

*MIDNIGHT*  
**MYSTERY STORIES**

January 13, 1923

10¢

A MACFADDEN  
PUBLICATION

*The Menace*

*Tricked*

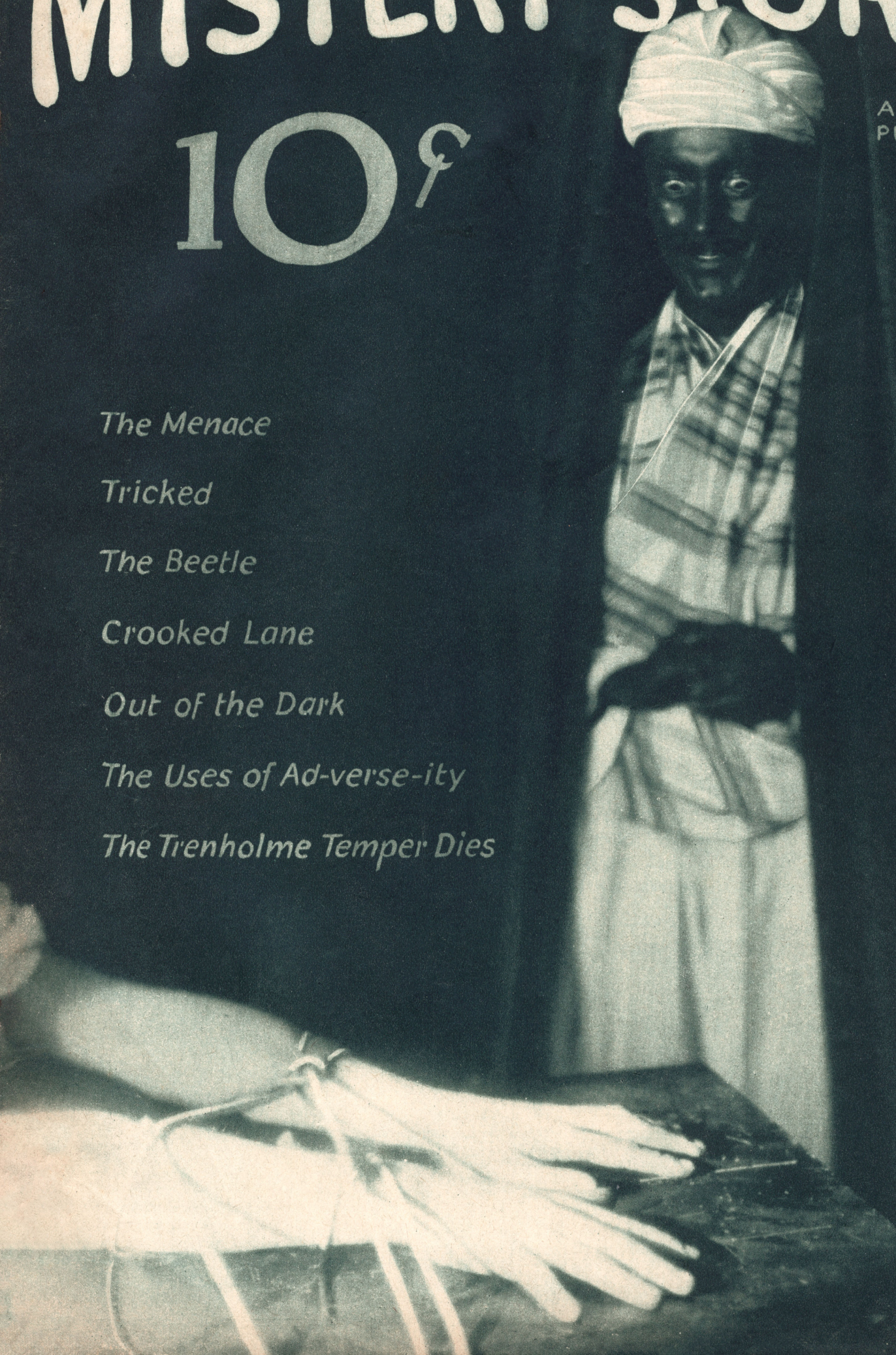
*The Beetle*

*Crooked Lane*

*Out of the Dark*

*The Uses of Ad-verse-ity*

*The Trenholme Temper Dies*



# What One Reader Thinks.

The following is a letter we have just received from one of our readers. It speaks for itself.

Knoxville, Tenn.

My dear Editor:

It is beyond my technique in the use of words to describe, or attempt to describe, the abundant pleasure which I derive in perusing the pages of your weekly magazine, "Midnight."

Ever since I studied Edgar Allan Poe, and Robert Louis Stevenson, I have had an insatiable appetite for stories of the character produced by the above-mentioned authors. While in high school Nathaniel Hawthorne's works afforded me no little pleasure.

I am an exorbitant magazine reader—and generally read good magazines of quality. But, never have I found upon the magazine stands of the stores a magazine that came so near publishing stories of the same quality or character as Poe, Stevenson and Hawthorne.

My recent experience in news-reporting for two of Knoxville's leading newspapers has given me a sense of good magazine stories. And may one who is an ardent student of good literature, of journalism, and a wide magazine reader, be permitted to extend his most hearty and sincere congratulations upon the splendid "Midnight" magazine.

In the "Midnight" magazine I adventure with notorious, murderers, forgers, robbers, embezzlers, highwaymen, swindlers, counterfeiters, moonshiners, revolutionists, and smugglers. And then I end my adventure with them as I see them face the stern bar of justice. And down in my heart there beats a pride for the praise-worthy way in which this magazine upholds the milky-white banner of justice and purity even in its stories of crimes and disappointed love tragedies.

In last week's issue I was particularly enraptured in enthusiasm with "The Fatepur Emerald." In my imagination I took a journey far-away from the workaday world of the West to the dazzling, luxurious East, in the reading of this story. I was in a land of romance and adventure, where shadowy, brown and yellow men and little, beautiful women, with little hands like marigold flowers, love, quarrel and worship amid scenes of mingled squalor and splendor. I saw it all in this fascinating story.

Next week and each succeeding week, I expect to take similar journeys thru the entertaining stories of this weekly.

Here's to one of the best magazines that was ever produced from a printer's press. I'm wishing it greater success and prosperity, and popularity, in the coming year than it has enjoyed in the past one.

I have the esteemed honor of remaining,

Very truly yours,

G. L. E.



## Next Week

We are glad to announce that we will begin the publication of a remarkable serial by Herbert Coryell. **GARBED IN GREEN** is the title of it, and we are going to give it to you in four generous installments. Robin Stage has written another one of his famous Dr. Blitz yarns, entitled **ONE MOMENT WAS ENOUGH**, which will give you the thrill of your life. **THUNBOLT**, by H. Child is another tale that will hold you to the last gasp, and you will get a thrill and several chuckles out of Lyon Mearson's **THE RULES OF SPORTSMANSHIP**.

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Illustrations for this week were posed by the following cast: Miss June Ferguson, Miss Mildred Walker, Carl Hayes, Milton L. Silver, Steve Lawson, Henry Van Bousen, Ralph Moreau, Leo J. Timmans, Scott McGee, Gordon Marr, Charles Hancock and Willard Cooley—to whom grateful acknowledgement is made.

## Next Week

We have a surprise for you soon: **BURIED ALIVE**, by Arthur H. Howland, being the inside story of the famous Becker murder case that is just now agitating and astounding the civilized world. It is a story that illustrates how closely fact parallels fiction. **THE MYSTERY CLOSET**, by Jack Hanley is certain to raise your hair, and Blanche Goodman, in **HIS CODE**, has written a little masterpiece. Also, the conclusion of **MIDNIGHT DOLLARS**, and **CROOKED LANE**, to say nothing of Thurston, Madame Pythagoras and Heart Throbs. A number we are proud of.

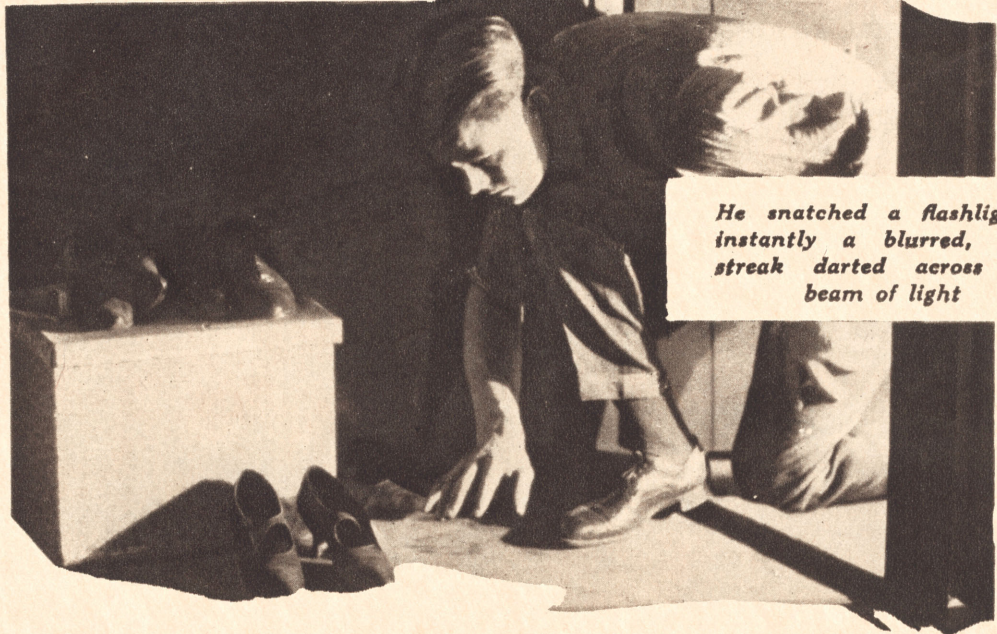
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JANUARY  
Thirteenth  
1923MIDNIGHT  
MYSTERY STORIESVOLUME 2  
WHOLE  
NUMBER 21

# Out of the Dark

by JAMES WILMER

"Huh!" he remarked, "a woman's shoes—I wonder if she'll be back after them"



He snatched a flashlight—  
instantly a blurred, dark  
streak darted across the  
beam of light



SAILOR JACK DANBY lumbered heavily up the steep, narrow stairs and bumped his clumsy seaman's chest through the doorway into the middle of the newly rented furnished room.

"There!" he muttered, swathing his face and neck with a big handkerchief. It had been a hot climb up those stairs in the dingy, stuffy old house on that July afternoon.

He reached for a wallet in his hip pocket and fingered out four soiled one-dollar bills.

"Here's your rent," he said, handing the money to the bleary-eyed, gray-whiskered old man in baggy trousers and a faded blue shirt.

"You're getting south windows, and them catches the breeze," said the landlord. He pocketed the money and shuffled away down the hall, leaving Sailor Jack mopping his face and surveying the premises.

The air was ripe with odors of an Italian fruit store on the ground floor of the building. There were cantaloupes, watermelons, oranges and bananas. Noises common to that ancient quarter of the metropolis in the vicinity of Grove Street, Bleeker Street and Seventh Avenue came through the windows. About a block down the street a hurdy-gurdy was grinding out a jazz medley.

The sailor sniffed and looked about and listened. He pulled his sea chest over into the corner of the room.

Up and down the teeming, sunlit street he gazed from each of his two windows. Then he examined the dusty, cracked porcelain bric-a-brac on the mantle. He peered into the wooden, built-out clothes closet in a corner. "Huh!" he remarked, "a

*In this story is the atmosphere of the East Side. Sailor Jack got a thrill there—so will you*

woman's shoes—I wonder if she'll be back after them." He lifted up an end of the mattress of his bed, inspecting its condition of cleanliness.

After he had thus become familiar with his new quarters, he poured out some water from a cracked pitcher on the dirty marble-top washstand into the huge porcelain basin and spluttered over it. Washed, he took a seat in a squeaky straw-bottom chair. He heard a step in the dark hall and looked around. In the doorway stood an old woman.

"Howdy!" said the sailor. She smiled a greeting. But Sailor Jack noted more than cordiality in the smile. It was either resentment or fear which strained the muscles of her pale cheeks.

"I'm Mrs. Sage," she said. "We're neighbors. It's so hot I have to keep my door open, and guess you'll have to do the same. It's the hottest house I ever lived in."

"I don't mind heat," said Jack. "Got used to it in the tropics. Won't be here long anyway—just

ashore for a few weeks—my ship's in drydock."

"There's been other sailors in this room. The last man here was a sailor." Mrs. Sage seemed to hesitate about something which she seemed to want to tell. After a long pause, she lowered her voice to a husky, frightened whisper. "But that sailor was took out of here dead!"

(Concluded on page 28)

# The Menace

"SIR Oliver Haultain!"  
The old aristocrat tugged, with apparent stupidity, at his white moustache before staring vacantly through his monocle at the servant who had announced him. There was no offence in the old man's stare. It seemed to be done with such lack of intention—almost with the artlessness of a child. The same thing had occurred with the door-man and with the man who had taken his hat and stick. Something about these rather large servants seemed to draw that meaningless stare through the monocle.

As Sir Oliver advanced into the dark-paneled library a man rose from a deep-seated chair and came forward with quick steps which were in strong contrast with the slow progress of the visitor. He was, perhaps, ten years younger than Sir Oliver and there was yet much black in his hair. Beside a tall stand-lamp he halted and the light played upon the keen and alert features of the American business man.

"I am Van Duysen," said the younger man with hand partly extended.

"Ah, yes," answered Sir Oliver, sinking into a chair and taking the glass from his eye in order to polish it.

Sir Oliver had not ignored the hand. He had simply attended to his eye-glass as if that were the most important thing in the world. Sir Oliver was the kind of a man who might strike but who would never stoop to offend. That would be beneath his dignity, and people, upon meeting him, soon recognized this. Van Duysen sensed it at once, as he drew up a chair, and an expression of studious

*The desks had been broken and a typewriter lay smashed on the floor—on a small table sat a girl. Squatting on the floor was a young boy whose tousled head of red hair drooped sleepily*



By  
R.T.M. SCOTT

interest spread over his rather handsome features. "Cormorand has not arrived yet," said Van Duysen. "He invited me to meet you tonight after dinner but a few minutes ago he telephoned that he would be late and asked me to entertain you in his library until he comes."

"Coffee, sir?"

Sir Oliver took the fragile cup and again he stared in a bored way at the servant who held the tray. He neither refused nor accepted the cream and sugar but seemed merely to forget the servant as he raised the cup to his lips.

"I think," continued Van Duysen, "that our host is rather upset over the hold-up which occurred here last night."

"Hold-up?" questioned Sir Oliver. "I did not know. Came straight from the boat. That accounts for the—ah—servants?"

"Servants?" asked Van Duysen, puzzled.

"They are not—ah—real servants," explained Sir Oliver, pulling at his moustache. "They are—ah—professional guards."

"Oh!" laughed the American. "You saw that so

quickly? It is a common practice—almost necessary—among men in this country who deal in a certain kind of politics. This place is a fortress and that makes last night's hold-up almost inexplicable."

"Thief caught? Anything stolen?" queried Sir Oliver.

"Nothing stolen and no thief caught," returned Van Duysen. "The man came boldly in and was mistaken for a guest at a large dinner party. He handed his coat and hat to a servant and immediately requested the use of a telephone which would give him privacy. He was directed to a small room at the head of the stairs. Almost at once a wild call of 'Fire?' came from upstairs."

"Cormorand, with some guests and servants, ran to the scene of the alarm. Cormorand went straight to a private study. A servant who tried to follow found the door locked and it took five minutes to

*Framed in the doorway was the towering figure of a huge Hindu*



*"They are—ah—professional guards," explained Sir Oliver*



*Dangerous anarchists have obtained possession of a flask of deadly poison that would kill every inhabitant of New York if the cork was pulled.*

*Read what the best Secret Service operatives of two continents find at the end of the trail*

break in. The supposed guest, who had asked for the telephone, amid the confusion of entering the locked room, rushed down stairs and out the front door calling excitedly for a doctor.

"Cormorand was found upon the floor, tied and gagged. He states that he was attacked by a tall man wearing a mask and that this man must have stood against the wall and slipped out as the crowd rushed in. Cormorand refuses to talk about the incident except to state that nothing was stolen. Of course there was no fire and the thing is a mystery."

THE heavy portieres parted and a short man of about fifty entered the library. His face showed fatigue and a slight twitching of the mouth gave an indication of nervousness. His eyes were deep brown—almost black—and denoted power and the desire for more and more power.

"Mr. Cormorand," said Van Duysen, rising, "this is Sir Oliver Haultain."

As the three men settled into their chairs, Cormorand came straight to the point.

"You come from the British Government, Sir Oliver?"

"Really, my dear sir," was the quiet reply, "if I came from the British Government I would deal with Washington and not with a private individual."

"Then what is your exact status?" demanded Cormorand.

"I am the London partner of Haultain and Smith," answered Sir Oliver, "just as Aurelius Smith is the New York partner of Smith and Haultain. We are not incorporated but work together on international cases. Smith wandered to India when I was in charge of the Criminal Intelligence Department of that country. He entered the service of that department for a number of years although retaining his American nationality. When I retired he returned to New York and I went to London but neither of us seemed able to give up the fascination of criminal investigation."

"And, now that you are here, what do you propose to do?" snapped Cormorand.

"I came to America to take the poison-flask back to England."

"Humph!"

Sir Oliver screwed his monocle more tightly into his eye and leaned toward his companion while he walked with absence of emotion but with sincerity of expression upon his old and somewhat yellowed face.

"Let us view the situation," he began. "At one point in the war the Allies were in a most desperate situation. So desperate were they that a certain sealed flask of vitiating poison—effective through the ether—was taken from the vaults of the Bank of England and carried to the battlefields of Europe as a last and ghastly resource.

"This poison was created by a great scientist, who is now dead, and was destined as a national defence to be used only when all other means failed. Its action is through the ether and a single flask of it will destroy, almost instantly, all life over a space of a hundred square miles. With the death of the scientist the secret of this poison died also. One flask remained in existence but it could never be analyzed since the man who opened the flask would die together with every other living thing within many miles.

