



LONDON  
**MYSTERY**  
MAGAZINE  
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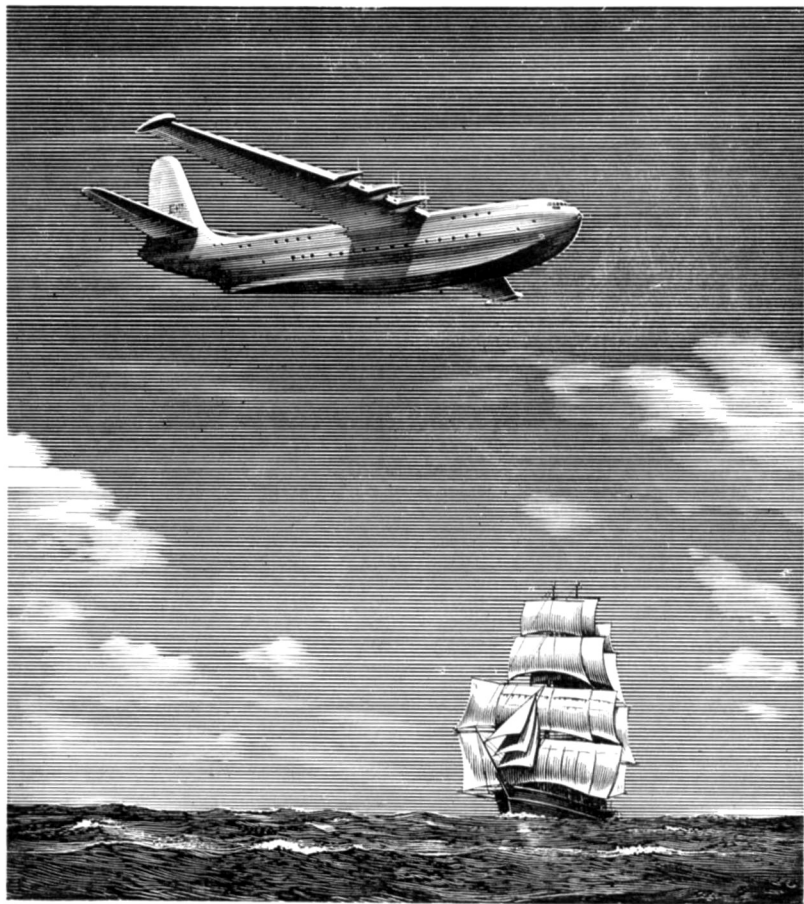


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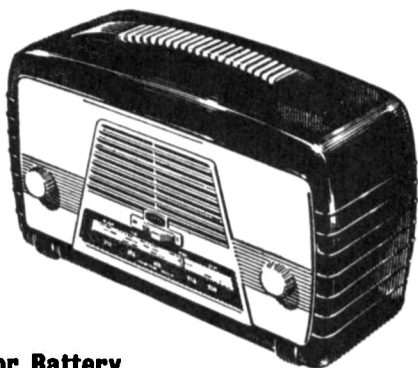
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# THE LONDON MYSTERY MAGAZINE

June 1951 July

NUMBER TEN

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## ***What is a Find?***

We prefer to define by example. Occasionally a manuscript reaches the publisher's desk that is different, brilliant, in short, "a find." *Mist over Pendle* by Robert Neill is such a book. Against a background of 17th-century rural England, the author has woven a remarkable first novel—a story of witchcraft and the power of evil. The book is a *Daily Graphic Book Find*.

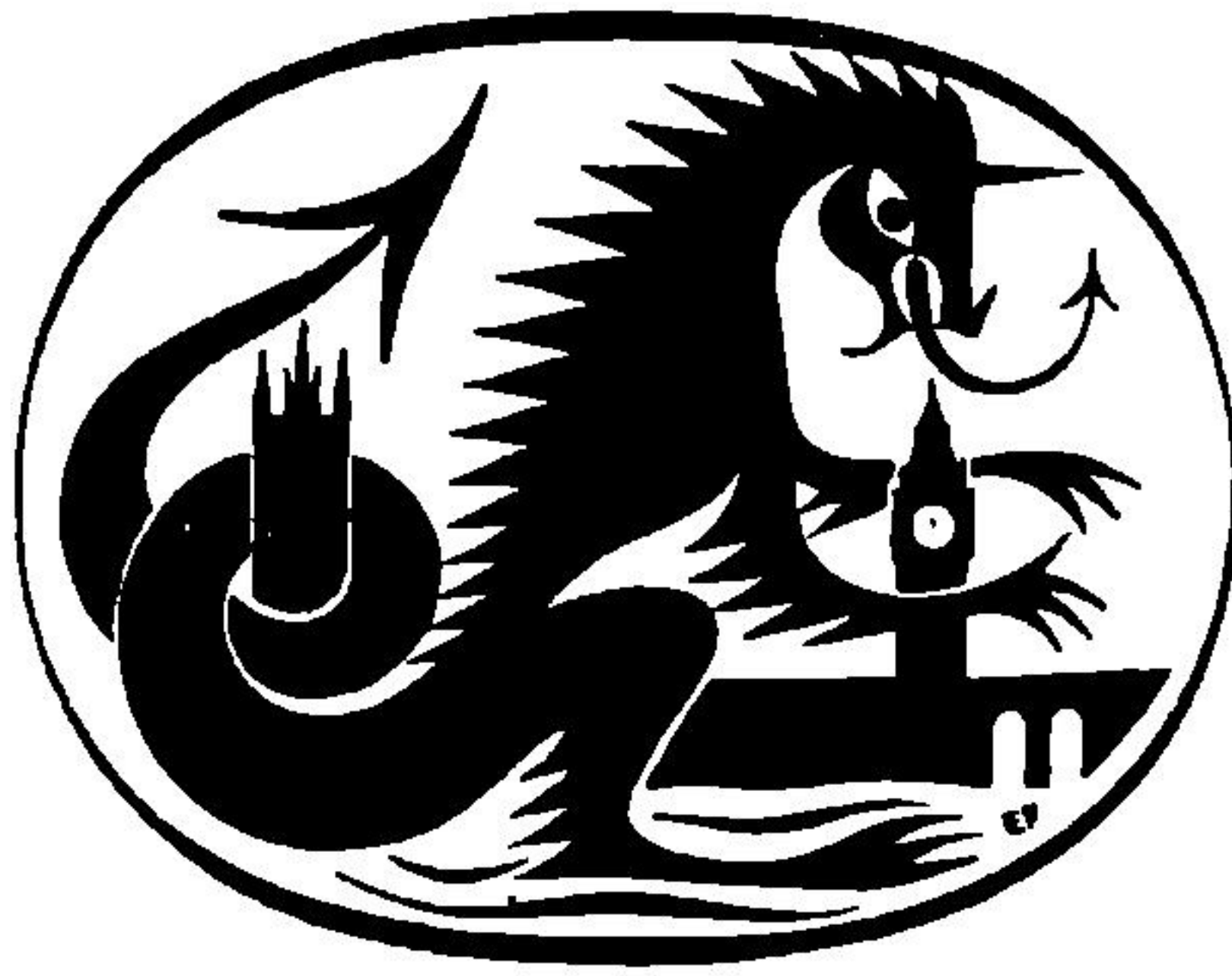
*William Irish*, on the other hand, belongs to that class of novelist that "prefers"—we quote a recent review—"to call a spade a bloody shovel." His new volume of short stories, *The Blue Ribbon*, not only justifies such a tough description, but also offers sparkling versatility and surprise.

Finally, we present a book for the connoisseur or possibly the gourmet of detection. *A Matter of Taste* by Richard Lockridge. The story of a man who at the age of fifty decides his life is incomplete because he has never killed anyone. How he plans the completion of this desire is told in a story that is a psychological *tour de force*.

MIST OVER PENDLE	<i>Robert Neill</i>	10s 6d
THE BLUE RIBBON	<i>William Irish</i>	8s 6d
A MATTER OF TASTE	<i>Richard Lockridge</i>	9s 6d

***Hutchinson***





FOUNDED AND EDITED BY MICHAEL HALL

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# THE LONDON MYSTERY MAGAZINE

221b Baker Street, N.W.1.

June, 1951.

DEAR READER,

Thanks to the splendid initiative of Marylebone Town Council and its Library Committee, and to the generosity of the Abbey National Building Society, 221b Baker Street can now welcome visitors to a Sherlock Holmes Exhibition at 221b Baker Street, which opened on May 22 for six months. This exhibition is a contribution from all of us in Marylebone to the Festival of Britain, and I hope that all who can visit it in person and those who can only radiate their good wishes from afar will reunite at the shrine of the one and only Sherlock Holmes.

THE EDITOR.

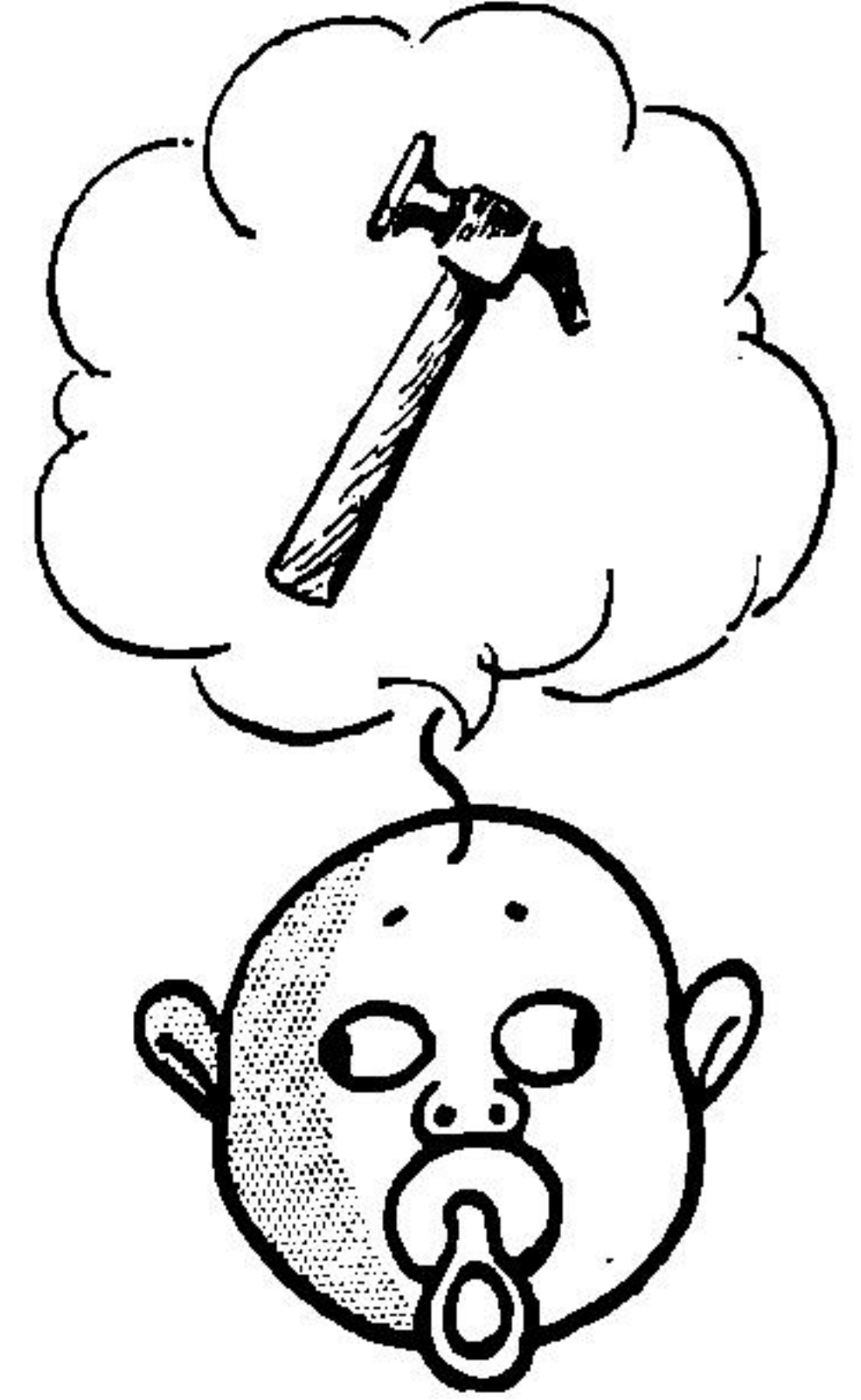


# THE FELON'S LOT

(After W. S. Gilbert)

Convicted by old-fashioned criminology,  
Once malefactors answered for their crimes,  
But owing to the inroads of psychology,  
The felon now can hope for better times.  
The penalty exacted by society—

By society,  
Was commonly extreme for murder done—  
For murder done.  
Before the intervention of psychiatry—  
Of psychiatry,  
The felon's lot was not a happy one.



Research on the subconscious personality  
Has introduced the maladjusted type;  
There's no such thing as criminal mentality,  
The killer for the gallows is not ripe.  
A sufferer from infantile convulsions—  
'Tile convulsions,  
He lacks from birth the normal sense of fun—  
Sense of fun.  
To remedy his murderous compulsions—  
'Rous compulsions,  
The killer's lot must be a happy one.

Crass ignorance of influence prenatal  
No longer the enlightened judgment warps;  
The hanging of the strangler would be fatal,  
The guilt, if any, rests upon the corpse.  
The homicidal impulse is subliminal—  
Is subliminal,  
And punitive procedure we must shun—  
We must shun,  
Society, now branded as the criminal—  
As the criminal,  
Must make the murderer's lot a happy one.

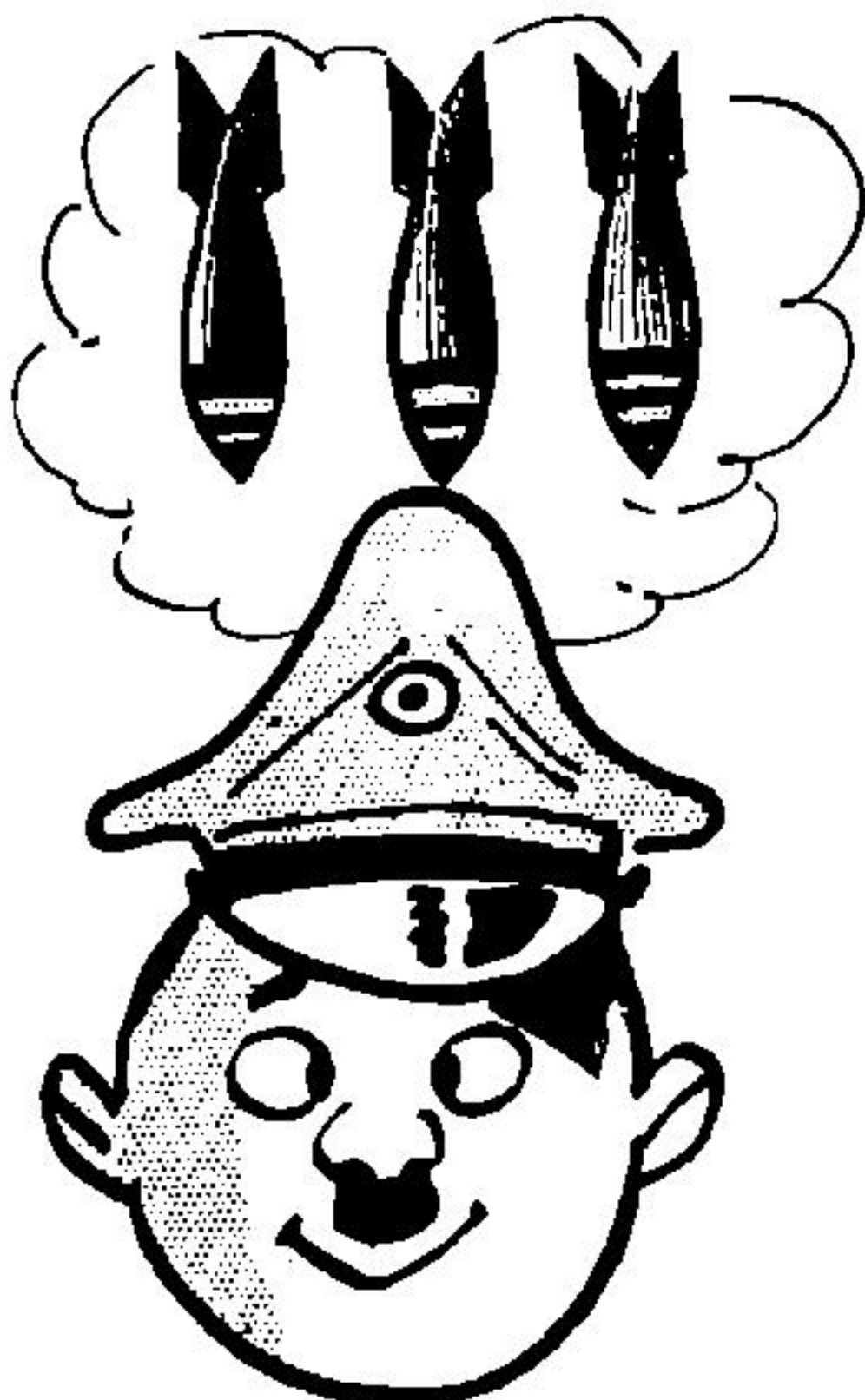
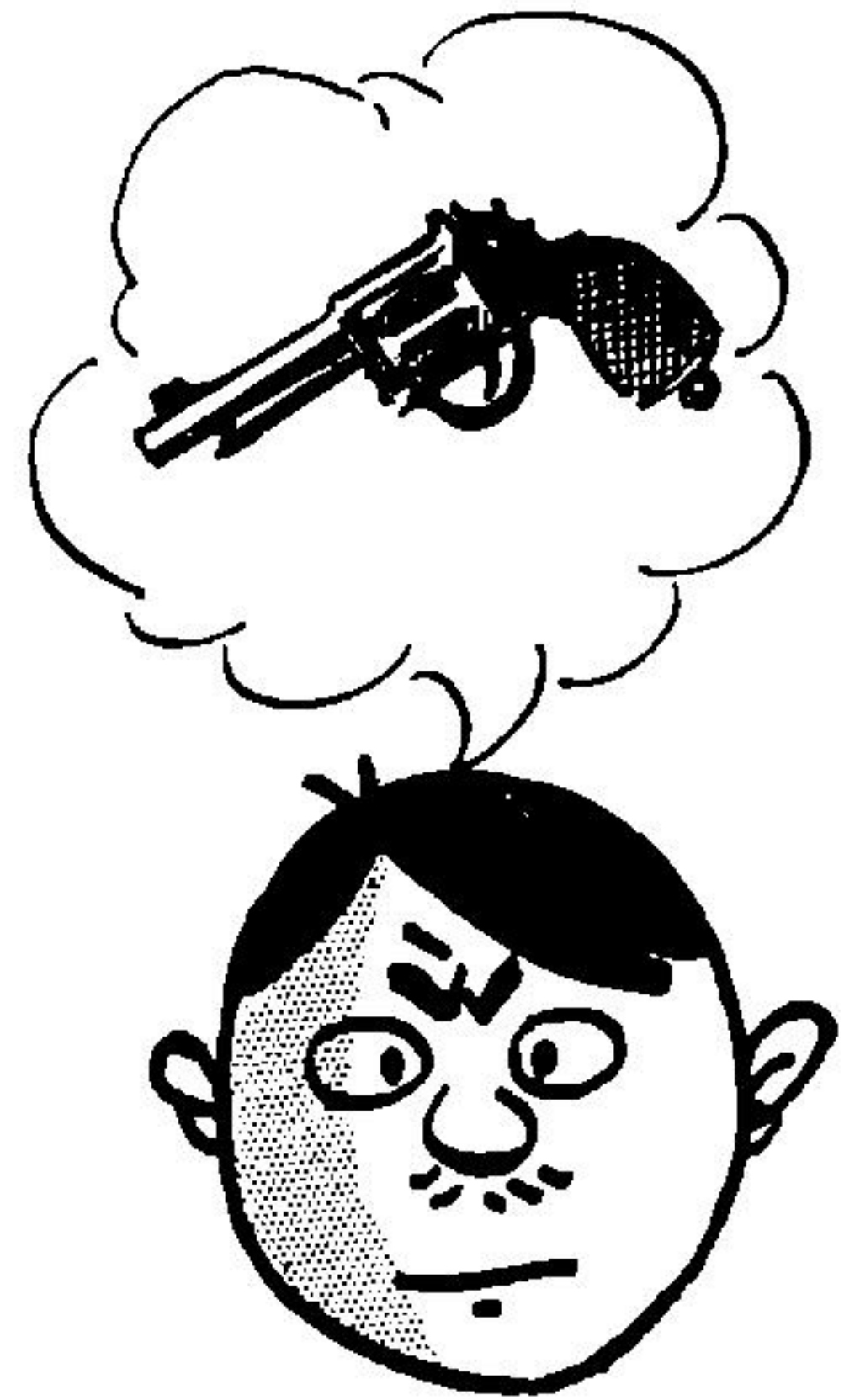






The scientific study of frustration  
Delinquents of delinquency acquits,  
For murder's merely mental aberration,  
Explained by schizophrenia, or fits.  
Indulgence on these grounds should be extended—  
Be extended,  
To those who the affairs of nations run—  
Nations run,  
And citizens are strongly recommended—  
Recommended,  
To make the ruler's lot a happy one.

When impulses neurotic and irrational  
Run riot in the most exalted sphere,  
No blame is due to leaders international  
However criminal they may appear.  
The ruler may be mentally affected—  
'Ly affected,  
But still he is accountable to none—  
'Able to none.  
No opportunity must be neglected—  
Be neglected  
To make the ruler's lot a happy one.



When symptoms of maniacal delusion  
Develop at a quite alarming rate,  
The citizen must come to the conclusion  
The ruler's in a psychopathic state.  
The paranoiac we must not be hard on—  
Not be hard on,  
When he starts dropping A-bombs by the ton—  
By the ton.  
But though to understand may be to pardon—  
Be to pardon,  
The human lot is not a happy one.



*Homage to Oscar Wilde*





## I HATE VIOLENCE

W. STANLEY MOSS

*Illustrations by Mendoza*

*W. Stanley Moss, or Bill as he is better known to his many friends in many lands—he was born in Yokohama and has globetrotted twice round the world—has presented us with a new story. As you may remember, his first story in Number 6 of THE LONDON MYSTERY MAGAZINE was set in darkest Brazil; but now he takes us for a stroll in the docklands of a great port where the undergrowth can be just as deadly. We would like to take this opportunity of congratulating him on having his book, "Ill Met By Moonlight," selected by Somerset Maugham as one of the three best books of 1950. We feel sure that his new thriller, "Bats with Baby Faces," just published by Boardman's, will keep on delighting his public.*

**L**IKE the rheumatic protests of branches in a high wind, the creaking and straining of derricks along the waterfront merged with the myriad voices of the great harbour: the woebegone hoot of foghorns out in the estuary, the cries of stevedores, the amplified instructions from the foreman on the bridge, the reptilian rattle of

black chains and pulleys, the startled squawk of seagulls dislodged from nocturnal perches.

"Here," thought Rupert March, as he walked along the quayside, sniffing at the mingled scent of salt spray and sewer, "here is romance." With head high—much higher than usual, for he was not yet properly accustomed to the lightness of a felt hat upon it—and a strange resilience to his step (doubtless caused by so



recent a substitution of gum-shoes for the ponderous burden of patrol boots), he whistled gently to himself as he made his way towards the thoroughfare which would lead him back to headquarters.

All was right with Rupert's world—so right, in fact, that he had no doubt that on this day he was the happiest, most satisfied policeman in the force. After no more than two years on the beat, attended by steady promotion, he had found himself assigned to his first job in plain clothes; and now, only a week later, he was returning to his chief to report that the case was solved, the miscreants identified, and a dozen arrests ripe for the making. What a day!

Presently, deciding to take a short cut, he turned away from the wharves, and directed his footsteps through the maze of dim alleyways which comprised the environs of the port. Here, again, the atmosphere of romance, engendered by the sly hissing of gas-lamps, the spray-glossed cobbles underfoot, and the bright windows of taverns which sent their images sprawling into the shadows, persisted in his imagination.

His sensitive appreciation of environment had fallen slightly in love with this new district to which he had been assigned. No fitful ingredients appeared to be lacking: the raucous laughter in crowded bars, the rattle and moan of juke-boxes, the drunken songs of seafaring men, and all the sights and sounds and smells of a great port were here combined for his æsthetic appetite. It appealed to his dramatic instinct—the feeling that he could walk into this pub and meet Pepe

le Moko, into that attic and pass the time of day with The Rat, into the cellar across the way and exchange greetings with any brain-child of O'Neill or Conrad.

It was into a world of theatre, in fact, that he now projected himself. He had of late regarded with no little satisfaction the growing tendency of dramatists to endow their guardians of the law with qualities of humanity, wit, charm, intelligence, and even handsome mien. Gone were the days of the obese, blundering superintendent, the roseate buffoon of a village copper, and the stereotyped detective who was for ever one jump behind the amateur sleuth.

There was nothing stereotyped about Rupert March, he told himself, casually comparing his qualities with those of the detective hero in a film which he had seen last week at the Plaza. He could do all that the celluloid detective had done—including, if needs be, getting the girl at the end. No, he considered, there was certainly nothing stereotyped about him. No one would be able to single him out as a typical flatfoot (albeit, reluctant though he was to admit it, his brow persisted in retaining the imprint of the rim of his recently discarded helmet).

And it was while his mind travelled along such pleasantly speculative lines that his reverie was brought abruptly to a halt.

"Excuse me, sir."

Rupert stopped, not realizing at first whence the voice came, and peered into the shadows. The dim light at the end of the alley did little to penetrate the gloom.

"Just a moment, sir."



This time he was able to trace the voice. It emanated from an abysmally dark doorway at his right hand.

"Yes?" he said. "What do you want?"

A figure slowly emerged from the shades.

"I thought per'aps you could spare a little somethin' fer the wife and kids, sir?"

Rupert was on the point of admonishing the man, but he relented. After all, the day had been kind to him, and he could afford to be generous.

"All right," he said, fingering the small change in his trouser pocket and selecting a sixpenny piece. "Here you are."

The man came forward to accept the coin; and now, for the first time, Rupert was able to look at him properly. He was a very large man indeed, with a seaman's cap pulled over his eyes, and he held the sixpenny piece out in the palm of his hand and regarded it with a certain amount of distaste.

"Now, now, sir. A tanner don't go very far these days, you know . . . what with the wife and kids. . . ."

"Oh, very well," said Rupert, wishing to curtail the interview with all possible haste. "Here, take half a crown."

"Why, thank you, sir."

As the man spoke, Rupert caught a whiff of his breath. It reeked of beer.

"And may I have my sixpence back?"

"Oh, you wouldn't want me to do that, would you, sir? I always recognizes a gentleman when I sees one."

Rupert deliberated. This much he knew: the man was extremely large,

with shoulders like a sea-chest, and all he wanted was enough money to go and get drunk on in a pub.

"In fact, sir," came the voice again, riding on a breeze of alcohol, "I was wonderin' if per'aps you wouldn't be so kind as to be jest a little bit more generous? The wife and kids. . . ."

"Now, look here!" said Rupert, of a sudden truculent. "I won't stand for this!"

It was then that the man, with a very slow movement, produced a brick of no mean size from behind his back.

"Not jest a little, sir?" he suggested, weighing his simple, though persuasive, weapon in his massive hand.

Rupert wanted to say a lot of things at the same time, but they all got clogged in his gullet.

"What with the price of everythin' goin' up day by day, sir, life gets pretty 'ard on a family man. . . ."

Some seconds must have passed before Rupert's surprise and indignation permitted him the use of his voice; but it was with a keen eye on the brick before him that he pronounced: "I'm a police-officer! An officer of the law!"

He heard a rumbling, deep-throated chuckle.

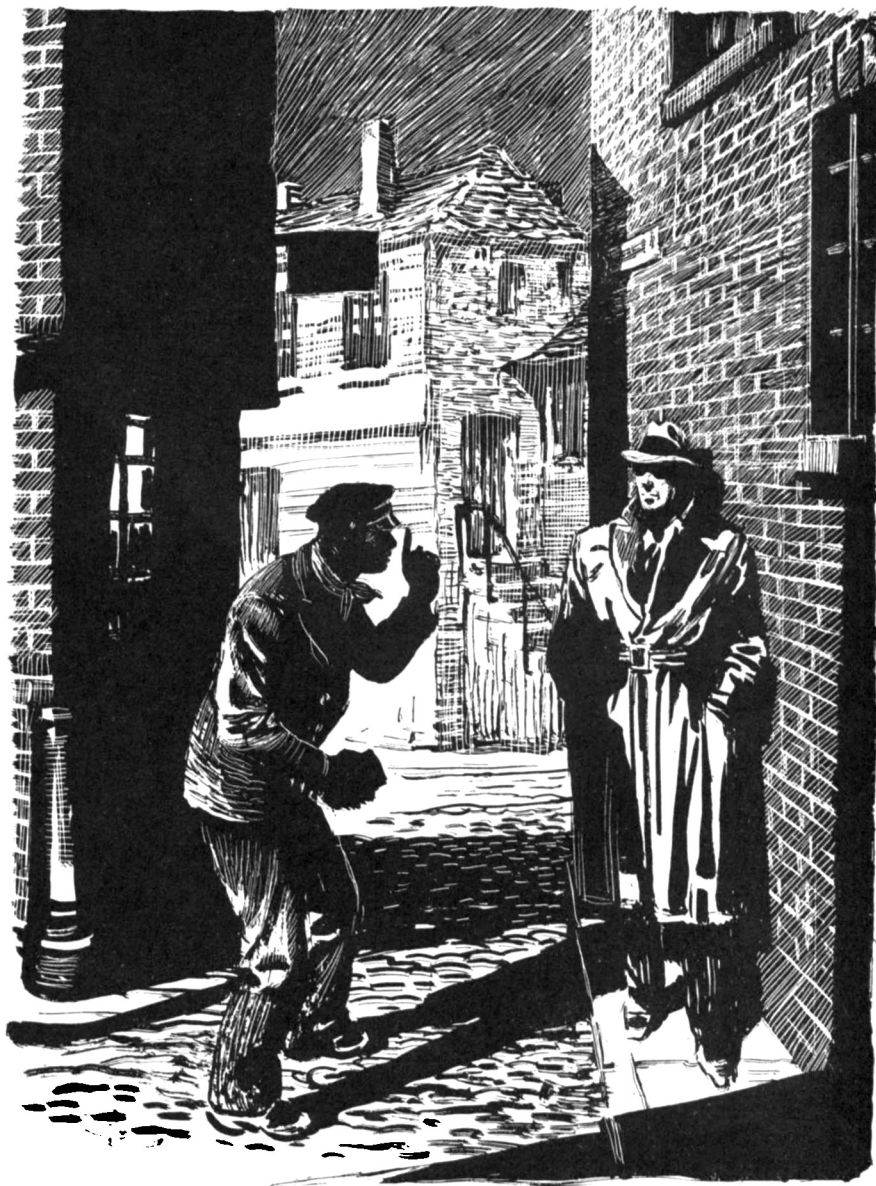
"And I, sir—I'm the Queen of bloomin' Sheba."

It was with pockets skinned to the lining and a conscience burdened with self-reproach that Rupert returned to headquarters and entered the superintendent's office.

"Anything wrong?" asked the superintendent, looking up from his desk.

"No, sir," said Rupert, in a tone





*"... somethin' for the wife and kids, sir? ..."*



not entirely convincing. "Not at all."

"You don't look too well."

"Don't I, sir?"

"No, you don't . . . but never mind about that. Have you got anything to report?"

Rupert's countenance visibly brightened. "I most certainly have, sir," he said, embarking upon his account of the day's findings, and it was not long before he had succeeded in totally excluding the embarrassing memory of his recent unsavoury encounter from his mind.

"It's like this, sir: the gang have got a motor-launch—quite an ordinary-looking craft, but very fast. They only take it out on Saturdays, and it never stays at sea for very long. You get the idea? No one would suspect a launch which just goes out for a short spin during the week-ends. Half the wealthy business men in this town have got some sort of a craft which they use for pleasure cruising—the whole estuary is full of them on a Saturday afternoon. Nobody would think of searching them. And besides, this particular craft never stays at sea long enough for it to have crossed the Channel or even to have taken on a cargo from some other ship lying off shore. And the cargoes, as you know, have been damned large. That's where these fellows have been so cunning—they haven't even given anyone any cause to suspect them, and for all we know, they've been operating like this ever since the war ended."

Rupert offered the superintendent a cigarette. "Perhaps you've already guessed the solution, sir?" he suggested.

"Of course I haven't," grumbled the superintendent. "Go on, go on."

"Well, sir, it's like this—very simple, really. Over on the French coast the gang have got another motor-launch. It's an exact replica of the one they keep in the estuary here. So what happens? Every Saturday both the launches, each carrying a full cargo of contraband, set out for a rendezvous in mid-Channel; and when they meet—hey presto!—all they have to do is to change crews—a matter of seconds—and carry on with their journeys. That's all there is to it. I watched them coming in to-day, and I've got a pretty shrewd idea where they unload the stuff. We ought to catch them red-handed next week."

The superintendent shook his head. "Incredible," he said at length. "Isn't it extraordinary how it's always the most obvious solution that one thinks of last?"

"Obvious, sir?" echoed Rupert, unable to conceal the slight hurt to his feelings.

The superintendent smiled. "I'm not detracting from your work, March. You've done a good job. It's just that I'm kicking myself."

"You shouldn't do that, sir."

"I ought to congratulate you."

"Thank you, sir."

"And I suppose you'd be wanting to organize the gang's arrest next week?"

"I most certainly would, sir!"

A low mist clung like cobwebs among the warehouses, and the foetal moon, scarce able to disclose itself, groped at the shadows along the wharf. There was a chill dampness to the air, muffling all sound with the dank oppressiveness of a mildewed blanket, and the twelve men who stood with Rupert in the



deep shelter of a derrick felt the cold creep through their bones with icy fingers.

For Rupert, the time had passed as slowly as the last week of term at school. But now the hour had come. It was Saturday night, and the pale hands of his wrist-watch pointed almost to ten o'clock. The stage was set.

"All right," he said. "We'd better get into position now. I'll go in alone, and I don't want anyone to move until I give the signal. You all know what to do when you hear the whistle?"

There came a murmur of confirmation on all sides, and one man said: "Pile in and knock 'em off."

"O.K.," said Rupert. "Let's go."

