll have a feed for you within an hour," Bill promised. He glanced speculatively up and down the street. Suddenly his eyes lighted. "See that place down the block, where the moving van is backed against the curbing?" he asked.

The rough guy showed signs of interest. "There's probably a few odd jobs of some kind there," said Bill. "Or else the man who is moving out has some old junk he would be glad to get rid of and that we could sell. Anyhow, we can dig up enough for a feed." Bill was speaking from experience, as he and I had worked the stunt many times before.

The rough guy, a bit reluctantly dropped the brick into the gutter.

"Well, I'll try it with you," he said grudgingly, "though personally I'd just as soon go to jail."

"The brick and the window will still be here if we don't land something," remarked Bill cheerfully.

The three of us strolled down the block. We found that the van was in front of a millinery shop. Bill led the way in. The place was in great disorder. A distraught individual was superintending the moving of two big crates. He seemed to be the boss of the joint.

"We noticed you were moving; need any help?" Bill doesn't believe in beating around the bush.

"Nothing doing. Don't bother me," snapped the boss.

"Well, is there any old junk around that you'd like to have us lug away for you?" persisted Bill.

"No. Don't bother me now. Can't you see I'm busy?" He waved us toward the door, but paused suddenly. "Wait a minute," he added. "There's a lot of rubbish in the back room. Take some of that if you want to, but don't throw any of it around in the street or the cops will blame me for it." He directed us to the back room and resumed his job with the crates.

"Didn't I tell you this would work out?" demanded Bill exultantly as the three of us hurried toward the back room. The rough guy looked skeptical.

"I don't smell any beef stew and coffee yet," he said.

We found the room piled with disordered heaps of empty boxes, paper and millinery.

"Nothing worth taking there," muttered the rough guy despondently.

Bill was not to be discouraged so easily, however. "We'll look it over at any rate," he said hopefully.

We pawed through the mess and found a lot of fancy-looking hats of brilliant color.

"These look O.K. to me," remarked Bill. "I bet they got in this rubbish by mistake. They're as good as new." He picked up a couple of the hats and stood in the doorway. "Hey, mister," he called to the boss. "Can we have these?"

"Take all you want," invited the boss.

"They're old stuff. Out of style. I got to get rid of them some way."

"What in thunder do we want with a lot of chicken plumage?" growled the rough guy.

"The hock shop will take 'em," declared Bill. "Pick out all the good-looking ones."

The rough guy demurred. "Think I'm going to stalk through the streets with a lot of flappers' headgear?" he demanded.
"For a guy who was hankering to ride in a patrol wagon you’re getting pretty fussy," said Bill sarcastically. "Come on, be yourself."

Bill gathered up about a dozen of the hats ranging in color from scarlet to baby blue and back again. I followed suit and finally our new friend, grumbling all the time, did likewise.

"We’ll get five dollars for these," predicted Bill enthusiastically.

"It’ll be worth five dollars to lug ’em through the street," grumbled the rough one. "Wish we had something to wrap ’em in."

We filed from the shop after thanking the boss.

"I feel like a blasted peacock," growled the rough one.

"That’s better than feeling like a striped zebra," said Bill encouragingly, from amid his load. "All we’ve got to look for now is the sign of the three gilt balls, and then—then, friends—for the feed trough." He tried to raise his arms dramatically, but the hats spoiled the effect.

We lugged the hats up to the corner and turned down a side street, where we figured the chances of finding a pawn shop were better. For six or eight blocks we wandered along without results. A steadily growing procession of youngsters trailed in our wake, as the sight of three shabby drifters laden with brilliant millinery is not a common occurrence.

The facetious comments of the youngsters seemed to bother the rough guy, though they rolled off Bill and me like rain drops on a freshly oiled macadam road. Finally the rough guy balked.

"I’m not going to tramp all over the city carrying a truckload of women’s finery," he protested. "You can have my share. I’m going back and heave that brick."

Bill tried to argue with him, but without success.

"Don’t they look just too sweet for anything with all them lovely hats?" piped a ragamuffin who had been dogging our heels for three blocks. "My, oh, my, I bet they’re three bridegrooms doing the shopping for ‘honey.’" His sally was greeted with a chorus of laughter from the other youngsters.