"The poison was not used because the United States entered the war in time to save the world. The poison was, however, stolen before it could be returned to the vaults where it had been kept. The disappearance of this dangerous flask has remained a mystery until a few weeks ago when Aurelius Smith sent me a photograph of the flask and stated that the flask itself was in the possession of an unknown Bolshevik agent in New York City. I have shown the photograph to certain English officials who remember the original flask and—"

"Is it genuine?" demanded Cormorand and Van Duysen in one voice.

"It is undoubtedly genuine."

Van Duysen swore softly and paced the room, an expression of pain upon his face.

"I UNDERSTAND, Mr. Cormorand," continued Sir Oliver, "that Mr. Van Duysen gave this photograph to Aurelius Smith and engaged his services. I understand, also, that Mr. Van Duysen received this photograph from you and that it came to you anonymously. With it came a demand that the business interests of this country must support a Bolshevik ticket at the next elections. The flask will be broken, if they fail to do so, and every man, woman and child in New York City will die. Am I correct?"

"Damnable!" ejaculated Van Duysen.

"But correct," added Cormorand.

"What can be done?" asked Van Duysen, rising again to pace the floor in agitation.

"We cannot sacrifice millions of our citizens," spoke up Cormorand. "There is only one thing to be done. We must do as they demand and try to get the flask back before they wreck the country."

"There is something else," said Sir Oliver, leaning back languidly in his chair.

"What is that?" asked Van Duysen, halting with knit brows before the old man.

"I shall take the flask back to England on the next boat."

"How are you going to get it?" barked Cormorand.

"I have great faith in Aurelius Smith," went on Sir Oliver. "In addition to his work in India he performed wonders in Europe during the war—wonders which may never be told to the public. His record with Scotland Yard is unsurpassed. He is an American through and through but he knows crime in many countries. He—ah—interviewed you, Mr. Cormorand?"

"I gave him an interview," answered Cormorand. "He did not appear to be very intelligent and did not seem very much interested. I think you overrate this man. He is not the kind to succeed where my own agents and the police have failed."

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### Here's your chance—

**"Every one who guesses what's in the author's mind may file his application for a place with the Secret Service in the United States, or Scotland Yard in England."—Sir Oliver Haultain**

---

"Then you have employed the police?" queried Sir Oliver rather sharply.

"Well, not definitely," responded Cormorand after a slight hesitation. "There would be a panic if this thing got into the papers. I have used influence to have certain radicals rounded up and searched—nothing more. My own private agents, however, are hard at work and, where they fail, your man Smith will never succeed."

"And yet"—Sir Oliver's long fingers played with his moustache and wandered in a helpless way to his monocle—"I received a wireless on the boat this morning stating that he had succeeded and that he would give me the flask if I called this evening."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Van Duysen, striking his hands together with enthusiasm. "Let's go and get it at once—that is, if I may come along."

"Sorry to disappoint you," broke in Cormorand, "but Smith has been missing for twelve hours. In addition to the entire police force I have half a hundred special agents searching for him. When my men can't find anybody it is fairly certain that the missing person is both dead and mighty cleverly planted."

"Why—why didn't you—ah—tell me this sooner?" falteringly questioned Sir Oliver with a look of dismay.

"Why didn't you tell me at first that Smith had secured the flask?" countered Cormorand.

"True," murmured the old man absent-mindedly as he held out his coffee cup. "I am getting old. May I have some more coffee? My thoughts wander."

"Why not pay a visit to Smith's diggings?" suggested Van Duysen as Cormorand rang for a servant. "Let's get some action. Order your car around, Cormorand."

SO it was that, at about ten o'clock, Cormorand's luxurious limousine turned from the bright lights of Broadway, in the lower eighties, and stopped before a quiet apartment house. As the chauffeur brought the car to a halt, a second servant sprang lightly from the front seat and held the door open. Sir Oliver, the last of the three men to alight, again stared with owl-like curiosity at the man who held the door. From the innocent expression on the old man's face it was impossible to guess that he recognized the servant as the same one who had taken his hat and cane at Cormorand's residence.

"Never can tell what you will find in the dug-out of a chap like Smith," muttered Sir Oliver as he stepped from the car. "Uncommon name for uncommon man."

The next moment he tripped and nearly fell over a legless beggar who was trundling himself along the sidewalk on a low box mounted on castors.

"I say, my man, you should be more careful," grumbled Sir Oliver in an irritable voice. Then, with more kindness: "Hurt in the war?"

There was no reply and Sir Oliver, after one of his vacant stares, dropped a piece of silver among the pencils in the ragged hat and followed his companions into the building.

The man who had opened the limousine door joined the party in the elevator. Sir Oliver stared at him anew as if he had not already seen him on the sidewalk. He quickly turned his attention, however, to the elevator boy—or rather man—as they shot upward to the top floor and came to an abrupt halt two feet too high. The car descended and stopped with a jerk three feet below the level of the floor. When it finally came to rest, a good six inches too high, Sir Oliver turned to Cormorand.

"Better leave your two guards outside and let 'em learn to run the lift," he suggested.

"What makes you think they are both my men?" demanded Cormorand sharply.

"Saw that they knew each other and they are both—ah—what you call gangsters," returned Sir Oliver coolly. "This one doesn't know a lift from a submarine."

Van Duysen hid a faint smile behind a gloved hand but Cormorand flushed with annoyance.

"Gangster is not a very polite word to use," he said, "but—you don't understand things in this country. I always keep one man with me. Come along Jennings."

It was Sir Oliver who pressed the buzzer outside the door of Smith's apartment. A shrill voice called something from within and light feet could be heard scampering across the floor. The next moment a guttural voice broke out and the feet stopped their patter. There was complete silence.

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, the door opened to its fullest extent. Framed in the doorway was the towering figure of a huge Hindu dressed in the flowing white of the native servant of India. His high turban, wonderfully wrapped, nearly touched the top of the doorway.

"Kaisa ho?" said Sir Oliver which is a polite question regarding the health.

The native's dark eyes opened to their widest and an expression of happy astonishment spread over his face.

"Ram! Ram!" he exclaimed, abbreviating the name of his god in his surprise.

Majestically the tall figure bent in a salaam and the hands flew to the forehead. There followed a torrent of Hindustani which Sir Oliver cut short.

"Speak English," the old man said. "We have much to do, Langa Doonh, and there is little time."

INSIDE the apartment the visitors found themselves in a large square room which had all the appearance of having been wrecked. The desks had been broken open and a typewriter lay smashed upon the floor. Pictures had been torn from the walls and a table lay upon its side. It was evident that a violent search of the room had recently been made. Only a rectangular aquarium seemed to be untouched as it hung from a wall bracket. Three gold fish swam unconcernedly within.

But the wrecked furniture was not all that the room held. On a small table, upon which rested her slender arms, sat a girl with her chin in her hands. Squatting on the floor, was a young boy whose tousled head of red hair drooped sleepily toward the table leg. Dark rings were under the girl's eyes and it was plain that she was in sad need of sleep. The boy's face was puckered in an effort to keep himself awake while he gazed at the visitors like a terrier that is undecided between friends and foes. The girl's face, delicate with an aristocratic beauty, held eyes in whose dark-brown depths there burned a zeal which defied sleep. Langa Doonh, once more impassive, stood straight and silent with his eyes fixed upon Sir Oliver.

"Coffee."

The silence was broken by the single word from Sir Oliver and the native vanished like a shadow into the next room, his bare feet making no noise upon the floor.

"Who are you?" suddenly demanded the girl, rising to her feet while the boy jumped up and took a step forward as if the terrier in him had decided to fight.

(Concluded on page 30)

# Tricked

BY GEORGE B. JENKINS

HERE was a sharp flash in the darkness, and the deafening report of a revolver crashed into the silence of the hallway. For a fraction of a second, the two men who were about to descend the stairs stood motionless. Then, in desperate, frantic haste, they fled to the floor below.

Like frightened rats they scurried across a wide hall, turned abruptly to the left through an open door, and crowded out of a tall French window to the lawn outside. Andrews was in the lead, with Benton close behind him. The cool fresh air of a quiet night swallowed them up.

Andrews spurted across the lawn, making for the shadow of a towering hedge. Again a revolver crashed on the second floor of the huge country home. A bullet whimpered past his head, and then a shot was fired at Benton as he darted in another direction. Andrews plunged toward the automobile that had brought them to the vicinity of Howard Van Wert's country dwelling.

Lights appeared on every floor of the building behind him. Guests awoke and rushed out, startled by the shots. Andrews knew that a search would shortly be made and he ran, lungs aching, knees paining, feet burning. He came to a high wall, topped with sharp-edged glass, and he flung himself upon it, ignoring cuts on his hands and torn clothes.

There was the car, by the side of the road, just as it had been left. It was concealed by the shadows of overhanging trees. Andrews snatched open the door and slipped behind the wheel. Before he stepped upon the self-starter he paused, listening intently.

The faint noises of the night were marred by shouts and the sounds of hurrying feet. Pursuit had begun—Benton, Andrews' pal in this criminal adventure, had not appeared. Andrews was waiting for him until the last moment.

They had been interrupted just after the safe had yielded to their skillful persuadings. A firm foot-step had sounded in the hall. A whisper in the dark, and both Andrews and Benton had frozen motionless. Then, when the man had entered the room and begun fumbling for the electric-light switch, Andrews had felt Benton's hand upon his arm. Moving soundlessly, the two interlopers had gained the hallway, and had been upon the verge of slipping down the stairs when the other man had fired.

There was no need for Andrews to wait longer. If Benton was going to join him, he would have appeared before now. There were voices on the other side of the wall. The sounds were undoubtedly made by people who rightfully belonged on the Van Wert's grounds, for Benton would not have been so carelessly noisy.

The motor whirred and caught, and Andrews drove away. He did not race with a roaring motor; his car rolled along at a moderate pace so as not to arouse suspicion as it passed through the nearest village and took the straight road for New York City.

Andrews drew his rubber gloves from his hands and stuck them into the side pocket on the car door. He stopped the machine, when safe from pursuit, and changed the soft-soled shoes he was wearing for oxfords.

Arriving in New York, he drove his car to a garage. He was not wholly disappointed by his evening's work. True, he had not brought anything away from that magnificent country place, but he knew Benton had snatched something from the safe in that second of opportunity before they were interrupted.

## II

THE morning papers played-up the robbery. Scareheads across the front page of a yellow sheet, announced:

"Princess' Pearls Purloined

Jewels Valued at a Million Escape Robbers.  
Frightened Away by Millionaire!"

Then followed a report of the visit of criminals to

*After a thrill  
comes a shudder—  
visit a doctor if  
you don't gasp in  
this story*

the country house of the exclusive Howard Van Werts, and the statement that a pearl necklace, valued at twenty-five thousand dollars was all the loot that had been taken. Much was made of the fact that had not the thieves been surprised at their work many famous and valuable jewels would have been taken.

Andrews smiled wryly. Still, the string of pearls, valued according to the newspaper report at twenty-five thousand, was a rich haul. His share of the proceeds would enable him to loaf for some weeks. He went into a cigar store telephone booth and dropped a nickel into the slot.

Benton answered. He had managed to elude the pursuers and was glad to know Andrews had escaped. "I couldn't get to the auto," he said; "I had to drift the other way. If I'd made the machine, I wouldn't have to spill bad news."

Andrews face hardened. "Bad news? Spill it!" "A stick-up!" declared Benton. "Come around and see me."

A stick-up! Andrews slammed the telephone receiver down on the hook. Was Benton lying?



*The faint noises of  
night were marred  
by shouts—pursuit  
had begun*



*"Four fingers from  
each hand," he  
said, softly. "I'll  
let you keep your  
thumbs"*

Andrews' swift brain blazed as he understood what had been implied. Was Benton going to say that, while coming from the Van Wert country home to New York, he had been robbed? Was Benton trying to double-cross him? Andrews' lips drew back from his teeth. So someone had stolen the pearls from Benton before he had reached home! A pretty story!

Andrews strode from the cigar store, a scowl upon his face. He almost ran into a slender brunette.

She grasped his arm and stopped him. "Ted! What's the matter?"

He whirled and recognized her. "Lots, Cora," he replied briefly. "I'm going up and cut the heart out of Benton! He claims——"

"The papers say a necklace was stolen. Why should——"

"He says he was stuck-up."

Her eyes narrowed as her swift feminine brain analyzed this statement. "I don't know Benton," she said.

"I'll attend to him." He started on. "If he thinks he can get away with——"

"Wait a minute!" Her voice was commanding, and he paused instinctively. "I gave you a tip on that proposition," she went on. "I want to know all about it. Tell me!"

Andrews quickly outlined the events of the night as he knew them. To the casual passerby, it looked as though a young business man was talking with an acquaintance. Andrews was young, well-built, tanned of face and alert in manner. Cora was a sweet being; her complexion discreetly and sparingly applied, and her afternoon frock of solid black, sleeveless, with filmy panels that almost reached the ground, closely followed the graceful contour of her figure.

"And what is Benton like?" she asked, as he finished. "What does he look like? What does he think about?"

"Oh, he's about medium height, broad-shouldered, rather small eyes, and—he's very careful about his hands. Nice, white hands." Andrews thought for a moment. "He doesn't care for women. Benton says that a woman always gets a man into trouble. He says that some day you'll get jealous, and spill all you know." He paused uncomfortably. "You know, there's a little bit of truth in that. I've seen it happen time and time again. After Molly Carter heard that Bill was——"

"Molly was a fool," interrupted Cora. "You know that."

"Sure she was a fool, but that didn't get Bill out. She went up to Dannemora to see him, and did everything she—What's the use of all this? I'm going to make Benton come through or plow—He's double-crossing me!"

"Perhaps he is," said Cora reflectively, "but if you bump him off, how do you know you'll get that necklace? If he's hidden it—and he has—how do you know you'll find it? I thought we were going over to Europe after this job."

"I told you we'd take in Monte Carlo," Andrews declared, "and we'll do it."

"You see Benton, then," Cora advised, "and let him talk. If his story is blah, we'll try another tack. I'll get into this game."

### III

ANDREWS' interview with Benton was unsatisfactory. Benton told a long-winded and almost convincing story of a hold-up. He had walked from the Van Wert country home to a trolley, changed to a taxi, then to another trolley. Then, seeing the elevated tracks two blocks away, he had left the street car. And two men had slipped out of a dark alley, one had covered him with a gun while the other went through his pockets.

"They cleaned me!" said Benton. "Took everything—watch, money, and necklace. Honest, I feel rotten about it."

Andrews listened, saying very little. Threats, or fury would not secure the necklace. Benton would feel that he was compelled to stick by his story; to admit that the hold-up tale was a lie would be inviting death. Andrews decided to meet guile with guile. He left to get in touch with Cora.

Later that afternoon, Benton strolled from his rooms in a quiet and respectable apartment house in the West Seventies. As he neared the corner, a brunette appeared, coming from Broadway. She was exquisite, faintly perfumed; her scarlet gown was a conspicuous and noticeable note. A smile fluttered across her mouth as she approached him.

Benton was not blind, neither was he ancient, nor was he dumb. Five minutes later he was escorting Cora into a softly lighted restaurant.

Ten minutes later Andrews was in Benton's apartment.

There were three rooms in the suite; a living room, a bedroom, and a serving pantry. The bed was a real antique of the Louis XIV period, narrow, with an ornately carved head-board, and slender spindle legs. The living room was masculine—comfortable chairs, ash trays, a lounge with brilliantly colored Navajo blanket smouldering on it, and a portable cellaret that had seen recent useage. There was a full-length mirror and paintings on the walls.

Andrews dismissed the pantry from consideration after a swift examination. There was a closet opening off the living room, and he opened the door. Inside were several suits of clothes, stolidly draped upon hangers, and his expert fingers ran down the seams in search of the pearls. Then lifting each hanger separately he searched beneath the clothes, thinking that perhaps the string had been concealed there. He had the fourth hanger in his hands when he heard the sound of a key being thrust into the lock of the entrance door.

It must be Benton! Andrews had arranged with Cora that she should detain the man until a thorough examination of the apartment had been made. Evidently, a slip-up. Andrews slipped swiftly in the closet, and softly closed the door.

The girl entered first, her high heels clicking as she stepped across the threshold. She murmured a complimentary phrase, and Benton answered her. Within the closet, Andrews crouched silently, his eye at the keyhole, one hand caressing a blue-steel automatic.

## HIGH HAND AT MIDNIGHT by Francis Dickie next issue

Cora passed across his field of vision, a graceful, swaying figure, the white roundness of her arms revealed through the openings of her scarlet gown. Benton followed, and Andrews' other hand slipped to the door knob. Then he mastered his impulse to leap in to the room and surprise Benton.

"—And what is your occupation, Mr. Brown?" Cora was inquiring, a mocking note in her voice. "Of course your name is really Brown."

"Brown, Black, White, or Scarlet, or whatever your favorite color may be," Benton replied. "I'm about to introduce you to Black and White."

There was the sound of pouring liquid, and the fizz of carbonated water.

"That one is yours," Cora said. "I'll take ginger ale in mine, and a little ice."

"You will? Just a moment; I'll get some ice."

Benton's footsteps traveled in the direction of the serving pantry. Suddenly the door of the closet was pulled open, and Cora confronted Andrews.

"Give me your gat—quick!" she whispered imperatively, not surprised to see him. "I want to——"

Andrews hesitated. "What did you bring him here for?"

"Tell you later. Give me your gat! Before he comes back!"

From the pantry came Benton's voice. "Lone- some in there?"

Cora laughed, a clear trill that was charming and seemingly pleased. "Just a little bit," she answered.

Then she whispered commandingly to Andrews: "Give me your gat!"

For a moment their eyes met. Then, a tender smile curved her lips. "Come on," she coaxed softly. "Gimme."

ANDREWS passed over the gun, the only one he had. The blue-steel automatic was poised a moment in her hand, then it vanished and she closed the closet door.

Unarmed, in the darkness of the closet, Andrews crouched at the key hole. His life was in Cora's hand. For if Benton discovered the man in the closet, he would shoot to kill. By spying upon Benton's movements in the apartment without his knowledge and consent, Andrews was behaving as though he did not trust Benton, did not believe his story of the hold-up, and planned to steal from him.