The shadowy figures dispersed along the wharf and lost themselves in the mist, leaving Rupert standing alone beneath the derrick. There was no doubt in his mind as to the course he was about to take. Already he had witnessed the arrival of the motor-launch, the unloading of its cargo at a private mooring, and the ascent of its crew of four to a lighted room above the boat-house. Even now, as he stood in the shadows, he could see the pale rectangle of a window behind which, he felt sure, his unsuspecting quarry was congratulating itself on yet another successful sortie.

His plans had been laid. At vantage-points along the wharf, his men would lie in wait, while he, alone, would enter the boat-house and confront the gang with the news of its arrest. Then, three blasts on his whistle, and the curtain would triumphantly descend upon his first case

(just as it had done in the film which he had recently seen at the Plaza).

He took a last pull at his cigarette before throwing it into the water; then, keeping always close within the shadows of warehouse walls, he slowly made his way towards his objective. Silently he moved, peering cautiously from side to side as he went, until at length he found himself crouching beneath the very window which was his target. Although it was twenty feet above him, he could plainly hear voices, and sometimes a stray word, from the room within. For a while, with his heart beating like a hammer in his breast, he remained listening; then suddenly—

"Well, well, well. Interesting conversation?"

The voice was cultured, slightly foreign of accent, and as cold as a dead man's hand.

Rupert wheeled around, his fingers automatically grasping at the whistle in his pocket.

"No, I wouldn't do that, if I were you; I've got a gun."

Rupert could see the black object in the man's hand, not two feet from his stomach.

"I think you'd better come upstairs and meet my friends. And perhaps you'll give me that whistle? Thank you. Now turn round."

Rupert felt a jab in his back, and started walking. Through a low doorway he went, then up a rickety staircase on to a landing.

"Now open that door."

Finding himself of a sudden in a lighted room, Rupert blinked upon the threshold. The voice behind him said: "We've got a guest."

"Snooper?"

"I think he's a cop."





*"... You've been going to the movies, Flatfoot. ..."*



There were four men in the room, grouped around a table, and by the oil-stove which burned in front of an empty grate there sat a girl in an arm-chair. Rupert recognized the men: they comprised the launch's crew.

The girl said: "Of course he's a cop. Look at him: soft hat, rain-coat, all the trappings." A cigarette, apparently suspended only by the adhesive quality of her lipstick, clung dejectedly to her lower lip. Slowly she uncoiled herself from the chair and stood up in front of the stove, smiling crookedly at Rupert. She was wearing a sweater, which had either shrunk in the wash or else had been made by a male tailor with a dirty mind. "You've been going to the movies, Flatfoot. Anybody could pick you a mile off."

"That'll do, Dulcie," said one of the men, getting up from the table. He had an appearance of elegance which just seemed to miss the mark, like a wine waiter in a cheap restaurant. "I'll do the talking."

"Go ahead, Al," said Dulcie in a bored voice, and swept a straggle of lolling blonde hair from her face. "I'm so tired I can hardly keep my mouth open."

Al turned to Rupert. "Well?" he enquired. "Got anything to say?"

"Plenty," said Rupert. He was feeling very frightened, and the timbre of his voice failed dismally to support the weight of his words as he pronounced: "I'm a police-officer, and I intend to place you all under arrest!"

"Very funny," said the voice from behind him.

Al smiled. "That's fine. Now let's hear some more."

"And make it rich," said one of

the men at the table. The other two nodded, grinning. They looked to be foreigners.

"What's your name?" Al demanded.

"March. Rupert March. And I arrest you in the——"

"Shut up!"

"So your name's March, eh? Well, you certainly didn't come in like a lion, did you?"

The voice behind said: "But I suggest he goes out like a lamb——"

"Like a light," said Dulcie.

"—yes, and the sooner the better. We've still got all the stuff downstairs."

"Wait a minute," said Al. "There's a bit more I want to ask this bum." He turned again to Rupert. "How long have you been snooping around like this?"

"Oh, quite a while," said Rupert.

"How long?"

"Quite a long time."

"I asked you how long!"

"Two or three months, perhaps."

Dulcie said: "I told you, Al, and you didn't take any notice of me. The boys have been getting slack."

"You keep out of this, Dulcie."

"Don't like to hear the truth, that's your trouble, Al," said the girl. "I sometimes wonder if you know what's going on right under your nose."

Al turned on her. "Listen, I know exactly what's going on under *my* nose. And I also know that the only thing which goes on under *your* nose is that great big crocodile mouth of yours! Now, will you keep quiet?" He sat on the edge of the table and returned his attention to Rupert. "Did you come here alone to-night?" he asked.

For a moment Rupert hesitated.



Al cut him short. "All right," he said. "I know what you're going to say. You needn't trouble."

"Oh?" said Rupert, doing his utmost to inject a note of suavity into his voice. "Well, it might interest you to know that I was going to tell you that this whole building is surrounded. You can't get away."

Again Al smiled. "That's exactly what I thought you were going to say," he said, and added: "They all do."

Dulcie said: "I told you, Flatfoot, that you'd been spending too much time at the movies."

Al looked over Rupert's shoulder at the man behind. "O.K., Pete," he said. "You might as well get moving. And go by the back entrance, just in case."

"Shall I come back here afterwards?" asked Pete.

"Yes, we'll be unloading for an hour or two."

Rupert felt a dig in his ribs.

"Come on, Copper. We're going for a little walk."

"So long, Flatfoot," called Dulcie, and relapsed once more into the arm-chair by the stove.

They had been walking for ten minutes, first through a disused warehouse, then around a shipyard, and now along a dim and totally deserted alleyway. Not a word had been spoken, nor any sound made save for the ominous, slipper-soft tread of their footfalls. So silent, in fact, was their progress, that Rupert could scarce believe that his grim companion was constantly but a pace behind him; but, whenever a corner had to be turned or a new path taken, the sharp nudge of steel in his

back acted as a forbidding reminder of his sorry plight.

Rupert could not quite believe that he was going to be killed. The hero in the film had not been killed. True, sometimes a hero was wounded, but he always recovered in time to put his arms around the girl in the final scene. It was a pity, thought Rupert, that there was no girl this time—apart from Dulcie, and dead or alive, he wouldn't want his arms around her. If only he could just be wounded—a flesh wound in the leg—everything would be all right. But hell, what was he thinking in terms of films for? They'd done him more harm than good—even Dulcie had said so. If he got out of this mess all right, he would never go to see a detective film again—no, never!

They were now half-way down the dismal alleyway. All around them was a huge silence, nor did any lamp shine in the gaping windows. At first Rupert could not understand how such desolation could exist in a dockside quarter of so large a town; but soon he came to realize that the houses on either hand were no more than masks—the gaunt façades of bombed-out slums, inhabited only by cats and scavenging curs. There was only one thing to be done, he decided, abandoning with grim reluctance his hopes of a last-minute rescue: he must immediately try to escape. He was alone with a silent executioner, and he could look to no one but himself for salvation. Now was the moment—perhaps his last chance—to make a getaway.

Suddenly he ducked to one side, turning as he did so, and swung a mighty blow at the shadow in his wake. But indeed, it was nothing more than a shadow that he struck.



In a moment he was on his face in the middle of the alley, and a foot was kicking him in the kidneys.

"Silly," said the still, same voice. "Now get up and keep moving—and don't try that sort of baby trick again."

Slowly Rupert rose to his feet. Again, he could feel the sharp prod of the revolver at his back. He started walking.

However, as they continued down the alleyway, he found, almost to his surprise, that a certain new courage had entered his veins. He would not despair, but would try again to make his escape. After all, he had nothing to lose. He would await another opportunity, and would use a different tactic. Perhaps the corner would be a good place? Yes, that was it. He would wait until they reached the end of the alley, and there he would make his second attempt.

But it was not at the corner that chance disclosed its hand.

There were still three or four empty doorways to be passed when the progress of this grim march was abruptly checked.

"Excuse me, gentlemen."

Rupert felt the brusque jab of the revolver dig into his back.

"What is it?" snapped the voice from behind.

"I was jest wonderin', gentlemen, if you wouldn't spare a little somethin' fer——"

"No!"

"No offence meant, sir . . . the wife and kids——"

Rupert watched the vast, familiar shadow emerging from the depths of the doorway. And at this moment he struck.

He heard the revolver go clattering on to the cobbles, a curse and a

shout; and in a moment he found himself on the ground, struggling fiercely with the writhing body of his unseen adversary.

"The brick! The brick!" he called, the wind squeezing out of his lungs. "Armed gunman! Murderer!" And then a knee crashed into his groin, and he gave a yelp of pain; but somehow he managed to hang on, his fingers clawing at the give of flesh that he found in his grasp.

For a moment there was no sound save the laboured, choking breath of the two fighters as they strove, on the one part to wriggle free, on the other to maintain a hold; then Rupert heard a thud—a dull, crackling sound—and of a sudden he felt the body of the gunman go limp in his hands. Slowly, as though it were a sack of potatoes, he pushed the unconscious shape away from him, scarcely daring to believe that the struggle was at an end.

"I 'ope I 'it the right feller, sir."

He looked up, and saw the towering figure standing over him.

"You certainly did," he said, grinning.

"I'm glad of that, sir."

Presently, as they were carrying the still inanimate body of the gunman towards the nearest police-station, Rupert asked: "What's your name?"

"Jest call me Charlie, sir."

"Well, Charlie, you saved my life. But why? I don't understand why?"

"It's jest that I 'ates violence, sir," said Charlie. "And I 'ates these people what carries pistols abaht. They ruins the trade fer simple folk like me. I don't ever mean no 'arm, sir. I 'ain't ever even 'ad to use ma brick before."



Rupert shook his head and chuckled. "Well, I don't know," he said, talking to himself. "I simply don't know."

Now they had arrived outside the police-station.

"I don't think I'll be goin' inside, if you don't mind, sir," said Charlie; but Rupert checked him: "Yes, yes, you must come in. I'd like you to."

The sergeant at the desk looked up as the strange procession entered, his face agape with astonishment. "What the——!"

"It's all right, Sergeant," said Rupert, announcing himself. "And I've caught quite a big fish for you, too," he added. "He's one of the smuggling mob we're after. The rest of the gang is down in a boat-house on the wharf, ripe for the picking. I'd like to use your telephone to get through to headquarters."

"Certainly," said the sergeant as he scrutinized the limp frame of the gunman. "And congratulations."

Rupert corrected him. "Don't congratulate me. We've got to thank this gentleman here."

"Oh?" said the sergeant, peering at Charlie, who had hitherto been at pains to keep in the shadow. "Well, well, well!" He turned again to Rupert. "Do you recognize this man by any chance?"

Rupert shook his head. "No," he said, "never seen him before in my life."

Charlie was screwing his cap into a tight knot with his enormous hands. "Well, I think I'll be pushing along now, sir," he said.

The sergeant was wearing a grin like a split water-melon. "Charlie Milligan! Fancy that! Charlie Milligan on the straight and narrow! Can you beat it? You'll be getting yourself a wife and kids next, Charlie boy."

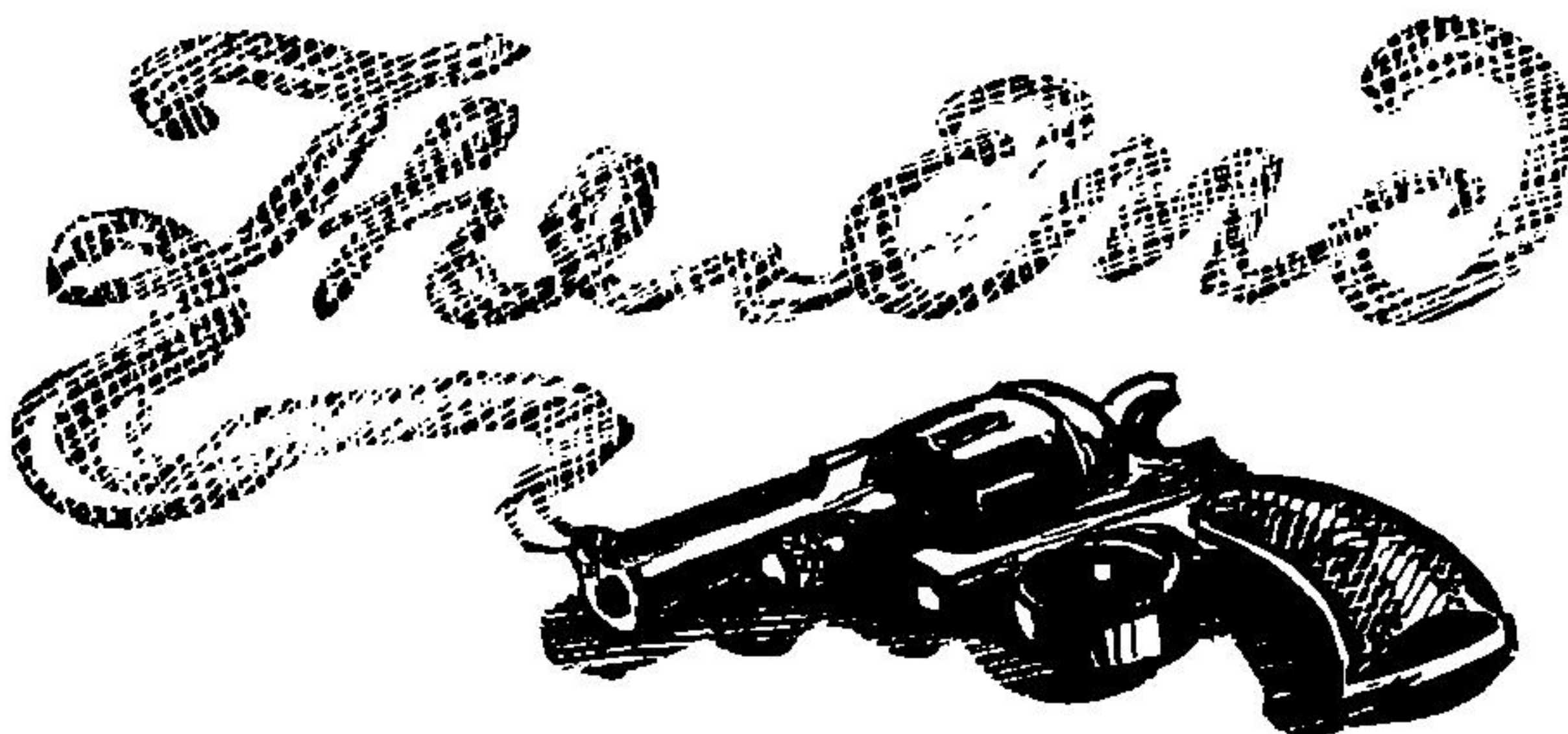
Charlie shifted from foot to foot. "I've always 'ad it in me, Sarge."

"And are you going to take up a good steady job now—like brick-laying?"

"No, seriously, Sarge, I jest needed the opportunity to prove myself, that was all. . . . Well, it's been nice seein' you, gentlemen. I think I'll be on me way now."

"No, don't go yet, Charlie," said Rupert. "I've just got to put through this telephone call, and then we can have a pint together across the road while I wait for the squad cars to arrive."

Charlie grinned like a schoolboy. "Ah, well, I don't see no 'arm in that, sir," he said, pulling his cap at a rakish angle over his eyes.







*only the evil cast no shadow . . .*



# WRITER'S WITCH

JOAN FLEMING

*Wood engravings by Zelma Blakely*

*We should hesitate to introduce our readers to a witch as a matter of course; but as she is sponsored by Joan Fleming they will be confident, we hope, that the woman is not just another nuisance on a broomstick. Indeed, she is not. This is a bookish witch. Her supernatural powers, evidently sophisticated by excessive reading in the classic authors, are in this instance used to demonstrate a very practical and devastating form of literary criticism.*



AMYAS gave a loud cry of pain and held his head in anguish; Mrs. Pegg looked round the door.

“Anything wrong, sir?” she asked with concern. It being a weekday she was not wearing her teeth and, for the same reason, upon her head she wore her husband’s old cap, round the edge of which her curlers bobbed playfully. Her face took on a look of shocked disapproval at what she heard. “Anything wrong?” she asked again, sharply.

Amyas stopped cursing and looked up, but the apparition which he saw through watering eyes in no way mitigated his pain.

“Yes, everything’s wrong!” he shouted. “I’ve just knocked myself nearly senseless on that blasted beam again!”

Mrs. Pegg made a curious sucking noise with her gums, intended, no doubt, to convey sympathy. “Tch! Tch! Your pore forehead! ’Ow about a spot of marg?”

Amyas dismissed the kindly suggestion with a snarl, and Mrs. Pegg

wisely held her peace whilst the pain wore off.

Her silent sympathy caught Amyas off his guard; for three weeks he had fought against an ever-increasing irritation and an urgent need to ease himself by bursting into angry complaint. Now he ceased to fight any longer.

“I must have been mad, utterly mad, ever to take this lousy little hovel, and to think I was going to be able to write here! Peace and quiet was all I wanted, but I didn’t expect to knock myself silly on these confounded beams every half-hour——”

Mrs. Pegg waited; she sniffed, she wiped her nose with the corner of her apron. Then, with great restraint, she said: “No, you’re not yourself, sir.”

Amyas looked sharply at her. Who was she (their acquaintance being of some three weeks’ standing) to know whether he was himself or not?

However, his need to talk was greater than his discretion, and he went on bitterly: “But I’ve got to be myself, I can’t go on like this! Either I sit at the typewriter doing nothing at all, or else I start moving about



and knock myself out, and it won't do. As you may know, Mrs. Pegg," he said sternly, "last year I wrote a best-seller," pause for effect, "and this year I must write another. My publisher is waiting for it, thousands of people are waiting for it, and here I am, the stage set, producing nothing, nothing at all! Not one word since I came. It's all here, mind you," he said, tapping his forehead, "or was, but I can't get going!"

Mrs. Pegg made her sympathetic noise. She was pregnant with talk; Amyas had known it all along; up till now he had taken immense pains to avoid any sort of mental contact with her. She was, however, an excellent cook, so he sighed heavily, and prepared for the broadside.

"It beats me," she said, "how a gent like you could take a place like this, though, *mind you*, it's not lousy now! The council 'as been ever so thorough."

Still nursing his head, but ceasing to rock himself gently to and fro, Amyas asked: "What did you say?"

"I said the council spread themselves, like, over getting this place what you'd call dee-loused," Mrs. Pegg replied in a louder tone.

"You don't mean it was really lousy!" Amyas exclaimed, sitting up, his pain forgotten.

"But you've just said so yourself, sir; 'lousy little 'ovel' was wot you called it, and lousy little 'ovel it was; only tramps 'as lived in it these past 'undred years, till it was condemned."

"Condemned!"

"For years," Mrs. Pegg went on cheerfully; "but it didn't fall to ruin like it might of; stone-built, that's why. Then wot with the 'ousing shortage *excetra*, the council dee-condemned it for the evacuees, see?"

Amyas nodded. He saw only too clearly. He had spent but one weekend at the *Crown*, seen the cottage, bought it and, at infinite trouble and expense, had had it "done up." He looked round the tiny sitting-room, at the uneven brick floor, the eau-de-nil chintz curtains, the dark oak of the bureau, the shining surface of the gate-legged table, and on it the copper bowl with the nasturtiums foaming from it and tumbling over the side to peer at their reflections in the deep polish.

"Condemned!" he whispered.

"But I must say this," Mrs. Pegg went on; "mind you, it's a nice little job now, apart from the garden, which you naturally 'aven't had time to deal with yet"—she looked out through the open door on to the grass plot surrounded by the high brick wall. On either side of the flagged central path the grass was high and a few gnarled fruit trees grew neither fruit nor leaf, but, bowed beneath a weight of years, they were covered with a soft grey lichen which blurred their aged outline. "Yes, apart from the garden, it's marvellous, reely, sir," Mrs. Pegg mused, "what you've done in the short time——"

Amyas lifted his head wearily from his hands and, leaning back in his chair, with a heavy sigh he said: "Why didn't anybody tell me all this?" But even as he said it he knew it was a foolish question. Had he sought or desired anyone's opinion? Had he ever laid himself open to advice or criticism from anyone in the village? Had he not deliberately avoided the bar of the *Crown* where he might have been given much useful information about the cottage he was buying.



Mrs. Pegg, Amyas thought, was brewing for something. She was poking primly about the bosom of her pink woollen jumper, a sign, he had learned, that a subject of importance was about to be broached. She would fidget thus when about to discuss her wages or how much money Amyas proposed letting her have for "the housekeeping."

"You wouldn't of found anyone in the village as would of wanted to talk about the place," she said at last. "It's unlucky!" And she continued to poke primly, knowing that she had, at last, roused Amyas's full attention. "Yes, unlucky!" she repeated, mouthing the word with enjoyment. "The evacs didn't——"

"The what?"

"The evacuees—they didn't stay long, I can tell you, and then the Army used the place, as an ammunition store, they said, and that scared everyone nearly out of their wits and no one dared even mention the place, *in case*——"

"Yes? In case what?"

"*In case!*" Mrs. Pegg repeated in a hoarse whisper.

"Is this some sort of joke?" Amyas asked coldly; "explain yourself, Mrs. Pegg."

A curious look passed over Mrs. Pegg's face. "All right," she said (rather nastily Amyas thought), "I'll tell you and be blowed! It isn't me as 'as to sleep 'ere nights." Glancing swiftly to right and to left, she moistened her thin lips and leaned forward. "It's Mary Ann Beehag! She's never left the place, not since she was 'ung at the cross-roads more nor a 'undred years ago!"

"Ah, I see," Amyas said in his most superior voice; "a thief, I suppose."

"No, not a thief. They 'ung her at the cross-roads on the way to Marley because that's where the gallows 'appened to be and that's what caused it. There weren't no gallows here, see? She'd never set foot out of this village since she was born under this very roof, and they went and took 'er 'alf-way to the next village and 'ung 'er!"

"Why, exactly, was she—er—hung?" Amyas asked, hating the misuse of the verb, but keeping in touch with Mrs. Pegg mentally.

Again the look passed over Mrs. Pegg's face which he could only describe as primitive.

"She was a very bad old woman," she said, then she wiped her nose once more with the corner of her apron and turned to leave the room.

Now thoroughly intrigued, Amyas called after her, but she did not come back. He got up and followed her into the tiny kitchen, where she was putting the finishing touches to the salad which she was leaving for his supper.

Amyas leaned against the wall with its brightly shining new cream paint and thrust his hands into his pockets.

"In what way," he asked, "was she bad?"

"Mary Ann Beehag? She was famous!" Mrs. Pegg said. "The last of her kind in the county, so they say, to be 'ung."

"'Of her kind'?"

"Aye," she replied, giving a lettuce leaf a vigorous shake, "and a good thing too!"

"'Of her kind'?" Amyas persisted.

"See here, sir," Mrs. Pegg said, stopping her work and looking squarely at Amyas. "Don't a-go stir-



ring up mud. Least said soonest mended, eh? Walls have ears!"

"I simply don't know what you're driving at," Amyas said, taking out his cigarette-case.

"You will," Mrs. Pegg told him, briskly plucking off her apron and hanging it on a hook behind the kitchen door.

"I'm surprised at you, Mrs. Pegg," Amyas replied, flicking at his lighter; "you, with your electric cooker, and your wireless, and your television, and your bus drive into town to the pictures every week, I really am surprised at your superstitions and your innuendoes——" He could feel her getting angry; no one likes having long words thrown at them by a superior voice. Amyas was beginning to enjoy himself; goading Mrs. Pegg was poor sport, but better than sitting in front of a typewriter clawing at the blank spaces in one's mind. "Are you trying to tell me that she was hanged for a witch?"

Silence, whilst Mrs. Pegg fidgeted with something in her black mackintosh bag.

"If so," Amyas went on, "I am not merely surprised but shocked. Do you know"—he was about to say "my good woman," but stopped himself in time—"do you know that thousands of poor harmless old women were—er—hung or burned for being, as they say, *witches*! Poor innocent women like—er—like yourself; tortured and put to death by hysterical, superstitious crowds——"

Mrs. Pegg was eyeing him with dislike and Amyas stopped abruptly.

"Mary Ann Beehag wasn't no pore innercent old woman," she declared soberly, "she was an evil witch. Evil as the devil 'imself." She opened the kitchen door, hung her black bag

over her arm, and looked out at the brilliant afternoon, then with her hand still on the latch she glanced back over her shoulder. "And the sun shone," she pronounced, "*right through 'er!*"

Amyas gave a shout of laughter as the kitchen door slammed and he heard her feet on the flags outside.

"The sun shone right through her!" he repeated, with delight.

Ducking his head carefully in the doorway, he returned to the sitting-room and sat down in front of his typewriter.

Gradually the amusement and the animation of the last few minutes left him and he sat, sulky and dejected, lighting cigarette after cigarette and writing not one word. Dully, he turned over the pages of his notes headed "Outline of Plot," which were so drearily familiar to him, and then, with sudden decision, he gathered the loose pages together and tore them across.

"Dammit, it's rubbish!" he shouted.

He stood up, tearing the paper across again and again, and, clutching the pieces in his hand, he strode to the door leading out into the sunlit garden.

Crash went his head against the beam across the threshold, and this time it brought him to his knees, half in and half out of the doorway; everything went black, and there were brilliant flashes in the blackness.

Seeing stars, Amyas thought, like the kids in *Comic Cuts* when they bang themselves. But this won't do! It won't have to go on!

He opened his eyes, and there, in the middle of the flagged garden-



path, stood Mary Ann Beehag, looking at him.

And Amyas looked at her.

"What are you doing in my house?" she croaked.

"Trying to write a novel," Amyas answered; "a best-seller!"

She gave a cackle of shocking, fendish laughter.

"What's that you have in your hand?"

Amyas looked at his hand, carefully and stupidly, as though he were drunk. It was full of torn scraps of paper.

"The 'Outline of Plot.'"

Mary Ann Beehag extended a frightful claw; it was misshapen, gnarled and covered with soft grey lichen which could not hide its aged outline.

Amyas snatched his hand away. He was still kneeling on the threshold. A feeling of cold, dreadful horror came over him.

"Look!" he shrieked, "look!" and Mary Ann Beehag laughed again, a cold, rustling laugh, like the wind in dead leaves.

Amyas's teeth began to chatter. "The sun shines," he mumbled,

"right through her!"

For the old woman stood in brilliant sunshine, and not to the front of her, nor behind her, nor to the sides of her, was there any shadow.

Mary Ann Beehag laughed again, and this time the sound scraped the inner linings of his soul. She said: "Yes, only the evil cast no shadow, young man! Give me those—*those*," she repeated impatiently.

Slowly Amyas put out his hand and dropped the torn fragments of his notes into her extended claw, then he watched, fascinated, as she shuffled down the path, a few steps through the long grass, and stooped under one of the dead trees.

"They're buried now," she shrieked maliciously, and she laughed again—a laugh that reminded Amyas of a certain book reviewer who had slated his last novel. "They're buried now, and we shall see what grows there——"

\* \* \*

P.S.—Amyas and his publisher are still waiting.







## MYSTERY IN ATHENS

KATHLEEN FREEMAN

*Etchings by Winifred Taylor*

*One morning, in the spring of 415 B.C., while Athens, in the middle of her long war with Sparta, was preparing a huge naval expedition against the Sicilian city-state of Syracuse, it was found that all the stone Hermæ in Athens had been defaced. These Hermæ were square blocks usually surmounted with the head of Hermes or another deity; they were placed at the doors of temples and private houses as a protection. No one knew who had done the deed, which was thought to be, not only sacrilege, but the signal for an antidemocratic revolution.*

*Among those who were arrested was Andocides, son of Leogoras, a young man of rich and noble family. He escaped death by informing against certain of his companions; but his whole life was overshadowed by his part in this affair, the repercussions of which were felt for many years.*

*Was he guilty or innocent? Did he confess and later withdraw his confession? Was he justified in turning informer? What was the motive and who were the instigators of the crime? The following reconstruction, based entirely on contemporary accounts and especially on Andocides' own speeches to the Athenian Assembly and jury-court, attempts an answer to what remains an unsolved mystery.*

### I

**I**T was a warm evening in May. At the house of Callias, in one of the upper suburbs of Athens, a dinner-party was in full swing. The tables with the first course, the meat and fish and sauces, had been carried out, the slaves had brought the bowls of

water for the guests to wash their hands, and the fresh garlands and perfumes had been dispensed. Andocides, reclining beside the host, who was his brother-in-law, glanced across the room to one of the other guests, who was talking earnestly to the men at his table.

"What is the matter with Euphi-



letus to-night?" he said. "He looks as if he had something on his mind."

Callias shrugged: "Talking about the next Club meeting, I suppose—or the war."

"Oh, the war!" Andocides at twenty-five was weary of the war, which had been going on since he was nine, with one brief interruption. He looked round. The guests were all young men: the women of the household never appeared in public. He knew them all quite well: they often dined at one another's houses, and met every morning at the gymnasium or the barber's. "Where's Charmides?" he asked. Charmides was his cousin and close friend.

"I don't know," said Callias. "I invited him, but I fancied he didn't want to come." He gave Andocides a shrewd look. "You should know why better than I."

Andocides frowned. He too had urged Charmides to come, but Charmides had been evasive. Possibly a love-affair. . . .

The second tables, loaded with savouries and sweetmeats, were being carried in and set before the diners. More important still, here came the wine. The guests rose to pour the libation, and then the drinking began and the singing as the harp was passed round. Callias kept a good table, though he was not a millionaire like his namesake, the son of Hipponicus, and of course his dinner-parties could not compare with those at Andocides' own home. Still, he served a good wine, well-cooled, and mixed with only a third of water. Soon all the young men would be pleasantly tipsy, and their cares would dissolve in the fumes of "the faultless wine of Chios."

Andocides reclined again and took up the goblet into which the slave had ladled the wine. He raised it to his lips, still watching Euphiletus, and at that moment Euphiletus raised his goblet and silently toasted him, his dark eyes glittering. Andocides did not know that on this evening his whole future was being decided—a future of uncertainty, suffering and fame.

## II

At the house of Andocides' father Leogoras, a quieter dinner-party was in progress. The guests who came to dine with Leogoras were there to enjoy conversation and the pleasures of the gourmet. They had finished the first course, of which the chief dish had been the famous pheasant reared on their host's estate, and now they were looking forward to the wine and sweet course: figs and raisins from Rhodes, almonds from Naxos, a savoury paste into which to dip one's finger of bread, and noble wines from the islands. They talked of the great naval expedition now gathering at Peiræus for the attack on Syracuse.

"But do you think Alcibiades is the right man to take command?" said Taureas, a cousin of Leogoras. "He is young and daring and irresistibly persuasive, we all know—but is it enough?" He turned to another of the guests: "Your brother must be very uneasy, Eucrates."

Eucrates took an olive. "Nicias is most unhappy about the whole enterprise, as you know. He did his best to quell popular enthusiasm in the Assembly; that was why he asked for such a vast armament. He thought it would daunt them. But they voted for it without hesitation,



and they forced him to take command with the other two. What can he do now? Alcibiades has dazzled the populace with dreams of conquest and forced the hands of the few who know."

Leogoras, a fat, cheerful man in the fifties, gave a chuckle. "I like Alcibiades. Amusing fellow. My son knows him well. They belong to the same dining and wining club."

Taureas did not respond. "If I were you, I should watch Andocides," he said with disapproval. "They say these young fools have been holding secret meetings in one another's houses—putting on religious shows. I am not easily shocked, but when it comes to dressing up as a priest and caricaturing the sacred Mysteries . . ." He cast a sharp look at Leogoras. "Don't tell me, Cousin, *you* know anything about this!"

Leogoras laughed again, not without embarrassment. "Well, I like to keep abreast with the times. I don't want to get out of touch with the young. I admit I did go along once with my son to a friend's house, and after dinner they began some such nonsense. But I was bored. I folded my cloak over my face and went to sleep. When I woke up it was all over. One mustn't take these youthful pranks too seriously."

Taureas said severely: "The Sovereign People will take it seriously enough, if ever they get proof of it." He turned to Eucrates. "Don't you agree?"

Eucrates sighed. "In times like these, one can't be too careful. As it is, there are rumours going round which are doing the Expedition no good."

Leogoras signed to a slave to fill up their goblets again.

### III

It was an hour after midnight. At Callias' house the drinking had been heavy. Some of the young men lay under the tables, others had slipped away with one of the flute-girls, the host himself had gone to bed. Nobody noticed, nobody cared. But a few were still awake, and among them were Andocides and Euphiletus.

They had both had too much to drink, but they had reached the stage when their minds seemed to them preternaturally clear.

"You don't agree, my friend?" called out Euphiletus across the space separating the tables.

"I think it's mad!" said Andocides.

"But you will help us?"

Andocides hesitated. It was a serious matter to oppose an enterprise decided upon by a club member as important as Euphiletus, who was recognized as their leader now that Alcibiades was entirely taken up with his new appointment.

"I think it's crazy," he repeated. "If any one of us were caught, we should all be flung into gaol—or worse. The People are in no mood for practical jokes just now."

"Perhaps it's not a joke," said a dark young man named Meletus, standing behind Euphiletus.

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Andocides.

Euphiletus laughed unpleasantly. "If you're *afraid*, we understand, of course. We shall be glad to relieve you of your own assignment—and your membership."



"I'm not afraid!" shouted Andocides, suddenly furious.

"Then we can count on you?"

"Not to-night. I don't feel strong enough. Besides, I promised my father——"

Euphiletus glanced at Meletus. "Our friend is thinking of his ancestral patron," he said with a sneer. "Naturally, he doesn't care to spoil the looks of the Founder of the Family." He walked over to Andocides. "We will postpone it," he said, "as a favour to you. There will be a general meeting of the Club at the Odeon on the night of the full moon. Do you think you will feel strong enough by then? If not, we'll let you off lightly: you shall deal with the Herm outside your father's house."

They went away.

#### IV

Two days later Andocides, exercising his pony in the riding-school, fell heavily, and was carried home on a stretcher. He was bleeding from a cut on the head, and he could not move his left arm. The women shrieked and wailed. Servants brought hot water. A doctor was called; he stitched the cut on the head, saying it was not serious, but he diagnosed a broken collar-bone. Andocides, his curls damp with sweat, tried not to groan as the doctor strapped up the arm on the injured side. He advised Andocides to stay in bed for a few days.

#### V

Three men were talking in undertones in the shadow of the city wall.

"If I do it," said Diocleides, "I

shall want a big fee: twelve minæ (£100) at least. The risk is very great."

The other two glanced at each other.

"Very well," said one of them, a nephew of Alcibiades, the new commander. "Amiantus, tell him the names."

Amiantus drew out a scroll from under his cloak and began reading:

"Leogoras, Andocides son of Leogoras, Taureas, Charmides, Callias son of Alcmaeon, Euphemus, Critias, Eucrates brother of Nicias, Phrynichus the ballet-dancer . . ." There were thirteen names in all.