The rough guy hurled the hats to the sidewalk with a half smothered imprecation.

"I quit right here," he declared.

Bill looked at me in silent despair. "I tell you what," he proposed suddenly. "Pile the hats here and I’ll stay with ’em while you and Jim look for a pawn shop. When you find one, come back and tell me."

"I ain’t going to roam around no more," said the rough guy doggedly. "That’s final. I’m going to heave that brick through a window and go to jail. I’m so weak now that my knees rattle."

"Suppose you stay here and mind the hats and my pal and I will look for a hock shop," urged Bill. "We’ll do the walking and you can rest for awhile."

The rough guy showed signs of wavering. "If these kids bother you, you heave something at ’em and they’ll go away," persisted Bill.

"Well, if you hurry up about it," growled the rough guy reluctantly. "So far as these kids are concerned, I’ll kill ’em if they don’t look out." He said it so ferociously that they involuntarily fell back in alarm.

Bill didn’t give him a chance to change his mind again. "We’ll be back in five minutes," he promised. "You go five or six blocks that way," he directed me. "And I’ll go this way. One of us will be sure to spot a hock shop."

We left our new friend standing beligerently against the wall with the varicolored hats piled in a gorgeous heap about him. He looked despondent.

II

COVERED my territory without luck and returned to the place where we had left the rough guy. He was gone. So were the hats. Only a piece of baby blue gauzy stuff remained to mark the spot. I was vainly trying to puzzle the thing out when Bill hove into view.

"I found a place, only four blocks down," he exclaimed exultantly. "I—"

He paused as he noticed that the hats and
The question provoked a broad grin. "Running? Not so's you'd notice it, he wasn't. He was in a police patrol. The cops took the hats, too."

"Police patrol?" demanded Bill. "What was he doing in that?"

"Just 'cause a few kids made a lot of noise jollying him about the pile of hats, a cop come along and pinched him for causing a disturbance. 'Twasn't right, either, for he wasn't doing nothing." He looked speculatively at Bill and me. "Are you his pals?" he asked. The urchin's eyes were popping with anticipation.

Bill didn't commit himself.

"'Cause if you are," continued the youngster, "the man hollered out as they stuck him in the patrol wagon, to tell you that you could have that brick 'cause he wouldn't need it."

Bill looked at me and sighed.

"Well, at any rate, he goes to jail honestly," he remarked virtuously.

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WHEN FLYNN'S WEEKLY first appeared on the market, we assured you that you would never be sated or bored with the monotony of a magazine that is limited entirely to one type and one formula of detective yarns.

In the current issue—just as in any other issue—you will find what we meant. When we announced that all types of stories dealing with detection, with crime, with police, with prisons, and with any phase of the continuous struggle between law and outlawry would be acceptable, we meant just that.

Look over the table of contents of the copy in your hands.

"The Real Jesse James" is the true story of an outlaw. "The Cat Burglar" is more in the generally accepted detective story manner—and yet, there is a difference.

"The Man with the Gout" is a good example of the sort of yarn that can be constructed around outlaw characters and criminal backgrounds. "The Joker" more or less conventionally shows a Scotland Yard detective at work.

But we needn't go farther here. Look at "Was He Guilty?", "The Death Warrant," and "He Blew Up Steamships." Read "The Trail of Behemoth" and "Where There's a Will."

You will understand why readers never tire of FLYNN'S WEEKLY.
BUREAU OF CORRESPONDENCE

FROM HALF A DOzen DIFFERENT STATES THEY WRITE AND ALMOST EVERY ONE HAS ONLY PRAISE AND SINCERE ENCOURAGEMENT

ANOTHER ENTHUSIAST

MY DEAR MR. FLYNN:

"The Avenger," "Arrest That Woman," "The Ladder of Cards," and "The Mad March Hares" were the best stories that have appeared in your magazine since I have taken it.

Here is a list of the authors I like best:


"The Garlic Bulbs" was fine. I shall look forward to more stories of Ruggles.

P. L. E., Gladwin, Iowa.

FEATURES TO BE APPRECIATED

MY DEAR MR. FLYNN:

Your fact stories are very interesting. Were it not that you have to have a balanced magazine to interest all your readers, I would say more fact stories.