"Here's mud in your eye," was Cora's toast, as the clink of touched glasses was heard. There was a

moment of silence. "What is your favorite flower?" she asked.

"A Brunette," Benton answered swiftly. "And yours?"

"Pearls," she replied. "In fact, if I had my 'rathers' I'd be 'whoever' stole that string from those people in Long Island last night. Where was it—Van Gerts, or some name like that?"

Benton spoke slowly. "You seem—to be 'right,'" he said. "Would you be surprised if I told you that I know who put that over?"

"Not at all. I made you a long time ago," Cora said. "You fanned the waiter in the restaurant."

"A bad habit. Only do it occasionally, when I forget." Again the sound of carbonated water sizzling into a glass. "I know who pulled that trick," Benton went on. "He'll get a stretch some day. Wouldn't be surprised if he's buried for this one. He's mixed up with a blonde."

In the closet, Andrews knew the way Cora received this remark. He could not see her, but he sensed that she was leaning forward, angered.

"Is that straight?" she asked crisply.

"Yes," Benton chuckled. "Do you really think that Andrews is playing fair with you?"

In the queer silence that followed the honking horn of a passing taxi sounded strangely loud, like coarse laughter.

"So you know!" Cora's voice flattened. "What do you know?"

"That you are chummy with Andrews, and that you picked me up this afternoon to find out whether I really was robbed of that necklace last night," Benton replied quietly.

Still, in the close, stifling closet, Andrews was hard hit with surprise. Before Cora had unmasked her batteries, before she had cajoled Benton into an admission, or led him to boast and betray himself, her plan had been punctured by his knowledge of her identity and relationship to Andrews.

"You're partly right," she said. "I tipped him off to the job, and I want my split. But if the necklace is gone——"

"Maybe you can vamp Andrews into believing you tipped the Van Wert job," said Benton, "but I know better. Anyway, the necklace is gone. He's a dub, besides. Why do you cling to him. Think of that blonde!"

"What blonde? And don't think for a moment that I'm shackled to any bush-league prowler. If he's been roving——"

"He has!" Benton's voice took on a warmer note. "You and I, Cora, could put over big-time stuff."

Sarcasm edged the girl's laugh. "Yes; like this Van Wert job. You and I do the heavy work, and somebody else gets the jack."

"Maybe; this one time. Anyway, you're sticky on Andrews, while he's trailing a blonde. The trouble is, we're both tied up wrong. I passed out of the blonde's life—Andrews stepped in—last Wednesday night. At exactly seven-thirty I was told farewell, and he was tagged."

"Last Wednesday night! Seven-thirty! Why, he told me he was with you until midnight! Do you mean——"

"I left Andrews and the blonde together just after dinner," Benton said calmly.

STILL crouched in the closet, Andrews was listening to the lies Benton was telling. He had been with the man until midnight, talking over their proposed foray upon the Van Wert job. He was growing uneasy; Cora was apparently believing Benton. Perhaps her anger was feigned—she was merely encouraging Benton to talk, he thought. She would lead the conversation back to pearls again.

"You're letting Andrews get away with cross-eyed murder," Benton was declaring. "Chop loose from him. What do you say?"

"And take up with another half-wit?" she asked slyly.

"He's no half-wit; he was smart enough to grab my blonde. He promised to take her to Monte Carlo. She believed him, all——"

"He did!" Cora's fury was terrific. "He promised—I'll get to the bottom of this!" Her draperies swished across the room. "Come out and tell me the truth!"

Andrews made an undignified entrance into the living room. He was pulled forth by a flashing-eyed, thin-lipped Cora whose black hair was electric with anger. He was met and greeted by an astonished Benton, who snatched an automatic from somewhere instantly. The menacing muzzle of the gun was pointed at Andrews' belt-buckle.

Cora's eyes flamed dangerously, but the cold pin-

(Continued on page 29)



# The Uses of Ad-verse-ity

by LYON MEARSON

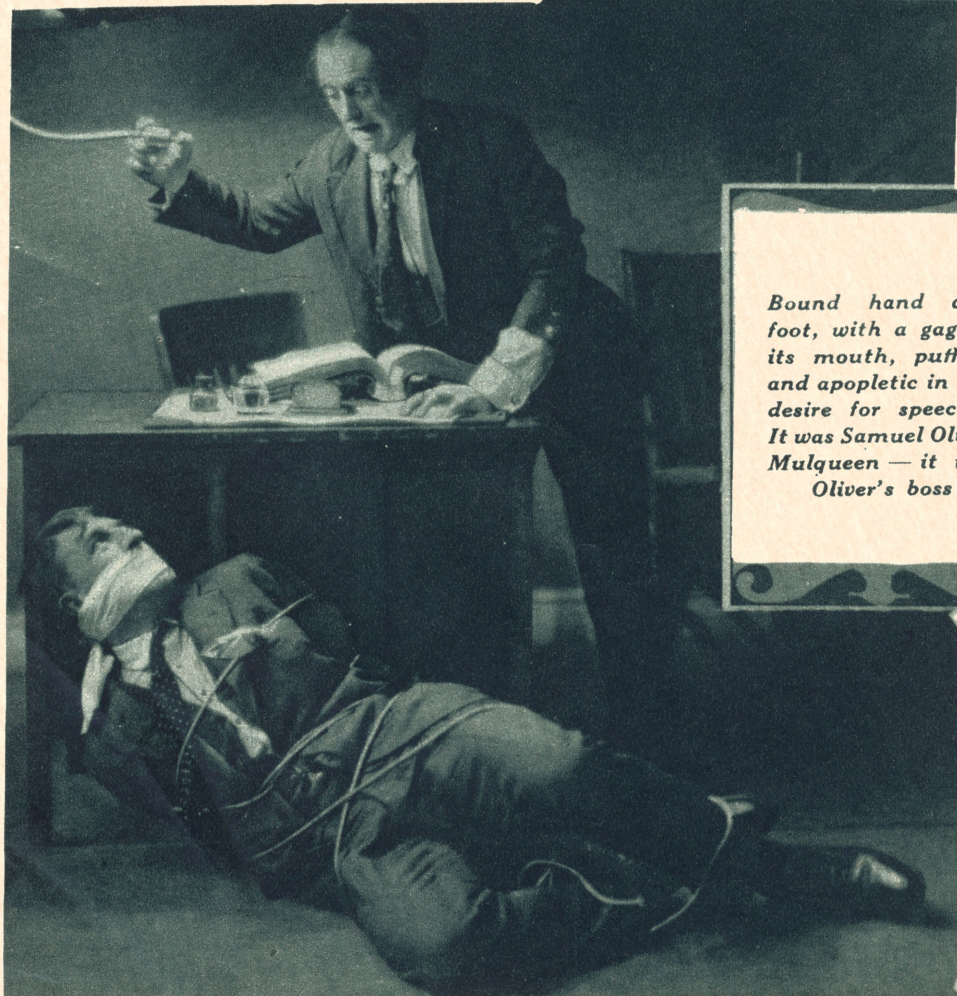
WHEN 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre it was a very simple matter. If a man was a lyre smiter, why, he smote the lyre. That was his business, just as gargling pebbles was the business of Demosthenes, and proving that the sum of the square on the two sides of a right triangle was equal to the square on the hypothenuse was Pythagoras' business. A man who was a lyre smiter, or a pebble gargler, or a genius in any of the other arts, did not have to labor on the building of the Pyramids to make a living, nor did he have to guard sheep on the Peloponesian hillsides, nor be a ferryman on the blue Aegian sea. He was able to live quite comfortably off his art.

That was then. Nowadays a lyre smiter, to live decently and connect with three squares a day, must do this smiting on the side; he must be able to negotiate a trial balance on the first of every month for his boss, or at any rate, to write those stirring letters beginning: "In response to yrs. of the 30th ult. we beg to acknowledge receipt of yr. order . . . ."

In other words, you can't depend on poetry for a living. Oswald Clavering was a poet. Fortunately, he had a working knowledge of double entry book-keeping. That kept him in comfort, if not in luxury, on twenty-five dollars a week. This is no princely income, yet for a single man it will do, in a pinch.



Oswald blushed a very pretty pink. "Neat," commented the boss. "Shakespeare never did anything like this"



*Bound hand and foot, with a gag in its mouth, puffing and apoplectic in the desire for speech—It was Samuel Oliver Mulqueen — it was Oliver's boss*

The trouble with Oswald Clavering is that though he was a single man, he desired to cease living in that state of so-called blessedness. There was a girl. Everybody knows that twenty-five dollars a week is not enough to support a wife with, even if you are an unpublished poet and would just as soon starve, in order to keep up the tradition. However, let us say one thing for Oswald. He was a good bookkeeper—easily worth more than he was getting. That's the trouble with being worth more; you cannot get it at a forced sale, and Oswald knew it.

So he stayed on being a bookkeeper for the Mulqueen Plumbing Supply Company, and a lyre smiter on the side. Not that anybody but the girl took his verse seriously; not even the editors. He had a very decent collection of rejection slips, those facile, lying little colored slips that inform you that this rejection does not imply any lack of merit, but simply, et cetera. That did not bother him very much, however; he was satisfied to go on making his verses, whether they bought them or not.

But this day the canker was in his soul. He wanted to get married. He wanted a raise, in order to accomplish same. Business was not any too good for Mulqueen at this time, but Oswald knew he deserved a raise. And he knew that Mulqueen, the old skinfint, knew it. That being the case, you will naturally inquire why he did not go into the boss's private office and demand his raise. That's what any ordinary man would have done.

But not so Oswald. There was a shyness in his sensitive soul; a shrinking from the coarse, misunderstanding vulgarity of Mulqueen; his heavy, sarcastic shafts and his rudeness. In other words, Mulqueen had the Indian sign on him. Oswald was afraid of him.

Yet, in spite of this, Oswald had nerved himself up. The thing had to be done, and he might as well get it over with, for better or for worse. For better or for worse! The phrase was magical to him. He imagined himself standing before the minister, taking a certain girl for better or for worse. A thrill went through him. Ah, the summer moon, a day in June, to spoon, and softly croon, on Southern seas, the while the breeze, sighs softly through the trees and—

"Clavering!" The huge bellow of Mulqueen

through the open door of his private office filled the outer office and crashed through the consciousness of Oswald as he sat making up this song about young love. He jumped to his feet.

"Commear," beckoned the boss, going back to his desk.

As always in times of mental excitement, Mulqueen was seated at his desk calm and cold, bulking huge over the mahogany, stroking his blue-veined jowls with a pudgy hand, while the hard blue-steel eyes of him, shining like sapphires, gleamed on the shrinking little Oswald Clavering, bookkeeper and sometime lyre-smiter. Mulqueen breathed heavily through his nose, took a puff of his big cigar, and threw it angrily to the floor at the side of the desk. He stamped on it as though it were the head of a serpent. As though it were Oswald.

BEFORE him on the desk, open at the first page, was the ledger of the Mulqueen Plumbing Supply Company. Oswald did not know he had taken this, though it was a custom of Mulqueen's to go through it once a month and see for himself how much money was outstanding. Of course, he could have required Oswald to give him a monthly statement; but that did not suit. It soothed his soul to go through the book himself, to gloat over each item, to rub his pudgy hands over each dollar. Somebody else's statement would rob him of this heart balm.

Oswald had not expected him to commandeer the book for some few days. Usually he asked Oswald for it. But this time, for no earthy reason, he was sitting here with the book in front of him, and within the book was something Oswald would have given worlds to save from the sight of Mulqueen. Mulqueen, with elaborate care, adjusted his gold eyeglasses on his short nose, breathed heavily through said member, and picked up the loose sheet he found in the front part of the book.

"If it's all the same to you, Clavering," said the boss, "I'd like to know what this means." He held the paper gingerly, as though it were infected. He peered at it through his glasses again, and looked up at Oswald inquiringly.

"It's—ah—it's a memorandum, sir. Ah—to remind me—that is—"

"Quite so! Quite so," Mulqueen's voice squeaked as it always did when he was trying to be sarcastic. "A clever idea, too. Stupid of me not to know it was a memorandum. All bookkeepers ought to learn to make their—ah—memoranda in verse, like this." He read loudly from the paper, so that all in the outer office could hear through the open door

*Don't forget to charge upon  
The bill of Jones & Knipe  
A dozen nickel faucets, and  
Ten feet of three-inch pipe.*

Oswald blushed a very pretty pink. "Neat!" commented the boss. "Shakespeare never did anything like this. Nor this gem:"

*Add on to the account of  
Obadiah More  
A Grade B. marble basin—  
Six dollars ninety-four.*

"Brilliant," said Mulqueen, as Oswald simpered nervously. "I see you've reduced the price fifty-three cents, too—I suppose that's because seven forty-seven wouldn't have rhymed, eh? Poetic license, maybe, he went on, "though I dislike to pay for the license myself, which I'm doing just because seven doesn't happen to rhyme with More. However, we'll let that pass. The next song is even better:"

*Charge up to Francis X. McGrath  
The fixtures for a shower bath,  
And send to Patrick Michael Schmitt  
A billy doo marked "Please remit!"*

"And this," he went on with forced sweetness, the while his skin purpled and the veins stood out on his nose:

*In Ledger A to F, old son,  
Correct the bill of Black & Gunn.  
And charge to Fieldstream Country Club  
A seven dollar 'named tub.*

He changed suddenly to anger. He slapped the book violently, and Oswald trembled, his weak eyes searching for a means of honorable escape.

"The thing that I want to know is," he slapped the ledger again loudly, "The thing that I want to know is, am I paying you for bookkeeping or for poeting. Do—"

"They're just memorandums—ah—I mean, memorandas—memoranda—stuttered Oswald.

"They're poems," thundered Mulqueen, slapping the book once more. "It takes time to write poetry—and I'm paying for your time. I—"

"They don't take any time, sir," protested Oswald, standing by his guns. "I write them as quickly as I'd write any other note. You see, it helps me to remember—"

"Don't interrupt me," thundered the boss again. "I tell you, this waste of time has got to stop. Either you're a bookkeeper or you're a poet—but you cannot be both. If you want to stay with me you're a bookkeeper. Now, remember that," he nodded to the door, showing that the interview was over.

SOMEHOW or other Oswald got to his high chair and quickly bent over his books, pretending not to hear the snickers of the office force. His ears, however, were red to the tips—and his heart and soul were red with anger and blood lust—blood lust, for the gore of Mulqueen.

Now, how in the name of all that's worth while can a man ask for a raise in the face of an incident of this nature, Oswald told himself. That settled that for today, anyway. Today and tomorrow Mulqueen would be busy with the ledger; in no mood for granting a raise, providing a man had the courage to ask for it.

As he bent over his books, trying to appear as though he were working, something seemed to hammer at the outer portals of his consciousness, some portent of evil to come, some feeling that all was not well, that something was wrong. It hung heavy over the spirit of Oswald Clavering, lyre smiter.

Then suddenly he remembered. In the back of the ledger at present in the possession of Mulqueen was another poem, which absent mindedly he, Oswald, had thrust there after writing it, intending to take it away with him that night. The words of this bit of verse echoed through his mind; mechanically he repeated them:

*If Samuel Oliver Mulqueen  
Should drink a swig of paris green  
And lie, a lily in his hand,  
His face turned toward the shining strand  
On high,  
Would I give way to heartfelt grief,  
Would I repine and weep? In brief,  
Not I.*

*So far I'd be from bitter tears  
I'd raise my voice in rousing cheers.*

Samuel Oliver Mulqueen being his boss. Bitterly he repeated the words to himself, syllable by syllable, like a rosary. He glanced furtively toward Mulqueen's private office. Through the door he could see that the boss was engaged on the first few pages. It would be hours before he would come to the part of the ledger that contained the foregoing bit of verse.

It at once became apparent to Oswald that under no circumstances must the boss read those words. Undoubtedly it would mean dismissal—a terrifying thing to Oswald, who dreaded hunting for a job, and always feared he would never find it.

There was another reason he did not wish the boss to find the poem. That reason was a peculiar one. The fact of the matter was that the words did not really express his feelings towards Mulqueen. In spite of Mulqueen's rough manner and frequent heavy sarcasm, he liked the man. It was inexplicable, but he did. There was something downright, something straightforward about the man that appealed to Oswald. He had written the bit of verse in a moment of pique, and one is apt to say things in verse that he would never think of saying in conversation—or even thinking. And Oswald was a mild-mannered, pacific little fellow, desiring the death of no one.

In addition, then, to the danger of losing his job if the boss found the ill-conceived literary effort, of which he was fully cognizant, Oswald felt that he would give anything not to have Mulqueen read the verses and imagine that they were his, Oswald's, opinion of him. Yet how was he to get possession of the ledger before the boss reached the part that contained said verses. He considered going in and asking for it, on the plea that he had to make an entry. He cast this aside, as being too likely to fail. Mulqueen would tell him to do it later, when he was through with the book. What to do? What to do?

"Day dreaming again, Clavering? Or thinking up something new to put over on old Kid Shakespeare?" The cold, edged voice of the office manager came over his shoulder, and Oswald was recalled to himself sharply. He hated the man who stood there, a thin, ferret-like face with mean eyes, and the long, lean fingers of a gambler; he stood next to Oswald, his fingers toying with an abomination that hung on his watch chain in lieu of a charm. The chain was composed of heavy solid gold links, of the kind popular in the early nineties, and the watch charm was a

hand carved basket made out of a peach stone, with the manager's initials, "J. B." in raised letters on the front of it. For some reason Sanford, the manager, was inordinately fond of the thing, and it occupied a very prominent place on his vest.

OSWALD had never liked the man, since his advent into the office two months ago. In the first place, Oswald had believed that he himself would get the place. There had never been an office manager in the office of the Mulqueen Plumbing Supply Company before. There had been no need for one—until Mulqueen took up golf. He had always been there himself, and needed no one to see that the place was run right. But since being introduced to the fascinating pastime of chasing a funny little ball over hill and dale, Mulqueen had taken to staying away week-ends and occasional week-day afternoons.