"Now remember," resumed the other conspirator when he had ended, "midnight at the Odeon. Then get away somewhere and don't show yourself till noon to-morrow. We shall be there ourselves, of course, but if you see us, you must make no sign. If the club-members see you, your life won't be worth an obol."

"But I have the names!" protested Diocleides. "Why need I go there at all?"

"You must have some other names besides those. Nobody will believe you if all the names belong to one family. You will need about thirty others. And besides, you must do something for your money!"

#### VI

On the night of the full moon, the Odeon, the new Hall of Music built by Pericles on to the great open-air theatre of Dionysus on the south side of the Acropolis, was the scene of a strange gathering. Under the high conical roof, which was the subject of jokes on the comic stage, young



men stood about in groups of fifteen to twenty, while one of their number explained to them what was to be done.

The voices were low, and the atmosphere was ominous; yet there were no protests. All were agreed that the thing must be carried through if Athens were to be saved. There must be a change of régime: the absolute rule of the People, unbroken now for nearly a century, must be ended, so that the city-state could be guided once again, as in the good old days, by the intelligent Few. The senseless sixteen-year-old war with Sparta must be concluded before Athens lost a second generation of young men in battle or through famine or plague. Above all, the crazy expedition to Sicily, on which the Government had fastened all their hopes of victory, must be prevented.

Euphiletus and Meletus moved among the groups, giving final instructions. They met again near the door leading to the dancing-floor of the theatre.

"Is everything settled?" said Euphiletus. "Everybody knows his job? Not more than three to a Herm, that's understood?"

"Yes."

Euphiletus looked round. Here and there the torches in the wall-sconces threw a lurid light on the faces turned towards them; the air was thick with smoke.

"Is Andocides here?"

"I haven't seen him. Somebody said he was ill: had a fall from his horse."

"I know. But that was seven days ago. He could have come. I meant to take him along with us. I don't trust him."

"Neither do I. It's a pity you told him."

Euphiletus said harshly: "If he doesn't turn up, you and I will call on him in the morning." He laughed. "A visit to a sick friend won't arouse suspicion.—And Charmides?"

"Not here."

"Callias? The cousins?"

"Not here, so far as I know."

"I see: a family boycott. Well, let's be going."

The word passed round. The groups began to move out of the dim hall into the bright moonlit space outside. As they left the theatre and went through the portico leading into the street, they did not see a man crouching, shrinking back among the black shadows between the bronze statue of a general and one of the columns.

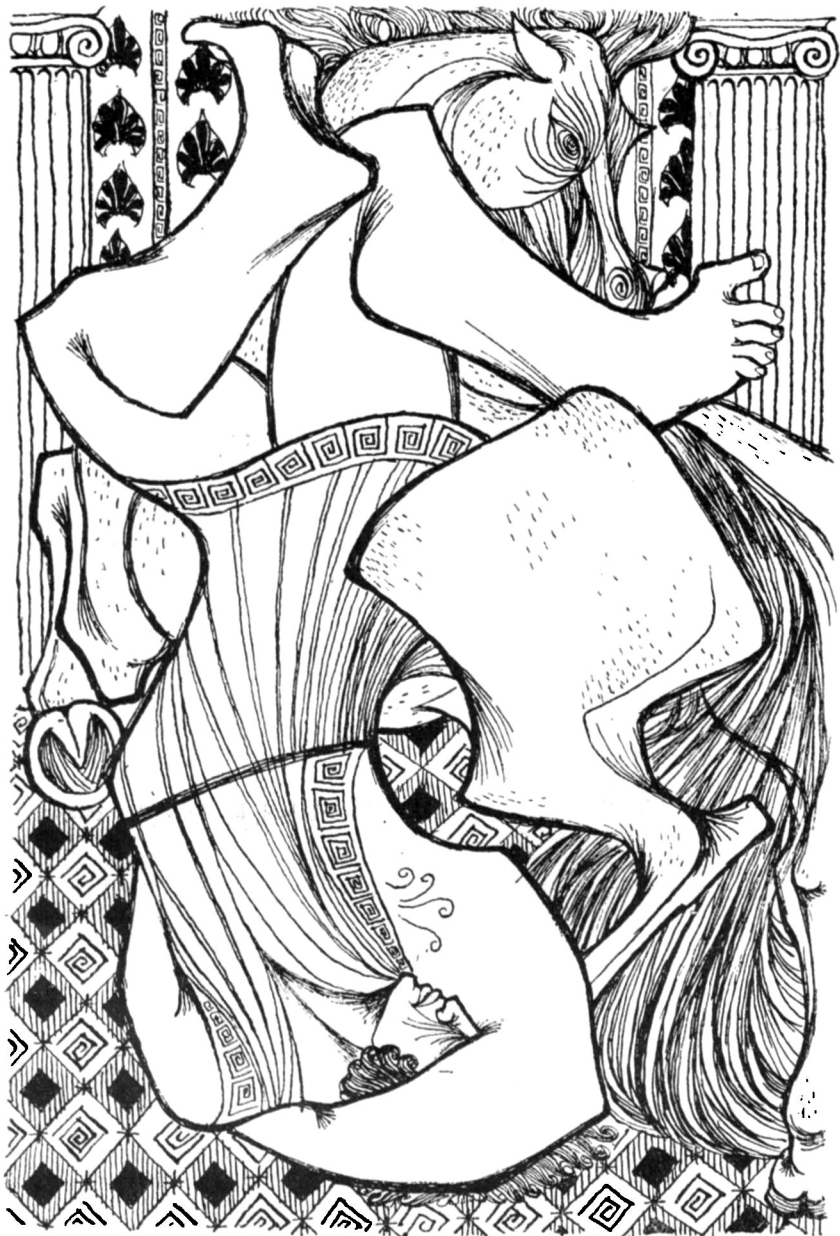
Not until the last of the conspirators had gone did Diocleides, the spy, venture out from his hiding-place. Creeping from shadow to shadow under the walls, he made his way to the crossroads where his horse was tethered. Leaping on to its back, he galloped away in the moonlight, south-eastward along the road to Laureion and the silver-mines.

## VII

Next morning at daybreak, Athens awoke to the astounding discovery that all the stone statues of Hermes which stood at the gates of temples and private houses had been defaced overnight.

Nobody knew who had done the deed. The city was filled with anger, outrage and superstitious fear. Everyone was certain that this was no stupid piece of horseplay such as was dear to the sons of the idle rich,





*... exercising his pony ... he fell heavily ...*



but the prearranged signal for an attempt to overthrow the constitution and open the gates to the enemy waiting on the frontier.

The Council, hastily summoned, offered large rewards for information leading to the arrest of the culprits; anyone who could help the authorities to discover the perpetrators of this or any other act of impiety was promised immunity. On the eve of the sailing of the great Expedition, nothing could be of worse omen than that one of the tutelary deities should have been so grievously maltreated and offended. Once again, it was rumoured that the Commander, Alcibiades himself, was involved.

Tempted by the reward, informers began to come forward. The Council, acting on good information, sent messengers to the neighbouring town of Megara to bring back a certain foreigner domiciled in Athens whose name was Teucer, and whom they believed to be in league with the conspirators. This man had fled at once when the news became known, but the messengers were instructed to tell him that he would be given a free pardon in return for a list of the names of those he knew to be implicated either in this latest outrage or in any previous affair.

#### VIII

Euphiletus and Meletus were admitted at once to Andocides' bedside. They looked down on him threateningly.

"Why weren't you there?" said Euphiletus. "You promised to come."

"I did not!" said Andocides. "I opposed the whole crazy idea from the first!"

"You were always with us before!"

"Perhaps. I was a fool. I never dreamed you would go so far. And anyway, how could I come? I've been in bed for the last six days!"

"You're not as ill as you pretend," said Meletus contemptuously. "One can *walk*, even with a broken collar-bone."

Euphiletus interrupted:

"Well, it's all over. The deed's done. If you hold your tongue, we will continue to be your friends and club-mates. But if you talk, we will be bitterer enemies to you than certain of the members would be your friends—through us."

Andocides stared at him, unable to grasp the meaning of these cryptic words. But the threat at least was clear. He turned away.

"You have nothing to fear from me," he said. "It's your own action that has brought you into this danger, not I and what I know."

#### IX

As Euphiletus and Meletus passed through the gateway of Leogoras' house on their way out, each glanced sideways at the undamaged Herm, the only one in all Athens that had not been mutilated. They gave each other a surreptitious smile. But a moment later their smiles vanished, as a servant of the Prison Commissioners stepped up to them.

"By order of the Council," he said, "you are under arrest."

They were preparing to resist, but the man's attendants seized them.

"I protest!" shouted Euphiletus, struggling. "I claim the rights of an Athenian citizen!"

"You'll get them," said the officer;



"a fair trial before a People's Court. Come along!" He shook him roughly. "It's gaol for you unless you can offer sureties—and you won't easily get anyone to go bail for you to-day."

"But why?" gasped Euphiletus. "I've done nothing!"

"Tell that to the jury!" said the officer. "They have brought Teucer back from Megara, and he's given your names as leaders of the accursed crew who damaged the sacred Hermæ."

"Come on, Meletus!" Euphiletus began to struggle violently again. "We can make a fight for it!"

But Meletus had got away, and was running down the street to where his horse stood waiting to carry him far from Athens until it should be safe to return.

## X

Diocleides rode home from the silver-mines at Laureion, where he had transacted some business. He had been in no hurry, but he had, he hoped, established a plausible alibi. He stabled his horse, and set out again on foot towards the centre of the city.

It was as he had expected. Everywhere groups of citizens stood about, examining the damage done to the Hermæ, some soberly discussing the event, others gesticulating and calling on the Government to find the criminals. Diocleides did not stop; he knew just what he was going to do next.

Sauntering up the Street of the Smiths, he saw the man he wanted standing at the entrance to the foundry of which he was the owner, while the noise of the hammers

wielded by his slaves, and the hissing of the bellows, sounded within.

"Euphemus?" said Diocleides.

"Yes."

"I should like a word with you. Can we go somewhere and talk, away from the noise?"

Euphemus indicated the Temple of Hephæstus, Patron of Smiths, overlooking the market-place. They walked there together without speaking, along the noisy street.

"Well?" In the shelter of the Temple colonnade, Euphemus turned. He was already on his guard.

"You are the brother of Callias, I believe—the Callias who married Leogoras' only daughter?"

"I am."

"You are intimate with the family?"

"I know them—naturally."

"You know Leogoras' son Andocides?"

"Of course."

"Well then—Leogoras would be glad to keep his only son out of trouble?"

"What do you mean?" Euphemus looked with outward calm and inward apprehension into the man's cunning eyes.

"Listen!" Diocleides came closer. "In the early hours of the morning, long before dawn, I happened to be riding out to Laureion. I had some business there connected with a slave, but I made a mistake in the time and got up too early. As I skirted the Acropolis and came past the theatre, I heard voices. It was a brilliant moonlit night, as you know. I saw men in small groups coming out of the Odeon and across the dancing-floor of the theatre. They were making for the exit. I was scared. I hid



behind a column near the statue of the general. I saw them all as they passed out into the street."

Euphemus said nothing; his face was stern.

"Of course," went on Diocleides, "as soon as I got back this morning and heard what had happened, I realized who had done it. There's no doubt, if they're caught, their lives won't be worth much. I recognized quite a number of them." He cast a furtive look at Euphemus. "There must have been about three hundred of them altogether, but I wouldn't swear to the names of more than thirty or forty."

"What has all this to do with me?" said Euphemus quietly.

"Well"—Diocleides gave him another quick look—"among those I recognized and could swear to were Leogoras, Andocides, your brother Callias, and several other members of the family."

"Impossible! You must have been mistaken! Andocides, for instance—he's in bed with a broken collar-bone."

"Perhaps," said Diocleides. "And yet it is possible to walk with a broken collar-bone. In any case, the Council is in no mood to ask questions. If I give them the names—and really, that's what I ought to do as a good citizen—I'm afraid your relatives are in for a very disagreeable time. But I don't want to get anyone into trouble. I would much rather go straight to Leogoras himself. I'm not a rich man—business is bad because of the war—but I would rather do them a favour than sell this information to the State."

Euphemus nodded slowly.

"Your idea is excellent," he said. "If you will go to Leogoras' house

to-morrow morning, I will tell them to expect you. Meanwhile, say nothing to anyone."

They parted. Euphemus was unaware that his own name also was on Diocleides' list.

## XI

Next morning, Diocleides approached the doorway of Leogoras' house and knocked. He noticed, as he waited, the undamaged Herm, and wondered how that would affect the family. Would it count as evidence of innocence or of guilt? He did not know and did not care. He himself was bound to gain. If Leogoras paid, well and good; if he refused, there was the State reward and the fee he had already been offered for a denunciation. As he stood there, the door opened, and Leogoras came out, on his way to the city. He stopped short at the sight of Diocleides.

"Are you the man they're expecting?" he said. "If I were you, I wouldn't reject their offer. They can be very useful friends to you."

He went off, leaving Diocleides delighted at the admission of complicity.

## XII

Diocleides entered. He found Andocides still in bed with his head bandaged and his arm tied up. Beside him, looking grim and determined, were several of the cousins. They wasted no time. Andocides said:

"The State reward is one hundred minæ (£2,000). We have decided to give you two talents (£2,400). If you do as we wish, we will also admit you to membership of the club.



Take it or leave it."

Diocleides restrained his elation. He said:

"I will think it over."

"Meet us to-morrow at my brother-in-law Callias' house," said Andocides, "and we will conclude the deal. In the meantime, say nothing to anyone."

Next day they met as arranged, and Diocleides signified his agreement. The whole party proceeded to the Temple of Athena on the Acropolis. Here the compact was sealed with solemn oaths. An advance on the sum agreed to was paid, the rest to be forthcoming in a fortnight's time, on the first day of the following month.

### XIII

Meanwhile, the great Expedition was ready to sail. Alcibiades was to go as joint Commander, with the pious Nicias and the soldierly Lamachus; but he was under a cloud. He had been accused of travestyng the sacred Mysteries of Demeter and Persephone in various private houses, as well as of being involved in the plot to deface the Hermæ; but when he confronted the Council and challenged them to take the matter to court, his enemies urged that the trial should be postponed so that the Expedition to Sicily should not be any longer delayed. Reluctantly, Alcibiades gave way.

The magnitude of the preparations surpassed anything ever before known. On the day of departure, the whole population gathered at the harbour and on the shore to see the splendid spectacle. Finally, the trumpet commanded silence. Soldiers and sailors joined in repeating after the Herald the prayers for a successful

voyage. Libations were poured into the sea from gold and silver vessels, and the great crowd on the shore united in fervent supplication. Then the huge armament put out to sea—never to return.

The people went back home, in a mood of foreboding. Ugly rumours were still abroad. The demand was renewed that those guilty of sacrilege should be found and punished. Some of the men already arrested on the information of Teucer were summarily tried and executed; others fled. The investigations undertaken by the Council continued. The city was full of fear and mutual suspicion. No one was satisfied that the criminals had really been discovered.

Diocleides the informer, taking fright, did not come to the rendezvous with the family of Leogoras. Instead, he went to the Council and gave them forty-two names of men he alleged he had recognized coming out of the Odeon on the night of the full moon.

### XIV

At once there was uproar in the Council. Two of the men named were Councillors; these were seized, and another member rose demanding that they should be examined on the rack. This was illegal. The two men accused rushed to the altars claiming their immunity as Athenian citizens, and with difficulty they prevailed. Two of their friends went bail for them. The accused men promptly took to their horses and fled across the frontier, leaving their friends to suffer in their place.

The Council was now determined to get to the bottom of the mystery.





*... his heart was still in Athens ...*



They went into secret session and began issuing emergency decrees. The other forty men named by Diocleides were arrested and taken to the prison, where they were put into the stocks, all together in the same cell. The generals were summoned and ordered to mobilize all citizens: they were to assemble under arms next morning in each of the three market-places. A trumpet-call summoned the city cavalry immediately. It was resolved that the Council itself should spend the night on the Acropolis, and that their Working Committee should sleep in the Council Chamber. All Athens was on the alert, expecting invasion from without and an uprising within.

## XV

If the ordinary citizens passed an uneasy night, this was as nothing compared with the dismay and terror of the forty men hauled off to the city prison. They knew that they could expect no careful investigation, no impartial trial: feeling was running too high for that. Like those arrested under the denunciation of Teucer, they would be put to death if they could not get away. Sixteen years later, Andocides was to describe to an Athenian jury his recollection of the scene:

“We were now all herded together in the stocks in the same cell. It was night, and the prison gates were closed. The women were still with us: one man’s mother, another’s sister, or wife and children; and there was outcry and wailing as they all wept and lamented their plight. It was then that Charmides spoke to me.

“Charmides is my cousin, of the

same age, brought up in our house from childhood. He said:

“‘Andocides, you see the terrible position we are in. Previously, I didn’t want to say anything to you or to hurt your feelings, but now I am driven to it by this disaster. It is not only ourselves, your family, who are in peril. Your comrades and clubmates are already either executed on the same charge that faces us, or they have fled into exile, thereby condemning themselves. . . .

“‘I beg you, if you know anything of this crime, speak out!! Save, not only your own life, but your father—naturally he means most to you—and your brother-in-law, your only sister’s husband, and all your other relatives, including me, who in all my life have never done anything to annoy you, but have always been eager to serve you and your interests whenever I was called upon.’

“When Charmides said this, and the others joined in, each imploring me to speak, I thought:

“‘What an appalling position I am in! Can I look on and see my own family unjustly perishing, their lives and property forfeit, their names recorded as criminals against religion when they are completely innocent? Can I see three hundred Athenians also unjustly put to death, and my country in dire distress, filled with suspicion? Or shall I reveal to the Athenian People what I heard from Euphiletus who did the deed?’”

The position was too serious for Andocides to hesitate for long. He was twenty-five years of age, rich, with everything to live for, and it



lay in his power to save himself and thirty-eight other lives, including that of his father. The eyes of desperate men and imploring women were bent on him in agonized appeal.

He called out to the gaoler.

## XVI

Pale but composed, Andocides stood before the Council sitting in full assembly, nearly five hundred men who held his life in their hands. He gave his evidence calmly and clearly, winning their credence though not their liking or respect:

“Members of the Council: I feel it my duty to tell you what I know. Diocleides has deceived you, for the sake of the reward: the men he has named are innocent. The instigator of the crime of the defacement of the Hermæ was Euphiletus. The eighteen names given by Teucer are correct: all took part. I can give you four other names. . . .”

The men denounced by Teucer were beyond punishment: they were either dead or in exile. The four men now named by Andocides were already under suspicion, and their arrest would in any case have been not long delayed. But when the Council's messengers went to seize them, it was found that they too had got away. They lived to return to Athens and enjoy their old status after the end of the war.

But there was one man on whom the Council could vent all their fury: the informer Diocleides, who was at this moment being fêted at a banquet in the City Hall after the presentation of the reward. In the

midst of his triumph he was seized and brought before the Council, where, after very little pressure, he admitted that he had lied. He gave the names of the two men who had persuaded him to denounce Andocides and his family, and these two also fled into exile before they could be arrested. Diocleides was handed over to the prison authorities and executed. All the men imprisoned on his evidence were at once released.

The city calmed down. Many exiles returned, and the mobilization of the citizens was cancelled. The State ship *Salamina* was sent to Sicily to arrest Alcibiades; but on the voyage home he escaped and made his way over to Sparta, where for years he worked to bring about the defeat of Athens, the city he loved and hated and to which he always longed to return.

## XVII

But the matter was not ended for Andocides.

Everybody knew about his revelations to the Council, but no one knew exactly what he had said. His enemies went about saying that he had betrayed his clubmates to save his own skin, and that he had confessed to his own guilt. The family, it was remarked, had been friendly with Alcibiades. Leogoras himself had been present, one of the servants declared, at a private house, where there was a mock celebration of the sacred Mysteries. As for Andocides, he might have pretended to be ill in bed that night, but everyone knew he had often been present when these young men carried out their wild escapades, and who could prove that he had had no hand in



this one? He had offered up his personal servant to be examined under torture, as a proof that he had never left the house that night, but who could trust the evidence of a slave? The female servants too, when questioned by the official investigators, would naturally lie to please their master. Andocides was at liberty; what of his friends who had been executed or banished? Why should he get off scot free? Andocides' position was not comfortable.

Moreover, rumours against his father were getting louder and bolder. Leogoras, easy-going as ever, wanted to ignore them; but Andocides, with tears and prayers, begged him to attack his enemies before they grew too strong. Leogoras consented. He brought a lawsuit for slander against one of his worst detractors, and won his case. This cleared the father; but it did not absolve the son. People even said that Andocides himself had admitted his father's complicity.

At last, the enemies of Andocides struck. The decree of immunity protecting informers was revoked for all those who had themselves confessed to a share in sacrilegious acts. It was declared that Andocides had admitted his own guilt on that night before the Council. He was forced to leave Athens, under the stigma of having profaned religion and betrayed his comrades.

### XVIII

Andocides travelled for three years, all over the Ægean from Macedonia to Cyprus. He was a shrewd young man, and now that adversity had sobered him, he began to display considerable business

ability. He established trade connections in timber and corn and bronze, and supplied these at cost price to the Athenian fleet lying at Samos, in the hope of ingratiating himself with the Government and securing his own return. But when, in 411 B.C., he landed at Peiræus hoping to plead his cause, he was at once arrested and flung into prison again. The democratic Government had been temporarily overthrown, and among the ruling clique was one of his old clubmates, who regarded him as a traitor. After much ill-treatment he was released, when the fortunes of the parties were again reversed, and the democrats returned to power.

Again he sailed away, returning a year later to address the Assembly and ask for a revocation of his sentence of exile. The speech he then delivered is preserved. In his thirtieth year, Andocides had still not acquired self-confidence; his speech *On the Return* was a plea for mercy, not a firm request for justice, and though he enumerated his services to the democracy, the tone was hesitant and unsure. At one point he seemed almost to admit his own guilt:

“It was well said, gentlemen, by whoever said it first, that Man is born to both good and evil fortune, but that it is a great misfortune to commit error; those who err least often are the most fortunate, but the wisest are those who soonest repent.

“Such errors are not confined to individuals: it is a universal law for human beings to err and to suffer. Therefore, men of Athens, if you judge my case with



humanity you will be displaying yourselves more merciful."

The great Assembly listened coldly to his plea. The event was too recent, the terrible night when the Hermæ had been defaced by the wild young men who had since caused Athens so much trouble: internal upheaval, and perhaps the anger of the gods that had destroyed the apparently invincible Expedition from which so much had been hoped. So many lives, so much suffering! Why should this young man be spared? It was said that he had made a fortune in commerce, and he himself had just admitted that the King of Cyprus had given him a large estate. They listened coldly, and voted against him.

Andocides left Athens for the third time.

#### XIX

This time he stayed away for eight years. He amassed an even larger fortune, but his heart was still in Athens, and when the war with Sparta came at last to an end after twenty-seven years, and Athens was humiliated, a general amnesty was proclaimed for all exiles.

Andocides was now welcome. His youthful errors were more or less forgotten; many of his enemies had died, and he himself was a man of substance. His father Leogoras was dead, and there was no son except Andocides to succeed him. During Andocides' exile the house had been commandeered by a popular leader of low origin named Cleophon, a maker of musical instruments, but this man had been eliminated by political enemies the previous year, and Andocides returned to his in-

heritance. He embarked on a career of public benefactions, using his riches in the public service: he financed a men's choir for the Festival and won the prize, which he was able to set up in the Street of the Tripods; he acted as President of the athletic contests at the Festival of Hephæstus, and as Treasurer of the State religious funds; he went on religious missions to the Panhellenic Games on the Isthmus and at Olympia, as if to show that he was worthy to associate himself with all sacred offices. He spoke on the Council and in the law-courts. He was now, while still under forty, a rich and influential citizen.

But he still had enemies. In 399 B.C., the year of the death of Socrates, when the cry of "impiety" was being used against prominent men who had given offence to somebody, Andocides was indicted on a charge of sacrilege. His old "error" of sixteen years earlier was brought up against him. It was alleged that he had then confessed to sacrilege, and now he had dared to attend the most holy of all the Athenian festivals, the great Mysteries of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis that his father, himself and his clubmates had once been accused of having profaned.

Andocides defended himself in a speech that has made him famous for all time. Gone is the diffidence of twelve years earlier. He speaks before the Athenian jury-court with all the vigour and confidence of a man who has won his right to live in the city of his birth and of his love. Gone are the half-suggestions of error and repentance, and the plea for mercy:



"The energetic preparation of my enemies to injure me as soon as I reached this city is known to almost all of you. The request I make will be a just one. I shall ask you to consider that I now stand before you under no compulsion, since I have given no pledge and am constrained by no imprisonment. I am here because I have trusted in justice, and in you, that you will recognize the right and not allow me to be unjustly destroyed, but will save me in accordance with the laws and with the oaths which you have sworn before you give your verdict.

"Many have told me that my enemies said I would not wait but would take myself off into exile. But I, gentlemen, think otherwise. I cannot content myself with every blessing elsewhere when I am denied my native land. I would rather be a citizen of Athens than of cities which at the moment may seem prosperous. With this in mind, I have committed my life into your hands, for you to pass judgment."

He recounts the whole story of what led up to the fatal night, of his arrest, of his decision to reveal what he knew and save not only himself but all the others, and clear the city of the alarms and suspicions that racked it. No one, he says, suffered through him: the four new names he gave were of men who would have been arrested anyhow and who are still alive and flourishing. He denies all complicity in the crime. He claims the verdict in return for his services and the long and noble history of his family. He reviles the malevol-

ence of his accusers. His peroration rings out with irresistible appeal:

"If you destroy me, you will have no one left of all my race: it will have perished from the earth. No shame will attach to you if the house of Andocides and Leogoras continues to exist. No man among you who has ever passed by our home can remember any injury received in public or in private by its inmates, who in the countless military commands they have held have brought you many victories over your enemies on land and sea, and in the many civil posts they have occupied with responsibility for handling public funds have never been convicted of any fault. There has never been the slightest offence either given or received between you and my family, a house of the most ancient lineage, whose doors were open at all time to everyone in need. . . .

"Do not, therefore, even if they are dead, forget their deeds also; rather, remembering their deeds, imagine you see them in the flesh asking you to protect me. Whom can I bring forward here on to this platform to plead my cause? My father? No, for he is dead. My brothers? No, for I have none. My sons? No, for they are not yet begotten. You, my fellow-citizens and judges, must stand to me in the place of father, brothers, sons. . . ."

Andocides was acquitted. From that time onward he lived unmolested at Athens, and the old scandal was at last allowed to die. We get a last glimpse of him nine years later, at



the age of fifty, when during a new and lesser war he went to Sparta on an embassy and returned to plead the cause of a peaceful settlement. He was unsuccessful; and so he fades out of history, rich, able, influential, yet never quite accepted by his fellow-countrymen. Was he guilty of participation in the defacement of the Hermæ?

In his first speech, pleading for the right to return from exile, he unmistakably suggests that he had been guilty of certain offences five years before:

“What has happened to me is deserving of pity rather than malice: I ascribe it to the folly of youth, or the power of persuasion exercised upon me that led me into such insanity. . . .”

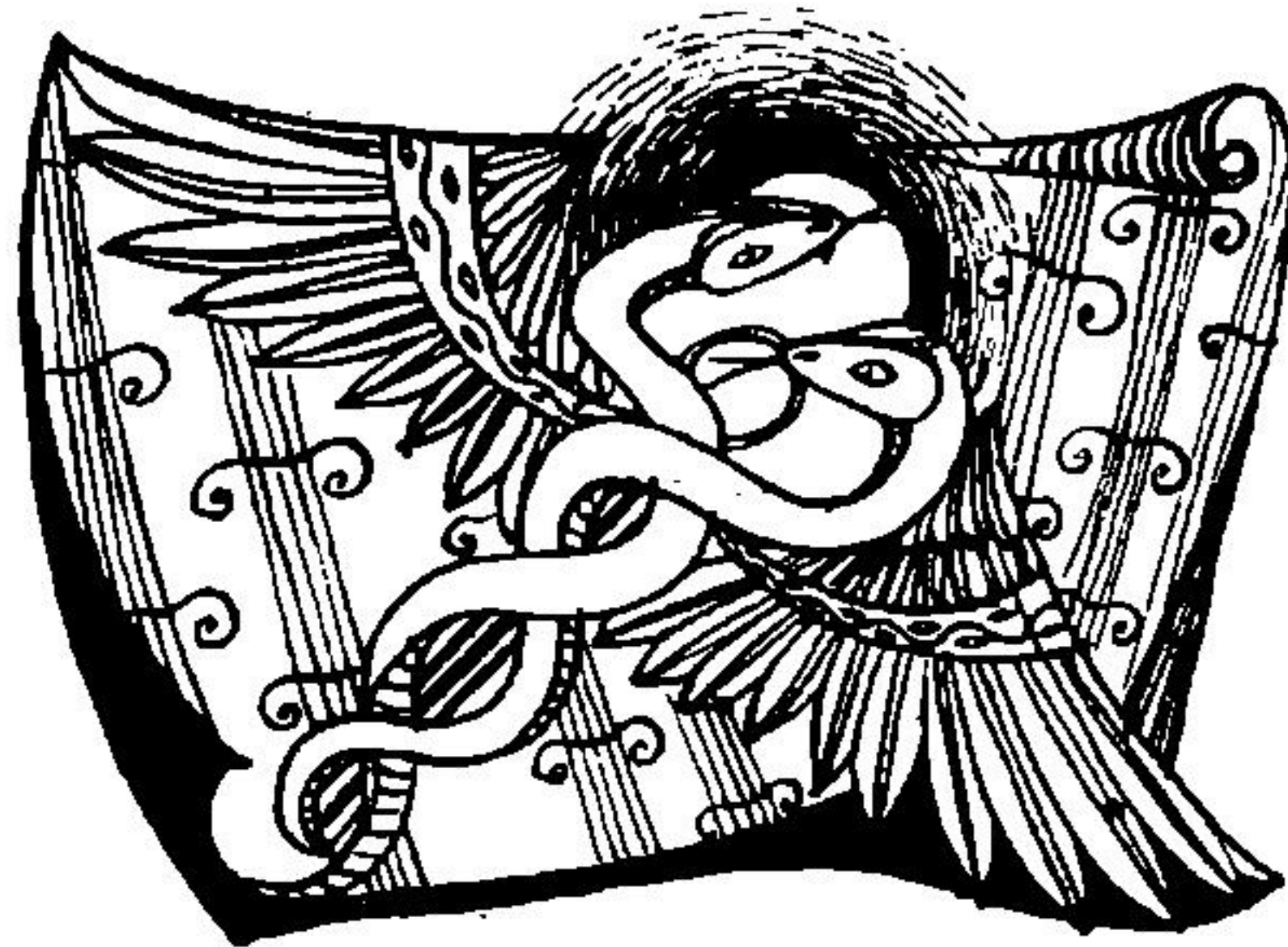
In his second speech, defending himself against his accusers, he denies all participation, and says he earned the enmity of his clubmates, especially Euphiletus, because he

strenuously opposed the scheme. He points out that the Herm outside his own door remained untouched, and says they did this to bring suspicion on him, whereas it is a proof of his innocence.

Again, did he denounce himself to the Council as well as the four others, and if he did so, was it the truth or did he do so to secure their belief?

The answer remains a mystery. Let Thucydides, writing two or three years after the event, have the last word:

“. . . Public feeling grew fiercer every day, and more arrests were made, until at last one of those who were in prison—the man believed to be most guilty—was persuaded by a fellow-prisoner to make a statement. Whether this statement was true or not is entirely a matter for speculation; there are two sides to the question, and nobody could say for certain, either at the time or since, who were the perpetrators of the deed.”



Having done what men could, they suffered what men must.

THUCYDIDES, *Book VII*, 77, 471–400(?) B.C.





## CAIF SOCIETY

DONALD KING

*Illustrations by G. A. H.*

*On certain levels of English society the cheap café as well as the public house is used as a club, and the uninitiated had better be told that in these circles café is pronounced 'caif.' Most 'caifs' are as respectably dull as a Pall Mall club, but some are frequented by those 'on the crook.' One of these is the scene of this tale.*

**K**ERRY LARKIN slipped along the dark street towards the "Golden Cat." He had no notion he was being watched. Larkin was making for his favourite "caif," as he called it, a low café where the customers discuss guardedly their latest villainies. He pushed aside the curtain that marked the door, and shuffled over to the counter, where he ordered a coffee.

He carried his cup to a corner table, and took a cigarette from his shabby coat. Those who had stopped talking at his entrance, resumed when they saw who had come in. However, he preferred that night to sit by himself.

Custer, a fat lout, who always seemed around the café gossiping with everyone, bellowed a greeting. Larkin gave a casual wave and said nothing. Custer stared at him curiously.

"Wot's up with Larkin to-night?"



he wheezed at the counter. "He's sitting very quiet. He's not feeling himself. Can't be, if he's not got something to brag about."

The counter hand gave a shrug and said nothing.

"Hi, you!" roared Custer as he carried his tea from the counter. "Wot are you sitting by yourself for? Why don't you come over and tell us the tale?"

"Go to Hell," was the answer.

"Oh, come on, don't be so uppity."

Larkin rose. "Beat it, Custer," he said, and lifted his sleeve to show the hidden razor. Custer moved off as if he had been hit.

Two new arrivals brushed aside the dark curtain and entered the café. Larkin watched them closely. Both looked like sailors and both had been drinking.

They took their cups of coffee to the end of the counter close to where Larkin sat secluded with his back to a small partition. Here they were out of his sight, and unless they peered over they could not see him. Larkin guessed they were sailors waiting to rejoin their ship, and thought no more about them.

But presently they began to argue. The word "pearls" was mentioned, and at this he listened eagerly.

"It was easy," said one, quietly. "I used a hammer, and the old man crumpled up. The pearls were in my pocket and I was gone."

"It was mad to leave your cap behind. The cops will trace you."

"They won't. I only landed yesterday, and I'll be out of the town before nightfall."

"They'll be after you. There may be a cop here for all you know. What was that?"

Kerry Larkin cursed. In trying not to miss any of this tale, he had pressed the partition and it had creaked. Turning his head, he looked up to find two faces glaring down at him.

"A rat," said one. "A rat listening to us." A brawny arm stretched over and jerked Larkin to his feet.

"No, I wasn't listening. I may have overheard a word."

"Perhaps he's a copper's nark," said one of the men.

"What, this rat? No! He just hoped to hear something useful."

Larkin, flung back to his seat, looked frightened. He shouted across to the counter. "Hi, Custer, come over." When Custer came, not over-quickly, Larkin whispered: "Tell these chaps I'm all right."