There are several features in FLYNN'S WEEKLY that should be appreciated by detective magazine readers:

(1) The price;
(2) Solid reading matter;
(3) Each story starts and finishes—except continued stories—without being "continued on page 109" among the advertisements;
(4) A story founded on fact is far superior to weird imagination. Your circulation should be at least a million copies.

B. M. B., Spanish Fork, Utah.

PRaise FOR "THE AVENGER"

MY DEAR MR. FLYNN:

I am a new subscriber to your magazine. But I have read FLYNN'S WEEKLY for the last year or so and am quite able to judge FLYNN'S WEEKLY's stories.

I want to congratulate you on the quality of the magazine. Especially I want to speak of "The Avenger," by John Goodwin. I've just finished reading it, and it's the best story I have read for a long time.

Please ask Mr. Goodwin to write more stories like "The Avenger."

T. S., Bismarck, N. D.

IT KEEPS HIS BLOOD GOING!

MY DEAR MR. FLYNN:

I think you publish the best stories I have ever read at such a low price. In most weeklies the publishers start the existence of their magazine with good stories, but as you follow them up, they do not keep up the quality.

I am a musician and play in all parts of the country. I have plenty of time for reading. In FLYNN'S WEEKLY I have found something to keep my blood going at the speed I like.

Again I will say that FLYNN'S WEEKLY is the best story book from cover to cover that I have ever read.

E. D. C., Detroit, Mich.

TECHNICAL CRITICISMS

MY DEAR MR. FLYNN:

I am a constant reader of FLYNN'S WEEKLY and find that occasionally a good story is spoiled by the author's killing the realistic possibility. Especially when dealing with drugs and chemicals I'm always there.

To be more explicit:

I've just finished "The Avenger" and find that Mr. Goodwin's chemical education has been sadly neglected. In the last installment in the evidence given against Mrs. Mulholland, the author confuses the words "capsule" and "tablet." That is to say, in one instance he says "capsule of hydrocyanic acid" and later he says a tablet. In all my practice I have never seen a tablet of hydrocyanic acid.

Then he mentions that fifty grams were sold

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and in figures writes “50 grs.” Grs. means grains all over the world. The metric system abbreviation of grams is always “gms.”

I hope that Mr. Goodwin will not feel that I am criticizing him unjustly, because these small errors may have been made in print during the set-up. But at the same time I felt I ought to write.

I'm not acquainted with professional pharmacy in foreign countries, but here in the United States powdered hydrocyanic acid is a technical chemical and seldom, if ever, found in a retail pharmacy. Then again, as said in “The Avenger,” fifty grams were sold. That's just about equal to two avoirdupois ounces and that seems improbable. You could poison a whole town with that amount.

Please don't be offended at my criticisms. I'm probably just showing off my knowledge of chemistry. We all get that way sometimes.

Your stories are good. My wife and I never miss an issue. Your fact stories are splendid, but your serials are best. W. T., New York, N. Y.

A GOOD WAY TO LOOK AT IT

MY DEAR MR. FLYNN:

It is a pleasure to read the letters in this issue, September 25. Usually there is some complaint, but it seems that the kickers have decided to accept FLYNN'S WEEKLY as is. I was a little amused at the letter from Arkansas anent the lady authors.

Of course I know who the writer is “alluding at.” But I regard her stories as extra superior, with all of her love of roundabout detail. She saves the “pie and ice cream” for the last, where it properly belongs. I don't care much for stories I can solve long before the final curtain. I have little patience with some of the fault finders.

If I wanted to edit a magazine, I should get one of my own and make it up to suit myself. I wouldn't give a snap whether any one else liked it or not. But, as I do not want to do that, I take into consideration that the other fellow might like the very yarns I don't care a great deal for. I like the fact stories especially. I think they are the most important part of the magazine; the most instructive. These fact stories are historical and give a vivid insight to human nature.

I like the fiction. I don't care for the cipher department, though I have studied the finger-print. Both are an important part of FLYNN'S WEEKLY. If I don't like a story, I skip it and let the other fellow have it. I think that is a good way to look at it.