It had been a great disappointment to Oswald when Mulqueen had announced that he had hired an office manager, yet he had said nothing. He simply went on with his bookkeeping and his verses. In due course Sanford—James Sanford—appeared, and Oswald liked him still less than he had intended to on the announcement of his engagement. The man was a slave driver, and Oswald needed no one over him to force him to his work. He was a good bookkeeper. He resented the little mean eyes of Sanford on his back continually, to see that he was working. They bothered him. And the lean, gambler's fingers playing continually with the horrible thing hanging on his watch chain, the peach basket, irritated him unreasonably. The man was a constant reminder of the job Oswald ought to have had.

He mumbled a reply to Sanford, and went on with his work, his brain working furiously. How to get the ledger away from Mulqueen? Craven, a large Western customer, came in and was ushered into Mulqueen's office, where he was greeted effusively. He stayed there for an hour, during which time the ledger lay open on the desk between them, unused. Yet Oswald did not dare go in and take it. He was afraid to interrupt the taking of an obviously large order. After Craven had gone Mulqueen rang for Oswald. He was jocose, heavily so. It had been a large order.

"Put this in the safe, Longfellow," he directed, handing him a roll of large bills. "These Western birds seem to be afraid of banks—Craven's just bought five thousand dollars worth, and paid for it in advance—in cash." He glanced at his watch. "Five o'clock. Bank's closed long ago. Stick it in the cash drawer, and lock it before you begin your next poem," he smiled. He was in good humor.

"Yes, sir," said Oswald. "There's thirty-five hundred there now—I don't think it ought to be—" "Nonsense, Whittier," exclaimed Mulqueen, his red face crinkling up into a smile again. "It's perfectly safe there overnight."

"I'll enter it—" said Oswald, reaching for the ledger.

"Never mind. Tomorrow'll do," said Mulqueen. "I'm using the book now." He motioned to the door. "On your way, Omar Khayyam." Oswald went out.

IT was getting late. At five-thirty his day's work would be done—and from the looks of it Mulqueen would still be at the ledger. This was confirmed a few minutes later, when Mulqueen's wife called up. Through the open door Oswald heard the boss tell her that he would leave for home at seven, as he was working on the books.

His heart sank. Not that, in the ordinary course, Mulqueen would get to the offensive poem this night, even by seven. But Mulqueen was one of the older breeds of employer; he considered it his duty to be at his desk by seven-thirty A. M. every morning, even though his employees did not get in until nine. Oswald had thought of getting in before him, opening the safe and taking the poem out of the ledger, which would be put away in the book compartment, but it occurred to him that it would look very strange for him to be in the office at that hour, as his work did not warrant it.

There was only one thing to do, he finally decided. That evening he would return to the office. He had a key, and he knew the combination of the safe. He could then abstract the paper and nobody need be any wiser. He felt better after deciding this.

IT was a dark night, and the Mulqueen Plumbing Supply Company was in a dark section. Matter-of-fact as he tried to be, Oswald could not repress a certain thrill, a thrill of adventure mingled with apprehension, as he approached the place. It was

(Continued on next page)

# FATE ON THE TRAIN

BY W. S.

Winner of Sixth Prize in Great Midnight Thrill Contest



I gave  
her my  
card

WE entered the train. She smiled, so did I—or perhaps I did first, you know how those things happen.

We sat together during the journey—twenty miles.

"What's your name?" she asked, her blue eyes smiling.

I gave her my card.

"And yours?"

"I'll just be Nellie Jones—alright?"

"But that isn't fair," I objected.

The conductor called our destination and we alighted. She hurried away at the exit and I scarcely hoped to see her again. Completing my

business I returned on the next train and reached home late.

The telephone rang.

"Is this Jim Stimson?"

"Yes."

There was a click on the line. I shook the hook to no avail.

Ten minutes later the siren of the police flying squadron stabbed the stillness. The open exhaust throbbed before our house. The door bell rang.

I answered.

"Are you Jim Stimson?"

I admitted it.

"The young lady you rode out of town with in the train tonight is dead. She was poisoned. Your card was found on her person, and you were the last one seen with her alive."

The little mantel clock rang—ding, ding, ding, ding. Midnight!

Sadly, I went with the police. Never shall I forget that ride. I knew I had an alibi—but the scandal! The darkened countryside streaked past. Zig-zag fences writhed before our dazzling headlights. The siren shrieked.

"It looks pretty tough for you!" commented the sergeant.

"Is she dead?" I asked in dread. He did not answer, but clutched me tighter.

We stopped at police headquarters and rushed inside. There on a cot lay—I'll still call her Nellie Jones. The presence of death awed us. All turned to me. I was the murderer. There was my victim.

"Good Lord, I never did anything to her. I'm absolutely innocent of this!" I cried. No one heeded me. They were awaiting my confession.

The wall clock mocked—tick-tock, tick-tock, you will flirt with pretty girls, eh!—tick-tock, tick-tock.

A sigh pierced the hush.

The corpse moved? The eyelids fluttered. Another sigh.

"Where am I?" she murmured.

"My Gawd, she ain't dead after all," the sergeant said, sort of disappointed.

In half an hour the young lady was O. K. Amnesia followed by unconsciousness had caused the trouble. The young lady and I were returned to our home town in a police car. The vision sat beside me and murmured apologies. My ears were deaf and my lips were dumb; darn it, she might drop dead again.

Incidentally, I don't smile at strange girls now.

## THE USES OF ADVERSITY

(Continued from preceding page)

after ten o'clock, in a section devoted to giant warehouses, and not a soul was to be seen in the streets. Oswald's footfalls echoed along the sidewalk, solitary and ghostly.

He wondered whether, after all, he had better do it. Better, perhaps, to take a chance on being able to get the book in the morning before the boss could get to the verses. It seemed such a sneaky, illegal thing to do, this coming in late at night and opening the safe. He would, perhaps, have turned and retraced his steps, had he not suddenly discovered that he was standing outside the entrance to the warehouse of the Mulqueen Plumbing Supply Company, S. O. Mulqueen, Prop. He fitted his key to the outside door and opened it silently while he was yet debating the advisability of the step.

To get to the office, where the great safe was, he had to go through the ground floor of the warehouse. It was spooky and dark. Impelled by his surroundings, Oswald was silent as the grave as he advanced to the office. The door of the office was open, as usual, and in the corner loomed the great black bulk of the safe. A sudden shaft of moonlight, as the moon broke through a cloud, penetrated the room like a silver knife.

Oswald's breath came out of his body with a gasp, and his hair stood up. In front of the open safe crouched the dark figure of a man.

A safe breaker! It shot instantly through Oswald's brain. A safe breaker, and over eight thousand dollars in cash there, to say nothing about thousands of dollars in negotiable Liberty Bonds.

His spirit soaring with the thrill of it, though his knees knocked with fright, Oswald leaped on the

intruder, his one idea in all the world being to save the property of Samuel Oliver Mulqueen.

They went down into a heap on the floor, scrambling around, arms and hands flailing, seeking for holds which neither could get, and in the tenseness of the struggle in the dark Oswald found himself swearing—something he had never suspected he could do.

Back and forth they struggled in the dark Oswald getting the worst of it, as he was small and slight. But his fright was over now, and he fought hard. Harder than he knew, for it was his opponent who gave up first.

There had been a sound of running feet outside, and this scared the intruder evidently. He wrenched himself free from Oswald's grasp.

"Damn you!" he grated and turned to dash through the door. Oswald flung himself forward again and seized him, but was flung off. Something came away in his hand. The dark, silent figure melted away through the door, into the shadows like a gray ghost in the night.

Panting and disheveled, yet triumphant, Oswald made his way through the office to the wall switch, in order to get some light into the scene. Suddenly he stopped dead short again.

His foot had struck something. Something soft and yielding. Something human!

A chill went through Oswald. Was there a dead man here? His legs went weak again, of a sudden; he was nerveless, and a cold perspiration burst out gently over him. He tried the body with his foot. Yes, it was a body. His eyes were becoming accus-

tomed to the darkness now, and he could dimly discern it on the floor.

Awesomely, fearfully, he circled it, making his way to the switch. He pressed the switch, and stood there blinking, blind, in the brilliant and sudden light.

In front of him, when he could see again, was the body. But a hasty glance convinced him that it was alive. It was bound hand and foot, with a gag in its mouth, rotund, corpulent, red, puffing and apoplectic in the desire for speech and the inability to gratify that desire.

It was Samuel Oliver Mulqueen.

It was Oswald's boss.

IT developed that, having nothing better to do that evening, and finding time hanging heavily on his hands, Mulqueen had decided to come back to the office and continue his examination of the books. This he was doing when abruptly darkness had closed in around him, and he lost consciousness. When he recovered consciousness he was bound and gagged, and the burglar was going through the safe. That was the moment Oswald had picked for his entrance. A hasty examination of the safe showed that nothing had been taken—the timely appearance of Oswald had prevented that.

They were seated now in Mulqueen's office, on opposite sides of his big desk, as Mulqueen told his side of it.

"First poet I ever saw that was of any real use," he grumbled, his pudgy hand feeling a huge lump on the back of his head. "I guess I owe you some-

(Concluded on page 14)

# The Beetle

by

CARL ALYMER



WHEN the murder of Captain Harvey Karns, an old seadog, was solved, Detective Gilmore was given the credit for exacting the confession from the culprit. As a reward for his work on the case, he was promoted to the rank of detective sergeant. Gilmore was and is still my friend and I make this story public with no desire to discredit his ability or to ruin his reputation. As a matter of fact, he showed considerable skill in his handling of an extremely delicate situation; a man with less presence of mind might easily have blundered and spoiled the chances of forcing the issue to its logical conclusion.

It must be said in truth, however, that Gilmore was not responsible for creating the circumstances which lead to the highly dramatic climax. It was Fate that pulled the strings; no human being could have contrived so startling and tragic-ludicrous a situation.

The murder of Captain Karns was committed at his home in Midvale, an east coast seaport. The whole truth was not made public at the time. It was generally known only that the guilty man had confessed. *Why* he confessed was not given out by the police and that was the only unique and interesting feature of the case. The commonplace facts which were printed did not attract much attention and were soon forgotten.

When the news of the murder was telephoned from Midvale to county headquarters Gilmore and I were assigned to investigate. I had been on the county force only a few months at the time and the case was really in charge of Gilmore with myself acting as assistant. We reached the Karns house—a small frame building near the town limits—at about one o'clock in the morning.

The Captain's body lay on the floor of his bedroom on the second floor. He was in his pajamas and there was an ugly wound over his heart. The room showed no signs of a struggle other than a small overturned table which had been standing near the bed—and this table might have been upset by the Captain reeling against it when he fell to the floor. Under the table lay a huge, clumsy, cheap watch. The crystal was broken and the hands had stopped at twenty minutes to twelve. From the disarranged covers and the depression in the mattress it was pretty clear that the Captain had been in the bed before the death struggle.

From our examination of the other occupants of the house we learned the following facts: Not including the Captain and Mrs. Karns, there were eight persons in the house, six men and two women. The latter were the mother and the maiden aunt of

*He stepped over to the bureau and dropped to his knees. His right hand flashed forward quickly*



Mrs. Karns. All of the men were seamen who boarded in the Karns Rooming House. The evidence was that Mrs. Karns had gone to town on a visit to a friend, and had not returned until at least a half-hour after the murder.

Captain Karns had returned from a trip to Havana a few days before. On the night of the crime he and all six roomers had been in the big parlor on the lower floor from about seven to ten o'clock. The Captain had exhibited some of the treasures and curios he had picked up on his last voyage. There were among other things, four perfect pearls of an almost translucent white color and some black

cameos. Karns had put the value of the pearls at from two to four thousand dollars each and had bragged that after he had sold them, it would no longer be necessary for his wife to keep boarders.

All of the men had separate rooms on the second floor. All of them swore that when the session in the parlor had broken up they had gone to their rooms and to bed immediately.

Everyone in the house had been awakened by the Captain's terrible scream a little before midnight. None of the men reached the hall to investigate for several moments. One of them switched on the hall light, and at that time three other men—all but partly dressed—were in the hall each of them near the door to his room. From the facts as we learned them, it was apparent that anyone of the six men could have re-entered his own room before the lights had been turned on.

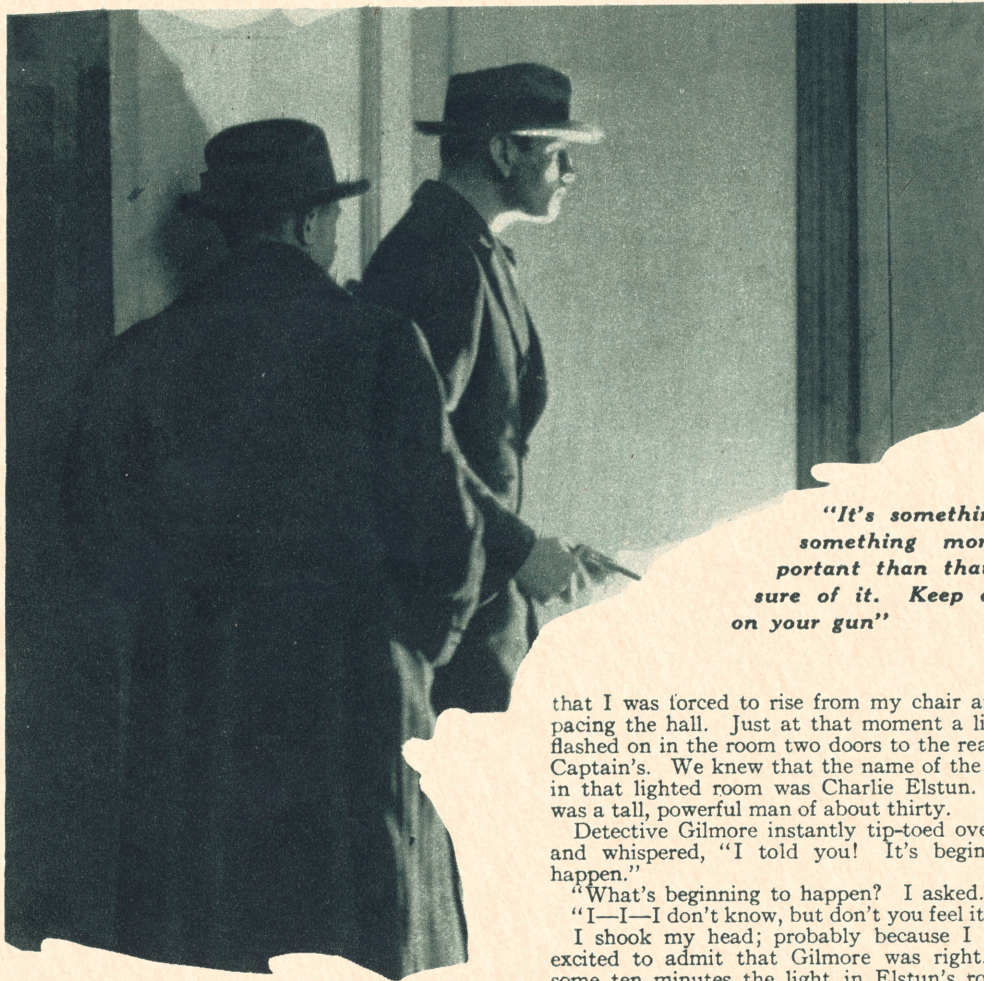
But which one of them was guilty? There were no tangible clues of any kind; no fingerprints were on the handle of the blood-stained knife which lay under Captain Karn's bed. We assumed that the motive for the murder had been the robbery of the pearls. The crime had failed, for we found the pearls in a small leather bag in a bureau drawer in the Captain's room.

Which one of the six men had been tempted by

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*A guilty conscience may be more terrible than the torment of the third degree. Coupled with the supernatural—well, "The Bug" made this man prefer the chair*

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**"It's something—it's something more important than that. I'm sure of it. Keep a hand on your gun"**

that I was forced to rise from my chair and start pacing the hall. Just at that moment a light was flashed on in the room two doors to the rear of the Captain's. We knew that the name of the boarder in that lighted room was Charlie Elstun. Elstun was a tall, powerful man of about thirty.

Detective Gilmore instantly tip-toed over to me and whispered, "I told you! It's beginning to happen."

"What's beginning to happen? I asked.

"I—I—I don't know, but don't you feel it?"

I shook my head; probably because I was too excited to admit that Gilmore was right. After some ten minutes the light in Elstun's room was turned out. "He is probably not feeling well and got up to take some medicine," I said hopefully.

This time Gilmore shook his head. "No," he replied in a low tone. "It's—it's something more important than that. I'm sure of it. Keep a hand on your gun."

About half an hour passed. During this time the dreadful silence remained unbroken. The suspense was almost unendurable, the more so because our suspicions were vague. It did not seem possible

the sight of the treasure? In the absence of any eye witness and of any other testimony pointing directly or indirectly to any one of the men, our task appeared to be hopeless. Detective Gilmore put all of them through a stiff grilling, but each of them maintained his innocence.

FIVE hours later, that is, at about six o'clock in the morning, an undertaker arrived. As detective Gilmore and the undertaker began to lift the Captain's body from the floor to the bed, a small black bug crawled from under the dead man's hand, hopped toward the wall and disappeared in a crack. It was a weird and gruesome incident. For some unexplainable reason I found an inward compulsion to stare at the crevice in which the bug had disappeared.

During the entire day Gilmore and I remained on the scene. Mrs. Karns, a small, and rather pretty woman with dark hair and large blue eyes, prepared a meal for us. She did not seem to be much affected by the crime, but neither Gilmore nor I thought it significant for we had previously found the folks on the seacoast to be of a stolid character, and able to restrain their emotions.

Gilmore made no examination of the premises, nor did he again question any of the house occupants. Instead, he haunted the hall-way and the rooms on the second floor. The dreary, uncouth surroundings cast a gloomy spell upon him. That night as we took our vigil in the hall outside the captain's room, Gilmore said to me, "I have a presentiment that something is going to happen. There is a certain tenseness about this atmosphere which has been keeping my nerves constantly on edge. One of the six men who are sleeping on this floor tonight is the murderer; we are pretty sure of that. How, in this utter darkness and quite unbearable silence he can keep his composure, is more than I can understand. If I had a guilty conscience and were forced to stay in this house, I should go mad."