Custer chuckled. "Mates, this is my old pal, Kerry Larkin. He's one of us, and if you want any help, he's your man."

"O.K., Custer. Scram. Now look here, Larkin, I'm Butcher. Dare say you've heard of Baldy Butcher?"

Larkin nodded and whistled. So this was the man who had "lifted" so many jewels. He was in high company.

"Be careful," warned the other.

"No. We must get rid of this stuff to-night. And I can't use M. K. He's being watched. Larkin, you heard what we were saying?"

"Er—yes, in a way," admitted Larkin.

"Well, take a look at these." Butcher brought out casually from a pocket a small wash-leather bag. Untying it, he cautiously spilled a string of pearls on the table and, hiding them with his arm from prying eyes in the crowd, pushed them



towards Larkin with his finger. "Those are the real goods, my friend. You know what they're worth?"

Larkin looked at them incredulously. "Yes, if they're the stuff."

Butcher's black eyebrows frowned. "You don't seem impressed. Have you seen better?"

"Yes, I have," snarled Larkin, stung by the derision in the big man's voice. "I'll show you." His hand went to his waistband, and he lifted out a necklace of diamonds. "See these sparklers? Once the property of the Countess of Holy Rock, but now mine."

He leaned back, savouring their evident astonishment. At last, Butcher pushed the necklace back to him roughly.

"We can't talk here," he muttered. "This is 'hot' stuff. The butler was killed. It will be difficult to get rid of it."

Larkin sneered as he replaced the stones in their hiding-place. "Not for me. In a few days I shall meet a—a friend."

"And he will buy them?"

"Yes."

"And would he buy the pearls?"

"Maybe. If I get my cut."

"Let's get out of here. I don't like

this place. We want somewhere quiet."

Larkin nodded. "There's a little caif I know." He led the way across the floor, closely followed by the two sailors, while Custer, who had been watching them from the counter, moved after them.

Outside, the second sailor waved his arm and, from the darkness, a taxi appeared and stopped by them.

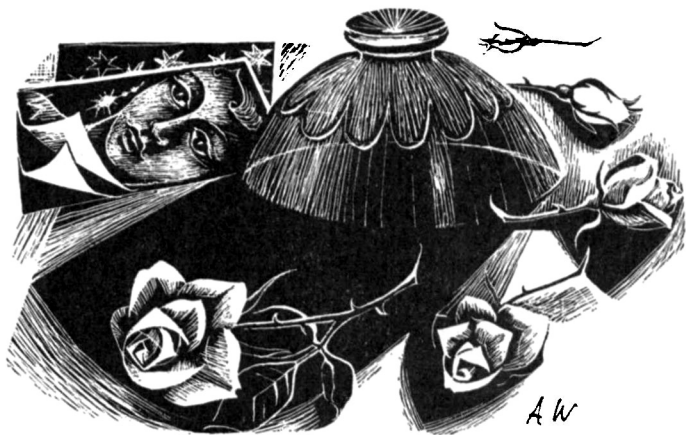
"You don't want a cab," said Larkin. "The caif's only up the street."

Larkin felt a sharp push on his back and stumbled into the car, where the second sailor was already waiting for him. A pair of handcuffs were snapped on his wrists. "I am Inspector Hansard," said his captor. "I arrest you for the murder of Henry Villers, butler to the Countess of Holy Rock, and for the theft of her necklace." He turned to Custer, who was standing on the kerb, staring into the car. "Here, put this in your pocket. You said he was a boaster. You were right. See to it you don't open *your* big mouth."

Custer stuffed something into his pocket as the car moved off. The "nark" decided he had better move off, too.







## A POLICEMAN'S SOLILOQUIES

(I) NO FLOWERS BY REQUEST

H. F. ROSSETTI

*Illustrations by Alison Welch*

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**R**IGHT from the start, what stuck in my throat in the Linda Carson case was that her husband had left London early that afternoon because of telepathy, as he called it, a feeling that suddenly struck him in the office that something was wrong at home.

Those who weren't so sceptical as I, told me that it was great mental tensions which created conditions for people's minds to come together

when their bodies were far apart. I had to admit that one point supported those who were ready to believe that this was a case of telepathy. Andrew Holmes had got home a full twenty minutes after his wife had been shot through the head. The evidence of the old woman who had heard the shot seemed to prove that conclusively.

The Carsons lived in a cottage with no near neighbours on the Chilterns, not far from Princes Risborough. It was lucky that anybody



heard the shot. But this Miss Pope had happened to be passing. She was much too nervous to go in the house, but she hurried to the village and told the grocer who rang the police. Of course, they took down the time of the call, and it was later proved beyond question that Andrew Carson was still in his train, five minutes away from Princes Risborough, when the police got the message, and that was at least ten minutes after the shot.

Unfortunately, the grocer gave his directions vaguely, as excited people sometimes do, and the police car went to the wrong cottage. They only got to the right one after the husband, who had driven from the station, had been there ten minutes. He was holding the gun, and of course simply covering it with *his* finger-prints, and he was telephoning the police in his turn when the sergeant and the constable walked in. They gave him the shock of his life, for it seemed like magic that they should walk in while he was ringing up to tell them to come.

His story was that his wife had been away for the week-end with her mother somewhere in Shropshire. He hadn't seen her since Saturday morning. No one had been staying with him, though he had been out a good deal with other people. On the Monday morning he had gone up to the office in London as usual. But towards the end of lunch-time a sense of uneasiness had come over him, a sense of doom. He repeated the whole story to me that evening when I took over the case, and I remember how he struggled to find a word to express his feelings. He tried to

shake it off and went back to his office, but within a quarter of an hour it had come on much more violently and was now associated with the idea of his wife.

The man he worked with at the office confirmed that his agitation was acute, and that he suddenly jumped up and said: "I must get back" and without more ado or explanation he left. Passengers on the train from Paddington, whom we traced, confirmed that he had been agitated, and at Risborough had dashed off the platform.

His statement was that he found his wife on the floor, dead. A revolver lay beside her, also on the floor were two or three old magazines, a piece of bamboo stick, and a bowl of roses and some foliage. But it wasn't a bowl *of* roses so much as a bowl *and* roses. The bowl was turned upside down, and the water from it was seeping into the carpet and had also wet the magazines. The roses and the odd bits of foliage lay scattered about. The body, the gun, and all these things were at the side of the room near a stretch of wall lying between the two windows. Against this wall was one of those tables which have a very narrow bit in the middle and two great flaps hanging down, which by pulling legs out from under the central bit can be made into part of the table. Both the flaps were down. The body was lying close to but behind a sofa, which had a large back. On the top of this, in two or three untidy piles, were a lot more magazines.

\* \* \*

Linda Carson had been shot through the very top of her head, at very close range. Now, this didn't



make suicide impossible, but it certainly made it most unlikely. Why should a woman who is going to shoot herself hold the gun in the contorted attitude which would be necessary to do it in this fashion? Andrew Carson said that he knew of no reason for suicide.

Miss Pope, being the only person known to have been near the cottage when the shot was fired, had to be questioned. But I soon did what I would never normally do—I ruled out of the list of possibles the only person of whom we knew that she *might* have been the culprit.

When we checked up on the dead woman's visit to her mother, we began to feel hopeful. She had not been to see her mother, and had not even been expected. We faced Andrew Carson with this. All he could say was that that was what his wife had told him. Luckily for him, confirmatory evidence was forthcoming. A local woman, who came twice a week to clean up at the cottage, had been told by Mrs. Carson that she was going to spend the week-end with her mother. It seemed that she had been lying. The question was: Why?

We were able to establish when Linda Carson had got home from her week-end, wherever it was she had spent it. She had arrived at Risborough by a train from the North, a "stopper" from Banbury, which, however, connected with the main line to Birmingham and beyond, including Gobowen, the junction for Oswestry, where her mother lived, only twenty minutes before her husband's train had got in from the opposite direction. I mean the one he had come by from London after his "telepathic" attack. She had taken a taxi, and had been put down, with

her small bag, at the cottage about five minutes before Miss Pope had heard the shot.

The taxi-man was firm about three things. First, Mrs. Carson had seemed quite normal—although he couldn't resist (I think for effect) adding that she had seemed "a little pale." Secondly, she had been quite alone, nor had he seen anyone at the cottage. Thirdly, all she had had with her was the little squashy, zip-fastened bag, which was found still unpacked in the cottage full to near bursting with all the ordinary things a woman would take for a short week-end. She had certainly had no bundles or parcels, let alone bunches of flowers. She had gone in, carrying her small bag, after opening the door with her key, and he had then driven off.

At the station the ticket-collector gave us an interesting clue. Mrs. Carson had handed in the return half of a Princes Risborough—Oswestry ticket which had not been clipped. It had been issued at the station on the Saturday. At Oswestry, the ticket man was positive that no one had shown him a Princes Risborough ticket that day, nor was any trace found of an outward half-ticket having been handed in on the Saturday. All this suggested that Mrs. Carson had been engaging in some fairly elaborate "blind": had bought a return ticket to Oswestry, but had got out along the route, claiming to "break her journey" and keeping her outward half. She had used this outward half to rejoin the line later, thus accounting for the return half, which she gave up when getting back to Princes Risborough, not having been clipped.



There were no reports of any stranger having been seen about the neighbourhood. Nothing out of the normal was reported except the shot itself, the discovery of the corpse, and Mr. Carson's strange telepathic disturbances in London. The revolver was a service issue from the 1914-1918 War. At the time—this case was in 1920—there must have been many in the hands of ex-officers, such as Carson. He said it was not his. He was certain that his wife had not owned a gun. But, then, he had been certain that his wife was going to Oswestry.

How had Carson spent the weekend? We confirmed that he had spent Saturday morning at work in London. On getting home, about half-way through the afternoon, he had pottered about, he said, until he went to dine with friends. On Sunday he had driven over to the far north of Oxfordshire and had spent the day bird-watching with a friend. At six he had left his friend (who confirmed all this), driven home, had a cold supper, washed up, looked at some old magazines, and then gone early to bed.

The magazines were those piled up on the sofa-back, where he had left them. Two or three of them had apparently been knocked on to the floor, where they lay with the roses, the gun, the body, and the bamboo stick. This stick was of the kind used for staking flowers. Whether it had been in the room in the morning he just couldn't say: he could see no reason why it should have been. I have already mentioned his solitary Monday breakfast, followed by his drive to the station, when his "week-

end" may be said to have finished with his catching his usual train to Town.

Now for the flowers—the roses. They were important. Like Wilkie Collins's Sergeant Cuff, I know something about roses. The roses lying on the floor of that cottage drawing-room were superb specimens of the kind called Parfum de l'Hay, a rose with a magnificent scent, but difficult to grow and really quite rare. There were points of interest about them which the local men had overlooked, lacking my special knowledge. Though there were many rose-trees in the garden—for Mrs. Carson was a keen gardener—there were none of these Parfum de l'Hay. Those roses had come from where, from whom? They were opening, but were by no means yet full open. They must have been picked and put into the bowl after Mrs. Carson's departure on Saturday. They had been crudely picked, simply wrenched off the bush. There were eight blooms, and all had short stalks. Had they been picked by one who was careless or ignorant, or by one in a hurry?

It was queer, too, that whoever had arranged the roses in the bowl had odd notions of floral decoration, assuming that the bits of foliage on the floor had been in the bowl with the roses. These twigs had come from a flowering currant-bush near the front door of the cottage. They too seemed to have been torn off.

All this struck me as needing an explanation, and I asked Andrew Carson a good deal about it. He said he never noticed flowers in the house, and, though I couldn't believe it at the time, Mrs. Wilks, the charwoman,



agreed that it was so. Often, she told me, when she was up at the cottage on her "days" and Mrs. Carson was arranging flowers, Mrs. Carson would say, "Of course, it's all a waste of my time. Mr. Carson never notices."

Carson maintained that he did not know whether the roses had been on the table at any time during the week-end. He had not noticed them, but they might have been there. When I told him that I thought they must have been picked since Saturday, he said that he could only suppose his wife had brought them with her, and had been perhaps carrying the bowl when—whatever had happened had happened.

Of course, he didn't know (at this time neither did I) that the taxi-man was to say that Linda Carson had only had her small bag with her when she returned. He would have remembered a bunch of roses. There was no room in the bag for roses. Anyway, who would pack a bunch of roses in a bag?

That was how the case stood that night. There was no one we could arrest.

\* \* \*

An account of the shooting in the next day's papers, however, brought things forward a little. A man came forward who had spent the week-end with Linda Carson. He was worried—and no wonder! He was (or claimed to be) half-distracted by the news of Mrs. Carson's death. He was a married man—he and his wife lived some five miles from the Carsons' house towards Great Missenden—and of course having to confess to his escapade was no joking matter, apart from the suspicion of murder. His name was Winter. The Winters

were friendly with the Carsons. As friend and husband, he had behaved dishonourably. But he came forward at once, which was in his favour.

His story was that for some two months he and Linda Carson had been in love. They used to meet in the woods sometimes. Linda, he said, had suggested the week-end. They had spent it, as Mr. and Mrs. Fortesque, at a country hotel not far from Banbury.

By the Monday morning, Linda, he maintained, was full of remorse. She had had her fling and was regretting it. They left the hotel in his car about midday, but he dropped her in Banbury, and she went back, as she had come, by train, while he returned by car. He reached home, he said, shortly before three o'clock, and spent the rest of the afternoon and evening there.

His wife later confirmed this, and was most insistent about the time of his arrival, but no one else had seen him arrive. He had been seen at home, however, at 4.15 by some friends who had called for tea. He had seemed quite normal. Miss Pope had heard the pistol shot in the Carsons' cottage, five miles away, at twenty past three. If Mrs. Winter's corroboration of his story that he had got home at three and had not gone out again were true, it certainly could not be he who had fired the revolver. He claimed never to have seen it before. But he, like Carson, had been an Army officer, and well *might* have had such a gun.

Now, just to complete the presentation of the basic facts, shortly after Winter had left the police-station after telling us his story, we



found out where those rare roses had come from. They had been removed from Winter's garden. It was Mrs. Winter who told us. Someone had stolen those precious blooms. She had noticed they had gone when taking the friends who had come for tea on Monday to look round the garden. She could swear that the roses were undamaged on the Sunday, and must have been stolen some time between then and teatime on the Monday.

\* \* \*

What do you make of all this? In some ways, it's easier for you than it was for me on the spot, for I've left out many details which proved to have no bearing on the matter and with which I didn't want to clutter up the story, but which I couldn't ignore. At the end of two days I was baffled. One theory I worked on was that the shot Miss Pope had heard had not been the shot which killed Linda Carson and that Andrew Carson had fired this on getting home twenty minutes later.

But, then, what was the shot which Miss Pope *had* heard? She was sure that she had heard it from inside the cottage, and there was no indication that any shot had been fired except that which put a bullet in Mrs. Carson's head. Of course, she, alone in the house, might have fired a shot through the window, for no apparent reason (that would leave no trace inside), and then put the gun down for her husband to pick up and shoot her with when he got home. But I didn't feel that that theory promised much.

I was most suspicious of Winter. He had been away with the dead woman; they had had, if not a row,

at any rate a disagreement, the roses came from his garden that day (unless it had been after teatime on the Sunday), and his story that he was at home at the time of the shot was confirmed by no one but his wife. But, then, there was no one else who *could* confirm it, for the two of them had been alone at home until those friends had come for tea.

Mrs. Winter had given her story before she could know (or so we thought) the significance of where her husband had been at that particular time on Monday. She immediately left home on hearing about his weekend, so it seemed that she was not in the mood for shielding him. If, however, she were lying—and even deceived wives will shield their husbands—then he might well be the culprit.

It was a quarter of an hour's drive from his house to the Carson's. Had he got home, seen his wife, and then, perhaps on a sudden impulse, decided he must see Linda Carson again before her husband got back? Perhaps he had been afraid that she might be going to confess. Had he, seeing the roses in his garden on his way to the car, thought to take her some, and picked them hastily? Had he—heaven knows precisely what, on this assumption, had next happened, but it might have ended by his shooting Linda? He would have had time to get away before either the husband or the police arrived, and the fact that Miss Pope had seen no car outside the cottage meant nothing.

But it was all surmise and, in spite of repeated questioning, neither Winter nor his wife (not even after, in her rage, she had left him)



could be got to alter their story. It wasn't that she *thought* he had come home when she said and *thought* he had not gone out: she had particularly remarked the time, for his coming had woken her from a doze, and she had spent the next three-quarters of an hour, before going to change to receive her visitors, listening to his pack of lies about his week-end with some old friend of his in Derbyshire.

But while I was failing to shake Winter or his wife, the telepathy story rankled. I still couldn't swallow it. But the "suicide" theory had two things—telepathy apart—to support it. It got over the difficulty that we could not find who else had been in the cottage or, apart from Miss Pope, near it, when the shot went off. And, there was perhaps some motive for suicide in the sense of shame and distress from which Mrs. Carson, according to Winter, was suffering on the Monday.

However, I decided to have another general chat about things with Carson. I went, hoping something might turn up, if only some vague indication of a new line of enquiry, and something did turn up, though I didn't immediately see it as significant. Carson's right thumb was swathed in a big bandage.

"Had an accident?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "I've got a poisoned thumb, gathered rather. The doctor's put all this on for effect, I think. It's not very bad."

"How d'you do it?"

"I don't know," he said. "The doctor took out a splinter, quite deep in."

An idea was forming in my head—nothing big—just that vague indication of a new line of enquiry for which I'd been hoping. I got from

him the name of his doctor and when I left I called at the surgery. What the doctor had removed was a thorn from a rose which had penetrated quite deeply!

So Andrew Carson had been lying when saying he knew nothing about the roses! He knew enough about them to have a badly gathered thumb swathed in bandages in consequence of his carelessness in picking them! Or so I assumed. One couldn't prove on what rose-bush or in what exact manner he had got this splinter, but as a working hypothesis it was fair enough to assume that it was he who had torn and wrenched those flowers off Mrs. Winter's bush between tea-time on Sunday and teatime on Monday.

Here was a breach, the first I had made in any of the stories I had been told, and it turned my attention to that space of time between teatime on the Sunday and teatime on the Monday. I saw how careless I had been. Up to 6 p.m. on Sunday, when he left his bird-watching friend in the north of Oxfordshire, we had checked the truth of Carson's story about his week-end. But what had he done from then on until catching his train to work on Monday morning? Gone home, washed up, looked at magazines, then up to bed and a good night's sleep, followed by early morning breakfast—that was his story. But one thing I was now taking for granted was that, for some reason and at some time or other, he had been in the Winters' garden picking rare roses very clumsily and without asking permission of Mrs. Winter.

Now what else had he done





*"... in the Winters' garden picking rare roses ..."*



other than he had said? The period began with him leaving his friend up in the north of Oxfordshire! Banbury was in the north of Oxfordshire! Had he . . . ?

I got a police car and called at the hotel where Mr. and Mrs. Fortescue, *alias* Mr. Winter and Mrs. Carson, had spent their week-end.

What I found there was exactly what my new line of thought had led me to expect. A man answering well to Carson's description, and driving a car, had turned up shortly before seven on Sunday evening and asked if he could have dinner. He went upstairs for a wash and tidy-up, which they told me he badly needed, but when he came down he seemed in a state of great agitation, and said that, after all, he wouldn't be having dinner. He told the receptionist he had seen a man upstairs, and he described Winter, whom he thought he had known in the army, but he couldn't think of his name.

"Oh! Mr. Fortescue," she had replied; "he's here for the week-end with his wife." "Ah! yes, Fortescue," the stranger had replied. "That's the name. Well, I can't stay unfortunately—and anyhow, if he's with his wife, she'd be bored with old army talk," and with a quick "Good night," he had gone.

I tried to fancy, as I drove back, what might have been going on in Carson's mind as he had driven over the same stretch of road on the Sunday evening after discovering that his friend and neighbour, Winter, was week-ending with his wife. The more I pondered, the more clearly I saw "motive" staring me in the face. But what could he have done, what

had he done, how did his telepathy, and the times of the trains, and the facts regarding the disorder in the room, fit in and make up a coherent story?

I couldn't make up a wholly coherent story, but I pieced something together which wasn't far short of it. From Risborough I rang up Mrs. Winter, who told me that on the week-end before the tragedy she had shown to both Mr. and Mrs. Carson her Parfum de l'Hays. As a rose expert she was enthusiastic about them.

\* \* \*

First thing on the Friday, I went up to London and put my notions before my chief at Scotland Yard. He agreed that we should try to get something out of Carson by telling him what we knew. He came out with me and that evening we both went up to the cottage with the local sergeant. I told Carson that some new evidence made it clear that his wife had not committed suicide. He looked a bit surprised. "We have discovered that your wife spent the week-end with your friend Mr. Winter, at an hotel near Banbury, and we have reason to believe that you saw them there, and then left hurriedly. Is that so?"

There was a slight movement of his lips, but he said nothing.

"Some time after," I observed, "some roses of a very rare variety were removed from the Winters' garden and were found in this room near your wife's body. She did not bring them with her. She had arrived from Banbury only five minutes before she was shot. No one else was in the house. You were hurrying back from London at the time. And yet your wife's death was



not suicide: it was murder. Those roses led her to an ambush. Whoever laid that ambush knew that your wife, as soon as she saw the roses, would go to look at them and bend down to inhale their rare scent. They had been surrounded by some thick foliage which forced anyone who wished to smell them to bend over the bowl. The leaves also hid the string or wire, whatever it was, which connected with the trigger of the gun and caused your wife by her own action in smelling the roses, to fire the gun at herself. This explains the wound in the very top of her head. She was shot as her head was thrust down horizontally into the centre of the blooms. The flower-bowl was on that table."

For a moment we all looked at the narrow table with the two flaps hanging down.

"The table," I continued, "had this flap which is near to us up, but supported, not by the leg which comes out for that purpose and which would have held it firm, but by that bamboo stick which was one of the objects in the mess you found on the floor. When your wife slumped forward on to the table, dead or dying, the stick was dislodged, as the person who had designed the plot had known that it must be, the flap fell down, and the bowl of flowers, and the body, and those magazines which were also on the table, no doubt to add to the confusion in a natural sort of way, collapsed in a heap on the floor, the bamboo stick amongst them.

"It was cunning. The very success of the ambush destroyed the evidence of it. By the falling down of the flap, under her weight, we were presented, not with a clear picture of

how a killing had been achieved without a killer, but with a scene of meaningless confusion."

I was talking too long, and knew it. If Carson was guilty, I was giving his quick mind time to decide what line to take. What he had decided was at once apparent. His pose was to express incredulity, but to recognize that what I had said *might* be true and neatly fitted the facts. But he gave no sign that anything might be thought to point at him. The rope we thus gave him he firmly declined to hang himself with. He agreed that such a thing as I had outlined would certainly be possible. He even went so far as to mention that he often had to contrive such things to get his photographs of birds in their nests. But there were two things, he said, that puzzled him—where the gun could have been, and how exactly it had been fired, for where was the string or wire that I had spoken of? I couldn't tell him, unless I was to come into the open, that of course he, the culprit, had had time to pocket the wire, or whatever it was, before the police arrived. As for his second point, where the gun could have been lodged, this was the main thing that puzzled us.

He took us over to the table and with his help we examined every possible lodging place for the gun, but could find none that would have served except some too far away to have caused the wound in Linda's head. "But even more important than where the gun was," he said, "*who* could have done it? You're not suggesting Alice Winter? They *were* her roses. It's easy to guess how she would have felt towards my wife if



somehow she had found out, just as I had found out, about her husband."

He now saw clearly his way through that earliest problem I had posed him.

"I *did* see them in the hotel, as you said when you began. I lied to you about that. But I didn't want it known that my wife had done such a thing, gone off with that rotter, and I was going to keep it dark, if I could. It was because of what I saw in that damned hotel that I rushed back from London on the Monday afternoon. I suddenly felt I must have it out with Linda, but—well, you know what I found."

Our "shock" tactics had failed. It was useless to mention the rose-thorn in his thumb—how easily he could have explained this as something he had suffered in his search for birds on Sunday—and though I was convinced that he was the murderer, there was not enough evidence to succeed in convicting him. Nothing more came out at the inquest, so the case was left in the files.

\* \* \*

It was not till after I had retired from the Force that I learned the truth—from Carson himself. He was dying in a sanatorium, and he wrote to me when very near the end (it wasn't a confession, but a letter of the utmost cynicism) asking me if I remembered the case. He had always remembered me, he said, and had been impressed by my ability (curse his cheek!).

His greatest difficulty was to be sure that his wife would bend down to smell the roses, he wrote. Then he had remembered her ecstatic joy over those rare roses in the Winters'

garden. So that Sunday night he had walked over to the Winters and pulled some of the blooms. He had forgotten to bring scissors or a knife with him. That was why he had had to break the stalks.

It wasn't telepathy, he wrote, or a desire to have it out with his wife, which had brought him back from London that Monday afternoon, but a desire to save her from murder.

After he had left his trap behind him, his confidence had slowly evaporated. Then he saw where he had gone wrong, the slip he had made. It was such an obvious one that he could not conceive how he had overlooked it. If the loop of wire which he had used to fire the gun were found on the floor, the way the murder had been contrived would be painfully apparent, and his beautiful alibi of no avail—indeed, in such circumstances, a beautiful alibi would be just what the police would expect the culprit to have. He had raced back home, hoping that he would be there in time to destroy the whole contrivance—but no, there was his wife's body on the floor.

His dismay had lasted only for a moment. He saw that he could have his murder and have his safety too. He had picked up the loop of wire which had fired the gun. It was of a kind his wife used for training flowers. It had been in his pocket when the local police arrived, but it had been disposed of—it was really very easy to dispose of a shapeless bit of wire—long before I appeared on the scene.

"I daresay," his letter went on, "that you weren't put out by the absence of the wire, as you must



have guessed I had moved it. What puzzled you was where the gun could have been. The magazines, my dear sir—they made the perfect gun-mount. They were in a pile on the table, all of them, and the gun was fitted into them at just the right height. The weight of those above kept it steady, with only the merest tip of the muzzle pointing out straight at where the head of any flower-sniffer would have to be.

“After I had picked up the wire, I saw that I could make assurance doubly sure if I moved all the magazines off the floor, except those

which were wet—you’ll agree that wet magazines on the sofa-back might have seemed suspicious if noticed—and this, of course, made things much harder for you. I’ve often wondered whether you’d have tumbled to their purpose if I’d left them on the floor. You’re a clever man, but I doubt it. Well, I’ll be dead now in a day or two, but I’m glad I got back home that day in time to do my little rearrangements—only just in time, as it proved, thanks to Miss Pope’s interference—and so have had what was left of my life.”



*. . . But must your roses die, and those  
Their purpled buds that should unclose?  
Even so; the leaves are curled apart,  
Still red as from the broken heart,  
And here's the naked stem of thorns.*

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI: *Jenny*, 1882.



A highly decorative border surrounds the text. At the top, there is a portrait of a man in a military-style uniform on the left, a classical building facade in the center, and a street scene with figures on the right. Below the top portrait is another portrait of a man with a beard. The left side of the border features a large, detailed illustration of a building with a balcony and a street lamp. At the bottom, there is a portrait of a woman on the right and a street scene with figures on the left.

## MISCELLANY FROM

Baker Street runs nor-nor-west from Oxford Street to Regent's Park, changing its name four times, as if wanted by the police. It starts by Selfridge's as Orchard Street; then for a stately moment is part of Portman Square; from there it is Baker Street to the Marylebone Road; the rest is Upper Baker Street, though only the map-maker calls it so. The Post Office now tidily numbers from the Square to the Park as Baker Street; until then, yet another part was separately numbered as York Place. In 1883, when Holmes and Watson took lodgings, the short thoroughfare was divided into Orchard Street, Portman Square, Baker Street, York Place, Upper Baker Street. A directory of 1884, which shows this, also shows only 85 houses in the lower and 54 in the upper half. Where then was 221b? With his logical mind, Holmes anticipated the neater Post Office numbering, and insisted that Watson should call Mrs. Hudson's house 221, which afterwards became so. (221b was used for the first floor only to separate Holmes's morning mail from the rest.) And number 221 was, of course, half-way up the west side of Upper Baker Street. This is plainly indicated in *The Beryl Coronet*, in which Watson, at the window looks down Baker Street, that is, looks south, and sees what he erroneously calls a "single gentleman"—the person is married: Watson means he can see one man—coming up the street from the Metropolitan station. As the





## 221b BAKER STREET

station is on the east side of Upper Baker Street at Marylebone Road, Watson could only have seen what he said he saw if 221b were, as it is to-day, north of the station on the west side. There are they who suppose the lodgings to have been south of the station, opposite Blandford Street; but Watson in the window must then have looked up the street to see a gentleman, single or otherwise, coming "from the direction of the Metropolitan station." The notion that the lodgings were in the south half of Baker Street is based, I suppose, on Watson's sketchy description, in *The Empty House*, of a night walk with Holmes. Watson, still upset by the excitement of the return of Sherlock Holmes, was also nervous because his friend was taking a devious route to avoid being followed "through a network of mews" which Watson had never been in before. He recognized Blandford Street like an old friend, but could only say that from there they went along a narrow passage into a yard. But Watson was obviously "be-mewsed," and did not realize that Holmes continued to Paddington Street, along Chiltern Street, across the Marylebone Road to Allsop Place, which converges on Baker Street by the Park. It was here, and could only be here, that Holmes opened the back door of a house the front rooms of which faced 221b, and showed the astonished Watson the shadow on the blind, "a perfect reproduction of Holmes."

J. S.







## THE STONE OF DESTINY

PHILIP AUDLY

*Illustrations by Pauline Diana Baynes*

*Philip Audly is the pen-name of one who spent most of the war dodging about Europe to avoid a German prison. He finally escaped to England by way of Belgium, Switzerland, France (where he fought with the maquis in the Jura Mountains), and Holland. Once more we are introducing a new author. This is Mr. Audly's first accepted story. He has been a pilot, and has helped to manage an airport, and took a degree in engineering at Cambridge University.*

**W**HEN recently the English papers reached me and I read of the Stone of Destiny, I relived a fifteen-year-old incident concerning just such a stone; an incident to which, by force of circumstance, I owe my present state of exile; an incident which proved a turning-point in my life.

It all started when I became involved in a casual conversation with

an Arab in a waterside café, in the ancient quarter of Port Said.

The oppressive heat of the afternoon had made me seek refuge and a cooling drink in the somewhat dingy establishment of a fat little Frenchman by the name of Gouchart, Émile Gouchart, locally known as "Le Porc Marin," a descriptive handle if not exactly flattering. He was a good-natured soul who bore the air of one who has seen more of the world than he originally bargained for.

Tolerant and good-humoured, he



never counted the number of a customer's drinks, with the result that his establishment, with its faded green shutters and flaking plaster walls, was significantly an economic failure. But Le Porc was a man of many parts. His café was naturally not his only means of livelihood. There were other matters to which he attended, more lucrative matters which often occasioned him to adopt a magnificent air of mystery and adventure, so that the stranger drinking there hastily swallowed his poison and stepped out into the night before worse befell him.

On the torrid afternoon in question then, as I say, I entered the Café Gouchart and ensconced myself as far away as possible from any door or window, my sole companion the glass of iced "Maison" on the marble-topped, three-legged table. "Maison" was the private trade name Le Porc had given to some furious home concoction which he served only to intimates. I say furious, because that is the effect it had; furious in a suave sort of way, determined yet affectionate, powerful yet soothing and thirst-quenching.

Idly I sat, and after a sip or two, twirled the glass by its stem. Le Porc fussed about with a damp cloth, wiping the table tops in a desultory fashion. This particular afternoon he was not feeling his loquacious self.

Just as I was about to order a second glass, the shutters in the doorway flapped open, and in strode the most magnificent specimen of an Arab I have ever seen. It was not his dress, the usual *burnous*, that struck me, but his imposing stature. He must have been well over six feet six and proportionately broad shouldered.

His mahogany face was held in the clutch of a large, well-trimmed brown beard. Without a doubt, this man was in his prime. As he entered the room he carried himself with effortless ease, and said in a voice that carried the tang of the salt sea-air:

"Marhaba! The Blessing of Allah on this house!"

"Bonjour, Hassan," Le Porc replied; "what news?"

"None, my little rotundity!" The Arab laughed till the very shutters seemed to vibrate to the deep resonance. "Bring me a goblet of your excellent 'Maison.' I will join the stranger, if he does not object."

Without waiting for my comment, he lowered his huge frame into the inadequate chair opposite me.

"Monsieur, I perceive, is a friend of the house!" he said, indicating my drink and looking at me from piercing blue eyes beneath shaggy eyebrows. He rested his powerful hairy arms on the table, then folded his hands together as though in prayer. Le Porc placed his glass before him and retired to his back room without another word.

"I have been here before," I admitted guardedly. "I—er—rather like the chef's cuisine."

He laughed again in that resounding bellow. "Well spoken, O Son of the Great West! I too have been here before, as you say; I too enjoy the chef's cooking!" Then, lowering his voice to a hoarse whisper, he added, "Do you travel far, my son?"

"It depends," I answered, still on my guard with this strangely jovial character.

"Depends on what, O Stranger?" I told him my name.

"I am Hassan Aboul al Zoba, Son



of Merchants. Now tell me, what seek you in the East, for assuredly you would not venture to the *Café Gouchart*—here he indicated the room with a lordly sweep of his arm—“without a purpose, eh?”

“I am a writer,” I told him. “I travel the world in search of tales to tell.”

“Oh-oh!” he cried; “in search of tales, are you? Then you have not far to look, my son, for Hassan knows more tales of the Orient than the immortal Scheherazade herself! *Le Porc*! Another goblet of your brew for the teller of tales, and one for my friend here!”

He drank his second glass at a gulp, swallowed, smacked his lips, and said: “Follow me, O Scribe, and I will show you something rare, something precious!”

By now I had succumbed to him. Whether it was because of the drink or because he was simply too outrageously large to argue with, I have no idea. I followed him out into the street, down the cobbled alleyway to the water’s edge, where now lay an Arab dhow that had not been there before.

He leaped aboard like any pirate of legend, and from the deck called, “Come aboard my humble dwelling, O Sage, and see a merchant’s treasure!”

He led the way into the master’s cabin below the poop deck, a cabin of such incredible lavishness that it almost defies description. From the exquisitely wrought mullioned stern port to the intricately carved oaken doorway through which we had just entered, the cabin resembled more a palace than a seafarer’s home.

Magnificent silken tapestries festooned the walls, delicately shaped

ivory tables inlaid with ebony filigree stood on either side of a silken-tasselled couch. Persian and Turkish carpets beyond price covered the floor. In one corner stood a Chinese cabinet, the façade of which consisted of a series of interlaced dragons. From this he produced a tiny casket set with an abundance of precious stones, so that even in the half-light of the cabin it glistened and sparkled as the sea under the brilliant sun outside.