G. C. B., Omaha, Nebr.

THE "ONLY" ONE ON THE MARKET

MY DEAR MR. FLYNN:

Just a word of praise from one of the thousands of FLYNN'S WEEKLY fans who are reading your magazine each week. You have the best and, in my estimation, the only detective story magazine on the market.

I have no particular choice among the different authors, I find them all to be exceptionally fine. Your fact stories are very interesting to say the least, and I hope you will never discontinue them.

"Carroll of Carrollton" is the best I ever read.

B. A. A., Washington, D. C.

FAVORITES IN TENNESSEE

MY DEAR MR. FLYNN:

I just wish to express a few likes and dislikes. It is hardly necessary to say that the magazine can be beaten nowhere either in regards to price or quality.

Since we have a cipher department, why not have more stories with ciphers in them for the fans to solve. The Douglas Greer stories by Peter Perry are great. Possibly I like them best because of the exceptionally good ciphers they often contain.

Other favorites with me are Detective X. Crook, Jack Calhoun, John Thordyke, Bill Lawson, Lee Foo, and Basil Lisle. We haven't had a Craig Kennedy story in a long while.

W. K., Nashville, Tenn.
"I SUFFERED FROM CONSTIPATION.\footnote{Medicines gave slight relief. Then a friend suggested Fleischmann’s Yeast. I have been eating three cakes a day ever since. My cramps have gone and I feel a hundred per cent better.}  

\section*{Pictures of Health.}

They conquered their ills—found glorious, vital health—by eating one simple food.

\textbf{NOT} a “cure-all,” not a medicine—Fleischmann’s Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active, daily releasing new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day, one before each meal: on crackers, in fruit juices, water or milk—or just plain, in small pieces. For constipation dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before meals and at bedtime. Dangerous habit-forming cathartics will gradually become unnecessary. All grocers have Fleischmann’s Yeast. Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days.


\footnote{In answering this advertisement it is desirable that you mention this magazine.}

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  \item \textbf{I TRIED EVERYTHING TO BANISH ACNE}—without success. Finally I took Fleischmann’s Yeast. Now after two months’ use, I’ve only one little ‘bump’ on my chin and I’m also getting rid of it with Fleischmann’s Yeast.  
  \hspace{1cm} \textbf{ANITA McALEER, Denver, Colo.}
  \item \textbf{THIS FAMOUS FOOD} tones up the entire system—aids digestion—clears the skin—banishes constipation.
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FLINN'S WEEKLY

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In answering any advertisement on this page it is desirable that you mention this magazine.
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Scientific excavations in the ancient city of Kish, so we are told by a news dispatch, show that women carried vanity cases forty-nine centuries ago. Why did not the luxuries of that old civilization spread to the rest of the world? Why were the delicate and pleasure-bringing things of life buried and hidden away for so many ages?

Without the printed word, information could hardly be spread to other countries, and the knowledge of events and things could scarcely be preserved. Today, if a better rug is produced in Kurdistan, it is soon advertised for sale in American magazines. If a better necklace is made in China, a printed advertisement will shortly describe it and quote the price on the other side of the globe.

Advertising publishes the secrets of good things from one end of America to the other. The newest and best products of forty-eight states are told about, fully and truthfully, wherever the public press is read.

Read the advertisements and you keep from being buried like Kish.

Advertisements tell you what is best to buy—where to get it and what to pay for it.
Guide to good things

GRANDMOTHER could tell, by rubbing it in her hand, whether the goods in a suit or overcoat was all-wool. Grandfather could tell good leather by the feel of it. Both had ways, or thought they had, of knowing good silver, brass or copper.

But you buy so many more things than our grandparents did, that it is almost impossible to be a judge of quality in everything you buy. In this age, only a specialist could really know even a small part of the many things used in your home, if the trade-marks and trade-names were left off them.

Advertising has taken the place of grandfather’s and grandmother’s knowledge. You may be sure a thing advertised is as represented. If it is not, the person making it and the one selling it will quickly lose your confidence and your patronage. People do not dare misrepresent in their advertising—to do so is to invite closed factories and stores.

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Buy two at a time—use alternately
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