I made no reply. In reality I was depressed more than Gilmore; the hollow sound of conversation in that dismal setting sent shivers through me.

All of the rooms on the second floor had transoms: for this reason we were able to observe that at about ten o'clock all of the rooms became dark. The intense silence which hung like a heavy shroud over the scene eventually excited me to such an extent

that that foreboding situation could last all night. We sensed an impending catastrophe and though neither of us could have given a logical reason for our feeling, we were both constrained to have implicit faith in the prophetic nature of our intuition.

At about quarter to twelve the light in Elstun's room was again turned on. Gilmore and I happened to be standing within a few feet of his door at the time. Slowly, without disturbing the silence, Gilmore moved close to the door and I followed. For several minutes we heard nothing. Eventually Elstun began moving about. His movements were spasmodic. There were intervals of sudden quiet as though the man had paused to listen. From the lower floor came the sounds of the huge parlor clock striking twelve; then again that appalling oppressive silence. Gilmore stood it only a few moments longer. He yanked open the door suddenly. The next instant he drew his revolver and entered the room. I stepped quickly after him. Elstun was slumped in a chair, his eyes bulging, a look of indescribable horror on his face. He raised the index finger of his right hand, his ashen lips began moving.

"Listen," he mumbled in an absolute monotone, "listen—to—that—damn—ticking. Tick, tick, tick. It's the captain's watch—haunting me. It's the Captain's watch trying to drive me mad!"

Of a sudden he rose. "Let me out of here!" It was almost a scream. "I can't stand it any longer; I must get away!"

I CONFESS that I was paralyzed into a mental and physical numbness, but Gilmore was quick to appreciate the possibilities of the situation. "Elstun," he said, "you killed Captain Karns and I'm going to keep you right here in this room till you tell me about it!"

"No—no! You must let me—"

"The sooner you talk," interrupted Gilmore, "the sooner you can get away from here—away from the Captain's watch!" Gilmore's tone was profoundly serious and the expression on his face did not change even to the extent of warning me against a betraying word or sign.

For several moments Elstun made no answer. Then abruptly the silence was broken. *Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.* I had to summon all my will power to remain standing still. Even Gilmore was startled. For those ticks were not imaginary but real.

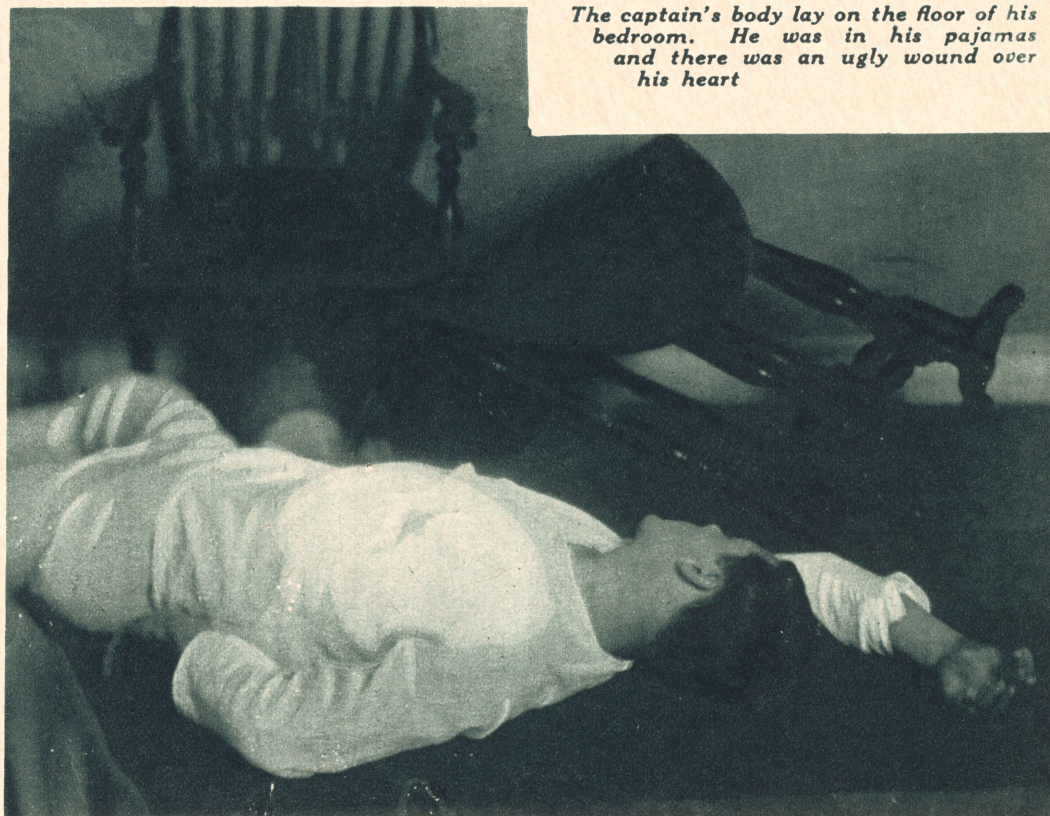
"There it is again," cired Elstun hoarsely. "Did you hear it?"

"It's the Captain's watch," Gilmore spoke slowly, "and it will tick, tick, tick, Elstun, until it breaks you into a raving maniac—unless you satisfy it and speak."

Elstun shuddered and collapsed into a chair. "I killed him!"

The tension relaxed. Elstun submitted meekly to

**The captain's body lay on the floor of his bedroom. He was in his pajamas and there was an ugly wound over his heart**



being handcuffed and led down into the parlor on the first floor. "If you don't want us to take you up into that room again," Gilmore told him, "you will tell us exactly what happened."

Elstun began speaking freely—it is some months since he paid the penalty—and I reproduce his confession herewith:

"I killed Captain Karns because I am in love with his wife and wanted to elope with her. I am pretty sure she loves me too, but she would not go away with me because I have no money to support her. I intended stealing the pearls and selling them. I was sure that I could then make his wife go with me. No one in this house knows of or even suspected our love affair for we were very careful to avoid being seen together.

"I made up my mind to kill the old man as soon as I saw he had the stones and I figured I had a good chance last night because his wife was visiting in town. I figured I had to do it before midnight when his wife would probably get home.

"Well, when I entered the hall I could tell, because of the transom, that his light was out. I crept along the hall quietly and went into his room. I knew that none of the doors on the second floor were locked. I intended to kill him, steal his pearls, hide them in the drain pipe which runs down the wall of the house just outside his window.

"As soon as I was in his room I heard him move. I stood still not daring to breathe. It was awful quiet in there—so quiet it frightened me. All of a sudden I found myself listening to a strange sound. It sounded terrible loud. I guess was it because the rest of the place was so quiet. Tick, tick, tick. It was his watch laying on the table near the bed.

"I started to move forward, but his bed sheets rustled as though he were turning. I didn't dare attack him while he was awake for he was a strong man and even though I was armed he would have had an even chance there in the dark.

"I stood still again and once more heard the sound of that damn watch. I can't describe what a funny feeling it gave me. It seemed that I just had to listen to it. Then all of a sudden I heard the loudest sound I ever heard in my life. I heard the watch stop ticking. That may sound funny to you, but did you ever hear a watch stop ticking in a room in which there was no other sound? It scared me so I wanted to scream.

"The next thing I knew the Captain had jumped out of bed and jostled into me. I guess maybe he had heard the watch stop too and wanted to wind it. When he jostled into me he hollered. He grabbed my shoulder. I just struck out once. He loosened his grip and fell back. It was luck that I stabbed him in the heart. I ran out of his room and into my room before the light in the hall was turned on. I threw away the knife but brought the handkerchief with me. After a few minutes I went into the hall and joined the others when they went into the room. I was dressed in my pajamas and looked just as scared as the rest of them and so none of them had reason to suspect me.

"It looked safe to me. Why should anyone think I did it? No one saw me and no one knew that I was in love with Mrs. Karns. But when I went to bed tonight I began worrying about it and couldn't sleep. Then, after I lay in bed a little while, I heard that strange noise again. It was the ticking of a watch, and there was no watch in my room because I haven't any. I stood it as long as I could and then I got up. I began looking for a watch, even though I knew there was none in the room. After a while the ticking stopped and I went back to bed again. But it started again. I had to listen to it. I kept telling myself it was imagination, but all the while I felt the sounds were too real for that. At last I had to get up again and light the gas. The ticks seemed to be coming from all parts of the room. *Ticks, ticks, ticks, ticks, ticks, ticks.* I heard them everywhere. I knew then it was the captain's watch. What else could it be that made that kind of a noise? I knew it was the same watch I heard in his room. The same watch that made me listen to it then.

"I wanted to run away, but I knew I couldn't do that with detectives in the hall. Even if I had been able to get out of the house, I couldn't have gone far for I had no money. At last you detectives came into the room. You heard the watch too, didn't you? Well, I guess you got me, but don't take me up into that room again."

AFTER Elstun had signed the confession, Detective Gilmore summoned three of the other boarders down into the parlor to guard him. Then he asked me to go up into Elstun's room with him. After we had closed the door, Gilmore said, "I'm going to find out about that ticking sound. That

fellow isn't talking nonsense because I heard the ticking myself when we were up in the room here before."

We stood in an attitude of listening. At length we heard it. There could be not the slightest doubt about it. *Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick.* And in that dreadfully silent room the sounds possessed a hollow, mocking weirdness. The ticking sounded like that made by a cheap watch, perhaps a little louder. But it was apparent at once that the sounds could not have been made by a watch, because there were at times several seconds pause between the successive ticks.

But if it was not a watch which was causing the ticking, what was it? Neither Gilmore nor I was inclined to place any faith in Elstun's story of a supernatural watch which had haunted him. And yet the phenomenon was mysterious enough to give both of us an uncanny sensation.

Then suddenly Gilmore began to laugh. He stepped over to the bureau and yanked it away from the wall. Then he dropped to his knees. His right hand flashed forward quickly. Laughing, he explained:

"Here's the fellow that did it," he cried. Between the fingers of his right hand he was holding a small black bug. "It's a beetle. And by the way, this particular species of beetle is called the *Deathwatch*. They are not very common in this part of the country . . . This little fellow certainly lived up to his name—*Deathwatch*—his ticks, which frightened Elstun into confessing, are made by striking his head against hard wood.

"When a man has a guilty conscience," mused Detective Gilmore, "his sensations can certainly play queer tricks on him."

I ran a handkerchief over my forehead.

THE END

\* \* \*

"GOING FOR THE DOCTOR," shouted the man running through the lobby of a New York Hotel a few seconds after a fusilade of bullets barked out. A man had actually shot and killed a girl who knew him by no other name than "Dutch." A few moments before the shooting occurred, "Dutch" had proposed marriage to his victim. The police think that the girl was killed because she stepped in line of fire between "Dutch" and an unknown man with whom he was quarreling. They have not found "Dutch."

## Uses of Ad-verse-ity by Lyon Mearson

Continued from page 10)

thing for that, Shelley," he smiled, a little ruefully. "That bird would've got away with a very decent haul if you hadn't jumped him the way you did—he was twice your size, too—"

"It was nothing," Oswald waved it away. "It was just something in the line of one's duty, of course; preventing robberies, and fighting large burglars . . ."

"Say not so, Keats," said the boss. "I'll buy you the finest rhyming dictionary on the market, my boy. By the way—" he looked at him fixedly, a thought occurring to him—"what on earth were you doing here at this time of night anyway?"

Oswald had expected that, and was prepared to make a clean breast of it. After all, maybe he wouldn't be dismissed for it. "Well—ah—er—you see, you know that page of poems you found in the ledger?" The other nodded. "Well, there was another one there—er—about you; in the back of the book," he went on hastily, while his courage stayed with him. "I didn't want you to see that, because—er—because—"

"Because it wasn't very complimentary, eh?" put in Mulqueen. He recited:

*If Samuel Oliver Mulqueen*

*Should drink a swig of parisgreen—*

Oswald blushed to his ears. "You—er—ah—you saw—"

"You bet I did, Chaucer," interrupted the boss. "I came across that jewel this afternoon. Why didn't you want me to see it?" he asked, regarding Oswald keenly. "Afraid of losing your job?"

"Well, yes," confessed Oswald. "But not entirely. You see, sir, that bit of verse does not really express the way I feel about you. One says things in verse because they rhyme, not because they're true. You can discharge me if you want to, but I want you to know that I couldn't accept a salary from a man and think such things about him—"

"That's all right, son," broke in the boss. "I know all about that. Fact is, I thought it was very

# The Week's Unsolved Mysteries

DID HE DIE OR DID DR. DANZI MEET FOUL PLAY? Suspicious that the Italian physician of the Bronx did not die from the effects of bronchial pneumonia but was killed by an unknown hand, has led former friends of the late Dr. Emanuel Danzi to demand an exhumation of the dead man's body. The eighty-year old Countess Montemeril, who lived with the doctor twenty years and claims his property as a common law widow, has been subpoenaed and will be severely quizzed.

\* \* \*

LINK THREE ASSAULTS OF GIRLS WITH DERVISH KILLING. The Jersey police have now decided that criminal assaults which were made on three girls of Bergen County within two hours of the brutal murder of Christina Dervish, bear a relation to this latter crime. It is the belief in official circles that these attacks were made by three of four men who have the key to the Dervish murder mystery in their keeping.

\* \* \*

FIVE BULLETS FOR UNFAITHFULNESS. Married only a month, and not past her seventeenth birthday, Carmello Contreno of Scranton, Pa., is dead with five gaping bullet wounds in her young body—all because her jealous husband came to the fatal conclusion that she was untrue to him.

\* \* \*

ANOTHER STENOGRAPHER PAYS THE GREAT PRICE! Refusing to discuss why, as alleged, he killed his pretty stenographer, who was a divorcee, Thomas Pollard, of Richmond, Virginia, is being held in \$10,000 bail.

clever." He pulled the poem out of his pocket. "My wife thought so, too. We'll call it square, if—what's that?"

"That" was a glittering bauble that lay on the corner of the desk. It was the thing that had come away in Oswald's hand when he had made a last grab at the intruder, and in the excitement of finding Mulqueen bound and gagged he had laid it down and temporarily forgotten about it. He picked it up now.

"Why, it belongs to the burglar, sir," he said. "I pulled it off him as he was leaving." They leaned over, and looked at it silently together.

It was an exceedingly heavy gold chain; part of one, at least; and depending from it was a charm carved out of a peach stone. In raised letters on the charm were the initials "J. S."

They were silent for a few moments. Oswald sat, immovable as a statue. Mulqueen whistled softly, tunelessly, between his clenched teeth. It was he who broke the silence first.

"Tennyson," he said softly, "I think I'm going to need a new officer manager beginning tomorrow—unless I'm very much mistaken."

Oswald nodded. "Looks a little like it," he said.

The boss looked quietly at Oswald for a brief space. "Kipling," he said finally, "how would you like to be poet laureate—ah—I mean, office manager—that is, if it doesn't cut in too heavily on the time you have to put in writing poetry?"

"I'd like to try it, sir," said Oswald soberly. "It would be the first time writing poetry ever got me anything substantial." He added in a sudden, shy burst of confidence. "You know, ah—er—there's a certain girl—ah—I mean, I want to get married . . ." He trailed off into an embarrassed silence.

Mulqueen nodded. "Sure. Congratulations." He detached the carved peachstone basket. "Here's your wedding present." He handed the atrocity to Oswald.

# THE Trenholme Temper Dies

BY

P. L. ATKINSON

THERE had been bad blood between Ted Malvern and Henry Trenholme for years—ever since the Telma Oil fiasco in 1918 when, at the solicitation of Malvern, Trenholme had invested fifty thousand dollars in Temla and lost every penny of it.

He never forgave Malvern, although events proved that Malvern was quite innocent of any wrong intention; but their mutual friends considered, rather, that he had never forgiven Malvern for that—and for marrying Alice Thorndyke.

Though the men frequently met, moving as they did in the same social set, they never spoke to each other, or about one another, and it was tactfully understood by every hostess in Claredale that Malvern and Trenholme, when their presence was inevitable at an affair, should be seated as far from each other at table as the laws of good taste would permit.

No hostess cared to evoke a display of the famous Trenholme temper, and, anyway, if the truth were known, Malvern had much more the popular side of the argument that had embittered the two men's lives. Trenholme, as indeed might be said of the whole Trenholme line, was a sour individual—fascinating enough when he chose to be, but terrible in his wrath when a spirit moved him to protest. Malvern, on the other hand, made friends easily, and kept them because of his charming manners. Everyone said that it was no wonder Alice Thorndyke preferred jolly little Malvern to the choleric Scot as Trenholme was dubbed by his friends.

So it was not particularly remarked when Trenholme spent the entire evening of the Claredale Country Club Ball in the billiard room, playing pool with Judge Kimball and Archie Belwyn, instead of dancing on the floor above. Malvern was certain to be there, basking in the smiles of the ladies, with his name on every dance card, while Trenholme, because the dance was always more of an obligation to him than a pleasure, would be sure to experience some difficulty in filling his card at all.

Outside, for it was early in December, a cold rain-storm lashed at the windows.

"Rotten night," Trenholme said suddenly, laying down his cue. "Rotten dull evening altogether. I don't know why I came out."

"And you've had exceptionally rotten luck," Belwyn said. "Never before saw you play so poorly, Trenholme. The weather must affect your game. I will admit it puts mine on the blink," he

counted his markers by laying them out with his cue. "Fifty, exactly," he announced. "Think I'll go upstairs and fling a foot." He moved toward the staircase. "See you all later."

Trenholme grunted something in reply and turning to Judge Kimball, he said, "I'll go you to a Scotch highball. I've a fair supply of stuff in my locker."

He handed the key to an attendant with instructions, and soon the two men were mellowing under the influence of the several drinks that followed.

"Hate all this dancing stuff," Trenholme confessed. "They'll keep it up all evening—all night—and I believe I'll duck. It's twelve thirty."