“Regard this, my Voyager, for the like of it I vow you have never beheld!” he said as he carefully opened the lid. Inside, nestling warmly on blood-red velvet, lay a single stone of purest amber, about the size of a duck’s egg.

“Behold, the Stone of Destiny, my friend! No, no! Do not touch it,” he said as I made a move to examine the stone more closely. “Few indeed have seen it, none have ever held it in their hands since it was placed in this casket one thousand and forty years ago!”

Apart from its transparent flawlessness, there was nothing remarkable about the stone. “Tell me,” I said; “where did it come from? If the stone is as old as you say, why then it must surely have originated in the time of the Sultan Schahriar?”

“You are wise indeed, O Westerner,” Hassan said, closing the lid of the casket gently and pressing the sapphire that snapped shut the hidden lock; “for it is reputed that this stone was given by the Sultan Schahriar to Scheherazade upon the occasion of the thousand and first night.”

“It is interesting, but that cannot be all the story?” I asked. So far it was nothing but a curio, even if its origin as related by Hassan was true.



“Indeed, it is not!” he said, somewhat perturbed at being thus hurried. “Be seated, and in comfort hear the tale I have to tell.”

I settled upon the silken couch, whilst he offered me a long Turkish cigarette from an alabaster box, and seated himself cross-legged upon a leather pouf such as are sold by native pedlars to ships’ tourists off the shores of Algiers.

“The Stone of Amber,” he began, “after the death of the gifted Scheherazade, on whom be the peace of Allah, fell into the hands of a Persian merchant upon one of his regular visits to the souks of Baghdad. It is said that he bought the casket without knowing its contents, for none had found the secret of its lock save Scheherazade herself. A thousand golden dinars changed hands, and the merchant went his way rejoicing in his treasure. On his path through the souks of old Baghdad, curiosity overtook him, and he tried to open the casket to inspect its interior, but he could find no access to the secret lock. As he crouched in the shadows by the alcove of a coppersmith, robbers attacked him, and in the fight the casket rolled to the ground.

“He succeeded in putting the robbers to flight, picked up the precious casket, and found the fall had snapped open the lock.

“For the first time he gazed upon the amber stone. Now, the coppersmith had been watching, and when he saw the robbers put to flight, he approached the merchant, and over his shoulder he too saw the amber stone. The merchant, pleased to discover that his price included yet another precious stone, made to lift it from the casket. No sooner had he placed a finger upon it, when floop!

he was gone, never more to be seen by mortal eye.

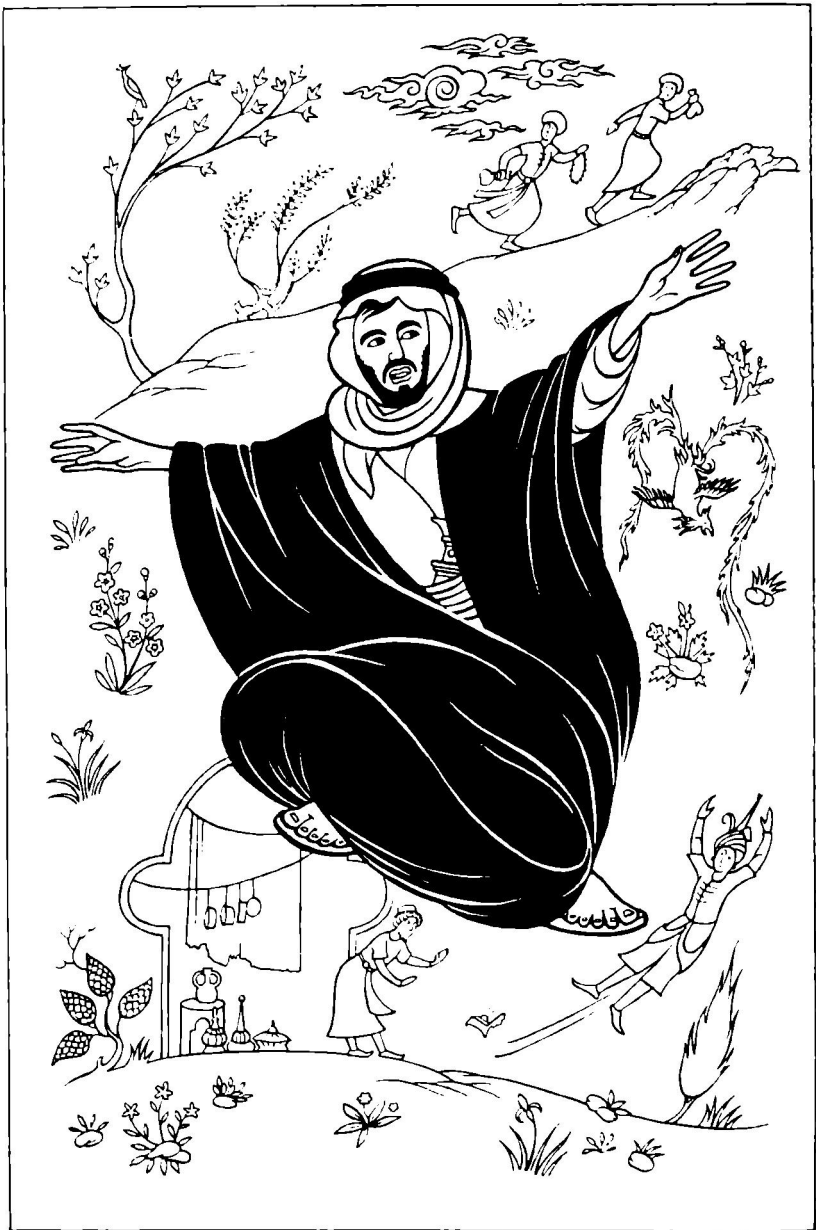
“The casket lay where his feet had been. The astonished coppersmith deliberated with himself an instant, then he retrieved it, took it to his humble shop, and there cunningly hid it beneath a loose stone of the floor.”

Here Hassan paused to ring a small gong at his side. Instantly a servant silently entered to bring two Chinese bowls of herb tea, the bitter taste of which enhanced even more the fantastic atmosphere of the dhow’s cabin. Outside twilight had fallen, and the silence was only broken by the quiet lapping of the waters against the wooden sides of the vessel. Hassan’s servant lit the two oil and tallow lamps that swung on golden chains from the heavily timbered ceiling. In the flickering light and shadow-play, the Arab continued his story.

“The coppersmith, as I said, hid the precious casket beneath the floor of his humble shop in the souk. Days, weeks, months passed, and ever the temptation to touch the stone arose within him. At night he would take out the casket, and having discovered the hidden lock, for he was a craftsman, he would open it and gaze upon the stone. Ever and again his hand would reach out for it, and ever and again fear withheld him from its cool touch. Then he would hide the casket once more until the temptation became too strong for him.

“One night, as he sat alone in his dimly lit shop, gazing at the stone in wonderment and wishing that he could divine its secret, a strange thing happened. In the transparency of the stone, a picture formed before his eyes. He saw himself, in his own shop. A Persian merchant entered, and see-





*"... flop! he was gone, never more to be seen ..."*



ing him with the casket, bargained with him for its purchase. He saw himself reluctant to part with his treasure so cheaply acquired.

“As he yielded to the high price offered by the merchant, he saw in his own face the rising, the last, temptation to touch the stone whilst it was still in his possession. Fear fought temptation relentlessly, and he closed the lid of the casket, but before the lock had time to shut, he had opened it just once more and inserted his hand to clutch the stone. No sooner had he done this, when behold, floop! he was gone, never more to be seen by mortal eye. All this he saw in the stone, and now, in its pellucid form, he saw his own shop, empty save for the merchant who stood amazed, looking at the casket lying on the floor where but a moment before he himself had stood. Then the merchant picked up the casket, closed it, and made off with it under his arm out into the night that hides all secrets.

“The picture in the stone then faded, and there he sat, alone with the open casket before him, alone in his empty, humble shop, while outside the souk lay under a starlit night that covered the dreaming city.

“Now, my friend, history has proved that this stone possessed, not only the fearsome power of making its owner vanish, but also to show him the future, inexorable as destiny itself, for on the instant that the picture vanished from its transparence, behold the Persian merchant entering the shop of the poor coppersmith. The scene takes place just as he had viewed it. The coppersmith, in all reality, ceased to exist, never more to be seen by mortal eye, and the merchant made off into the night with the casket without paying, indeed,

without being able to pay for it.

“Thus the stone has been handed on from one to another these many hundred years. Never has its power diminished, never has the picture in its transparence wavered in truth. Sometimes the future predicted took place on the instant after it faded, sometimes as much as twenty-four hours later. But always it took place as sure as the sun rises in the east.

“Ever the owner of the stone feared its incalculable power, and ever fear was conquered by temptation. Some yielded quicker than others. Some held out against its power for years, others for only a matter of days.”

Hassan's voice trailed away into the dark shadows of the cabin as we sat there, for all the world like a pair of conspirators in the very days of the Sultan Schahriar. I was first to break the silence.

“And you,” I asked, “did you come by the stone in like manner?” It was a while before he answered. Then he said, a note of fear in his voice alien to his huge, strong frame:

“Of a surety, my son, I came by it as others did. The keeper of a coffee-house in Koweit, with whom I was trying to effect the purchase, vanished into the night. He also was never more seen by mortal eye, but before this happened he warned me of what he had read in the stone. Despite this, he was powerless to resist, as all his predecessors had been. I took the casket from the floor where he had stood, and with it under my arm, made off to my dhow and placed it in this Chinese cabinet, swearing I would never touch the stone. And to this day, fear has always been stronger than the terrible desire to lay my finger upon it.”

“You are wise, Hassan,” I said,



"and my wish is that you may long continue to resist the urge to touch the stone. Perhaps so, you may come to break the power and one day remove it from its casket fearless of the consequences!"

Again he fell silent, sitting cross-legged upon his pouf like some carved statue, not a muscle moving. The shadow of his great beard fell deep across his chest. Overhead the oil-lamps spluttered. Outside the cry of a night bird broke the stillness as we sat. Then he got up, removed the casket from the ivory table upon which it had rested all this while, opened its lid, and gazed fixedly at the stone. Over his shoulder I too gazed at it. Against the force of all reason in me, a longing, nay a craving to possess the stone arose in me. For minutes on end I battled against this insane desire for something I could well do without. My scepticism for the tale Hassan had so eloquently spun me amidst this eastern setting, availed me nothing. I believed him not, yet he spoke the truth.

His truth was fantasy, yet no lie was in it. I did not want the stone, of that I was sure, yet the very atmosphere told me the stone was on its way to me, and nothing Hassan or I could do would stop it from changing hands. For one instant I was on the verge of asking his price, but I managed to quell the impulse.

Hassan spoke. "Last night, O Son of the West, as my dhow sailed peacefully along the last stretches of the Suez Canal to Port Said, I sat, as we are sitting now, in this very cabin and contemplated the stone just like this. In ten minutes from now it will be twenty hours ago that I sat alone and beheld the picture in its transparence. Need I relate what I saw?"

Deep silence fell once more between us as the dancing shadows played eerily with the dragon cabinet in the corner.

"Let me see into the stone," I asked him.

"It is no use, my son, for you are not yet its owner. The stranger sees nothing but the amber that foretells the destiny only of its possessor."

"Hassan," I said in a last desperate attempt to break the spell, "you have regaled me magnificently with your legend. The hour is late and I have enjoyed my visit to your dhow, your conversation, and your hospitality. But now I must go. There is a strangeness in this cabin that I fear. Farewell!"

I made for the door, and had already passed through it when his voice called me back. He had not moved from the pouf.

"Hold, my friend!" I turned to face him.

"Our destinies for this one space in time are linked. We cannot avoid them. I have seen you before, leaving this cabin and returning to it, because in the West there is no longer a home for you, no slumber will bless your nights after this one. The stone's own destiny is to remain in the East, and as its new owner you must remain with it. This much I know, so I have set my affairs in order. In the drawer of the cabinet you will find my trading charters, my maps and sea charts. They will at least provide you with a rich living. My crew has been instructed to obey your orders implicitly. You, Son of the Great West, in your fearless wisdom, will be the new master of this dhow.

"Remember only that my vessel is known for fair trading and honest dealing. I leave it to you, as I leave



the lives of my men in your hands. Use them wisely, and beware only of the stone so that you may enjoy life as long as possible. Your time will doubtless come, but you will be warned by the stone as we all have been."

I succumbed to his prescience. The truth he spoke had suddenly become acceptable because it was unavoidable. "What is your price, Hassan?" I asked in a resigned sort of voice.

"The price of the Stone has always been a thousand golden dinars, my son," he said.

"But I haven't that much in the world!" I protested. He began to laugh in that deep booming voice, first heard in the Café Gouchart. "Do not fret, my brother, all men have asked the price, none yet received it. Do you therefore give me a statement of debt as men do in honourable trade. It will suffice to gratify the force of destiny!"

So there I sat, at midnight, in a dhow, lying in the quiet waters of Port Said, writing an Arab an IOU for one thousand golden dinars which I did not possess and which he would never own in order merely to placate the whims of destiny!

Suddenly I saw the humour of the whole situation. The spell was

broken. I, like Hassan, laughed uproariously at the cunning guile of this teller of tales. I gave him the IOU, and he bowed ceremoniously.

"Thus all good tales come to their appointed conclusion." He smiled. "I trust, O Scribe, you will find meat for your fantasy in the things I have told you. There is no greater teller of tales since the days of Scheherazade than Hassan Aboul al Zoba!"

"Peace and the benevolence of Allah, than whom there is none greater, be upon you. Farewell!"

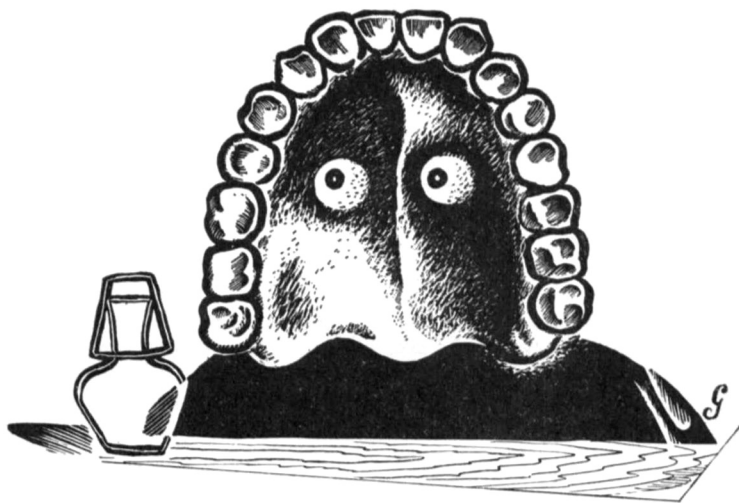
"Farewell, Hassan, Son of Merchants, Spinner of Legend, farewell," I cried gaily and opened the door. Out of the corner of my eye I just managed to catch a glimpse of the smile on his face as he dipped his great hairy hand into the casket.

He was gone. I stood alone in that cabin, alone with that fearful casket lying open upon the ivory table, its stone nestling comfortably and undisturbed in its deep, blood-red velvet recess.

How long I stood there, with my hand frozen in fear to the door handle, I shall never know. Yet I know that before dawn broke I was studying the trading charters kept in the meticulous hand of one Hassan Aboul al Zoba.







## NO LAUGHING GAS MAN

IVY MATTHEWS

*Illustrations by G.*

*We all agree that a visit to the dentist is a necessary evil to be endured with what fortitude we have. A good remedy is to think of anything except teeth, and Basil Duke takes his mind off the subject of drills and forceps by analysing a case of murder in the dentist's parlour.*

**A**S Basil Duke, author of *The Bloodstained Brassie, Murder in the Brewery,* and *The Curious Corpse,*

rang the door-bell, he wondered what particular unpleasantness the dentist had in store for him. The fact that Mason was a friend and fellow club member had not hitherto cut short the painful ritual of the torture chamber. Nor did the presence of a police car, complete with uniformed driver, on the wide gravel sweep do much to

take his mind off the prospect of the next half-hour. He merely speculated idly on the unlikely event of an unfortunate patient having succumbed to Mason's enthusiastic ministrations.

His musings were cut short by the opening of the front door by the dentist's receptionist. Her customary professional smile of welcome seemed to be somewhat overlaid by a worried look of anxiety, and she lost no time in conducting him to the waiting-room. Crossing the hall, Basil was aware of the rise and fall of voices which emerged from the



holy of holies. Evidently, he thought, his friend had not had his usual success in applying that exasperating gag. Or did it mean that the present patient was about to be released and his turn would soon come?

Basil, according to etiquette, studiously avoided the eye of the lady who was already waiting, surveyed the literature displayed on the polished table, and helped himself to a sample packet of pain-killer from the glass bowl which constituted the centrepiece. It occurred to him that this offer of free pain-killers was scarcely a tactful addition to a dentist's waiting-room; one might as well advertise the fact that, after a session in his chair, the patient was liable to be in greater discomfort than before.

At the opening of the door and the wafting away of the next victim, Basil watched the disappearing back, eloquent of mingled determination and apprehension, as of an early Christian about to be thrown to the lions, and then fell to studying the houses and estates for sale as depicted in an illustrated magazine. He had just selected an Elizabethan mansion—wealth of old oak, priest hole, and complete with every modern convenience—when he was summoned to his own ordeal.

Mason's "Well, what can I do for you?" seemed to have lost some of its cheery ring, nor did he keep up the usual one-sided patter with which it was his custom to beguile a patient restricted, of necessity, to a few inarticulate grunts. The drill had done its deadly work and he was engaged—with nerve-racking squeaks—on a miniature cement-mixing operation, when Basil was once more able to speak.

"I see you've been having a visit from the police," he ventured. "Which of your unfortunate victims has succumbed, and is it murder or manslaughter?" He paused while the receptionist gathered up a clattering heap of instruments which she had allowed to crash to the floor, and, ignoring Mason's hiss of annoyance, went on. "I imagine there'll be no difficulty about the disposal of the body." He explored the apparently enormous cavity resulting from drilling operations. "Landru could have buried all his victims in what's left of this tooth."

"As a matter of fact," was Mason's reply, "it's not particularly funny. Ursula, you'll have to sterilize all those again—and for heaven's sake, don't get the jitters! It's got nothing to do with you. Now!" He adjusted the object which drains the patient's mouth, and proceeded to ram home a large lump of amalgam.

"Wha's up?" asked Basil.

"What's up?" From long practice, Mason had no difficulty in interpreting the enquiry. "Rather an unpleasant occurrence, at least, from my point of view. Though I can't see . . . Yesterday afternoon I did an extraction for a Mrs. Carter-Dewcey. She isn't—wasn't one of my regular patients—her own man is away." He removed the sizzling horror from Basil's lower lip. "Rinse, please."

"I know her," said Basil. "Fairly poisonous old girl. What about her?"

"She's *been* poisoned," was the reply.

"Good lord!" Basil replaced the glass of mouth-wash and wiped his lips. "How?"

"Strychnine—at least, the police think so. There'll be a post mortem,



of course. She was found dead in her bedroom this morning and—they found an open packet of pain-killer. A sample packet——”

“Like this?” Basil produced a small envelope from his pocket.

“My sainted aunt! Are they still in the waiting-room? Ursula, you’d better——”

“I shouldn’t worry,” said Basil soothingly. “I don’t imagine they all contain strychnine.”

“All the same, you’d better bring ’em back, Ursula. I supplied the police inspector with some from the box I’ve got here, of course,” Mason continued, as the receptionist departed. “As you say, they *must* be all right. We don’t even know if the death had anything at all to do with them—but there are three tablets in each packet, and there were only two left in Mrs. Carter-Dewcey’s.”

“They’ll be analysed, of course,” said Basil. “And I bet there will be nothing wrong with them, unless whoever planted them substituted three to be on the safe side—if you can call it the safe side! Tell me, had she any particular enemy? Apart from the fact that she was something of an old she-dragon. *Nil nisi* and all that, of course.”

“Well—I’m told she was addicted to trumping her partner’s ace, otherwise——”

“Exasperating, no doubt, but an inadequate reason for murder,” agreed Basil, as the receptionist returned with the bowl of samples.

“I don’t see how anyone could have planted strychnine pills for the old girl,” objected Mason. “How could he be sure she’d take the right packet? Some other patient might have taken it.”

“Excuse me.” Ursula’s voice was

diffident. “I was just wondering if Mrs. Carter-Dewcey *did* take all the packets. There were none left when I went to tidy the waiting-room yesterday evening.”

“Good heavens!” Mason was stricken with horror. “D’you mean to say there was a whole basinful of strychnine for *anyone* to take?”

Basil reassured him. “I shouldn’t worry. It’s much more likely that whoever poisoned Mrs. C.-D.—if somebody did—took the precaution of removing the lot and leaving one packet carefully planted. Who was in the waiting-room just before her? That’ll be your culprit. Stop a bit, though! Surely there would be more than one? I have observed that, in an effort to conserve your valuable time at the expense of your patients’, you always have two people waiting—unless it’s the last one of the day, like me. If anyone was seen to swipe a whole dish of samples and then carefully replace them with another packet from his pocket——” He paused, as the receptionist suddenly giggled, and eyed her severely.

“Oh, but they do!” she exclaimed. “Take the whole lot, I mean. Some people can’t resist anything free—especially the rich ones. As a matter of fact, I thought old Mr. Hetherton had taken them yesterday. He was the last patient—and he’s ever so rich, isn’t he?”

“Hm!” said Basil. “Interesting sidelight on the denizens of the waiting-room. Well, old Hetherton isn’t poisoned yet, at any rate. He was lunching at the club to-day with that poisonous young nephew of his. Sorry, we don’t seem to be able to keep off poisons, do we?”

“Damn old Hetherton, *and* his nephew,” said Mason impatiently.



"Who foisted a strychnine pill on Mrs. Carter-Dewcey—and in *my* waiting-room, too? That's what I want to know. A nice thing to happen to a professional man, I must say—and not even one of my own patients. Get out the book, Ursula, and let's see who came yesterday afternoon."

The receptionist produced the appointments book, and was flapping over the pages when suddenly she paused.

"I don't see how anyone could have known Mrs. Carter-Dewcey would be here," she said. "She didn't make an appointment, Mr. Mason. Don't you remember? She came because Mr. Sprotley was away. She said she hoped you would be able to see her, as she was in such pain."

"So she did," replied Mason. "She was lucky——" He hesitated and smiled wryly. "Well, I suppose she was damned unlucky as it happened. What I mean is, someone cancelled an appointment at the last minute, so I had half an hour to spare."

"Now we're getting somewhere!" Basil exclaimed. "*Who* cancelled an appointment? Let's have a look at that book. Good lord! No wonder you keep your victims waiting so long. Damned if I can make head or tail of this."

With a superior smile, Ursula ran her finger down the page. "Here it is," she said, pointing to the name. "Mrs. Singleton. She was booked for four-forty-five, and she never rang up until the actual time to say she wasn't well. So when Mrs. Carter-Dewcey came along, we were able to fit her in nicely."

"Mrs. Singleton? But that's the wife of old Hetherton's nephew!" Basil's voice held a note of excite-

ment. "And he's Hetherton's heir. I begin to see daylight."

"But——" Mason began.

"Look here, don't you see? That sample wasn't meant for Mrs. C.-D. The murderer didn't even know she was coming, so how could it? It was meant for old Hetherton, and the poor old girl went and upset the apple-cart."

"You mean . . .? But how could Mrs. Singleton have planted the packet?" Mason objected. "Ursula's just told you, she never came here, she cancelled her appointment at the last minute. It was most annoying. Why people can't ring up before——"

"That was the idea," Basil interrupted. "She had to be sure there was an interval when the waiting-room was empty and that was the only way she could do it. You'd better cram your appointments even closer in future and be on the safe side. No, Mrs. Singleton arranged a clear field for the murderer and—she rang up herself, of course?—made sure of her own alibi at the same time."

"Then who——?"

"Yes, who?" asked Basil. "At a guess, I should say young Singleton. I've heard rumours of mounting debts. Ye—es. I think we can put our money on Singleton."

"But he never came near the place," Mason expostulated. "I told you, old Hetherton was the only patient after Mrs. Singleton's appointment—excepting Mrs. Carter-Dewcey, of course."

"I don't suggest he came as a patient," was Basil's reply. "He'd know you'd recognize him, and that was the last thing they wanted. It would be no good having an alibi for



his wife if he was known to have been here." He pointed an accusing finger at the receptionist. "Was it the inspector from the gas company? Or, perchance, a courteous gentleman who was testing the neighbourhood for wireless interference? I believe that's the new confidence trick—kindly provided by the wonders of science."

Slowly, Ursula's face reddened under the accusing stare.

"It—a man came about the gas-fire," she confessed. "He said the company thought there was a leak somewhere."

"But the packets of pain-killer are sealed," said Mason, "how could he open one without tearing it? Or do you suggest he boiled a kettle on the gas-fire and steamed it open?"

"I suppose he could have done something like that," Basil conceded. "He had a tool-bag, presumably, so he could have brought a small kettle. I believe it can be done with a hot knife, too. It would take some time, of course, and it would have been a bit risky. There would have been something of a sensation if Ursula had come in and caught him at it; to say nothing of old Hetherton being shown in on top of him. He would have recognized his nephew, peaked cap and all. No, it's

my belief he brought a specially prepared packet with him."

"But how would he get hold of an envelope with the firm's name on it?" Mason objected. "These samples are only sent out to professional men."

"Easily," Basil retorted. "You're not the only dentist in the country, my dear chap. Or—wait a bit! What about Mrs. Singleton? Was that cancelled appointment to have been the first—or did she——"

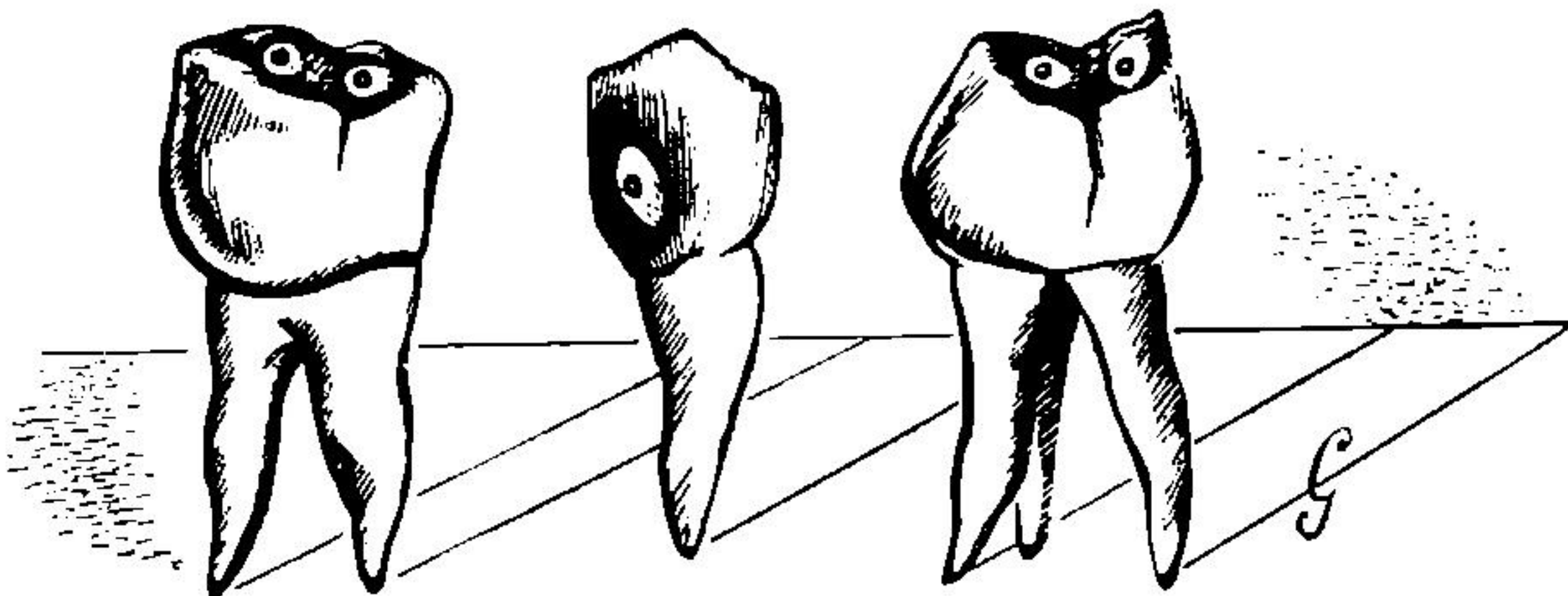
"You're quite right," said Mason. "She came last week. This was to have been her second visit."

"And the samples were in the waiting-room then? Hm! I wonder who first conceived the plan when they saw that packet? Did she get the idea in your chastely furnished apartment? Or did her nasty little husband, perchance searching his wife's handbag for spare cash, find——"

"It's no laughing matter," Mason cut in, "and it's all very well to say it *might* have been as you say. How are you going to prove it?"

"Not my job," Basil replied. "But it *is* your job to give the facts, now that you know they are relevant, to your friend the police inspector." He pointed to the telephone.

Slowly, Mason lifted the receiver and began to dial.







# THE INVISIBLE WORM

GEOFFREY GRIGSON

ENGRAVED ON WOOD BY  
ROSEMARY SLATTERY

THE expression scholar and poet is much too easily bandied about, but Geoffrey Grigson is that rare of rarest literary birds—a severe and discriminating professional critic whose own excursions into creative writing can stand up to his own exacting standards. There is nothing namby-pamby about his likes and dislikes: many of today's poets have to thank him for his vigorous championship. He likes the well-chosen word, and we were much refreshed by his conscious choice of epithet in this investigation into the history of a creature that many still believe to be real.







**D**O you believe that when you die you will become meat for worms? Not long ago I went into the abbey church at Tewkesbury and saw there the stone cadaver of Abbot Wakeman which is crawling with worms. He had no doubt of becoming worms' meat, so with stone worms and toads he ordered this reclining figure of himself while he was still alive. Go to Tewkesbury, I told a friend of mine, who is an obstinate champion of the fallacies of common belief, if you want to see what grave-worms are like. "I don't want to see them," she replied. So I added that she need not worry, because grave-worms do not exist. "Nonsense." "Well," I went on soothingly, "they don't exist, and you really needn't bother about Golders Green and clean ashes." "Of course they exist."

She gave way to argument, not believing in them quite so firmly as Abbot Wakeman in early Tudor days; yet I have found that Grave-wormers, even now, are more common than Flat-landers, and it set me digging for the Invisible Worm, or at least for the truth about him.

The wormiest of soils, I soon found, are the fourteenth, the fifteenth, and the sixteenth centuries. You could not think then of

death without thinking of the worm. Natural enough. Worms wriggle in the earth, and into the earth we go. People did not observe, and no one knew, that earthworms like nothing to eat but earth. And what did Job pronounce in the Old Testament? "If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." So the grave-worm was just a fact, like the rising or the setting of the sun. It did not matter *that no one had seen a grave-worm.*

Luckily, though, we are not always thinking about death. In the Middle Ages, in the thirteenth century, there was a time when people thought a great deal more about life. You have only to go into Southwell Minster, in the Midlands, and into the chapter-house. All around you are the most delightful, and life-full, carvings of fresh buttercups and hawthorn, symbols of spring and not of winter. Life predominates, and the world feels young. Then, in Northern Europe, there comes a change, as the Middle Ages wear out. Paintings and windows go up in churches to warn you of the rewards of wickedness. The blessed go upward into light, the wicked fall into scarlet flames, and devils with pronged forks hasten their upside-down descent. In the last of the thirteen-hundreds, a monk,



John Bromyard, who was Chancellor of the University at Cambridge, preached a celebrated sermon on the rewards after death of good and evil. All the sins of the evil-lovers of this agreeable world are catalogued. The end of everything comes; and "instead of a great retinue and throng of followers, their body shall have a throng of worms and their soul a throng of demons."

The years pass. Men begin to delight rather too much in the life and activities and lusts of the world, bold with all the fresh courage of the Renaissance; but—they cannot forget the pictures, the carvings, the sermons, the worms. So in Queen Elizabeth's time every poet thinks about death and decay in the midst of all his so brave delights. The fair body the poet or the courtier enjoys, may to-morrow be blotched with the plague. The fair shes are clothed in silk. To-morrow they may be clothed in corruption. In all the energy and the courage, in the conquest of new worlds, among the lyrics and the madrigals and the high jinks, the worm rears his nasty head. There is much of love with naked foot stalking in my chamber, but death in the Queen's reign is always pushing a bald face through the petals or through the flowered curtains of the four-poster. Even the street women of London wore death's-head rings.

It was not, I think, that the brave Elizabethans were scared so much of the devils as of the worm, which was the end of joy and vanity. The link of vanity joins beauty and the worms. There were no convenient rhymes for worm; but three words jingled together excellently—lust, and dust (which follows the worm), and *must*, that short word of ineluct-

able compulsion. The poets made these words thin with use. They liked to mix them with Helen of Troy, whose face launched the thousand ships. Even Helen had to die:

*Where is become that wight  
For whose sake Troyë town  
Withstood the Greeks till ten years'  
fight  
Had razed their walls adown?*

*Did not the worms consume  
Her carrion to the dust?  
Did dreadful death forbear his fume  
For beauty, pride or lust?*

That was written when Thomas Nashe, one of whose poems everybody knows, was a small boy. Nashe grows up, the plague in the foetid streets of London full swift goes by, and he writes:

*Brightness falls from the air,  
Queens have died young and fair,  
Dust hath closed Helen's eye,  
I am sick, I must die . . .*

And the worms are not missing. In 1594, in some of his wildest prose, Nashe explained to pretty women exactly how they would become meat for worms and toads: "Your mome-like christall countenances shall be netted over, and (masker-like) cawle-visarded with crawling, venomous worms. Your orient teeth, toads shall steale into their heads for pearl; of the jelly of your decayed eyes, shall they engender their young." And the next minute Nashe writes with delightful loveliness of the meeting of girls and men. Without any trouble you could make a vermicular anthology coming down to Shakespeare, and from Shake-



speare to Webster, the last inebriate of death in his terrible plays. In the ballad, the murdered Clerk Saunders tells the maid Margaret that he slept among the hungry worms. There are worms in hundreds of epitaphs in country churches. I used to stare at such an epitaph in the church I went to as a boy:

*O what a nest of worms,  
A lump of pallid earth,  
Is mud-walled man . . .*

And that was the epitaph on a man who ventured his money in the enterprises and wonders of the New World, who knew Drake, and probably went to the New World himself in one of the ships out of Plymouth.

Do you remember in Shakespeare the Hamlet worm — “my Lady Worm” — who owns the skull the grave-digger throws up? Or Mercutio turned into “worms’ meat”? Or King Richard talking of “graves, of worms, and epitaphs,” making dust our paper, and writing sorrow on the bosom of the earth? Or Rosalind, the duke’s daughter, remarking, “Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love”? The situation is usually the same. The worms are in the mouth of kings or queens, dukes or duchesses; or they are soon going to be.

“Though we are eaten up of lice and worms,” says Bosola in Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*,

*And though continually we bear  
about us  
A rotten and dead body, we delight  
To hide it in rich tissue.*

And when the Duchess asks who she is, Bosola replies savagely, “Thou art a box of worm-seed, at best but a salvatory of green mummy.”

And yet the invisible worm, in whom even now so many of us do not trouble to disbelieve, was nearing the end of his meat. It would soon be possible to degrade him into a joke. If you made a joke about the worm in Tudor times, it was a wry joke or a defiant one. But after the Civil War things were changing. The Royal Society was formed. Long-nosed scientists were taking nothing on trust and were upsetting tall tales, and the worm could not escape any more than notions that elephants had no bones or that bears licked their shapeless cubs into the proper likeness of bears. In 1658 a sceptical doctor in Norwich, Sir Thomas Browne, began to look for grave-worms. He opened graves in Tombland in Norwich, and he could not find them. His idea—and everyone else’s perhaps—was that grave-worms were common or garden earthworms. His conclusion was, “Few in churchyards above a foot deep, fewer or none in churches, though in fresh decayed bodies.”

This is the point for rather more explanation of how the concept of grave-worms came about. It was not only that earthworms are universal or that if you leave a dead dog about, wormy maggots soon appear in it. What made the worm so easy to accept (without ever seeing one) was an old notion going back to Pliny, and from Pliny to Aristotle. This was the idea of “spontaneous generation.” You, your dead flesh, bred the worms. That was the point. That was what Bosola meant when he called the Duchess “a box of



worm-seed." And the worms would be in you and at you even if you were lapped in lead. This notion of spontaneous generation was universal. Samson's dead lion producing bees which yield honey (as you see it still on treacle tins) produced them spontaneously. There were maggots in cheese. They were spontaneously generated by the cheese. Grubby boys who did not wash had lice. The lice were generated from their sweat. Eels appeared in ponds from which there was no stream: they were generated spontaneously in the mud. Toads, so it was believed, were found inside rocks; and why not if spontaneous generation was a rule of life?

It was just after the Tudor and Jacobean triumph of the worm that spontaneous generation began to be tested and ridiculed. Did maggots just occur in a piece of meat with no outside help? For the first time

in human history, in a new age of scepticism and enquiry, the answer was given by the simplest of all experiments. An Italian, Francisco Redi, in 1668, took two pieces of fresh meat. One was placed under a screen of wire gauze, the other was unscreened. In the second there were soon maggots, after the attention of bluebottles; in the first there was none. So the principle was announced that all living things come from the egg, that every living thing comes from a living thing of its own kind. By 1713 an English Fellow of the Royal Society could say in one of his books, "Spontaneous generation is a doctrine so generally exploded, that I shall not undertake the disproof of it"; which was vermicide to the worm.

We might go on keeping him sentimentally, traditionally, and conveniently alive, but it has been only the preservation of an old habit of mind.



. . . a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. . . .

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *Hamlet*, IV, 3.





## MEET DOCTOR FITZBROWN

PART II—THE TALKING GATEPOST

MARY FITT

*Wood Engravings by J. Buckland Wright*

*Mary Fitt's new detective, Doctor Fitzbrown, was introduced to readers in our seventh number. He is a country doctor with a wide practice and an intelligent interest in crime detection. A doctor who is early on the scene of death or injury has often a unique opportunity of noticing that all is not well. In this second case, Doctor Fitzbrown finds that a gatepost tells him more than the injured man beside it or the dead man in the car.*

**D**R. FITZBROWN lay dozing in his arm-chair before his study fire. It was eleven o'clock on a mild, foggy December night. The house was silent. Nurse Callum had gone to bed; so had the housekeeper and the maid. It was Fitzbrown's happiest moment, when at the end of the day he picked up the book he was eager to read—and fell asleep. He was roused by heavy thudding on the surgery door.

Dropping the book, he heaved up his long frame out of the deep chair, and strode along the passage. Before he could get there, the bell rang insistently.

"All right, all right!" he muttered, never able to quell the irritation he felt at being too impatiently summoned. He slung open the door. P.C. Robbins from the village stood there, his lamp at his belt, the mists swirling round him.

"Sorry to trouble you, Doctor—but there's a man up the lane, seriously injured. I found him lying in



Mr. Walbeck's drive. Could you come?"

Nurse Callum, in her dressing-gown, was now behind Fitzbrown in the surgery, packing his accident-bag. He took it from her and moved out to join the policeman.

"I'll walk," he said. "It's only a hundred yards or so up the lane."

"Doctor, your coat!" cried Nurse Callum, scandalized, running back towards the hall to get it. But Fitzbrown had gone.

## II

As they walked up the road, Robbins explained:

"I passed your house ten minutes ago, Doctor. We have orders to patrol the lane because of the robberies at Mr. Walbeck's place. You know they've had a couple of burglaries recently—carpets and silver and some of Mrs. Walbeck's fur coats."

"Some?"

"Yes; she's got several." Robbins gave a chuckle. "Mr. Walbeck's doing very well in business lately—oh, *very well!*"

"That new garage of his on the main road?"

"Yes, sir. More than petrol changes hands there, as you might say. He calls his transport company 'The Eezylift,' ha, ha!—and that's about what it is. They do say their house is like a museum—old furniture, clothes, china, pitchers——"

"Pitchers?" said Fitzbrown. "Oh yes—pictures."

"Gold pitchers," said Robbins, undisturbed. "Well, Doctor, they've had a couple of burglaries as I was saying. So Sergeant Collis sends me along to keep an eye on things. Well,

I pass your place and turn into the lane, and when I get to Mr. Walbeck's place there aren't any lights to be seen in the house, so I turn into the drive to take a look round, and I fall over this chap lying in the gateway."

"Alive?"

"I think so—but only just."

"Car accident, I suppose?"

"I suppose so. It's a nasty night for driving. But he was a bit off the road for that—lying between Mr. Walbeck's gateposts, about four feet off the road."

"The gates were open?"

"There aren't any gates, Doctor—not yet. Seems Mr. Walbeck's still looking round for a fancy pair of some sort. Here we are, sir."

The gravel crunched under their feet as they turned into the Walbecks' drive, and Robbins played his powerful torch downward on to the body.

## III

By the time Dr. Fitzbrown rose, Nurse Callum had joined them. She waited with Fitzbrown's coat, ready to fling it over him like a matador preparing to entangle a bull, but not yet able to find an opening.

"Fractured skull," Fitzbrown said shortly. "Nurse, will you run back and ring for the ambulance? I'll stay here. Robbins, you'd better take a few measurements, hadn't you? And I shouldn't trample the gravel any more than you can help."

Robbins looked up sharply, but he could not see Fitzbrown very distinctly through the swirling mist and the condensation of their own breath.

"Foul play, Doctor?"

"Not necessarily. But you'll want to find out who knocked him down.



Better look out for tyre marks—a skid, for instance.” He stooped down again to feel the pulse. “He’s alive still.—Hurry, Nurse!—Oh, give me that coat!”

He wrapped the coat over the patient. Nurse Callum, thwarted, hurried off.

#### IV

Robbins made his measurements.

“Gateposts—concrete—height five foot three. Distance — between — posts”—he laid his folding rule across the gap, puffing with the effort of stooping—“ten foot six.”

Fitzbrown, busy with bandaging, said: “Know the man?”

“Oh yes, Doctor!” said Robbins as if surprised. “Surely you do too? He’s Mr. Walbeck’s next-door neighbour, as you might say; lives in that bungalow there, higher up the lane. You could see the lights if there were any.”

“Even through the mist?”

“I should think so. It’s only forty yards farther. But there was no point in going there: he lives alone since his wife left him last summer. No kids, and of course no maid. He couldn’t afford one if he could get one, which nobody can up here.”

“Of course. I remember. Didn’t look at his face,” said Fitzbrown. “Small thin fellow, about thirty-five. One sees him hurrying down the road at about five-past eight every morning to catch the ’bus. I’ve given him a lift once or twice when I’ve happened to come out at that time. Never knew his name.”

“Jay—Oliver Jay,” said Robbins. “Came here with his wife about eighteen months ago. Reduced circumstances. Used to have a draper’s

shop in Broxeter. Had his own car then, they tell me.”

“What went wrong?”

“Usual trouble,” said Robbins, noting the distance between the patient’s now closely bandaged head and the base of the post. “Extravagant wife. Flighty. Gave her everything. Ruined himself. Went bankrupt. Had to take a job as a commercial traveller. Must be hard on a man: has to call at his own shop, maybe, with samples.”

“Yes. I’ve seen him carrying a heavy suitcase down the road,” said Fitzbrown, feeling the patient’s other limbs and arranging them neatly, ready for the ambulance. “But why did he come to live out here, a quarter of an hour’s walk from the ’bus-stop?”

“Maybe to keep his wife away from her old—friends,” said Robbins. “Anyhow, it didn’t work, because she walked out on him last June and I haven’t heard of her since.”

Fitzbrown stood up.

“Where’s that damned ambulance?—Look here, Robbins, I think you’d better knock up these Walbeck people. If they’ve got a plank or something we can use as a stretcher, I’d like him taken indoors out of this cold and damp.”

Robbins stowed away his pocket-book, to which he had now added a rough drawing of the position in which they had found Jay lying, and walked up the drive to the dark house.

#### V

Before Robbins’s loud knocking obtained an answer, the ambulance lights flooded the lane. Carefully the injured man, under Fitzbrown’s



direction, was laid on the stretcher and lifted inside.

"You go with him, Nurse," said Fitzbrown. "I want to stay here and make a few enquiries. Say I'll be coming along shortly. And"—he looked into the white interior where Nurse Callum had taken her place beside the stretcher—"if you can get hold of Doctor Jones, ask him to look this fellow over, will you? and you might keep an eye on my coat."

Nurse Callum did not deign to answer.

## VI

"There's no answer," said Robbins as they stood outside the porch and looked up. "Funny. I thought I saw Mr. and Mrs. Walbeck in the village this morning, outside the garage. In the car, of course: he never takes his coat off nowadays. Drives his wife into town every morning."

"Devoted husband?"

"Well, she keeps him up to the mark. Sees to it he loads her with clothes. Fond of a bit of fluff himself, I'm told. Of course, they may have been going off for a couple of days. But there's the daughter——" Robbins had been speaking quietly, for him, and now he stopped altogether, listening.

"What is it?" said Fitzbrown. "Somebody coming at last?"

"Seems to me, Doctor," said Robbins, "I can hear something. Can you? A sort of humming, like a car engine. I heard it before, but I thought it was noises in my head."

Fitzbrown listened. The night was intensely quiet.

"Yes," he said, "I *can* hear something. It might be traffic on the main road, and on the other hand . . .

Look here, where's the garage?"

"Round to the back," said Robbins promptly. "It used to be here at the side, but he had it pulled down and moved—some might think because he didn't want any curious people noticing anything he was unloading. The drive goes this way, see?—and round." He set off, playing his torch ahead; the beam was spread and refracted by the white mist into a dazzling curtain.

They came to the garage doors, which were on runners. Robbins inserted a hand between the sections and pushed with his shoulder. The door rolled back and along the inner wall. Inside, with its engine softly running, was an enormous Buick. Inside the Buick was Harry Walbeck, slumped over the driving-wheel. In a swivel ashtray on the inner side of the driving-door lay the undisturbed grey ash of a burnt-out cigarette. On the passenger-seat beside him was a revolver; from his left temple a trickle of blood flowed down his cheek.

"Well!" said Robbins gruffly, "he meant to do it thoroughly, didn't he?"

Fitzbrown leaned over Walbeck and turned off the engine.

"Better get out of here," he said.

## VII

Fitzbrown stood outside the open garage doors, waiting for the fumes to clear so that he could go in again and examine the body. He was just about to make the attempt when from the side of the house he heard a window opening and a high clear voice called:

"Who's there?"

Fitzbrown called back:



"Will you come down, please?"

A few minutes later, standing in the porch outside the front door, he saw the hall light switched on, and a tall girl in a white silk wrap that covered her came towards him.

"Oh, the doctor!" she said, when she had opened. "Is there anything wrong?"

Fitzbrown entered. The sitting-room was warm still, though the fire was out.

"There's nothing wrong, I hope?" she began again. "My stepmother's away for a few days, and my father hasn't come in yet, so I'm alone in the house." She laughed. "I'm sorry I didn't come down at once, but to tell you the truth I'm rather nervous at night since the burglaries. One never knows. I thought I heard Daddy's car come in half an hour ago, but——"

"Miss Walbeck," said Fitzbrown, "you must prepare yourself for a shock. I'm afraid your father has had—an accident."

She gave a gasp and covered her mouth with her hands.

"Not another!"

"Has he had one before?"

"Didn't you know? I thought everybody did. It was before we came here. We lived in Birmingham then, and he had an accident in a fog. They have awful fogs there sometimes. He knocked a man down and killed him. He was accused of manslaughter. He drove on, you see, after the accident and came home. He says he doesn't remember——"

Fitzbrown interrupted her:

"What happened?"

"He was acquitted—but oh, only after the most *awful* trial! You can't imagine what it was like—the police—the neighbours—the papers. That's

really why we came down here. People said terrible things. They said he didn't stop because he had things in the car he didn't want the police to see. And even afterwards, they still went on saying he ought to have been found guilty." Her large dark eyes began to express panic again. "Since then, he—and we—have lived in terror lest he should have another accident. He always said if he did he'd commit suicide—he'd never go through another trial."

"I see," said Fitzbrown. He took a step forward. "I'm afraid there's been—more than an accident, Miss Walbeck."

She had been kneeling by the ashy fire, trying to induce a flame. Now she rose slowly.

"Do you mean——?"

"I mean—everything. Just now the police found the body of a man lying across your drive, between the gateposts. He appeared to have been knocked down by a car. We came here to let you know and ask a few questions—and we found——"

"Yes?"

"Your father's car in the garage with the engine running; your father sitting in the driving-seat."

"Dead?"

Fitzbrown nodded. "The odd thing is, he seems to have shot himself as well. There was a revolver on the seat——"

Miss Walbeck said sharply:

"What's happened to the man my father knocked down? Who was he, by the way?"

"Your neighbour from the bungalow here—a man named Jay. He's not dead yet. He may recover. But he's very badly hurt. His skull's fractured."



Miss Walbeck's knees doubled up under her. She fell, before Fitzbrown could catch her, across the hearth-rug. As he bent over her he heard the sound of a car arriving, and again there was a loud knocking at the door.

### VIII

Superintendent Mallett closed and locked the garage doors.

"Well, that seems to tie up," he said. "He knocks the fellow down in the lane—thinks he's dead—drives his car into the garage—closes the doors—leaves the engine running—and then, afraid it mayn't work or may take too long, puts a shot through his head."

"Funny he should have a revolver handy," said Fitzbrown.

"He must have crept into the house and got it. It's his own all right."

"Funny his daughter didn't hear him. She was awake, waiting for him to come in."

"Perhaps she did hear him and didn't come down. You said yourself she was frightened of burglars. Or perhaps she dropped off to sleep. Did she hear the shot?"

"I didn't ask her. She didn't mention it."

"Then she must have fallen asleep. Anyway, what are you getting at? We know the man threatened suicide."

"Oh, nothing," said Fitzbrown. "It looks a bit premeditated, that's all.—I wonder how the fractured skull's getting on?"

"I'm going along there now," said Mallett, "to fix the p.m. for Walbeck. Care to come?"

"No, thanks," said Fitzbrown. "I just want to have a look round—see

how Miss Walbeck is. She mustn't be left alone. I'll get Nurse Callum to look after her when she gets back. I'll follow you later."

"O.K." Mallett went off with the garage key in his pocket. Fitzbrown went round and knocked lightly at the front door.

### IX

Elsie Walbeck let him in.

"They've gone?" She was pale but composed.

"Yes. There'll be a post-mortem done immediately. I shall go along there presently. Meanwhile—have you got another key to the garage?"

She looked at him, interested but not unduly surprised.

"Daddy had all the keys," she said. "But you can get in from the house: this way, through the kitchen." She led the way. Fitzbrown picked up the bag he had left standing in the hall and followed.

There was an excellent light in the garage. The great black Buick stood there, still looking shiny and new in spite of the superficial traces of the mud and damp of the day: clearly a car that was washed and polished every morning. Fitzbrown, with his own torch to supplement the light, examined the paint-work with careful scrutiny.

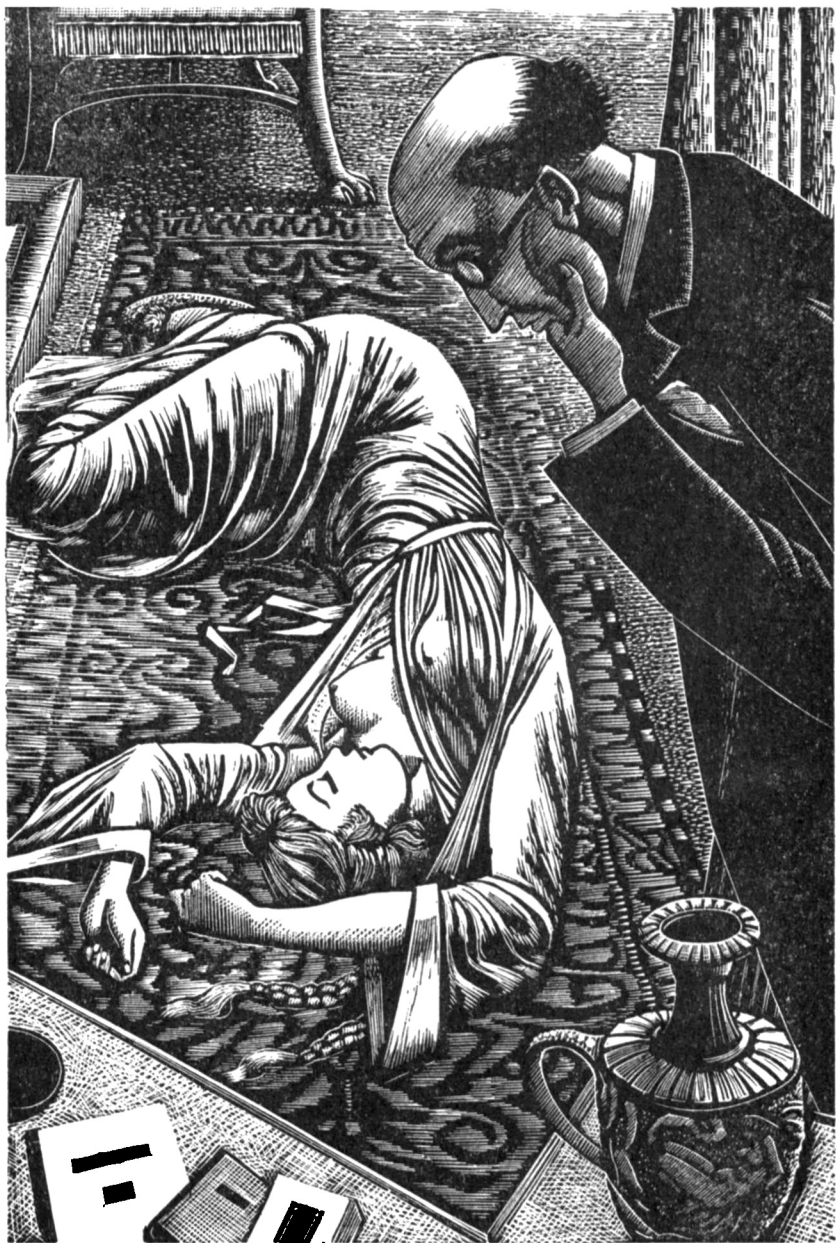
"Not a mark on her anywhere," he said finally. "It can't have been your father who knocked that man down—not in this car, anyway."

"Then how . . .? You said he was badly hurt?"

Fitzbrown shut off his torch.

"There is another possibility," he said slowly. "Jay had been struck on the top of his head—here." He gave himself a smart blow with the palm of his hand. "It was as if he had





*... She fell across the hearthrug. . . .*



been charging forward with his head down when he ran into something. But there's no sign of it on this car."

"My father must have thought he'd killed him," said Elsie, "or why did he come straight here and—shoot himself?"

"I said your father didn't run him down in the car," corrected Fitzbrown. He moved to the door leading back to the kitchen. "Can you tell me, Miss Walbeck—had your father any cause to hate Oliver Jay?"

## X

"I can't help you much," said Elsie. They were sitting in the drawing-room again, before the dead fire, and the room was getting colder. "I don't know much about it myself. But it's true that for some reason my father took a dislike to Oliver Jay. I never asked why. I don't enquire into my father's business. I've found it's better not to."

"Would your stepmother know? Where is she, by the way? Shouldn't she be told about this?"

"I don't know—where she is, I mean. She's away for the week-end. She has her own car. She often goes off like that. She'll ring up when she's settled. I thought she'd have rung up earlier. But it's not too late." She glanced at the clock. It was midnight. "Yes, she might know why Daddy disliked Mr. Jay. All I know is, Daddy used to pick him up in the car most mornings and take him in to Broxeter. Then for the past couple of months he wouldn't."

"Wouldn't give him a lift?"

"Worse than that: he used to wait till he saw Mr. Jay go by carrying his suitcase, and then he'd get out our car and drive past him. I used

to go in with Daddy sometimes, and it worried me, the way he used to drive past, splashing him with mud, in the narrowest part of the lane. And what's more, if he could, he'd stop and pick up someone else a bit farther along, so as to make it clear. I did say to him, 'Daddy, how *can* you?' but he just called Mr. Jay a swine and did the same thing next day."

"H'm—very odd. I should guess Mr. Jay knew something about your father's business activities that it wasn't convenient for him to know, and stupidly let it out.—Well, good-bye, Miss Walbeck. Sure you wouldn't like my nurse to come and keep you company?—that is, if you won't come down to my house."

"Oh no, thank you, Doctor. I shall be quite all right. I feel I must be here in case my stepmother rings up." She showed him to the door. "You'll let me know how Mr. Jay gets on, won't you?"

## XI

At the gate where a short while before Oliver Jay had been lying, Fitzbrown made his own careful examination. He had no need of a diagram; he remembered perfectly the position of Jay's unconscious body: bent, lying on one side, with the crown of the head almost touching the concrete gatepost on the right-hand side as one entered. Again the thought occurred that Jay looked as if he had been walking head foremost, as one does against a high wind. Yet the night was completely windless.

Fitzbrown bent down to examine the gravel: yes, there were footprints still to be seen. He had feared that



he and Robbins would have obliterated them, but he found three good prints under the place where Jay had lain. They were deep: the gravel was scuffed back from under the ball of the foot. And they pointed towards the right-hand gatepost—the one against which Jay's head had lain. Fitzbrown measured them, taking out his own footrule, and in the light of his torch he sketched his own diagram—three footprints lying well within the outline of a body. Fainter steps pointed the opposite way. It was not possible in this medium to take a cast: the loose sharp chippings prohibited that.

Then he turned the beam of his torch upon the gatepost. The spotlight travelled slowly up, one foot from the ground, two feet, three, four. . . . As it reached four, Fitzbrown gave an exclamation and strode forward. Jutting out from the post was the upper of two iron staples on which a gate had formerly hung. With a forceps he picked off from the end a few hairs, which he placed in a fold of paper and so into an envelope. The hairs were smeared with blood.

Mist swirled between him and the dark house as he hurried down the lane to his own house, got out his car, and drove off to the General Hospital in Broxeter.

## XII

Two dead men lay under sheets in the mortuary. In an adjoining room Dr. Jones scrubbed his hands, while Dr. Fitzbrown sat on a table swinging his long legs, and Superintendent Mallett watched them both from under his bushy red eyebrows.

"Well!" he said at last. "I thought

we had a case of manslaughter and suicide-while-the-balance."

"I was for murder and *felo de se*," said Jones with a chuckle. "But I didn't guess that what we had was in reverse. How do *you* describe it, Fitzbrown?"

"Murder and accidental *felo de se*," said Fitzbrown promptly. "Is there such a thing, Mallett? Well, the Coroner can tell us that, I suppose."

"I still don't see what put you on to it in the first place," said Jones. "I wasn't there, but——"

"But you had the cadavers," said Fitzbrown. "I hadn't, except for a few minutes, and in the dark, more or less. It was clear to me from the start that Jay couldn't have been knocked down where he lay. If he had been knocked down by Walbeck as he swung into the drive, Jay would have been run over as well. But Jay had no injury except the blow on the top of his head. To get that, he'd have had to have been walking head forward into the car, from the house to the drive. If that were so, clearly he couldn't have been lying *across* the gateway with his head almost touching one of the gateposts. You see?"

Mallett nodded. "The injury seemed to come from the direction of the gatepost, as it were."

"Quite so. My opinion was confirmed when I examined the car and found there was no mark of any kind on the radiator or the wings, or indeed anywhere on what was obviously a new—or newly cellulosed—car. There was a rumour that Walbeck, among other activities, dealt in stolen cars, you know."

"We know," said Mallett grimly. "If he hadn't been dead, he'd have



been in gaol this time next week."

"Good. Well, now he's gone before a Higher Tribunal—we hope. So now we had a real cadaver. Didn't you notice, Jones, that he wasn't left-handed?"

"How do you know that? Oh, you asked the daughter!"

"Certainly not. I noticed that the shot was in the left temple and the revolver was beside him in the passenger's seat—always a suspicious circumstance, by the way, when the revolver isn't in the suicide's hand, because of *rigor* in sudden death. Then I looked at his hand where it lay near the revolver. Then I went round and looked at the other hand through the window. It was on the driving-wheel. Everything pointed to a right-handed man. There was an ashtray, swivelled out, with a burnt-out cigarette on it, on the right side at knee-level. The right hand was stained with tobacco, the left hand not. The right hand was larger, more powerful-looking; the left hand was finer and whiter, and carried his rings and wrist-watch. I would say Walbeck was a completely right-handed man—that is, one who never uses his left hand except when he must."

"I examined the hands for traces of firing," said Jones, "and there was a faint smell on the *left* hand, Fitzbrown."

"Of course. The killer forced the left hand round the revolver to get the finger-prints. But the left hand wouldn't hold the revolver, so the killer had to leave it on the seat. The shot was fired from the left side—but not by Walbeck."

"How did the fellow come to make such a simple mistake?" said Mallett contemptuously.

"Perhaps he had no choice," said Fitzbrown. "He probably persuaded Walbeck to stop and pick him up in the lane or even in the drive. They sat talking—and that was the side he was on. He knew he could count on one witness to say Walbeck was, if not left-handed, ambidextrous. It would take a lot of disproving if a relative vouched for it."

"And the engine?"

"Oh, the criminal's way of making it look like determined suicide: assurance doubly sure. Criminals always overdo things, don't they, Mallett?"

Mallett grunted doubtfully.

"But this fellow Jay," said Jones. "It was overdoing things with a vengeance to crack his own skull. Do you really ask us to believe he ran his own head on to a concrete post to give verisimilitude?"

"I do," said Fitzbrown calmly. "You'll have to. I can prove it. Look here."

He showed the envelope containing the bloodstained hairs.

"Off the staple," he said, "and definitely belonging to Jay. Go and compare if you're not sure." He jerked his head towards the mortuary. Neither of the other two men moved.

"I noticed," said Fitzbrown, not without quiet triumph, "that Walbeck had no gates hung on to his gateposts. I suppose he was waiting until he could lift—Eezylift—a fine old wrought-iron pair from some country house. When Jay planned to murder Walbeck and make it look like suicide, he had to stage an accident to himself, since no one else was available. Right. He lay in wait for Walbeck, shot him with Walbeck's revolver, and then rammed his own



head against the concrete post. He didn't intend to do more than bruise the top of his head and sham a short unconsciousness. He knew of the arrangement by which Robbins was to patrol the lane for possible burglars, and he knew he'd soon be found. So he took a deep breath, ran his head against the post—and did not see the iron staple which sticks out three inches just where his head would hit if he charged head downwards. So he had it—and left some of his scalp on the staple."

"Ah!" said Mallett with the deep sigh of a frustrated sleuth, "if only I'd got there first!"

There was a silence. Then:

"The motive?" said Dr. Jones.

Fitzbrown shrugged. "Ask the ladies—if you can find 'em."

### XIII

Mrs. Walbeck came breathlessly into the police-station next morning. Soon she was sitting in front of Mallett, telling him in asthmatic gasps all she knew, while the three rows of pearls, and the mink lapels scented with violet heaved up and down.

"Motives? Motives?" she cried. "They *all* had motives! The question was, who'd get in first. To begin with, my husband ruined Jay and then got him into his own business, pretending to sell hosiery, actually offering—well, you know all that."

"Jay's wife?" queried Fitzbrown, bending his keen face towards her.

Mrs. Walbeck shook her head, so that the long ear-rings danced.

"Not on your life! My husband liked women to be *clean*. And he wouldn't have touched Jay's leavings. He despised Jay, and never lost a chance of showing it."

"Splashing him in the car," nodded Fitzbrown. "Well-known way of arousing murderous feelings, especially in ex-car-owners."

Mrs. Walbeck turned to stare. "How did you know that?—I told him he was a fool. However. . . . No, the real cause was——" She paused for dramatic effect.

"Elsie," said Fitzbrown coolly.

"Well, I give up!" said Mrs. Walbeck indignantly. "Since you know so much, Doctor, you'd better tell the rest." She bridled, looking to the stolid Superintendent for support.

"Right, I will," said Fitzbrown. He sat on the edge of the desk. "Jay was in love with Elsie and Elsie with Jay. Jay's wife left him—not unwillingly; she was sick of him and living in the country, and his affair with Elsie was the last straw. Jay knew plenty about Walbeck, but Walbeck had the upper hand. If Jay tried informing, he ruined himself along with his master. I imagine Jay tried a bit of blackmail, and that was why Walbeck enjoyed splashing him. Anyway, Elsie didn't want her father ruined. She wanted to inherit his fortune. She got the bulk of it, I guess, as you're only his second wife?"

Mrs. Walbeck pouted.

"All I got was five thousand pounds. She took the rest, including the car, the furniture, the china——"

"And the pitchers," said Fitzbrown solemnly.

"Eh? Oh yes, the *pictures*," she corrected him with scornful superiority.

"Well," continued Fitzbrown, "Elsie probably knew from Jay that Walbeck couldn't avoid the police much longer—you were on to him at last, Mallett, you say—and she knew she'd lose the lot if she didn't get in



first. So she and Jay cooked up this scheme together. She knew about her father's threat to commit suicide if he had another car accident. She probably faked the burglaries, with Jay's help, so that she could get her father to arrange to have the lane patrolled. She knew when her father would be back, and when Robbins would pass by. She got her stepmother out of the way—didn't she, Mrs. Walbeck?"

Mrs. Walbeck nodded furiously. "Not for the first time, by any means!"

"She gave Jay her father's revolver. And, of course, that was why she 'didn't hear any revolver shot.' She couldn't have failed to on such a quiet night."

"Then she's an accomplice!" said Mrs. Walbeck exultantly. "You'll arrest her immediately? Do you know where she's gone?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Mallett. "But it'll be difficult to prove she had any hand in it—unless we can get her to confess."

"That you'll never do," said Mrs. Walbeck. "She's as hard as iron."

Fitzbrown leaned across the desk.

"She has already confessed—to me," he said gravely.

"What!" All three turned their gaze on him.

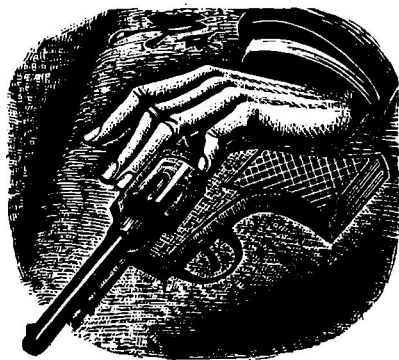
"Yes. When I first saw her last night, she was calm, thinking that Jay's injury was slight, as they had arranged. When I told her her father was dead, she didn't turn a hair. But when I told her that Jay's skull was fractured, she fainted. She'll break down under examination, Mallett, if you go about it in the right way. Get her to identify her father's body, for instance, in the supposed absence of her stepmother—she'll probably swallow that—and then show her the other. She can't yet know he's dead."

Mallett looked doubtful.

"She had no mercy on her father, you know," said Fitzbrown. "And if that doesn't work, hand her over to me."

#### XIV

Elsie Walbeck is now serving a sentence of imprisonment for life. When she comes out, in about fifteen years' time, it will not be to inherit her father's goods, for most of them were stolen, and he was insolvent, anyway. Mrs. Walbeck managed to prove that some of the property was hers—enough to equip a lodging-house in Brighton with furniture, china, and five gold "pitchers."







## THE RAINMAKER

ROY PEARSON

*Illustrations by Winifred Walsh*

*The Rainmakers flourished in Southern and Central British Africa during times of drought until comparatively recently. It was a common practice for these necromancers to sacrifice to the gods of the elements young children, concocting special brews of appeasement believed to possess magical powers, enticing the rains to fall. Lips, fingers and ears from the bodies were used. It being believed these were the symbols of life. The author, who lives in Southern Rhodesia, says that modern witch-doctors who make rain by throwing chemicals on to clouds from aeroplanes have not appeared as yet.*



ON dipping day at Masaga's cattle dip, some five hundred Africans had assembled with their wealth—the motley collection of cattle ranging from grey speckled steers whose nodding heads so closely resembled the old men of the kraals, to the unusual jet-black cow—the one people whispered spelt witchcraft.

Drought had prevailed throughout the Northern Transvaal; the ominous spectre of famine was already rearing its evil head. The emaciated condition of the cattle told the story. Dipping day was no longer a day of sport and entertainment watching herd boys dash in among their surging mass of excited and frivolous beasts—the cattle stood dazed, al-

most dead on their feet, with ribs protruding from glaring hides.

Bitali, the old chief, turned to the gathering who had chosen to sit around him. The chocolate-brown flesh hung in folds over his ancient belt, from which suspended his loin-cloth.

"Maybe," Bitali commented, "the European has news of rain?"

"I think not," a younger man replied. "No, induna, he will no doubt come to tell us we must eat still less to last us over until the rains come next year."

A motor-truck came over the rise, picking its way carefully down the eroded slopes which led down to the tank.

The dip attendant greeted the European. "Look, nkosi, how filthy my water is—I dare not change it; it



has been like that for weeks; we want water badly."