"Better stay," the Judge's eyes twinkled. "The pretty girls will soon come down here to join us. They get tired of dancing, after a bit, you know, I'm going to wait for Eleanor. She said she'd join me here—an hour and a half ago." He chuckled and caught Trenholme by the arm.

"No, no," Trenholme protested. "I'm going." He turned to Joseph, the colored attendant. "Get my things, Joe. Then I'm off."

Buttoning his heavy, thick, ulster well around his neck, stick in hand, hat settled firmly on his head,



He put his head into the cab—  
Ted Malvern was  
dead

Trenholme went through the open door and a vicious gust of rain passed him on the way in. The door closed quickly; at that moment Alice Malvern came down the stairs.

"Have you seen Ted?" she asked the Judge. "He left me fifteen minutes ago and I haven't seen him since. They are playing 'Three O'clock in the Morning,' and I wouldn't miss this waltz with Ted for anything in the world."

"Haven't seen him," the Judge replied. "Too bad Trenholme just left. He'd have been glad to dance it with you," and with a smile that was more than half an old man's jest, the Judge watched her ascend the stairs slowly.

\* \* \* \* \*

OUTSIDE, on the broad porch, Trenholme scanned the line of waiting taxis for one that would take him to his home, a half hour ride from the club. After waiting five minutes or more, on the wet, chilly porch with the cold rain blowing in his face, Trenholme fashed out with a curse and ran up and down the line of cabs, searching for a driver. None was to be seen. They were doubtless in the abandoned golf-house, hard-by, sitting around a fire. It was too early for them to expect a call. It was mighty exasperating.

The old Trenholme temper asserted itself.

Leaping into the driver's seat of the first cab, Trenholme hastily adjusted the curtains, and took matters in his own hands. He drove off, and somewhat later, perhaps around one o'clock, he drew up in front of his Cedar Avenue home.

As he stepped to the curb, under a street light, the

(Continued on page 27)



The next day Trenholme appeared at the Claredale Country Club with a brand-new

# "You Aint Done R"

A Review by Webster Harwood

Constabule  
Doolittle has  
been on the job.

"Have some  
peanuts," says  
Doolittle at the  
wedding.



## OUR NELL

**O**LD time touches from the theatre of a quarter-century since—the bits that made us boil with wrath at the villain, or weep with the lass that's betrayed, are served up in a very delightful musical "mellerdrama," under the title "Our Nell" at the Nora Bayes Theatre, New York.

The big delight of this how is in the lyrics—but—the blase audience is often distracted from the stage. Interruptions come from some country cousin in a box seat who rears up and wants to form a posse to hunt down and hang up the dazzling stranger with the black mustache.

"Our Nell" arrives home unexpectedly from New York—so the story goes. She will not explain her sudden return. Even her forgiving old Grandpap believes something is wrong. He will forgive her—only why does she not tell her heart's secret. No—it is not that kind of a secret.

Dashing Dan has arrived in Holcumville—Nell's village—at about the same time as did Nell—in pursuit in some of his nefarious promotion schemes. It appears she has been employed by him in New York and has fled because she learns he is a swindler and finds herself incriminated.

The money-grabbing old Deacon is about to foreclose on Grandpap's homestead. Dashing Dan has involved the Deacon and now offers to lift the mortgage if Grandpap will persuade "Our Nell" to marry him. Grandpap persuades—many tears.

There is one young fellow who hasn't asked Nell "How come?" He will stand with her before the whole world and has loved her ever since she was a girl in gingham—before she learned city ways.

Comes the big wedding night. Constabule Doolittle has been on the job, trying to get evidence and land his man—\$2500 reward—'spects to get hitched.

And a movie mad couple are busy. They help Doolittle but, alas, too late! The wedding bells have banged.

Into the scenery of Holcumville and the wild life of Doolittle drifts a wild girl. She is the wife of Dashing Dan, and she takes him home to the twins—right away from his latest bride. But first he has to live up to his agreement and pay off the mortgage—also tickle the palm of Doolittle, who gets hitched O.K.

And the chore boy, who doesn't ask questions, makes a milk-maid of "Our Nell" for life down on the farm.

This is all of it, except the remark that the U. S. A., past and present, is richly kidded—all the way from Los Angeles and its Hollywood flimsy colony to New York—in which latter place are "none but noble men who wouldn't wrong a young girl."



# ight by Our Nell"



*There is one young fellow who will stand with Nell before the whole world.*



*Dashing Dan has to tickle the palm of Doolittle who gets hitched O.K.*

# Crooked

A HEAVY touring-car, painted a dark blue, crawled with the traffic stream northward on Broadway to the corner of East Eighth. There it turned westward, still proceeding at a snail's-pace until past Fifth Avenue, when, at a low voice from the tonneau, the great car leaped forward, turning the corner into Sixth on two wheels, lurching, jolting over the car tracks just ahead.

"Step on her, Red!" came the voice, in a vibrant undertone. "Give her th' gas!"

It was ten in the evening; the Avenue was brightly lighted; and, too, it was a Saturday night. The huge car had not been always painted that dark, retiring blue; its former owner would scarcely have recognized it save for the purring of that powerful motor, like a great cat; at three speeds forward it would cleave the rushing wind of its passage like a thunderbolt.

Now, following that first sharp burst of easy speed, the car slowed, turning down a narrow alley to the west. This was at Thirteenth. A great department-store, closed now for the day, loomed dark and silent, its rear end abutting upon the alley, but toward Sixth Avenue, if you stood back there in the darkness you saw life, roaring at full tide, with the clanging rattle of surface-cars, the booming roar of the "L" trains overhead; the lighted windows of lesser shops, open for the late trade.

At the corner of the alley there was life and movement; backward, viewed from the Avenue, was just a dim tunnel of gloom, whispering, sinister—or so it seemed. But there would be light enough to see that monster car, and the men around it; to a man looking, say, for such a car, it would be—a big thing to find.

The car had slowed down at the shipping entrance to the department-store. Three men alighted from it, furtive, sinister, slouch-hatted, with lean, strong faces, their movements soundless and swift.

"You fix it, Red,"—again the voice with that vibrant undertone came in a silken whisper. "Chi and me will go on up—and we'll be with you in a brace of shakes—How—"

Something huge and bulky—broad and flat—which had lain, covered with its dark gray cover, across the car top—came downward now with a sudden rush. A man grunted, heaved—there came the faint clink of metal upon metal—the lookout was alone.

A quick rip from a jimmy in a practiced hand—a downward thrust—and the two, Chi and the man who had first spoken, were inside. Creeping between the counters, they approached the jewelry section, where even in the darkness, there was a faint glimmer like a halo from the soft blaze of diamonds on velvet.

"Th' velvet, Slim—surest thing you know—this touch'll put us there—on velvet—but—that rummy watchman—what do you think—?" whispered Chi under his breath, his eye upon that opaque blackness, starred with stones.

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*Crooked Lane is a real Crook story—from the standpoint of a "rookie" policeman. And he uses the "direct action" method of solving his puzzle—one requiring courage.*

---



"Quiet!" hissed Slim—the man with that tense, vibrant undertone—"You want to blow th' work, ha? Now—"

But "Chi" was not to be denied:

"That stunt of yours, Slim—that's sure th' cat's-whiskers, I'll tell a man!" he breathed. "Nobody else'd ever thought of it!"

"Shut-up!" grated Slim. They fell to work.

While below stairs in the alley the lookout, Denver Red, leaned nonchalantly against the wheel of that giant car. And while he leaned there, waiting, and the seconds sped on, down the Avenue there came the policeman on the beat.

HE was a young policeman—just past the probationary stage—the spoilers knew of it. Now, as he passed the alley's mouth he paused a split second, his keen, young glance boring into that glimmering tunnel, straight before his gaze, not fifty short feet inward to the great blue car, and the man leaning against the wheel.

It was a circumstance suspicious enough—the sight of that car there at that hour, and the man standing beside it. For further on, perhaps an equal distance beyond the waiting car, that alley met and intersected at right angles another street, and at each end of the alley there was a light—a wayside arc, its twin carbons blazing downward across the cobbles. This other street was silent, usually, tenantless—the marauders had little to fear from that direction.

But at its intersection with the Avenue the alley

*"Power—your beat passes Thirteenth Street and the Avenue—Sixth, I mean—doesn't it?" rasped the inspector.*

was, as one might say, open to inspection to all who passed.

The young policeman—he had yet to win his spurs—looked now, with his keen young gaze, straight inward to that waiting car, and the man standing beside it. Then—he passed on, swinging his club, whistling under his breath. For he had seen—*nothing suspicious*—it was as if a mantle of invisibility had cloaked that huge car, broadside to the alley, plain for all to see.

A moment now, and the workers in darkness were outside. There came a muttered word; a purring of that mighty motor, like the muffled beating of a heart, and they were away. But they did not leave by the way that they had come; rolling silently onward, the blue car, turning the corner into that further street, rushed forward now into the silence and the darkness of "The Village"—into the night, behind it, end to end, and side to side, that alley bare and empty under its twin, sputtering arcs.

## II

INSPECTOR Haggerty frowned upward at the well-set-up figure facing him across the desk. The Inspector was a thick-set, square-jawed, grizzled official, with a frosty blue eye that could, on occasion, be as cold, as biting, as arctic ice.

# Lane

BY  
HAMILTON  
CRAIGIE

It was a warm day in late August, but to the young patrolman facing the inspector the temperature of that room seemed close to zero; anyway, his heart in his boots, he listened now as Haggerty spoke, biting his words off short with what seemed to the patrolman a vicious emphasis:

"Power—your beat passes Thirteenth Street and the Avenue—Sixth, I mean—doesn't it?" he rasped.

"Why—yes—Inspector—" began Power, "but—"

With an inexorable certainty the Inspector continued, with a wave of his hand:

"—And there's an alley, isn't there, between Twelfth and Thirteenth—on the West side of the Avenue?—there is—it's still there, Mister Power?—Well—I wonder, now—"

Inspector Haggerty sat back in his chair, his eyes closed. Power, wondering, held his peace. Abruptly the inspector, springing to his feet, thrust a newspaper, folded to a flaring headline, under the patrolman's nose:

"Well—an' what of that?" he roared, his face a scant six inches from the officer's own. "What about that, eh?" he shouted, shaking the paper violently—then smoothing it out with a flirt of his thick thumb.

Power looked, the headlines shrieking their message at him in an eight column spread:

## DARING DEPARTMENT STORE ROBBERY Thieves Make Rich Haul Police Powerless

For the third time within a month Dorfman's Department Store was the victim last night of a daring robbery, jewelry to the value of \$100,000 being taken. There is apparently not the slightest clue to the identity of the thieves, the police believe it to be the work of an organized band of loft burglars. But the crime wave continues; the police are powerless.

"See that?" shouted Haggerty. "Police are Powerless—I'm beginning to think they are—or they will be—Power-less, young fellow—" he laughed grimly at the pun—"if you can give me no satisfactory explanation of how you failed to see a single suspicious sign! Why," he continued, "they must have been right there in the alley as you were passing it. Hansen says he saw a car—a blue one—turn into the alley as he was making a pinch near the corner. He couldn't stay to see—but you must have come by there—well—are you dumb—what you got to say for yourself?"

He paused, glowering. Power cleared his throat, and Haggerty, inwardly approving, noticed that the blue eye met his squarely, look for look. And they were clear eyes—the blue eyes of a fighter, the inspector decided, or he knew nothing about men.

"Yes, sir, Inspector," said Power. "I'd just rung the box, sir, and I passed that alley a couple minutes afterward. I looked in, as usual, sir—just 10:06 it was; I gave a good look; I could see clear through to the other end; it's only a hundred feet; and there wasn't a thing there, sir—not a thing! The arc-light above where I was standing was all right, sir, and so was the one at the other end of the alley, but—"

HE stopped suddenly, a curious expression in his keen, good-humored face.

"Well, now, that's funny!" he continued, half to himself. "That's—funny!"

"What's—'funny'?" barked the inspector, hands gripping the arms of his chair, as if in visible restraint.

"Why—why—that I should have been there just at the time that car was in the alley—and—and I didn't see it, sir!" finished Power lamely.

The Inspector snorted.

"Do you mean to say it wan't there at all—better go easy, Power—Hansen's *reliable*—one of our best men—he noticed the time, too—you watch your step, young man!"

His tone hardened:

"And that's the third time that place has been cleaned—a hundred thousand in diamonds! Why—they'll be saying next we get a rake-off, ha? And—three times—and out, young fellow! Now—"

But at the look in the patrolman's eye he paused. "Well," he said, in a lower tone, "come clean—what's on your mind, ha?"

The rookie's mouth tightened.

"Only this, sir," he answered earnestly. "You give me a week—in plain clothes—to see what I can do, Inspector—just a week, and—"

The inspector smiled grimly. "You're pretty keen—f'r a rookie," he mused. "And—I can see you think you know something—after it's happened—Well—" his tone abruptly changed; the patrolman sensed it, "go to it, son—and—you bring home th' bacon, or—"

He left the sentence unfinished. Power, saluting, turned on his heel, in his eyes that curious look; the look seen sometimes in the eyes of a man who leads a forlorn hope—in the case of Power, however, the dawning of an idea, and with it a plan:

For there had been something that he had abruptly remembered—it had been on the tip of his tongue, but he had kept silent—and that some-

*The sun had cast a silhouette  
against the dead wall.*

thing had to do with the alley, and that great blue car, and its dark-faced passengers.

For, now that he recalled it, there had been something wrong, something out of place: a twist, a kink, an incongruity—only he would not have called it that.

He left the station, his gaze thoughtful, while behind him, Haggerty, cigar held at a rakish angle in his clenched teeth, frowned after him at the closed door:

"Well," he muttered, under his breath, "we'll stand pat on that!"

### III

PATROLMAN Power got busy the next day—Sunday morning—for the beginning of his investigation. For one thing: there would be no one in the alley at that time—and for another: "Detective" Power—detective for a week, at any rate, believed in beginning early. He had a week, and he meant to make every minute of it count.

It was scarcely to be expected that the thieves would be bold enough to make a fourth foray—but already the depleted jewelry stock had been made up; it had been fully covered by insurance—and—you could never tell.

After all, it might be an inside job, and then again, that question of the insurance kept knocking at the



back door of his mind in spite of what he had seen, or, rather, had not seen.

Halting now at the Sixth Avenue entrance to the alley, as he stood peering ahead of him along the narrow way, he was aware for a split second of a shadow at his right; the sun, blazing from overhead, had cast against the dead wall, beside him, a sable silhouette; for a heart beat, out of the tail of his eye, the patrolman saw, or fancied that he saw, the thin nose, wide lips open in a wolfish grin; the peaked cap, pulled low over the forehead—then it was gone.

The patrolman, pivoting on the balls of his feet, saw—nothing. A trick of the sun, doubtless—and yet that shadow, as he had seen it, could not have been cast save by a man peering around the corner at his back.

In two swift strides he was at that corner; if there had been a man there he would have seen him; but the avenue drowed in its early Sunday morning quiet; in the length of the long block south to north there were but two pedestrians, and neither of them wearing anything that resembled a cap. And both of these two were a good half block distant.

Power was unknown to the Underworld; perhaps a chance few—one or two “dips” with which the neighborhood was infested—these might have known him as a rookie, late probationer, and that was all.

But as he turned backward into the alley he was aware for a moment of a sensation of cold; the sunlight seemed flattened strangely to a heatless flaming of pale radiance. And then, peering down the short, deserted way, side to side, and end to end, he stifled a quick work in his throat.

There was the alley—no wider than the length of a large touring-car—ten or twelve feet, say, at the widest; and it was not longer than a hundred. The patrolman could see it, side to side, and end to end, from its intersection with the avenue, to its other end, and at each end it went no further. It was like the middle bar of an H, but it was not a blind alley, a cul-de-sac; ingress or egress could be had at either to or from it by means of the avenue and the street, intersecting it at either end.

The patrolman could see it along its length; it ran, straight as a string, east and west, whereas, before—

With his fingers upon the edge of the mystery, Patrolman Power uttered that word aloud:

“I’ve—got it!” he said, aloud, to the empty air, and then of a sudden it was not empty, filled with the quick singing as of angry bees.

Steel-jacketed bullets tore through the space his body had just quitted, boring into an iron warehouse door at his right like hammer upon anvil.

Power threw himself, face downward on the cobbles, his service pistol jerked from its scabbard. But the burst of bullets ended as suddenly as it had begun. It had been a plunging fire—from some roof-top, doubtless—that, in part, accounted for his being unhurt; a sniping fire, delivered from above, is never so accurate as when the marksman can see his target fair. And the man had, doubtless, been using a high-powered automatic with a silencer; it was extremely unlikely that it had been a rifle.

Another man, even a policeman, might have called it a day, standing not upon the order of his going, but the inspector’s mental estimate of the young patrolman had been a bull’s eye if the invisible marksman’s had not. But it served to show, at any rate, that the thugs had been beforehand with him; they knew, at the least, what was his mission, and they meant to stop him, if they could. But that they suspected that he had solved the mystery—almost from the beginning—Power did not believe. Nor was he certain, even yet, that he held in his hand the key.

Waiting a moment, on the chance that someone might have heard the shots, Power went forward now into the alley’s mouth, pausing at the spot where that great blue car must have halted on the evening of the robbery. It would be useless, besides being a waste of time, to investigate at the moment the source of that plunging fire—in that wilderness of chimney-pots spread in a wide-flung circle about him from north to south.

After the shooting he decided to go home and avail himself of the “plain clothes” privilege. It was a different appearing Power who came back to the alley.

A moment he peered about him to right and left; then, with an exclamation, he stooped, picking out of the dirt some objects that gleamed and glittered under the bright morning sun. He was getting warm, indeed; in fact, at that very moment, he was burning his fingers—Then, at a sudden step upon the cobbles, he whirled.

A MAN was coming toward him across the cobbles; behind him, from the shipping platform of the department store, the sheet-iron door had been rolled back a scant six inches; Power was not certain of it, but for an instant he had been aware of a face, like a white, glimmering oval, peering at him from the depths.