The sunburned European looked at the thick brown water, noting that sticks and filth lay on its surface rather than floated.

"There is still no sign of rain—the wet clouds from the north have turned back again," he began. Addressing the people in their own clicking tongue, he implored them to conserve their grain. He exhorted them to sell their beasts rather than lose them altogether. One woman—he did not notice her—listened attentively to all he said. She gazed heavenwards at the banks of cloud which hung there, grey brassy seams which had dawdled across the skies for weeks—she knew, however, that rain was still far off. She smiled cunningly as she thought of the European's words. Having come from afar, her mind dwelt on her bush hideouts—she had no cattle there now, they had all died from thirst; even the great Limpopo was dry. Somehow or other she must fill her kraal again, the kraal few men knew.

Striking the rocks with a hyena tail, she moved to the gathering by the dip, stopping near Bitali. Furtively they eyed her hyena tail—they knew immediately she was either a witch or possessed with magical powers.

Some recognized her, and knew her fame as a rainmaker; others shuddered as they remembered stories which had percolated into the Zoutpansburg.

Bitali spoke. "Mother, our cattle are dying daily—our stomachs hang—kuda graze right by our kraals, yet we lack the strength to hunt them—the children cry and our women revile us, the white men

have promised us food, but it hasn't yet arrived—our——"

"Stop," ordered Vanochema, raising her right hand and swinging her switch. "Bitali—meet me by Mpala hill just after sunset to-night, bringing with you two fingers— young fingers."

She turned and walked majestically away into the sun-scorched and dusty thorn scrub.

A pale moon was climbing the heavy skies, slightly illuminating the rust-coloured bulk of Mpala as Bitali halted by its slopes.

Ahead of him stood two cows almost dying on their feet—they were the fingers she had idiomatically asked for. To the west the last blood-red streaks of the sun faded on the horizon, away to the east a veld fire raged, silhouetting the craggy kopjes.

Vanochema came from under the shadows of a fig-tree. "Here are your fingers," Bitali whispered, urging the cattle forward.

Silently the woman clubbed the unfortunate beasts, who seemed to welcome and await death. Cutting their throats, she let the blood gush forth with a rattle into two large calabashes. "Pick up a calabash," she urged Bitali, signalling him to follow her. Quietly they picked their way up the rocky hill-side.

Vanochema seated herself by a small fire already prepared in a small amphitheatre of granite boulders, waving Bitali to the ground in front of her.

With a mysterious gesture she placed the gourds of blood on the edge of the fire near the glowing ashes.

"I will summon the rain," she whispered. "Look at me, Bitali," she



commanded. "Look at me, Bitali—look at ME—Vanochema, bringer of rain!" Her voice droned on, it commanded, then pleaded, reaching a high crescendo of imploring sound, then dropped to the depths—an urgent order.

Bitali felt something was happening to him; he raised his head higher and higher, his body seemed to become possessed with a new-found youth, then that left him. He felt or saw nothing, except two burning piercing eyes which stabbed out of the darkness at him malignantly like embers. From time to time they grew larger, they filled with a blood-red lustre. Bitali found himself moving now, he rent the air with short sharp staccato barks, and jumped around like a baboon—a spirit had possessed him, a jukwa spirit which had long left the body of some scavenger of the veld.

His physical identity left him—he was no longer Bitali of the Gumbo clan—the night before him was filled with vague dancing spirits—overawed by the dominating presence of Vanochema.

The night was suddenly split asunder by a high-pitched scream, the sky seemed to fall in on the old chief, and his mind then left his body. For the remainder of the night he was the slave of Vanochema—the great rainmaker whose fame stretched far north of the Limpopo.

Bitali awoke long after the sun had climbed above the hills. He walked to his cattle kraal and eyed his stock despondently—twenty head of skin and bone. Then he noticed the red cow and the jet-black ones were missing, a premonition of evil

gripped the old man—he remembered Vanochema—she had sacrificed the cattle, rain might now come. As though to cheer him, a few heavy drops spattered down on to the rancid dung of his cattle kraal.

Bitali took his breakfast, a plate of dry and stinking locusts. It was later that morning he heard the shocking news. Two young boys had been found dead by a plum-tree near Mpala hill—their bodies had been horribly mutilated.

Bitali sorrowed with the grieving parents. He advised them to go straight to the Police Post and report the murder to Mafohlela—the local sergeant. His native name meant—to break out of something difficult.

A fierce crack rent the skies apart. Bitali saw the ragged yellow fire leaping down to earth. The first great crash of thunder echoed from the undulating hills and the rains came, falling in a solid mass to inundate the countryside almost immediately.

Some weeks later Bitali stood in a box. It was the first time he had ever seen the inside of a European courthouse. He watched the magistrate enter and saw everyone rise and sit down again.

Following his custom, he politely sat down. "Stand up," roared an orderly to him. The European has some funny laws, thought Bitali, making a man stand up when it was polite to be seated.

An interpreter was speaking to him. Opposite in another box stood the policeman who had brought him to town.

"He says, that near a hill called Mpala he found two small children's



bodies—they had been clubbed to death, fingers from their hands were missing. Nearby were the burnt remains of two head of cattle. He also found calabashes with dried ox-blood on them, on one calabash he found your fingerprints. He is now reading a report from a clever doctor in Johannesburg—this doctor wrote swearing it to be the truth—that in the calabash bearing your fingerprints he found the remains of ox-blood and also the remains of human fingers. The blood from them is the same as the blood from the dead children—this doctor divides blood up, that is his work—there is the calabash we are talking about in the Court.”

Bitali looked at the gourds—he saw one rather burnt, and then the other—the one he had carried up the hill for Vanochema.

“Do you want to ask any questions?” enquired the magistrate.

Bitali spoke. “Did you find the oxen I gave to Vanochema to bring rain?”

The policeman said he found only the burnt remains of two oxen at the foot of the hill. The calabashes were higher up the hill.

Bitali thought—are they trying to say I killed my neighbour’s children, he wondered? Something flashed across his mind, but he could not remember much about that fateful night. The art of self-defence by cross examination was unknown to this rural native.

“Did you ask Vanochema about her offering for rain?” He addressed the policeman. The witness seemed loath to answer.

“I think it is better for you to call this witness Vanochema,” said

the magistrate; “you can question her direct then.”

Another man entered the witness-box. The interpreter rattled on—“He is a clever man who has studied the ways and customs of our people—he holds many certificates saying how clever he is—he knows all about rainmaking, and he has heard the evidence in this case—he says it seems an old custom has been revived. He has dealt with many cases where a magical potion called “indiwisi” was brewed from ox-blood, roots and parts of human children’s bodies. Some natives believed it brought rain in times of drought,” was the translation of his evidence.

Bitali remained silent. How could he question such a clever man—and in any case, what he said was perfectly true—he knew about “indiwisi”—it wasn’t a word people played with, but he knew that his grandfather had used such a medicine to help crops grow in times of drought, and there were many tales of children missing suddenly from their kraals.

Evidence followed from people who lived near him to the effect that they had identified the children, and that Bitali had been talking to a rainmaker at Masaga’s cattle dip named Vanochema.

A doctor said he thought the children died at about three in the morning.

“Have you any evidence?” asked the magistrate.

“Where is Vanochema?” queried the accused man. A policeman stood up and said they were searching for her.

A few weeks later Bitali was brought to Court again. Vanochema,





WALSH

*"... I will summon the rain ..."*



the great rainmaker, gazed at him from across the crowded house. Bitali looked once at her—those piercing eyes met his, carrying a grim warning.

She gave evidence that she was recognized as a rainmaker north of the Limpopo, and that she was often called in by the people during drought.

She recounted how Bitali had asked her to bring rain for his section of the tribe, and how she had asked him for two head of cattle.

“You said two fingers, didn’t you?” asked Bitali.

“That is the way the people speak when they talk of cattle,” replied the woman.

“You killed them, Vanochema, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Why did you ask for cattle from Bitali?” the magistrate intervened.

“To bring the rain—I had to have them to propitiate the gods who send the rain—it seems obvious these people”—pointing to Bitali and his clan—“have wronged their gods—he, Bitali, asked me to do this for him and his people. I only sacrificed the cattle.”

“Where did you leave Bitali and at what time?” asked the prosecutor.

“I left him on the hill, and it was a short time after the sun had sunk that I set off; the last I saw of Bitali, he was sitting by my fire clenching and unclenching his hands, mumbling to himself.”

Bitali looked across the courtroom puzzled—what *did* happen that night?—he could not remember.

Vanochema left the room.

“The case will come up before the

great Judge at the High Court,” said the magistrate.

It was a month later when Bitali faced the Judge and his assistants. He looked at the long hair of the Judge and the red flowing gown. Only clever people had long hair—he remembered the old Kings Dingaana and Tshaka—both had long hair—it indicated great strength of body and mind. Beside the Judge, on each side, sat two men whom he knew to be Native Commissioners some years ago.

The same evidence was heard over again. After it was completed, an advocate who had visited him in gaol spoke—the interpreter told him what he said.

“My client knows nothing of this dreadful affair—although the evidence looks black against him; the period of time on the night in question is not accounted for. The doctor thought the children died at three in the morning. All that has been proved is that he was with this woman until just after sunset, and that she was trying to bring rain by using an old ceremony—I must ask that he be let free.”

Another address followed by another European, who maintained, that after Vanochema had left Bitali, he had carried out a rainmaking ceremony himself—“everything and all the circumstances point to that,” he said.

The Judge talked with the two men who sat beside him. Bitali now recognized one of them as Umhla-kanipa—the very clever old retired Native Commissioner.

They left the Court and returned after half an hour.

Straightening up, the Judge spoke.



"The accused must be released. Bitali—you are free. My learned advisers tell me that these rainmakers, or goddesses as some people prefer to call them, have very clever and cunning hypnotic powers—in fact, they are similar to the witch-doctors who get people under their spell.

"I order," he said, after a pause, "that a very thorough investigation be made into this case, especially into the movements and history of Vanochema."

Bitali walked out of the Court. Heavy rain was falling. A crowd of excited relatives greeted and cheered him. The terrible dream was over.

Why did they put me there, Bitali wondered, as he set off for home.

The hills glistened in the fleeting rays of sunlight, water coursed down the recently dried-out spruits. A rainbow—the Queen's hair circlet—stretched across the sky, multi-coloured birds whirred round Bitali's head, who noticed all these wonderful things at once.

He stopped by the gate of his cattle kraal. There was not a beast in it; the old appearance of the dung told him it had been empty for weeks.

Bitali called his brother. "Where are my cattle?"

At that moment a police truck pulled up nearby. "When did you last see Vanochema?" asked the policeman of Bitali's brother. He answered both questions together.

"She came about a month ago and took

them all away—she said Bitali had instructed her to collect them, and sell them for his defence costs."

Bitali rubbed his eyes. Why should I worry, he thought, I am free and the rains have come?

A fierce onslaught of rain drenched them suddenly. "Alas," said Bitali's brother; "when is it going to stop, we have too much now."

A woman sat in a fissure of rocks near her kraal way up at Pafure, near the Mozambique border.

The rains had not yet reached this desolate part of the country. Below her about fifty natives were crying for rain.

She smiled. "No," she whispered to herself, "I won't be too greedy—I have twenty head of cattle near the Sabi; let's wait until next year; besides, the rain will soon come here—I have appeased the gods."

She failed to notice the two native detectives climbing the rugged rocks behind her, otherwise she might have escaped.

Later, as they led her away from her kraal, she eyed the hyena tail they had taken possession of. She was worried, for she noticed the tail

was still slightly caked with blood, and remembered that, after all the precautions she had taken at Mpala hill, she had forgotten to clean the tail—she had wanted to, but there was no water in that district, and she had waved that tail, symbol of her profession; frantically all that fateful night.







## APPARITIONS AND HALLUCINATIONS.

KENNETH WALKER

*Illustrations by Jack Matthew*

*In the account of hypnotism given by Mr. Kenneth Walker, the surgeon, in our eighth number, he emphasized that hypnosis produces an increase of suggestibility. The hypnotized subject, he wrote, can be brought to believe almost anything: that the room in which he is sitting is a garden, or that he has become a child again and is crying for his mother. The subject creates for himself a very passable garden out of the room in which he is sitting or cries much as he cried when he was actually a child. It is not make-believe. He is persuaded that he is in a garden or is a child who wants his mother. The subject of hallucinations is an important one.*

**W**HAT is an hallucination? The *Oxford Dictionary* states that it is "the apparent perception of an external object

when no such object is present." But instead of relying on definitions, it will be more satisfactory to take some example of an hallucination, note its characteristics, and then discuss its nature and causation. There is an interesting example of an hallucination in Edmund



Gurney's *Phantasms of the Living*, a book published in 1883, which was the outcome of an investigation carried out by a committee of the newly formed Society for Psychical Research. It contains the following account of an hallucination by Miss Reddell:

"Helen Alexander (maid to Lady Waldegrave) was lying very ill with typhoid fever, and was attended by me. I was standing at the table by her bedside, pouring out her medicine, at about four o'clock on the morning of the 4th October, 1880. I heard the call-bell ring (this had been heard twice before during the night in that same week), and was attracted by the door of the room opening, and by seeing a person entering the room whom I instantly felt to be the mother of the sick woman. She had a brass candlestick in her hand, a red shawl over her shoulders, and a flannel petticoat on, which had a hole in the front. I looked at her as much as to say, 'I'm glad you have come,' but the woman looked at me sternly, as much as to say, 'Why wasn't I sent for before?' I gave the medicine to Helen Alexander, and then turned round to speak to the vision, but no one was there. She had gone. She was a short, dark person, and very stout. At about six o'clock that morning Helen Alexander died. Two days after, her parents and sister came to Antony, and arrived between one and two o'clock in the morning; I and another maid let them in, and it gave me a great turn when I saw the living likeness of the vision I had seen two nights before. I told the sister about the vision, and she saw that the description of

the dress exactly answered her mother's, and that they had brass candlesticks at home exactly like the one described. There was not the slightest resemblance between the mother and daughter.

"(Signed—FRANCES REDDELL.)"

\* \* \*

This description of the ghostly visitor was given by Miss Reddell to her employer, Lady Waldegrave, a few hours after she had seen it. It was recorded therefore while the incident was still fresh in her mind, and Miss Reddell prefaced the account of the visitation with the following words: "I am not superstitious, or nervous, and I wasn't in the least frightened, but her mother came to see her last night." It is difficult therefore to dismiss the whole story as the delusion of an overtired servant, or as a tale elaborated later, after she had met the dead girl's mother.

What particularly interested the members of the committee of the Society for Psychical Research who investigated this case was that the description of the figure corresponded exactly with what would have probably been the appearance of the mother had she been roused suddenly from bed that night and had she actually visited her daughter. Not only was the candlestick seen in the vision of the pattern used in her house, but so also was there a hole in the front of Mrs. Alexander's petticoat, a hole which was produced by the way in which she always wore that garment.

The account also illustrates another point which the committee found to be true of the great majority of accounts of hallucinations investi-



gated by them, namely, that an hallucination is not necessarily the sign of an unbalanced mind. Many of the people who had seen apparitions were quiet, responsible people who had never previously suffered from any hallucination. The girl Reddell was regarded by all who knew her as being a very matter-of-fact and reliable young woman who had not had any previous unusual psychic experiences.

Yet in the words of the *Oxford Dictionary* she had perceived "an external object when no such external object was actually present." Nor was the external object she had perceived a vague or nebulous one. It was sufficiently well defined to allow of such details being noticed as the facial expression and the existence of a small hole in the front of the petticoat. It was only in its mode of production that the hallucination differed from the ordinary seeing of an old woman carrying a brass candlestick and wearing a red shawl. The apparition was not produced by way of stimulation of the eyes, but came from a direct excitation of the visual area of the brain. In other words, it arose in the same way as memory images, imagined figures, or dream figures arise, centrally in the brain.

Yet the conditions associated with the production of the apparition were quite unlike those which are required for memory figures, visualized figures and dream figures. Dream figures require for their appearance a lowering of the general level of consciousness, and imagined figures demand a focusing of the artist's attention on what he has a desire to create in his mind. The vision of the figure in the red shawl

had made no such demands as these before it had appeared, but had manifested itself when Miss Reddell was fully awake and was occupied in thinking about something entirely different, namely, about the correct dose of medicine for her patient.

What, we may ask, was the cause of the sudden activity in the visual area of Miss Reddell's brain which resulted in her projecting into the room the hallucination of a stout old woman dressed in a flannel petticoat with a hole in it? I would hesitate to proffer any answer to this question, but F. W. H. Myers, in his *Human Personality*, comments on this case as follows:

"Now what I imagine to have happened is this. The mother, anxious about her daughter, paid her a *psychical visit* during the sleep of both. In so doing she actually modified a certain portion of space, not materially nor optically, but in such a manner that persons perceptive in a certain fashion would discern in that part of space an image approximately corresponding to the conception of her own aspect latent in the invading mother's mind. A person thus susceptible happened to be in the room, and thus, as a bystander, witnessed a psychical invasion whose memory the invader (the mother) apparently did not retain, while the invaded person—the due percipient (the sick daughter)—may or may not have perceived it in a dream, but died and left no sign of having done so."

Note that in giving us this ex-



planation Myers has been compelled to make a great many unsupported assumptions. Some will think that his explanation raises more difficulties than it solves. "The mother, anxious about her daughter, paid her a *psychical visit* during the sleep of both." What evidence is there that psychical visits can be paid during sleep? "A person thus susceptible happened to be in the room, and thus, as a bystander, witnessed a psychical invasion." What precisely is a psychical invasion?

Many will find it easier to have done with the whole business and to say: "Miss Reddell suffered from an hallucination; in other words, she perceived what did not actually exist, and why she did so is beyond the wit of man to tell."

Yet it is quite impossible to dismiss all hallucinations as the products of the imagination of hysterical people or halfwits. Many hallucinations are built out of complex images, and their fashioning demands the exercise of considerable intelligence on the part of their makers. An hallucination has on occasions been shared simultaneously by two or even three people. An apparition has been known to impart to the percipient knowledge of which he or she was not previously aware, the veracity of which is afterwards confirmed. It is difficult, therefore, to put all hallucinations into the same category as the pink rats and green snakes of the alcoholic or as the nightmare creations of the delirious patient. The majority of apparitions have indeed more in common with the visions of the artist than with the nightmares of delirious patients.

So full of life are they and so little is the percipient aware of their genesis that they, like the artist's creations, appear to have arisen of themselves and to be completely independent of the mind of the percipient.

But the fact that the creations of the subconscious mind can be objectified so thoroughly by the percipient that they appear to have an entirely independent existence of their own is of very little assistance in explaining the apparition described by Miss Reddell. She was not an artist in the throes of creative work, and the idea of the patient's mother had up till that moment never entered her mind. She was occupied instead with the practical task of measuring out her patient's medicine. No reason can be found therefore for the eruption into her consciousness at that particular moment of a life-like picture of an old lady in a red shawl which, unknown to her, had been forming itself in the dark regions of her subluminal mind. And even if a reason could be found for this creative activity on the part of Miss Reddell's imagination, we are still left with the difficult task of explaining how her subluminal mind had managed to paint such an excellent portrait of a person whom she had never seen. From a snapshot perhaps which the sick servant Helen Alexander had previously shown her! But in the year 1880 few people possessed photographs of their relatives, especially when they belonged to what were known as the working classes.

But it should be noted that Myers is not primarily interested in *Miss Reddell's* subconscious mind. It is with the mind of *Mrs. Alexander*,



the sick girl's mother, that he is chiefly concerned, for it was her mind which was responsible for what had happened. According to him, the mother's desire to be with her sick daughter brought about a "psychical invasion" of the sick room, an invasion to which Miss Reddell was sensitive.

In support of this contention that a person's subconscious mind can manifest itself elsewhere, Myers reproduces another account of an hallucination from Gurney's book, *Phantasms of the Living*. The narrator this time is a Mr. S. H. B., who writes:

"On a certain Sunday evening in November 1881, having been reading of the great power which the human will is capable of exercising, I determined, with the whole force of my being, that I would be present in spirit in the front bedchamber on the second floor of a house situated at 22 Hogarth Road, Kensington, in which room slept two ladies of my acquaintance, viz. Miss L. S. V. and Miss F. C. V., aged respectively twenty-five and eleven years. I was living at this time at 23 Kildare Gardens, a distance of about three miles from Hogarth Road, and I had not mentioned in any way my intention of trying this experiment to either of the above ladies, for the simple reason that it was only on retiring to rest upon this Sunday night that I made up my mind to do so. The time at which I determined I would be there was one o'clock in the morning, and I also had a strong intention of making my presence perceptible.

"On the following Thursday I went to see the ladies in question, and in the course of conversation (without any allusion to the subject on my part), the elder one told me that on the previous Sunday night she had been much terrified by perceiving me standing by her bedside, and that she screamed when the apparition advanced towards her and awoke her little sister, who also saw me.

"I asked her if she was awake at the time, and she replied most decidedly in the affirmative, and upon my enquiring the time of this occurrence, she replied about one o'clock in the morning.

"This lady, at my request, wrote down a statement of the event and signed it.

"This was the first occasion upon which I tried an experiment of this kind, and its complete success startled me very much.

"Besides exercising my powers of volition very strongly, I put forth an effort which I cannot find words to describe. I was conscious of a mysterious influence of some sort permeating in my body, and had a distinct impression that I was exercising some force with which I had hitherto been unacquainted, but which I can now, at certain times, set in motion at will.

"(Signed) S. H. B."

The committee interviewed the two Miss V.s as well as a third sister sleeping in an adjoining room. The two sisters, L. S. V. and F. C. V., confirmed their having seen an apparition of S. H. B. at one o'clock, and the third sister A. S. V. stated that she had been called into her sisters' room that night to be told



about what had happened. At the request of the committee the experiment was repeated by S. H. B. and again apparently with success.

What can be said about hallucinations when the subject is approached from the standpoint of the scientist? Very little. It can be said that an hallucination, whether it be optical or auditory, arises from central activity in the brain, and that the sense organs play no part in it. It can also be said that a state between

waking and sleeping is a very propitious one for the occurrence of an hallucination, and that there are many instances in which the hallucination has occurred simultaneously to two percipients. And having made these statements, it is better, for the present, to go no farther, for we know so little about these strange activities of the mind that it is a mistake to build theories on such insecure foundations. They are mysteries in the true sense of that word.



Vision is the art of seeing things invisible.

JONATHAN SWIFT: *Thoughts on Various Subjects*, 1706.





## THE SAME PLACE TWICE

GLYNNE W. ROWLAND

*Illustrations by Winifred Walsh*

*Mr Rowland is a Welshman who, after living for over thirty years in London, recently returned to his native land. He keeps a grocer's shop and, what is more to the point, the grocer's shop keeps him so well that he now controls a second business. In his leisure moments he writes. This is his first detective story.*

**S**ERGEANT PETERS put down his pen with deliberation.

"You look worried, Johnson," he remarked with gruff kindness. "What's the matter?"

The constable stopped pacing the station floor and looked at his superior doubtfully.

"You've no need to tell me if you'd rather not," the sergeant said. "Particularly if it's a domestic matter."

"I'm afraid it is, sir."

"Then forget I asked about it, Johnson."

The fresh-complexioned, youthful constable was not finding it easy either to talk or keep silent. Until the last few weeks he had been keen and enthusiastic, a promising P.C., eager for promotion. Recently he had become sad and absent in manner.

The sergeant, who liked the youngster, was worried about him, for he understood rather better than the constable realized the cause of the change. Johnson's wife was by no means ideal for a policeman. She wore clothes which caused the villagers to ask each other how her husband could afford such luxuries, and she had a superior manner



which annoyed them. And there had been bitter domestic quarrels. He did not need to listen to village gossip in order to be certain of that. When passing the constable's home he had often heard raised voices.

Whatever the cause of the trouble, the sergeant felt that Johnson was close to breaking-point. But he decided not to press questions at the moment, thoughtfully dismissed the constable to his duties, and turned his attention to choosing the bowls team for the coming Saturday tournament. He had drawn up a list of "possibles" when he was interrupted by another visitor.

Mrs. Davidson was obviously nervous. The sergeant knew her well, for she was on every committee the village boasted. The Youth Club, the Parish Council, the Parochial Church Council, the Cricket and Football Clubs, all had her support. She was an active little woman. What she chose to describe as a "sense of responsibility" many villagers referred to in a less flattering phrase.

"Sit down, Mrs. Davidson. What is it this time?"

"It's—it's about Mrs. Johnson."

Sergeant Peters was almost caught off his guard.

"What about her, Mrs. Davidson?" he asked, in a tone of polite interest.

"She's—dead!"

"Dead?"

"Yes, and if I know anything about it, she's been murdered."

The sergeant blew his nose vigorously.

"Come, come," he reproved.

"She has, sergeant. She's been murdered, and by her husband, too."

"Mrs. Davidson, really——"

"I know she's been murdered." Mrs. Davidson spoke with emphasis

and with the pride of one bearing momentous tidings. "I live next door, as you know perfectly well, sergeant, and neither my husband nor I have seen her since last Thursday. Johnson told me she was on a visit to her mother, but Mrs. Johnson told me only two months ago that her mother was dead."

She stared at the sergeant with sharp, triumphant eyes.

"Apart from that," the sergeant said patiently, "have you any reason for such a serious accusation?"

"Oh yes. I've heard Johnson tell her he'd do her in. My husband's heard him, too. In fact, Johnson's made the threat several times."

"Why should he wish to do that?" Sergeant Peters spoke sharply. "After all, I happen to know that Johnson loves his wife very much indeed."

Mrs. Davidson took a deep breath.

"That's all the more reason why he should want to kill her, if she happened to be bothering with another man."

"How do you know that?"

"I've heard him telling his wife to keep away from a certain Basil Renton. I saw her twice in a car with a strange man. He would be Basil Renton, I'll be bound. I've seen the same car parked outside the 'Green Man' more than once."

Mrs. Davidson, the sergeant noted, had been nosy ever since he had known her. Obviously, she had been eavesdropping.

"You've told me everything, I suppose, Mrs. Davidson?"

"It's enough, isn't it, sergeant?"

"Yes, it's enough to run you into serious trouble. Mind you, I'll look into it, but you'd better keep your mouth shut."

"You seem to forget that I'm a



Parish Councillor," Mrs. Davidson flashed, rising.

"There's no danger of forgetting that, I'm sure," said Sergeant Peters. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Davidson."

The most important member of the Council (in her own eyes) had been gone an hour when Constable Johnson returned. His every look and gesture betrayed mental strain. The sergeant decided to speak at once.

"Johnson," he said, "I would like to know—purely as a friend, mind you—where Mrs. Johnson happens to be?"

"You'll have to know sooner or later," Johnson replied. "She's left me."

"That's what I thought, Johnson. I'm very sorry indeed. You've no idea where she might be?"

"She left no address. Simply a note saying that she was never coming back."

"Your wife might come back, Johnson."

"She won't, I know she won't."

The despairing emphasis startled the sergeant.

"Well, we must hope that she does," he said quietly.

On his way home, Sergeant Peters was so immersed in his thoughts that he failed to see Miss Paterson standing at his gate. He had almost pushed the front wheel of his cycle against her before he noticed she was there.

"Sorry, Miss," he apologized.

"Oh, Sergeant, I simply must see you!"

Miss Paterson, the village schoolmistress, was usually very composed, with an air of command which was the result of dealing with children,

but to-day she seemed timid, as though frightened by something.

"What is it, Miss?"

"I don't quite know how to begin." Miss Paterson fluttered. "It's about the constable, Mr. Johnson."

"What about him, Miss?" he said, with commendable calm.

"You remember my dog, Bruce, Sergeant?"

"Of course. But he's dead, isn't he?"

"Yes. I asked Johnson to bury him for me on Tinden Common."

Suddenly, the sergeant felt he knew why the policeman had been so sure that his wife would never return.

"What about it, Miss Paterson?"

"He called last Wednesday evening, put Bruce in a sack, placed him across the handlebars of his bike, and that was the last I saw of Bruce."

"Why did he bury the dog so far from the village?"

"Because Bruce loved playing there. It seemed to me to be a most fitting burial——"

"I see. What exactly are you suggesting, Miss Paterson?"

"Oh dear, Sergeant. It's a terrible thing to say, but I'm sure that Johnson's wife, poor soul, is in Tinden."

"In the grave where your dog's supposed to be, eh?"

"Yes. While Bruce, I fear, is at the bottom of Tinden Pool, stones weighing down his sack."

Sergeant Peters blew his nose.

"What makes you think so, Miss Paterson?" he asked, his manner suggesting nothing more than courteous interest.

"The fact that his wife has been missing since last Thursday. Every-



body knows they have not been happy together——”

“Yes, everybody seems to know that.” He almost added, “Thanks to Mrs. Davidson,” but checked himself.

“Sergeant, it’s all so very terrible.”

“You’re quite right, Miss Paterson. However, we’ll make full enquiries. In the meantime, don’t breathe a word of your suspicions. You might find yourself in very serious trouble.”

Miss Paterson paled.

“Oh, I won’t say a word, Sergeant,” she twittered. “Not a word.”

She had been gone several minutes before the Sergeant entered the house. If Dan had disposed of his wife as Miss Paterson suggested, he had not been very clever. Still, a man in a distraught frame of mind might not weigh too carefully all the possibilities. He put in a telephone call to his superior.

It was beginning to rain as he led four men on to the Common. Armed with spades, they separated, searching the wet ground on their grim and dismal task.

The sergeant himself noticed the freshly turned soil as the last light of day faded out of the sky. He blew his whistle and was quickly joined by the others.

“This is it, I reckon,” he announced. “Clever place, too. We might have searched for days.”

The fact that the soil had recently been disturbed made the digging easy, and within half an hour they were scraping aside the last thin layer covering the body which the grave contained.

“Why, it’s a blinking dog!” said one of the diggers.

“Thank God!” Sergeant Peters exclaimed fervently. “All right, chaps.

Fill it in. And, remember, not a word to anyone.”

A week later Sergeant Peters was again intercepted by Mrs. Davidson.

“Have you heard, Sergeant?” she asked eagerly. “Have you heard?”

“Heard what?” he asked, officially polite.

“Why, about Johnson. He’s gone. Went early this morning. Took a taxi to town. Said he’d heard from his wife, and that she’d asked him to join her as soon as possible.”

“Are you sure of this, Mrs. Davidson?”

“Certain, Sergeant. Johnson told me himself. It seems his wife wants them to make a fresh start.”

“Did he say where he was going?”

“He never mentioned it.”

Behind her spectacles the hungry little eyes gleamed. News to Mrs. Davidson was as necessary as food.

“Well, it should make Johnson happy.”

“He hardly knew what he was doing. Like a boy he was, Sergeant. Asked me to look after the house, and gave me three pounds to pay anyone who called for money.”

“I shall soon need a new constable,” Sergeant Peters remarked. “Thanks for the information, Mrs. Davidson.”

But he was not thinking of a replacement for the absent Johnson when he made discreet enquiries at the railway station. No one had seen Johnson there. He felt a little annoyed that Johnson had neither told him what he was about to do nor written to him afterwards. After all, he was absent without leave. But it was not annoyance he felt when,





*Peggy saw to everything . . . !*



after an official visit to the cemetery, another explanation for Johnson's sudden departure occurred to him.

"You mean," enquired his startled superior, "that he buried his wife first—and the dog afterwards?"

"Yes, sir. It was that monument that gave me the idea. Several members of one family had been buried in the same grave."

"Yes, yes, of course. If it's true—and it seems much more than likely"—Inspector Jones smacked his fist into his palm—"it was a clever idea. I wish to heaven you'd thought of this before. Johnson's slipped through our fingers. By now, he can be anywhere almost."

That night, Sergeant Peters was supervising his second excavation party. Lanterns cast vague shadows on the rainy darkness, and the men worked in an expectant and determined silence.

The sergeant carefully cleared away the last layer of soil, then he went down gingerly on all fours. He called for the light. The body was not that of Johnson's wife. It was Johnson.

The rest of the night was spent searching Dan's cottage. He recalled many things. For example, that name mentioned by the nosy Mrs. Davidson. Basil Renton. Bless her! He silently gave her leave to talk scandal without reproof for the rest of her life. It should be possible to trace Renton, if it was his own car.

Within two days the sergeant and Inspector Jones were climbing stiffly out of the police car which had driven them to a Midland town. At police headquarters they were shown into a comfortable office, where a

local inspector and a smartly dressed, nervous-looking man named Renton were awaiting their arrival. After a few introductory remarks, Inspector Jones addressed himself to Renton.

"We are making enquiries concerning the whereabouts of a Mrs. Peggy Johnson, of Hestin," he announced. "I think you can help us, Mr. Basil Renton."

"Peggy Johnson? I'm afraid——"

"You will not deny that you know the village of Hestin?"

There was no reply.

"Well, you have been in Hestin, let me tell you. Did you bury a dog there recently?"

"A—a dog? I—I don't understand."

"You will, when we tell you that we've seen Mrs. Johnson!"

Sergeant Peters saw the already shaken façade crumble.

"She's told you. Yes, and she's blamed me. I knew she would. Oh, what a fool I've been. It—was her fault! It was truly! I'd never have thought of it. It was Peggy. I'd been engaged to her before I went up North. My firm sent me there, and she wouldn't wait for me. Then I found her when I was transferred down here again. But she was married."

"That didn't stop you from seeing her, though."

"She was madly in love with me. So at last she came down here to live with me. But she wanted to marry me. Someone told her about the dog being buried and dug up again. So she wrote to her husband. Oh, she understood him all right. He did everything she asked in her letter. He came straightway to Ribberly, and when she asked him if he'd kept the whole affair a secret, as she'd



told him to do, he assured her that he had."

"You overheard Johnson telling her that?"

"I was in the back of the car, and he was sitting beside her, just as Peggy had planned. I hit him with a spanner."

"It seems that almost everything favoured you, eh?" the inspector prompted.

"Yes. There was a fog, and that was just what we needed. We drove as near as we could to the place where the dog had been buried. Peggy saw to everything—footmarks, tyre treads—everything. Oh, if only she hadn't heard about the police digging up that dog! But it did seem safe, it did seem safe," Renton wailed. "Fancy the police digging in the same place twice!"



Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the Lord thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the Lord thy God.

DEUTERONOMY xxiii, 18, c. 650 B.C.



The parish makes the constable and when the constable is made he governs the parish.

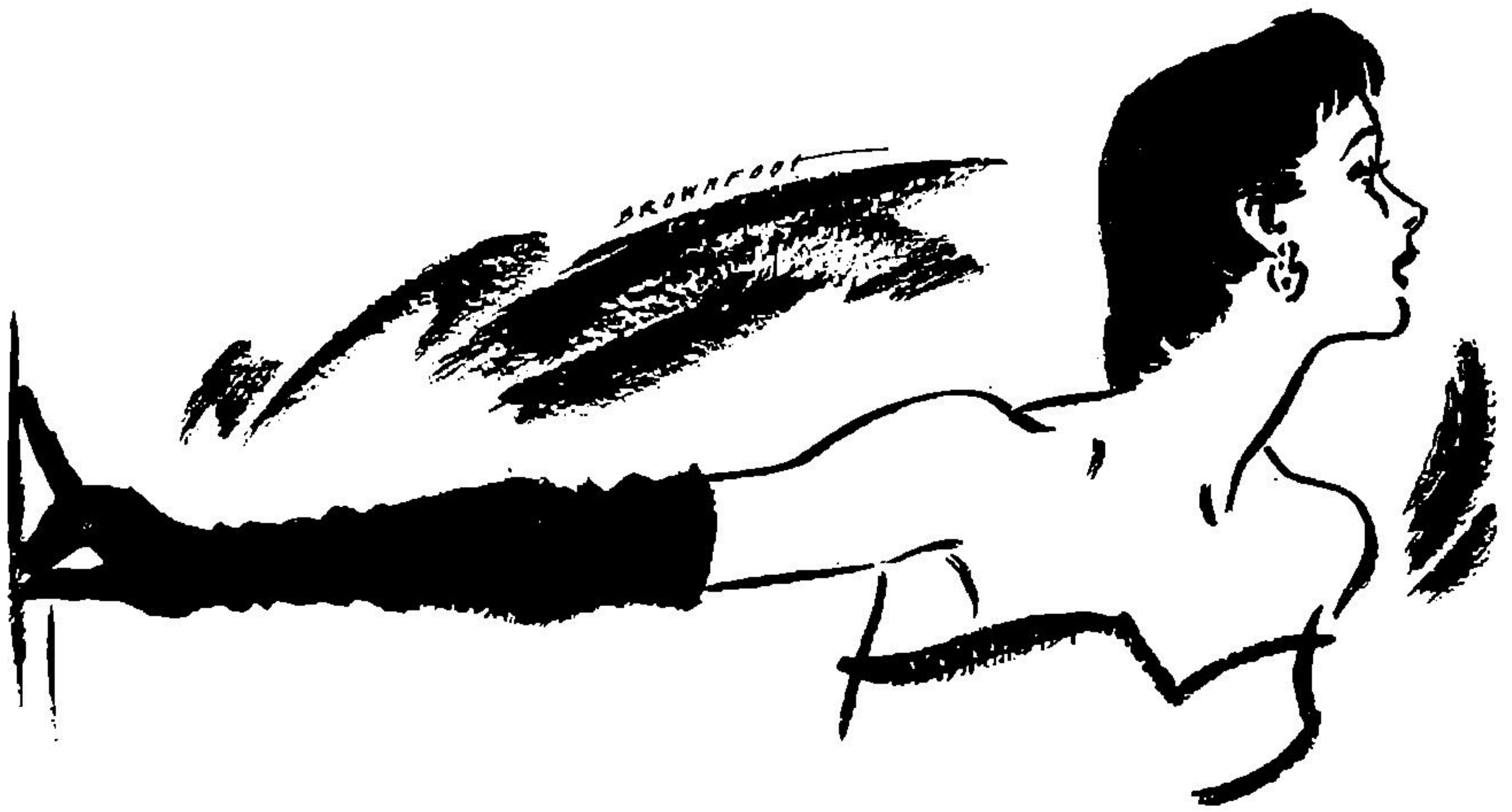
JOHN SELDEN: *Table-Talk*, 1689.





*"And I, dear lady, am Jack-the-Ripper."*





## CLORINDA HER DIARY

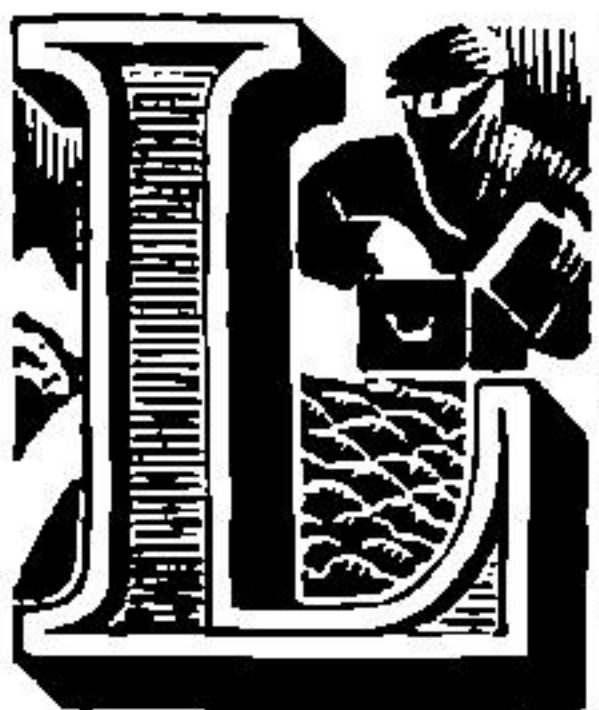
CHRONICLED FOR HER BY  
CHARLES FRANKLIN

*Exclusive fashion designs and illustrations*

by MAURICE BROWNFOOT

*This is Clorinda's sixth adventure. She is most grateful for the many kind letters encouraging her to go on with her dangerous profession, though some complain that it is about time that she got married and settled down. But who are we to influence so dashing and independent a young lady? All we dare do is to repeat, for the benefit of newcomers, that Clorinda is just as glamorous outside the pages of the L.M.M. as in, that her telephone number will not be passed on by this office, that her dresses are specially designed for her by Maurice Brownfoot, and that her ex-R.A.F. pal and chronicler, Charles Franklin, does his utmost to camouflage the places and happenings about to be recounted.*

1951, PART THREE



LONDON, *Sunday*.—On the way back from Paris we could hardly see anything but endless grey clouds, and, being one of those people who always look out of railway carriages, even when going

through the outskirts of London, I was disappointed.

But we did catch one glorious glimpse of the Channel—gleaming electric blue in the one and only sight of the sun, which made the cliffs look like bright ribbons as we headed into the gloom again.



I had a pleasant and most entertaining companion in the next seat, a kindly little man with a bald head, a benign smile and beautiful white hands. He must have been at least sixty. He told me his name was Mr. Playfair, of Messrs. Playfair & Company, jewellers, goldsmiths and silver-smiths, whose establishment in the West End is both respected and well known. He told me most interesting things about the goldsmiths' art, and invited me to come and inspect some of the treasures in his exclusive establishment.

I don't know whether he saw in me a prospective customer, or whether he just found chatting to me was a better way of filling in a dull hour in the air than reading a magazine. Anyway, I made a half-promise to pay him a visit. I must confess I took a liking to his manner, which was fatherly and chivalrous.

We had been diverted to Northolt, and there Ernest met me, which was a pleasant surprise. I think Mr. Playfair was disappointed, as he bowed to me with old-world courtesy while a chauffeur held open the door of a Rolls-Royce.

"No trouble with the Customs?" asked Ernest, as he drove me along Western Avenue through the misty suburbs.

"Of course not. It would be a fine thing if I was caught trying a little smuggling."

"You'd be surprised the people who do."

"No, I wouldn't. It's always been done. A form of sport."

"There's smuggling and smuggling," said Ernest.

I lit a cigarette and passed it to him. "If you're waiting for a reply to that very profound observation,"

I said, "there isn't one."

"I only made it," he replied, "because I would like you to interest yourself in smuggling."

I opened my eyes wide. "So. The department has become a jack of all trades."

"We are at the disposal of several other departments," he said. "I have been asked to organize a few discreet enquiries. Who else should I think of but you?"

Well, it turned out that some concern had been felt in high quarters about a great increase in diamond smuggling. I was to investigate the activities of a certain M. Bouchon, who was staying at the Grand Hotel, Southpool. It was, however, more important to find out who his contacts were than merely to stop his present activities.

Ernest thought it might be a good idea if I acquired at least a nodding acquaintance with the trade, and when I told him about my travelling companion, he seemed to think that the coincidence could profitably be turned to good account.

"Coincidence?" I murmured sceptically.

*Monday.*—This morning I went to see Mr. Playfair. Going into his beautiful shop from the noisy rush of London is like going into another world. You know when people close a window in a film, every outside noise is instantly shut out, and you laugh to yourself because doors and windows don't really shut out sounds to that extent.

But they do at Playfairs. There is only the murmur of polite voices, a flash of beautifully polished silver, a



strangely shaped vase about which Wilkie Collins might have written one of his heroically proportioned thrillers, then a long avenue of black marble pillars, up which I was escorted by a very well-dressed young man who seemed to regard me as being so important that he practically kissed my feet. But I flattered myself—and Maurice—that the *svelte* lines of my new Brownfoot suit were a fitting ornament to this most elegant establishment, and if the beautiful young man had kissed my feet, I was at least wearing my newest and smartest footwear for the occasion.

The marble corridor was flanked with glass cases in which faintly gleamed various artistic creations of precious metals. When I had passed the last marble pillar, the young man, with the grace and air of a Court footman, opened a door of inlaid walnut, and announced in his well-bred voice:

“Miss Clorinda Hill, sir.”

As I went through the doorway, I felt the young man's eyes looking at me in a way which was somehow a direct contradiction to his very deferential attitude, but I didn't give him another thought, because the room I was walking into so charmed me with its quiet elegance and good taste. To describe what was in it wouldn't convey much to you, because the place itself had an atmosphere and a quality which made it quite different from other rooms. It was more than an office; it was a reception room, where you would imagine Mr. Playfair entertaining Eastern potentates while they bought pearls and diamonds for their dancing girls.

There was a gleam of glass and

gold, the reverent light of mulioned windows, and an immense desk of shining black, behind which rose Mr. Playfair, with his benign smile, his tortoiseshell reading spectacles held in his white hands, like a doctor holding a stethoscope.

Mr. Playfair willingly brushed aside his morning routine in order to complete my education on the lines suggested by Ernest. Of course I gave him the impression of being a potential customer, though I don't think that made very much difference. In fact, I suspect Mr. Playfair of being a little too fond of young ladies than befits a man of his years, though fortunately he was too well-mannered to attempt the slightest familiarity.

I hadn't been talking with him long when something occurred that aroused my interest enormously.

The well-dressed young man intruded apologetically, but with an air of restrained and polite urgency. In his hand was a letter.

“A M. Bouchon has just left this, sir,” he said. “He told me it was very urgent and for you personally.”

At the mention of the name Bouchon an expression flickered over Mr. Playfair's mild face which I find rather difficult to describe, but it was plain that the thought of M. Bouchon gave him no pleasure.

Apologizing to me, he read the letter, and the contents of it seemed to upset him. I would have given a lot to have seen that letter. Bouchon and Playfair. . . . Of course, my seat in the 'plane was no coincidence. You can imagine the thoughts which were going through my mind.

But Mr. Playfair soon recovered from his displeasure, or at least appeared to do so. He put the letter carefully into one of the inner re-



cesses of his large, gold-tipped leather wallet, and turned to me with his paternal smile.

"Do forgive me, Miss Hill. Now please, let me show you a few of Playfairs' treasures."

I readily agreed, and he showed me some exquisite examples of the goldsmiths' art. He had some particularly fine mediæval Italian pieces and some lovely Spanish filigree silver work. We talked about diamonds, too, though of course I gave him no hint of the angle in which they interest me at this particular moment.

We talked about his firm, and it was soon obvious that Mr. Playfair's one passion in life was maintaining his beautiful establishment at its present level of elegance and exclusiveness. When he saw how genuinely impressed I had been by it all, he was delighted.

"I flatter myself that I am the only person in the world who can keep Playfairs going at this very high standard," he said confidentially. "I do everything myself. Nothing happens at Playfairs without my personal supervision."

"It must be hard work," I said.

"Our expenses are enormous, and increasing. Business is good, of course, but it does not grow fast enough."

"But, Mr. Playfair, how then does a firm keep going? If you will excuse my ignorance."

He shook his bald head sadly. "Sometimes I wonder that myself. Of course there are many firms who want to buy us up. But that would mean changing the character of Playfairs, and I should no longer be in complete control." He paused, his eyes staring vaguely at the immaculate desk in front of him. "I think I

would rather die than that," he murmured. "Playfairs, you see, is my one and only love. Take away its character, and expose its beauty to the vulgar gaze, and I shall have lost my love."

"How I sympathize with you," I said softly. "It would be almost sacrilege. I don't understand much about these things, but surely one can raise capital—issue shares?"

He smiled at my naïveté. "Of course you can, my dear, but you have to produce a properly audited balance-sheet. I should hate anyone to see my balance-sheet."

"I should think the best thing to do would be to start a more popular and prosperous business in order to keep Playfairs going," I suggested.

He looked at me queerly for a moment, then smiled. "I think you're quite a business woman after all," he said with inoffensive irony. "Actually I have to do something like that. But don't ask me what it is, because even your persuasive charm won't get it out of me."

"If it became known," I asked, "would Playfairs ever forgive you?"

He shook his head unsmilingly. "Never. I have a jealous god. There is no possibility of compromise. You know, Miss Hill, you are extraordinarily understanding. In the normal way, I would never dream of talking like this to anyone I do not know very well. Yet somehow, I feel I do know you well. You sympathize with how I feel about"—he made a vague gesture—"all this."

I thought Mr. Playfair was just a

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*Tailored suit in natural shantung with black taffeta collar and cuffs shot with spots of gold. Gold fleur-de-lis motif on black suède gloves. Black straw beret.*





*... I was escorted by a well-dressed young man ...*



little mad, but not in a way to which one could take the slightest objection. Indeed, I still like him, despite my suspicions. He seems a very harmless old gentleman, whose passion for his beautiful establishment is something I can readily understand. What his other interest is I can only guess in view of the well-contrived coincidence of our meeting, to say nothing of his connection with the mysterious M. Bouchon.

I declined his luncheon invitation. To-morrow I am going to Southpool.

To-night I am thinking about my holiday, and the lovely party Aunt Barbara gave me.

*Southpool, Wednesday*.—The wind is still screaming around my hotel window, and I can hear the harsh sound of the waves tearing at the beach. I have locked and bolted my door, and I must confess I am a little frightened.

To begin at the beginning, I came down here yesterday and booked a room at the Grand Hotel. It is a big place, crowded with people, mostly travellers. The food is good, and I have a comfortable room with a balcony overlooking the sea. With so many people coming and going, it is not difficult to remain inconspicuous, and unquestionably M. Bouchon had found it so.

It was in fact some time before I could locate him. He was a slight man of about forty-five, with a black moustache, and a bald patch on the top of his head, of which he was very conscious.

It rained on and off all day, and I discreetly followed M. Bouchon on three different occasions. Dressed in the latest but most unobtrusive crea-

tion in ladies' wet-weather wear, I thought perhaps I might not have been noticed. But to think this was certainly to underestimate M. Bouchon.

On one of those none-too-comfortable little outings, I sat not far from him in a noisy café, trying to drink a revolting cup of coffee and watching him talking to two seamen, with whom he was having some sort of transaction, but what was passed between them I could not see. I learnt very little that I couldn't guess, except that it's better to order anything but coffee in places like that.

It wasn't too difficult to discover that the seamen were from a ship which had just arrived from Amsterdam. The routine was well known. The men were heavily bribed to bring over the sealed packages to deliver to M. Bouchon. If they failed to hand over the goods, they would be waylaid on their return to Amsterdam and mutilated with razors. Fortunately, that side of the racket was not my concern.

M. Bouchon was nobody's fool. This evening, when I was just finishing dinner in the big, crowded dining-room, he came up to me, bowed, and then sat down at my table with a lack of etiquette which was surprising in a Frenchman.

"Mademoiselle, I beg of you, please to put me out of this suffering." He spoke English quite well.

I looked at him in surprise. "I beg your pardon?"

"For me," he said, "it is unendurable."

"I'm sorry about that. What is unendurable?"

"Being pursued by someone so lovely. It is a torture I can no longer stand. If anyone is to be pursued, it



must be you, ma'amselle. It is against Nature for it to be otherwise."

I said nothing, but just looked at him. He didn't look into my eyes for long, but turned and beckoned the waiter.

"Let's have an end to this silly nonsense, *ma chérie*," he said. "I know perfectly well that you have been following me all day. Did you really imagine that I had not observed you?"

I smiled at him. If he expected me to be disconcerted I disappointed him. "Of course not, M. Bouchon," I said. "It is inconceivable that you could have been so careless as not to have observed."

He stared at me, surprised at my use of his name.

I picked up my coffee cup. "The waiter is standing waiting," I pointed out. "You beckoned him, if you remember."

M. Bouchon turned. "Bring this lady a Cognac," he said. "And I will have a large whisky."

I shook my head. "Nothing for me, thank you."

"As you please," he shrugged. The waiter left us. "I think an explanation is due," M. Bouchon continued.

"Does it inconvenience you very much?" I asked innocently.

"Inconvenience?" he echoed in surprise. "To be spied upon? Yes, it does inconvenience me, Mademoiselle, despite the fact that you are so very desirable. It is most inconvenient—and most distracting. Please don't do it any more."

"I shan't," I said. "Neither shall I tell anyone."

"And what won't you tell anyone, if you please?" He seemed a little exasperated.

"About your little smuggling

racket. Mind you, there's nothing very original about it. Nor are you doing it with conspicuous skill."

He stared at me, and he seemed to screw his eyes into little points, in which I saw, not only cunning, but fear.

"*Mon Dieu*, what are you talking about?" he whispered. "Who are you?"

"Have you ever heard of a firm named Playfairs, M'sieu?"

Instantly the expression on his face changed. At first he was just puzzled.

"Yes," he said cautiously, "I know Playfairs. But——"

"Why so surprised?" I asked, groping my way in the darkness, as it were. "Shouldn't Playfairs be also interested in you?"

"Listen, Ma'amselle, please tell me. Who are you?"

"Can't you guess?"

He leaned forward confidentially. "Are you from Playfairs?"

I nodded.

"But they said——"

"They said they'd have nothing to do with you?" I suggested.

He laughed. He was at ease now. "Of course they did, *ma chérie*. You can hardly blame them really. But I knew they'd climb down. It just required Bouchon to get tough. Well, this is very nice. I salute them for sending someone so very chic and so very charming. This is business with glamour, as they say. I like very much."

"Don't enthuse, M'sieur," I said coldly. "There is not the least enthusiasm on our side!"

His eyes froze, and a little sneer twisted down the corners of his moustache. "There's nothing very much he can do about it, in view of the circumstances."



At that moment the hall porter came to the table. "Excuse me, sir. Are you Mr. Boo-shon?"

My companion turned a little impatiently. "Yes?"

"A gentleman on the 'phone for you, sir. He has asked for the call to be put through to your room. He said you'd understand."

"Thank you. Thank you. I'll attend to it." He turned to me, half-rising. "Will you be here when I get back, Mademoiselle? Please pardon me."

I finished my coffee, then opened my bag for my cigarette-case. "I certainly shan't wait here for you, M'sieur," I said non-committally. "But I won't be leaving the hotel just yet."

"Please remember the importance of our business, Mademoiselle," he reminded me.

After he had gone, the waiter arrived with the whisky. "Is the gentleman coming back, Madam?" he asked as he lit my cigarette.

"Without a doubt," I said, "the gentleman will be back."

But I was wrong.

For a few minutes I sat there smoking and thinking. Then some dreadful prompting in my mind made me get up from the table and leave the dining-room.

M. Bouchon, I knew, had a suite of two rooms and a bathroom on the first floor. I had already located it previously. To reach it, I had to go in the same general direction as I did to get to my own room, so I did not arouse any questioning in the mind of anyone who might have been watching my movements.

Two doors opened into the suite, and I cautiously tried the door which I knew to be the sitting-room, guessing that the telephone would be in

the bedroom. The door was unlocked and the room was in semi-darkness. I went inside, leaving the door slightly ajar. The light was coming through the communicating door, which was half open, and I could hear the sound of voices in the bedroom.

He was not talking on the telephone. He had someone in there with him—another man by the sound of the voice. I crept nearer the communicating door to try to listen to what they were saying, but the wind was banging and buffeting on the windows so hard that it was quite impossible to make out a word of what was being said, or even to distinguish the voices with much certainty.

Suddenly the talking stopped. The wind was beating madly on the windows and the place was full of sounds. The thump I heard and the gurgling noise might have been anything, and I certainly had no reason to think that a man was being murdered in the next room as I stood there listening.

Then the light went out and the door in the other room closed softly. I waited for a few moments, thinking they had both left. Then I heard a dreadful groan.

I rushed into the bedroom and switched on the light.

M. Bouchon had fallen on the floor with his head against the leg of the bed. His eyes were open, and he looked at me as I knelt beside him. His coat was apart, and the left side of his shirt was red with rapidly spreading blood. It was a dreadful sight, and I wondered desperately what I could do for him, not even thinking in that awful moment to ask him who had done it.



But there was nothing I could do. For a second or two he just looked at me. There was no pain, no fear, no surprise in his gaze. None of those things mattered to M. Bouchon now, for the next instant the life faded from his eyes and he was dead.

You can imagine how I felt. Whatever poor M. Bouchon had done, he didn't deserve this.

It was, however, a bad policy for me to get mixed up with bodies and suffer the attendant publicity. But before I went, there was one thing I particularly wanted. That was M. Bouchon's little notebook which he kept in his jacket pocket, and which I had seen him several times consulting.

It is not pleasant taking things out of the pocket of a man who has just been stabbed to death, and I had no sooner tucked the notebook safely in my handbag and was turning to the door, when to my horror it opened. Mr. Playfair walked in.

When he saw me, his amazement was both genuine and overwhelming. But when he saw M. Bouchon's corpse lying bleeding on the carpet practically at my feet, it gave way to a horror and concern at my situation which was quite touching.

"Oh, my dear young lady, what a dreadful, dreadful thing! You must leave quickly—at once," he urged. "I shudder to think of you being involved in a thing like this."

I went to the door. "And you?"

"I'll meet you downstairs in the lounge. I think we have one or two things to say to each other."

I left him in the room. I met no one in the corridor, and went straight to my own room, where I wrapped M. Bouchon's little notebook in a piece

of tissue paper and concealed it safely and intimately next to my skin in such a way as not to disturb my new dinner frock.

A little later I went leisurely downstairs and found Mr. Playfair waiting for me a trifle impatiently in the lounge.

"You look very cool, young lady," he said, eyeing me in a way which betrayed a new and keen curiosity.

"Is that a bad thing?" I asked.

"No, in view of the circumstances," he said slowly, "I should say it is a very good thing."

"Mr. Playfair," I said softly, "are you trying to build up a guilt complex in my mind?"

"My dear Miss Hill, all I want to do is to help you. I'll do anything to keep this thing quiet, and certainly won't ask any questions."

For a few moments I stared thoughtfully at the blue smoke which I exhaled. "But I'd like to ask you a question, Mr. Playfair," I said at last.

He looked at me quickly, but his face never lost any of its benevolent concern. "A question, my dear? Of course."

"Why did you come into M. Bouchon's room just now?"

"My dear child, for the simple reason that I had an appointment with him to-night. They told me at the desk he was in his room. It was a great shock."

I sighed. "Indeed it was. Quite horrible. So you knew M. Bouchon?"

"Purely a business relationship. Did you?"

I shook my head. "A very slight acquaintance. He spoke to me while I was having coffee after dinner. You know, as people do in hotels—and in aeroplanes."

He smiled faintly. "The strange co-





*"... 'You think of everything,' I said softly. ..."*



incidence of all this is a little disturbing. What are you going to do about it, my dear?"

"Naturally I am very anxious to keep out of it," I said. "That should be possible, if I can rely upon you."

"Of course you can rely upon me. Who could refuse such a request from anyone so lovely?" Despite the forced gallantry of his remark, I could sense his shrewd grey eyes studying me intensely as he tried to weigh me up. Our Mr. Playfair was no fool, and he had developed a new and very vital interest in me. "Are you going to stay in the hotel? I noticed Bouchon's bed has been turned down, so they won't find him until the morning."

I looked at him curiously. "You think of everything," I said softly. "Yes, I shall stay here to-night as I planned."

I did not want to prolong my talk with Mr. Playfair. Presently I thanked him for the drink and bade him good night.

To-night I have locked and bolted the door of my room, and I feel a little nervous as I sit here by the gas-fire writing this. I haven't undressed yet. A little while ago I tried to get through on the 'phone to Ernest, but there was no answer to his number, and there is no one else I can talk to.

The gale is making an awful racket outside, and about half an hour ago I am certain someone tried my door. Believe me, it is a most uncomfortable feeling.

*London, Later.*—A lot more happened to-night, after I made the last

*Dinner gown in lightweight woollen material of a rich wine colour, skirt inset with pleated chartreuse fabric. Jewelled stars.*

entry in my diary.

I had gone up to my room about ten o'clock. A little after eleven I rang the clerk at the desk and asked him when was the last train to London. He said eleven forty-five, so I told him to make my bill out and get me a taxi.

Half an hour later I was out of the hotel being driven in an immense Daimler through the raging gale to the station. The train was half empty, and I made a point of getting into a carriage where there were several other people.

I felt more comfortable leaning back in the smoky compartment with my drowsy companions, as the train raced through the pelting rain towards London. I had thought it was a non-stop, but I was mistaken. It pulled up at some deserted station, the name of which I couldn't make out, and everybody got out of the carriage, and as the bleary lights slid past the window into the blackness again, I was quite alone.

However, I didn't mind at first. Southpool was a long way behind now, and I got M. Bouchon's notebook out and began to study it. It was mostly filled with briefly written addresses and telephone numbers, and I was studying it closely when the door leading to the corridor suddenly slid back.

For an endless moment I sat there with a beating heart, knowing without looking up, that he was standing there and that I was alone with him—alone in the whole train for all I knew.

Slowly I looked up, slipping the notebook into my handbag. Mr. Playfair stepped inside and closed the door.

"You left the hotel in a hurry, my



dear," he said, sitting opposite me and smiling in that kindly, fatherly way of his.

"Why did you follow me?" I breathed.

"Because, my child, I don't believe in coincidences."

There seemed only one thing to do, and that was to have a cigarette. It would steady my nerves anyway, for I frankly admit I was very frightened. But before I could open my bag, his firm white hand stopped me. I drew back indignantly.

"Girls engaged in such dangerous work as you are frequently carry guns," he said. "I don't like guns."

"I don't carry a gun," I said.

"I'd like to inspect your bag, my dear."

I breathed hard. "I refuse to let you. Mr. Playfair, this is an outrage. I shall pull the communication cord."

"No, my dear," he said pleasantly, "I shan't let you do that. In any case, there's no need for dramatics. Just sit there quietly for a few minutes and tell me how you knew."

"How I knew what?" I whispered. "That you killed M. Bouchon?"

"Yes," he said, putting all his breath into the word. "How did you know?"

Have you ever been in dreadful, terrible danger? I have been several times, and to-night was one of them. I always find it's a good thing to talk at a time like this. It steadies the nerves. So I talked. I had to talk, if only to postpone the dreadful thing I knew he was going to do—or try to do. It was useless to pretend any longer. He knew about me, and he knew that I knew about him.

"Because when you came into M. Bouchon's room you didn't knock," I said. "That was how I knew definitely

it was you."

He smiled a little sadly. "You don't seem to have much to go on, my dear." He might have been a benevolent uncle indulging in polite small talk with his favourite niece.

"There were many other things," I said with a sigh.

"Tell me them. I'm most interested."

"In the first place, Mr. Playfair," I said, "I don't believe in coincidences either. Our meeting on the plane from Paris was not providential."

He nodded thoughtfully. "I'm glad about that in a way, my child. It would be a very harsh Providence which would indulge in a prank like this. But go on."

"When I visited you at Playfairs on Monday you told me in as many words that only this profitable sideline of yours has kept your firm solvent in recent months. I could only guess that you were dealing in smuggled diamonds, but my guess was fully confirmed during the short talk I had with M. Bouchon, during which I took the impertinent liberty of posing as a representative of your firm."

"It was no liberty," he said gravely. "The honour belongs to Playfairs."

"I did it merely in order to trap M. Bouchon into making an indiscretion, which he was on the point of doing when he received your message to meet you in his room. I wonder he didn't mention me to you."

"I realize now that that was what he was about to say," said Mr. Playfair. "But I was, I'm afraid, too hasty. You've no idea what Bouchon was doing to me—and to Playfairs."

"Oh yes, I have," I said. "When you started to deal in smuggled diamonds, Mr. Playfair, you should have



been a little more careful. A man in your position should never have direct dealings with crooks like M. Bouchon. He found out who you were and blackmailed you. That was obvious from his conversation with me."

"You're very clever, my dear. I should have had you on my side."

"As you said, you were hasty," I continued. "You are not used to this sort of thing. Killing him panicked you for a moment, and you left the room without the most vital thing of all—his notebook, in which is probably the evidence which can involve Playfairs in scandal. You accounted for your walking into the room at that moment by saying you had an appointment with him. I didn't believe that, because if that was so, being naturally a well-mannered man, you would have knocked. Then again, why did you stay behind in the room after I had left, if not to look for the notebook—something which was so vitally important as to make the risk of returning to the room worth while."

"That vital something," he murmured, "which you have in your handbag."

"Another thing," I continued, "was the way you tried to make out I was in a desperate situation just because I had gone in there and found him, and your eagerness to help me conceal my innocent discovery. You were the one, Mr. Playfair, who wanted the discovery of the body postponed. By trying to persuade me that I also had anything to gain thereby, you not only seriously underestimated my intelligence, but you completely gave yourself away."

The benign smile never left his face. "And you were clever enough

to play up to me without appearing to. It is a pity, my child, such a great pity that it should be you—the one who loves and appreciates Playfairs as few people do—that you, of all people, should be the only one who can bring disaster to Playfairs, and to me. There is only your evidence, my dear. It is a terrible tragedy. You are such a talented and lovely girl."

I saw his hand go to the slide latch of the carriage door, and I jumped up in terror as the door crashed open to admit the beating rain and the pounding clatter of the track. I reached desperately for the communication cord, but he struck my arm down with a force that hurt, at the same time wrenching my handbag with its precious notebook away from me. For an elderly man he was amazingly strong, and no matter how I struggled, I found myself being pushed towards the open carriage door.

Then I screamed at the top of my voice. I screamed and screamed again before he could get his hand to my mouth.

What happened next is not perfectly clear. Two men came in from the corridor almost instantly. The very tall man grabbed me and we fell on the seat together as the train swayed and jerked over some points. The other man dashed past us, but when I looked round he was standing there by the open door, wrenching the communication cord. Mr. Playfair had gone.

Fortunately I had fallen on top of Ernest, which neither of us minded a scrap.

The train was very, very late, and I was cold and exhausted. I was never more glad to have Ernest there to put everything right with inquisitive



officials.

He brought me home and did everything short of putting me to bed. He denied it was a subtle form of propaganda for married life, but did admit that he had been following me for the last two days.

"Do you know what I'd like to do?" I said.

We were sitting in front of the fire drinking tea. I was on the floor, leaning up against his chair, and he was tickling my head with his finger.

"What?" he asked.

"Burn the little notebook."

"Burn it? But why? It's full of the most vital information, Clorinda?"

"Well, at least destroy the reference to Playfairs. You see, the real reason why Mr. Playfair jumped out of the train was to save his beloved firm from scandal. That was why he went

in the smuggling business, and why he killed M. Bouchon. There are all sorts of reasons why people become criminals, and Mr. Playfair's was the least dishonourable."

"But he tried to murder you, Clorinda." Ernest was faintly scandalized.

"I know he did. But I can still feel sorry for him, and I should hate that magnificent establishment of his to become the object of scandal. He loved it so much that he went a little mad."

"I should say he did. No sane business man would do what he did. But don't worry any more about Playfairs. We'll protect its sacred portals from the breath of scandal." He ruffled my hair playfully. "Now go to bed and forget it. That's an order. It's nearly half-past four."





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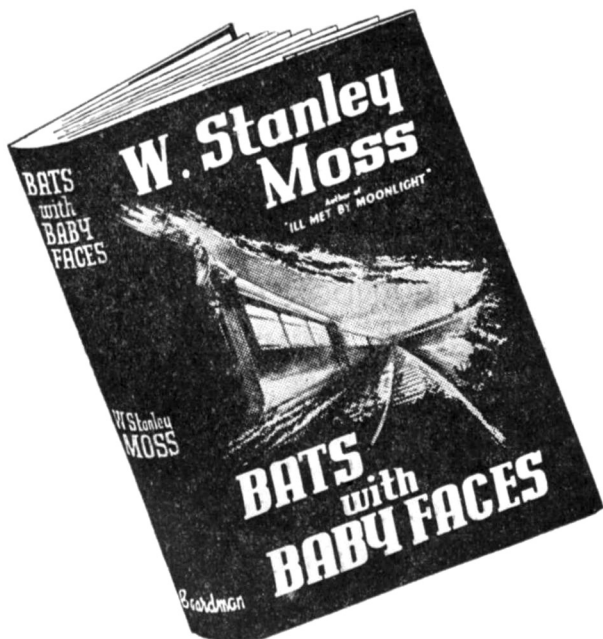
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★ *Protect your valve cores from dirt and grit. Always replace the caps.*

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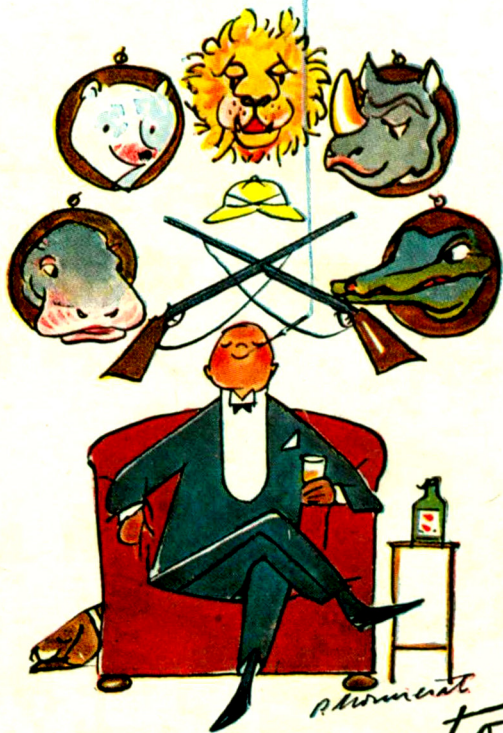
BIRMINGHAM

ENGLAND

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All this...



and a 7 too!

**NUMBER SEVEN**

No. 7 'Virginia' Cigarettes 20 for 3/10 ALSO Abdulla Turkish and Egyptian