The patrolman waited, his hands in his pockets, as the man came forward. He was a rough, tough fellow of middle age, his face seamed and scarred, the skin the texture and color of mahogany. There was a surly menace in his attitude, his great hands, like stone mauls, balling into fists, as he said, low, out of the corner of his mouth:

“Well, Mister, an’ what might you be doin’ here, hey—gold-diggin’?”

Plainly the man had watched, himself unseen, as the patrolman had searched among the cobbles. For a moment an absurd suspicion that this might be the invisible marksman came to Power; then he dismissed it abruptly; the fellow had not the look of



He twisted and tugged inward—the door was fast!

a gunman despite the seamed face, the hard, decisive mouth. And yet—you never could tell—

But the patrolman for the moment had forgotten that he himself, in plain clothes, might be an object of suspicion; the dingy sweater, the shapeless slouch hat, pulled low over his forehead; the bristles showing on his unshaven cheeks—at face value he might have been a roustabout, a drifter, anything but what he was.

The man of scars came into action, following his words. He lifted a gnarled fist, reaching for the patrolman’s shoulder. Whatever might have been his intention, Power did not pause to consider. The policeman was not a big man, to the eye, but beneath that shapeless sweater the broad, sloping shoulders hid bunches of muscle; something in the poise of the man might have warned the other, but the patrolman acted with the speed of light.

His arm shot out, the fingers closing with a grip of iron on the thick, hairy wrist; there came a sudden, brief explosion of movement; the man of scars knelt suddenly upon the cobbles, in his heavy face a queer expression of bewilderment and sudden fear.

The policeman’s back was toward the building; consequently he did not see that iron door slide backward—the figure diving from the opening soundless and swift. . . . But in that flash of time he read the message in the eyes of his adversary; he ducked, extending his foot, and the body of his new assailant catapulted over his head.

The second man was crawling painfully to his feet, when the man in the dungarees rasped, out of the corner of his mouth:

“You win—old-timer!”

And then, to his reinforcement of one:

“Lay off, Bert; this ain’t a prowler—I’ll gamble on it—but—”

Power interrupted, with a crisp word. Honors were easy, but—you never could tell. The man of

scars was rising to his feet. Perhaps, after all, it might be—a trap. He said, low:

“All right—stand up—but keep your distance, you two! Now—”

He shot the words at them like bullets:

“—Where’s that car?”

THE man in the dungarees grinned; then he said, with a humorous twist to his hard mouth:

“Oh—reporter, huh? Well—you’re barkin’ up th’ wrong tree, mister—I’m telling you! Take a look?”

He turned back his coat, exposing his watchman’s badge. “And—Bert here—he’s my assistant—been with Dorfman’s goin’ on five years now—nossir—we aint crooks—not by a long shot! An’ that blue car—well—she’s one blue ghost—an’ you c’n gamble on that!”

Power hesitated. He had been on the beat but a little while, and he had never seen the watchman. But the fellow’s story seemed straight enough; anyway, it was easily verified, and a moment later, verification came with the arrival of the policeman on the beat.

To him, however, Power’s warning eye-flash was enough, and more than enough. Peering into the alley on his morning round, he had seen the tableau; he knew Power. But he grinned behind his hand as he departed; Power’s secret was safe with him, for all the good it might do the rookie, he reflected. But as he came out of the Sixth Avenue entrance to the alley he missed completely that which, as the young patrolman followed him, he recognized with a quick surprise and understanding.

But there were two things, rather than one:

Around the corner from the alley there was a large iron door—the entrance to a freight elevator—in it a smaller one, man-size; it swung open now; showing merely a black well of glimmering dark.

Power, peering within, glanced upward, to where, high up, and dark against the dingy skylight, a dim bulk loomed: the elevator. Usually, it would be at rest upon its snubbers. But it was not, because—it had been run upward, and there left by—the sniper who had pumped that clip-full of slugs downward to the alley, and the man beneath. That was why the patrolman had not seen that drifting Shadow; and that was why—

With an abrupt exclamation he stooped now, retrieving from the cobbles an object which he pocketed with hasty stealth.

And it was nothing more than a slender segment of silken cord. But the patrolman as he put it in his pocket was thinking of but one word, or, rather, three: Thug—Dacoit—and of these, the last and the most terrible, *Apache!*

V

SIX days of his week had passed, and Power, with the key to the mystery in his fingers, had yet drawn blank. He knew—he was certain of it—what had happened in that alley on that Saturday night; he could go to the Inspector with it—it was a big thing—a clever stunt, indeed—but—would it—be enough?

Power did not think that it would. He was on his mettle—and that meant not merely the solution of the mystery, but the snaring of the men—or of the man—who had made it possible.

Uninvited now, he was going to a rendezvous—it might very well be with death—at any rate, it could not fail to be with peril, real and not assumed; for that silken thread had furnished him with a clue, for that was all it was; a clue, a thread, perhaps, after all, drawn across his path by the gross spider who had put it there—the keen, devising brain which, out of its dim lair, might, at any moment, reach forth to maim, to slay—

For that silken thread meant but one thing; the presence of the thug, the dacoit, the strangler. Power knew it well enough; and now, as he turned the corner into a street gay with lanterns, oriental from the sidewalk inward and down, he was piecing together into a pattern, strange and varied, the things that he knew, that he had discovered: But here again he had drawn a blank.

HE had let it be known that he was in the market for diamonds; he knew stones; and following that attack there in the alley it had seemed that the only risk he ran was the risk of his job, his place in the Department. For he had been everywhere, and, so far, in safety.

But that man who had used him for a target had known that he was an officer; the tip that he had received—after all, there was nothing more likely than that it was a trap. In a saloon uptown a man

(Concluded on page 31)

# GOOD PAPER

By MARCEL WALLENSTEIN

IT was dusk of the same day when a taxicab containing Goddard and Morehead drew up before a dingy building in a side street far down town. The banker had enlisted the assistance of the bank's private detective. With exacting care the forged check had been replaced in the book and the volume, apparently untampered with, returned to Brunen's shop.

As on previous occasions, the same sickly man had bought the book. This time he had been followed by Roth, the bank detective, who communicated with Goddard, the moment he had seen the man enter the building before which the taxicab now had arrived. Roth came over from across the street.

"He's been up there about ten minutes," he said, indicating the narrow stairway before them. "Shall we go up?"

They climbed the stairs to the second hallway, lined on either side by offices deserted for the night. A single gas light burned at the far end of the corridor where another flight led to the floor above, and up they went, Roth in advance, his employer and Morehead at his heels. Ahead of them a square of greenish gas-light was diffused through the ground glass of an office door, which bore the lettered information that this was the professional address of one Frank Snell, a practitioner of the law. Roth tried the door and found it locked. He knocked.

Presently the door was opened a few inches by the man Roth and Goddard recognized as Brunen's periodical patron. Obviously he was surprised at the late call.

"Well?" he demanded.

"We're looking for a Mr. Snell," announced Roth and pushed his way into the room before the man within could resist, if he were of a mind to do so. Goddard and Morehead followed.

The office was what they had expected to find, the dreary business quarters of a man who had never known success. They saw a flat top desk and near it on the floor a large iron cuspidor; a few chairs, a rusty leather lounge, its headrest hollowed by what must have been an almost continual burden, a case with four shelves of law books. A yellow diploma in a black frame hung above the desk, the single attempt to cover the soiled yellowing walls, and the floor was uncarpeted.

"My name is Snell," announced the attorney. "What can I do for you?"

As he entered the room Roth had seen the book he sought lying closed on the desk. Without replying to the lawyer, the detective strode to the desk and took up the book. He whirled about just in time to avoid Snell's futile rush.

"Get away from that!" Roth commanded sternly, grasping the lawyer's thin arm. For a moment Snell fought fiercely to free himself; but the pressure on his arm increased. He was helpless in the stronger man's grasp.

"Let me go!" he cried. "Put down that book, you—*thug!*"

Roth forced him into the swivel chair before the desk, maintaining the grip on his arm and glaring down at his prisoner.

"I've got him, Mr. Goddard. Would you mind 'phoning the nearest police precinct? Or I can take him if you'd rather."

"Where?" gasped Snell. "Take me where?"

He turned and surveyed Goddard and Morehead, his terribly thin face twisted into an expression in which there was something of both misunderstanding and fear. He threw himself forward to his feet, only to be hurled back in the chair by Roth.

"Call your precinct!" raged Snell, "before I save you the trouble."

So far Goddard had been content to remain as a spectator to this unaccustomed sight. Now he came forward and took the book from Roth. The lawyer had made no attempt to remove the forged instrument. For the second time that day Goddard cut it away with his knife.

"This should be sufficient explanation of our presence," said Goddard sternly holding up the check before Snell. He turned and indicated Morehead. "This gentleman is the man whose name is

At the long table in the dead letter office sat a pallid man.



forged as an endorsement. Anything more you might say would be useless."

From his enforced position in the chair Snell examined the check as it was held before his eyes. His voice was calmer when he spoke again.

"So you accuse me of forgery?"

"Is an accusation necessary?"

The lawyer's assurance was increasing.

"You force yourself into my office, assault me without provocation, cut open a book and wave this before me," he sneered. "I suppose you have a warrant." He paused to note the effect of this shot and then continued. "No? You haven't a warrant. Oh, do call in the police. There will be several versions of this to tell."

"THE hell you say," cut in the detective. "I've got you catalogued, Snell. We've been on to you for months. You'll find a few of your friends in the Tombs," he concluded, employing the oldest trick known to the manhunter.

"That will be quite enough," interposed Goddard. He drew out a card which he dropped in Snell's lap. "That will explain who I am," he said. "If you don't care to go with us, you may remain until I call the police. Is that clear?"

A glance at the card sufficed for Snell. He assumed a conciliatory attitude.

"I can see now there has been a mistake," he said. "I'm entirely mystified, especially about this forgery."

Morehead advanced and entered the conversation for the first time.

*This story is immensely different so don't miss reading the conclusion in this issue if you haven't read the first part.*

*Goddard, a banker, has turned sleuth to assist his book dealer friend Brunen solve the mystery of a mysterious code, used, apparently, by unknown persons to communicate through the medium of books bought and sold in Brunen's store.*

*A drop of liquor, accidentally spilled, leads to the discovery that the signature of Morehead, a jeweler has been forged to a big check pasted behind the cover page—Read the rest.*

"I fancy you'll have difficulty in proving your possession of it," he suggested.

"Not at all," denied Snell. "Mr. Goddard removed it from the book. I never would have found it there."

"Of course not," snorted Roth. "But you have paid five dollars a piece for books not worth forty cents."

"Let me suggest this is a matter for the police," insisted Morehead. "We're wasting time."

Snell made a gesture with his skinny hand, as though brushing aside the suggestion. "The pur-

chase of a book proves nothing. Try and prove I knew of the existence of the forged check, if it is a forgery. Try and—"

"We'll try," promised Goddard gruffly and Snell was jerked to his feet by Roth.

"Wait!"

There was a pleading note in Snell's one word. He began to speak again but a fit of coughing took possession of him. Two fiercely red spots burned brightly above his craggy cheekbones; he pressed one hand to his laboring, tormented chest. Roth permitted the stricken man to sink into the chair, and presently he ceased coughing and dabbed at his lips with a handkerchief. Snell's bluff had ended. His hands fell listlessly in his lap. There was no more fight in him.

"You can take me to jail and cause me the expense and trouble of getting bail, but I tell you, you can't make a case against me," he said wearily. "You want a man for forgery. It will not help get him by arresting me. I admit I bought this book and others under what may be suspicious circumstances."

He hesitated and looked up at Goddard, then he asked, "If I explain my part in this, what then?"

"You know the law better than I," answered Goddard.

"I am sure I can convince you I acted innocently," Snell continued earnestly. "I shall tell you everything and I can prove most of my statements."

He sank deeper in the chair, closed his eyes and seemed to be resting for a moment before continuing.

"It shouldn't be necessary to explain I am not a rich man," Snell resumed. "I've been ill much of the time and my practice suffered. I've had to take what business came to me and that's been precious little."

"Several months ago I received a telephone message from a stranger who said he was Edgar Barnes. He said he was too ill to come to my office and wanted me to come to his hotel that night on a professional matter. I found him in bed, his head swathed in bandages so that his features were completely masked. Only his eyes were visible. He explained he had been in an accident; I think he said he had been knocked down in the street. Then he asked my advice on a trivial legal question about a suit for damages. He paid my fee in cash and I started out when he called me back.

"He suggested he knew a way to make money, if he could rely on my discretion. He hesitated in approaching the subject, and I could see him watching me carefully between his bandages. But there was nothing, absolutely nothing criminal in the plan as he explained it.

"Once each month I was to go to a certain bookstore and purchase a book. I would be notified by telephone of the name of the book and the day

to go for it. I was to bring it to my office where a stranger would call for it. Before parting with it I was to consult Page 104. There I would find a written memorandum for my information."

"Such as the 95 % C?" suggested Goddard.

"Yes; that represents a sum of money; in this case \$9,550. The letter C designating hundreds, coupled with the figures. Ninety-five hundred and fifty. Sometimes the letter M. for thousands was used. These figures represented the amount of the transaction. I knew nothing of the details. My part in the affair was to deliver the book, and several days later receive the amount designated on Page 104, minus a commission. I always knew how much the man who took the book from me should return."

"WHERE have you sent the money?" asked Goddard. The three men had listened intently to the lawyer's story, which he had related without hesitation or apparent effort to recall details.

"Never to the same place," continued Snell. "See here," the detective moved nearer, prepared for any treachery.

But it was only a harmless cardboard box that Snell took from the drawer. He removed the cover and handed the box to Goddard. It contained a score or more long envelopes, each typed with a different name and address.

As Goddard took the box he was immediately attracted by two broad red lines printed in red across the front of each envelope. These two scarlet bars, gave the envelopes a distinctive marking. The natural inference of a man receiving one of them in his mail would be that the sender had employed an unusual advertising pattern. Goddard asked an explanation.

"You know as much about it as I," declared Snell. "I was given the box containing these addressed envelopes that night at the hotel. After my monthly caller has taken away the book and returned with the money, I extract ten percent for myself. Then I place the remainder in large bills in one of the envelopes and send it through the mail."

Goddard cut in with another question.

"How did you know which envelope to use, since the addresses are different? I suppose you mailed them in some prearranged rotation."

"No. That is one of the details I don't understand. No one of them is addressed to the same name or place, you will see. My client specified no system. He told me to use my discretion. Evidently he has received the money, as there has never been a complaint and each month I have been notified by telephone the name of the book I was to buy."

He paused and looked from one to another of the three. Then he asked point blank. "Do you believe me?"

"I don't know whether I do or not," was Goddard's frank confession.

"Every word is as I have told it. I'll swear to it. Tomorrow morning the man will call for the book. I don't know him, not even his name. My client evidently directed him to me, and I have followed direction and asked no questions. If you will allow me I can prove that part of it."

The banker summoned Morehead into a corner for a hasty whispered conference. Then he returned to Snell, who had remained in his chair, a sick and discouraged man.

"You shall have a chance to prove your story," said Goddard.

All that night the bank detective kept the invalid lawyer under surveillance. It was nearing noon of the following day when Roth followed a man carrying the book from Snell's office to a hotel in the upper Forties. He waited outside the hotel until his quarry came out without the book and followed him again, this time to the Broadway branch of one of the city's best known banking institutions. As the man passed the check through a teller's window Roth arrested him.

Several hours later when his prisoner reposed in a cell following such an examination as only metropolitan police authorities fully understand, Roth reported to his chief.

"There's no doubt about this bird," he informed Goddard. Name's Benny Marquis, alias Behrens, alias Gerson. His picture and finger-prints are in the gallery at headquarters, and he's done two stretches."

"For forgery?" asked Goddard.

"WELL, as an accessory. He's what's known as a layer down. His part of the game is to establish himself with some bank, open up an account and keep it straight. Then when he gets

to be known well enough at the bank to disarm suspicion he shoots through the bad one and disappears. We worked on him for two hours and all he would come through with was he got the check out of a book, and the book from Snell. He stuck to his story that he doesn't know the master forger. Said he had received all his instructions by telephone."

"Shielding his pal of course," grunted Goddard. "I don't believe it, Mr. Goddard," dissented the other. "This Benny is the worst kind of a rat. He has the promise of a light sentence or even better if he comes through, and he's yellow enough to do it, too, if he only knew how. We got it on Benny and he knows it and would sacrifice his mother to pull himself out."

Nothing was more necessary to convince Goddard the man he sought was not a criminal of the moron type. Here, undoubtedly, was an intelligence which challenged his own. And Goddard who had developed the handful of loose change of his youth into his present magnificent fortune, rather prided himself on his ability to think a thing out.

He was thinking with more than customary speed



as he withdrew the box containing the scarlet envelopes he had confiscated the night before. There must be some vulnerable spot in this crook's armor. Perfect crimes and perfect criminals existed only in fiction. One did not have to be a mental heavyweight to realize the envelopes stood for something in this affair. As he spread them on the desk before him Goddard was prepared for the next move.

Briefly he advised Roth of his plans. Each of the envelopes, as Snell had said, was addressed to a different name and address. Choosing one of them which bore a name Goddard knew was fictitious and the address of a hotel in a New Jersey town, the banker informed Roth he would place several hundred dollars in currency in the envelope and mail it.

"It's worth much more to get our hands on this criminal," he told Roth. "I'll use real money. Otherwise our man would be notified someone is on to him should the letter fall into his hands. I'm not going to risk \$9,550 the amount of this last check, but the sight of real money in the envelope should quiet any suspicion. He can believe Snell double-crossed him, or that part of the money was stolen in transit, or anything he pleases."

"It's up to you, Roth, to grab him as the letter is delivered."

For three days thereafter Roth loafed about the dreary hotel of a New Jersey town. The man he sought did not arrive. The clerk who had grown old in his job had never heard the name, and showed Roth the scarlet striped envelope which he was

holding for the expected guest. Two days afterward Roth by subterfuge obtained the envelope containing his employer's money and returned to New York.

"We'll try another," declared Goddard, selecting a second envelope from the box. "We'll try them all, if necessary," he declared doggedly. "Here's one addressed to Henry Gibson, Kingston Hotel, White Plains. Start at once and I'll mail it this afternoon. If your man does not show up bring back the letter at any cost."

At the railroad station in White Plains Roth entered a taxicab and asked to be driven to the Kingston hotel.

"There's no such hotel here," answered the chauffeur.

"What?"

"Never heard of a Kingston hotel," continued the man. "I know every principal hotel in Westchester county and that's not one of them."

ROTH assured himself the driver had spoken the truth. There was not, nor had there been in the memory of the oldest inhabitant a Kingston hotel in the town. There was nothing to do but represent himself as Hugh Gibson at the post office, demand the letter and report again to Goddard.

The banker's chagrin was tinged with admiration when Roth had told of his second failure.

"A man as capable as this crook might have anything he wants," he said, and added, "I have no doubt he does have it."

A third envelope was selected at random from the pack, this one addressed to an Albany hotel. Before dispatching Roth this time Goddard made an inquiry by long distance telephone.

"No use, Roth," he related after the telephone conversation. "It would be another waste of time. There's no hotel of that name or any similar name in Albany."

The detective spread his hands helplessly.

"What do you make of it?" he asked.

"What do you make of it?" retaliated Goddard. "Crime is your specialty, not mine."

The repeated failure was making inroads on his complacency. It lacerated his pride. He had believed when entering upon this man-hunt it would be disposed of as swiftly and with as little conscious efforts as the hundred routine matters that came daily to his desk. He was not at all pleased either with himself or the bank's private sleuth and when the latter suggested, "Hadh't we better turn it all over to the police?" he scowled and curtly refused.

That night the banker was preoccupied at dinner and after a futile attempt to be companionable his wife arose and stalked from the table. Presently Goddard went into his library and strode before one of his enormous bookcases and searched among his collection, one of the finest in the country. He wanted something in fiction that would illustrate the methods of the great detective. Perhaps the exploits of the geniuses who could determine from the single hair of a person's head the nature of the thoughts in that head might inspire him to a startling achievement in his own mystery. But his library was lacking in this sort of thing. There was Poe, of course, and he took down *The Gold Bug* and began a study of the solution of the cipher code in that engaging tale. That should get him in the proper frame of mind.

He reclined in his enormous chair, the book drooping from one hand. The thing to do, he decided was to take one line of reasoning and follow it to its natural conclusion. All the best detectives worked that way. Then he remembered that while pursuing this course the masters of deduction always found it necessary to cast out irrelevant theories and unimportant facts which obscured the issue. What were the unimportant facts here? Was old Mattie the means to the solution? Did the lawyer Snell know more than he had told? Could something of value be sweated from the man Roth had arrested? How did the red striped letters—?

The clock in Goddard's library chimed and he heard a servant moving about locking the doors for the night. He replaced the book and climbed the stairs to his bedroom. Those letters . . . he removed his coat and wai coat. How did the forger expect to realize from his crime if the money was sent to persons who apparently never received it? Goddard took off his collar and scratched the back of his neck. Why did the forger insist the money always be mailed in the distinctive red striped envelopes, thus attracting to it an attention which might result in its loss by theft?

Goddard entered his wife's bedroom, which adjoined his own. She lay in bed in a lacy negligee, a rose shaded lamp lighting the book in her hand.

(Concluded on page 29)

# Midnight Dollars

BY C. S. MONTANYE

AT Fourteenth Street she left the train and went down the stairs. A few night-hawk taxicabs loitered under the shadow of the elevated structure. The girl eyed them with some concern. This was one of her hardest problems, for some of the chauffeurs who drove New York's conveyances had been gunmen and crooks in another day. Her fingers tightened over the handles of the bag again, and she shut her teeth resolutely against a little thrill of fear.

Presently she spied a cab of the Black and Gold corporation and signalled its uniformed driver. At least there was not so much chance in risking a taxi of the sort.

"Do you know where Pierrot Alley is?" she asked the driver.

"Yes, miss."

"Please take me there," she requested, adding the number and climbing in, the kit bag placed on the seat beside her.

Fourteenth Street was lighted by a few all-night lunch rooms. Tammany Hall, on the right, was a weather-beaten mausoleum deserted by its chieftains. Running directly west, the taxi passed the Academy of Music, gave a glimpse of Union Square for an instant, then wheeling sharply left, was on lower Fifth Avenue, its nose pointed in the direction of Washington Square and the eastern outposts of Greenwich Village.

This, the Latin Quarter of Gotham, was the Hobohemia whose citizens and devotees were artists, poets—a curious, nomadic tribe, differing from all others in mannerisms, speech, action and dress. Here was the Land of the Tea Room—strange, bizarre little places with misleading names—Captain Kid's Den, The Green Parrot, The Yellow Hound, The Candy Kitchen. Here also were shops and attics where the villagers sold their daubs, where art novelties were offered to the gullible and long-haired young men and short-haired young women congregated for gossip and cigarettes.

Further on the region was criss-crossed by streets so narrow as to permit the passage of but one vehicle at a time—blind courtyards.

The address the girl had given the chauffeur was one of these tiny thoroughfares—a straight, poorly-paved alley, hedged in by old-fashioned houses, some of which had suffered alterations of the same kind that had been visited upon the building in which Trant's rooms were located. The taxi stopped before one of these houses and the girl alighted.

The chauffeur paid and dismissed, she took herself and the kit bag into the vestibule. A latchkey opened the front door. She unerringly located the apartment in the rear of the first floor, used another key to gain admittance, and presently lighted a floor lamp with a heavily fringed Chinese shade. The room was comfortably but not pretentiously appointed, its furniture being of the variety known as mission oak. Perhaps its best ornament was a little baby grand piano, on whose polished top was scattered a heap of music and a quantity of pen and ink manuscript scores.

On the margin of these was written the name *Marion Blake*.

A single glance sufficed to show the girl with the blonde hair and blue eyes that nothing had been disturbed since she had left at noon that same day.

She nodded as if to express some unspoken thought and then knelt swiftly beside the kit bag. As she had suspected, it was locked; and to get at its contents was compelled to go into a miniature kitchen and return with a double-edged bread knife. With this she hacked and cut away one entire side of the kit bag and so at length was able to draw out of its maw the little satchel.

This was unlocked. She had only to snap back its English lever-latch and the treasure was before her.

With shining eyes she began transferring the packets of money to the floor, stopping only now

*A mingling of dismay and terror swept the animation from her pretty face*



and again to look breathlessly back over her shoulder as if she feared that in the background lurked some monstrous figure with outstretched hand.

It took some twenty minutes or more to learn that every dollar of the fifty thousand was intact. When this knowledge became apparent, she filled the satchel again with its green and yellow contents, stored it away behind a phonograph that was in one corner and then straightened up with a little exclamation of satisfaction.

Not until now did she seem to realize how inexpressibly weary she was, under what tension she had lived and moved during the topsy-turvy progress of the last two days. She seated herself on the divan and, after a minute, took a letter from a table drawer, or rather, the remnants of a letter, for the sheet of blue notepaper on which it had been written had been torn almost in half. With brooding eyes, the girl sat stiffly still for a cycle of minutes.

Presently she squared her shoulders and read the elaborately scrawled sentences that rambled across

---

*Trant has become enmeshed in a maze of detail—a bag containing fabulous wealth, detectives and a girl. It is a battle for millions and in this installment Trant gets closer to the solution—if you go on with the story from here the girl and her bag take you into the very heart of the mystery.*

---

the fragment of the note in the brightest and boldest of purple inking.

One side read:

—put off this matter any longer. You know what my feelings are and I feel sure you know the kind of a person I am when I get my temper up. I'm banking on you to use common sense and to realize the string is played out. In view of this—

Reversed the note continued:

—bring the fifty thousand dollars to the house mentioned. I will be there waiting and expecting you at five o'clock sharp on the day arranged. This is absolutely your last chance. If you don't make good on it you know what the penalty is. However, I feel confident that for your sake as well—

For a long time the girl sat staring at the words.

## VII—"COME INTO MY PARLOR"

THE next morning was not auspicious. When the girl in the apartment on Pierrot Alley awoke and pulled aside the Batik drapery at the single window of her chamber, she looked out upon a morning made melancholy by drab and shoddy clouds that hung in a tarnished sky and gave promise of a storm. Gray though the morning was, the mood of the girl was as bright as the hair she expertly dressed, humming the meanwhile an elusive snatch of melody popular on piano rolls and phonograph discs. She assured herself that she had every reason to know the tingle of happiness that awoke a song in her heart.

Last night she had been too tired to know that she alone and unaided had achieved the seemingly impossible. Now, after seven hours of sound, restful sleep, the full significance of all that which she had attempted and won flooded her with keen happiness.

At ten o'clock she breakfasted on dishes prepared on an electric grill. At ten-thirty she tried, without success, to get a number in the upper East Side section of the city. After that she dressed in the blue summertime frock, placed the torn note in her beaded bag, and, when she was certain that the apartment was in good order, picked up the treasure satchel and let herself out.

She walked west as far as Sheridan Square, took the nearest Seventh Avenue subway entrance and descended into that tunnel which crawls like a worm through the rocky fastness of the island metropolis.

It was ten minutes of five exactly the same afternoon when she went up the front steps of a house on Forty-eighth street, the fifteenth house from the avenue, whose first and second floor windows were adorned with iron gratings. A press of the bell button brought no immediate response. At length she rang again, this time more successfully, for, after a short interval, the inner vestibule door of the house opened and a maid in conventional black and white appeared. The caller asked information which obviously the servant was unable to answer.

"I don't know where he is," she said. "If you will come in and wait, I will find out for you. What name shall I say, please?"

The girl with the blue eyes and blonde hair supplied it. She was ushered into a reception room to the right of the entryway and asked to wait. Seating herself, with the maid's ascending footsteps dwindling on an upper landing, she surveyed the room with no little curiosity. It was a chamber of fair dimensions, beautifully appointed in the prevailing mode. Its furniture was expensively subdued, charming pieces upholstered in some delicate tapestry, colored with the faintest of pastel tints.

Underfoot a thick Oriental rug sprawled like a shore-intruding wave of color. The walls were in square panels, hung with a tapestry that composed the furniture's upholstery. Wall sconces had little shades, and a stately mirror in a far corner gave back the vista of the chamber in all its fascinating luxury.

The visitor had just finished a cursory inspection when the maid appeared in the doorway.

"Please come with me," she requested briefly.

The girl with the blonde hair and blue eyes nodded and fell into step beside her. They went up a wide margined staircase, through a void of silence in which their muffled steps sounded dully, to the floor above. Here the very faintest suspicion of aromatic smoke spiced the unstirred air. The little maid led the way down the corridor, opened the door at its furthest end and stood aside.

"The gentleman will be right down."

This second room was a library, walled in with glass-enclosed bookcases, each crowned with the

pallid bust of some celebrity. Its double windows were drawn to the August afternoon and overlooked an immaculate back yard, where a small, dwarf pear tree flourished. The maid closed the door of the room after her. The caller sat down in a deep leather wing chair and gave herself up to a series of speculations. Some thought of her own deed flushed her cheeks and made her eyes misty. Surely, she told herself, in doing what she had done that morning, last night, yesterday, she had fulfilled a task which had become a duty—since that hour when she had first learned!

FOOTSTEPS and the turn of the door knob snapped the thread of ruminations. With parted lips and shining eyes, the girl jumped up, bending eagerly forward. The door opened and a fat, pink and white gentleman entered, shut the door carefully behind him and turned to the girl with a smile. Like a black cloud passing over the face of the sun, a mingling of dismay and terror swept the animation from her pretty face. She fell back, still staring in horrified amazement, her suddenly dry lips at last able to form one sibilant word:

"Sanford."

"The name," the man stated blandly, "will do as well as any. You did not expect to find me here, did you? My dear, it is the totally unlooked for occurrence that gives life a piquant flavor. Let us sit down and discuss matters with all confidence. I rather expected you."

The girl's first shock of bewilderment ebbing, she moistened her lips and let the hand she had placed at her breast drop limply at her side.

"Where—where—," she faltered.

Sanford wedged his bulk into a chair, crossed his legs and produced a platinum cigarette case. He leaned back comfortably, struck a match for a cigarette and exhaled a spiral of blue smoke.

"Where is the gentleman you came here to see? Truthfully, I have no idea. I understand he was here earlier in the afternoon but departed several hours past. However, I feel reasonably confident that I will see him again shortly."

"What do you mean?" the girl asked unsteadily.

The fat crook grimaced.

"I mean," he replied, with a sudden change of tone, "I've wasted more time on this affair than I had a right to. I mean that this town is becoming a little too torrid for me in more respects than one. I can't tarry longer. Now, coming directly down to cases, I'm curious to know what your intentions are. First, what did you do with the satchel and the money? Where is it? You didn't turn it over to him, I know. *Where is it?*"

The girl, who had her back against one of the bookcases, turned her defiant eyes upon him.

"The money," she said clearly, "is where you can never get it now!"

A shade of red wiped out the pink in Sanford's moon face. Standing, he seized her roughly by the arm and drew her to him.

"You tell me where that bag is," he rapped out savagely. "I've had quite enough of your interference, young lady! I've reached the end of my patience, and for your own good you'd better speak out, and speak out quickly! *Where's the satchel?*"

Wincing, the girl shook her blonde head.

"Where you'll never be able to get it!" she repeated.

Sanford's narrowed eyes flashed.

"That's final?"

"I'll never tell you!"

He released her, shrugged, and touched a bell button in the wall near the door.

"I think you'll change your mind, my dear. At least you shall have plenty of opportunity to think it over carefully. I am not a pleasant person when I am aroused, though ordinarily my disposition is as sweet as trailing arbutus. I'm not threatening you when I say I will stop at nothing to get that satchel. Think this over and—"

## "ONE MOMENT WAS ENOUGH"

By Robin Stage

next week

Another of those famous

"Dr. Blitz" Stories



HE was interrupted by a knock on the door. Followed, the entrance of a mild-faced, grave-eyed woman with gray hair. She was attired in a high-collared dress of some plain material and carried a freshly ironed apron over one arm.

"Did you ring, Mr. Sanford?"

The stout man nodded and indicated the girl with a gesture.

"This is the young lady I was speaking to you about, Mary. She is in a somewhat obstinate frame of mind. I have several things to do and so I can't stay and keep her company. I want you to keep an eye on her until I return. You understand that it is necessary that she doesn't get away."

The woman bowed and turned to the girl.

"Will you come with me, Miss?"

Sanford consulted his watch and discarded the stub of his cigarette. Through the girl's mind a medley of thoughts raced. It would be useless to struggle or attempt to escape. She had been neatly trapped and must make the best of it. The satchel with the money had become a thing that affected her in two different ways. She was safe so long as Sanford's present mood prevailed. But what would happen when she steadfastly refused to divulge its whereabouts? Experience had taught her that the fat man was a relentless foe.

Her last impression as she turned and left the room accompanied by the woman with the grave eyes, was of Sanford's cherubic smile.

Her destination proved to be on the top floor—a room that was small, windowless and lighted only by a half-opened skylight protected by iron bars. It was sparsely and plainly furnished, containing a cot, a chair, a small table and a dresser. Its lock was new and shiny, a patented, burglar-proof affair, that stood out conspicuously. The woman ushered the girl in.

"I'll get you something to read," she said.

She went down the hall to a closet and returned with a dozen magazines, which she placed on the table; then, without further comment, she withdrew, locking the door behind her.

It was now twenty minutes past five. An hour dragged by. The girl skimmed through the magazines not with any high interest. Her thoughts were all engaged with Sanford and the recollection of his conversation. From what he had said in the library, it was feasible to believe that he was also preparing a trap for the person she had come to this house to see. She closed her small hands tightly and drew her red nether lip in under the vise of her white teeth.

It was maddening to think that this Sanford should roam the jungle trails of the humming metropolis free and unhindered. It was maddening to have to sit back with folded hands, while his plots were put into practice. Sometime, somewhere, she had heard something about Right triumphing over Wrong, but in this particular instance it seemed villainy had its own reward. True, she had snatched the satchel with the money and had placed it out of his reach, but even that, at this minute, did not balance the indignity of her present predicament—the fear that Sanford would carry out his statement and capture this man whom she had been told had visited the house several hours before her own







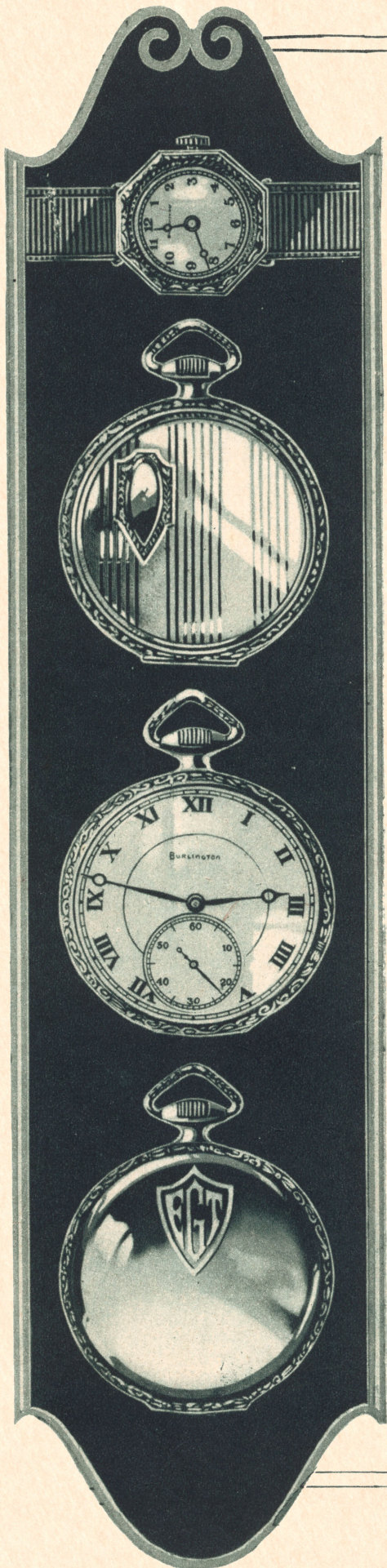












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