

The PHANTOM 10¢ DETECTIVE

MAR.



A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

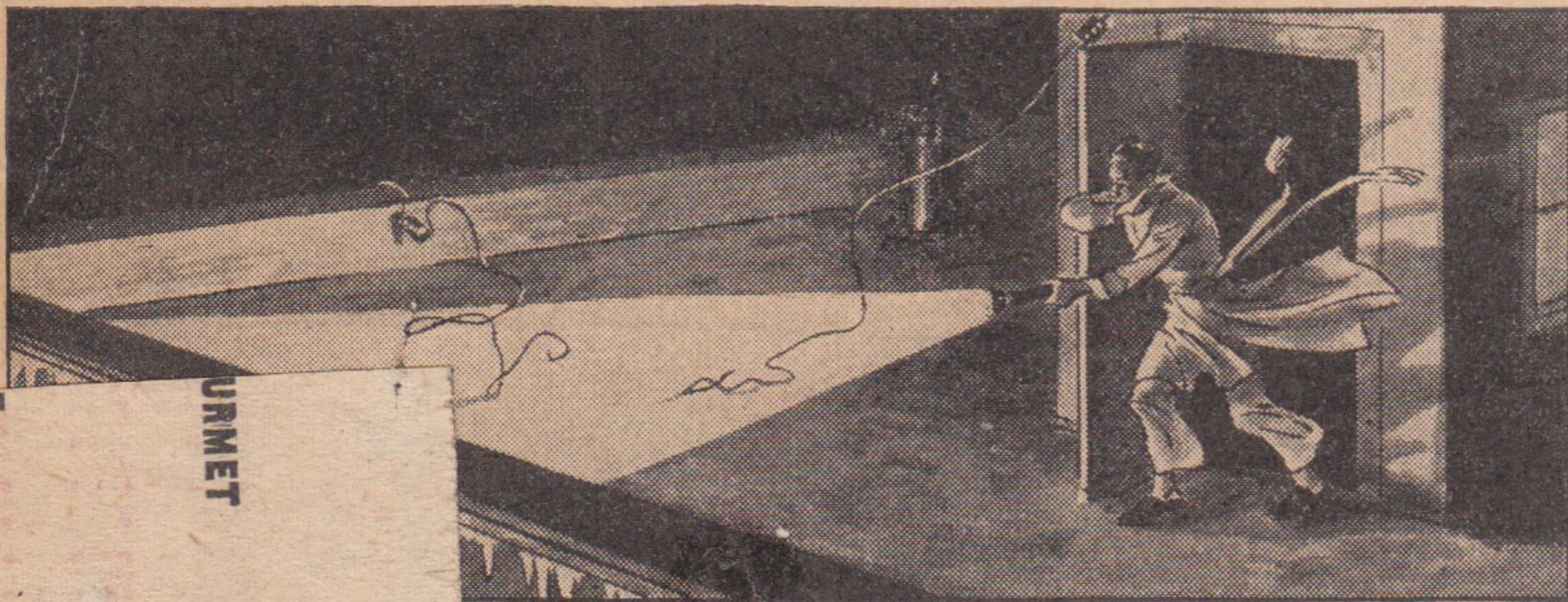
IN THIS ISSUE:

MURDER CALLS THE PHANTOM

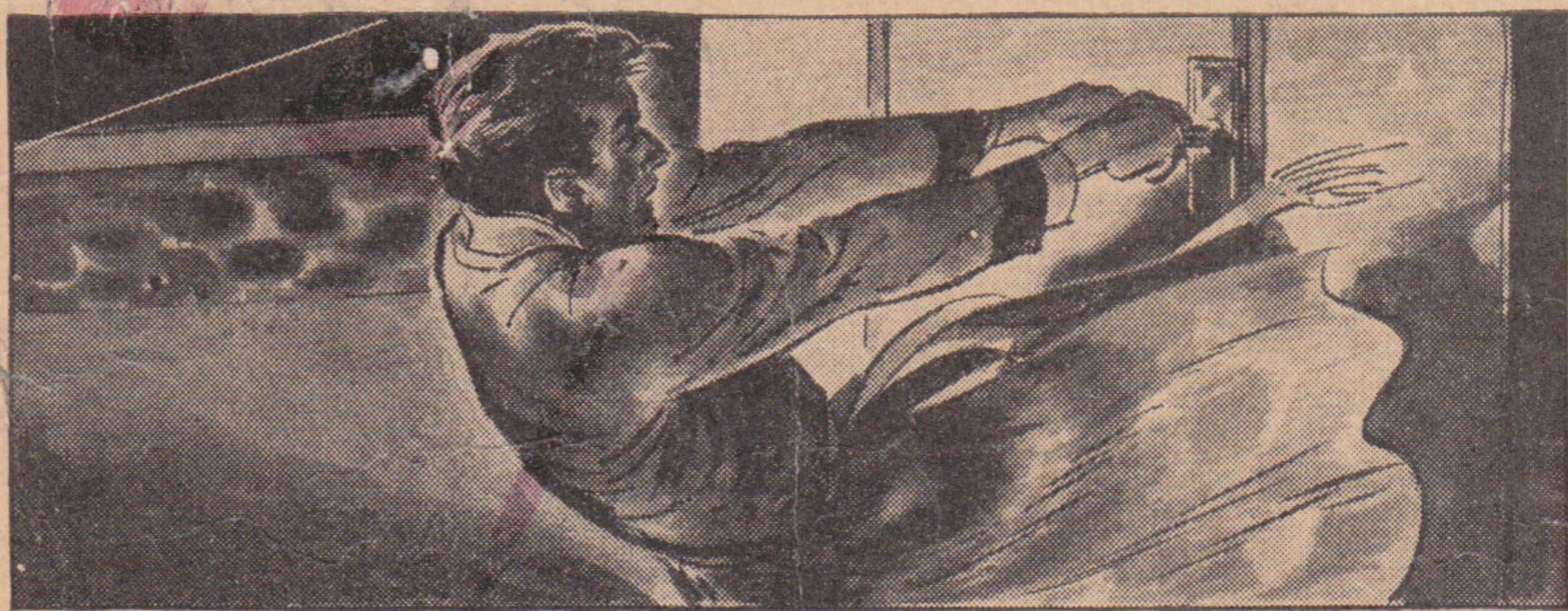
A FULL-LENGTH NOVEL FEATURING
THE WORLD'S GREATEST SLEUTH

"I CHEATED DEATH ON A SKYSCRAPER ROOF!"

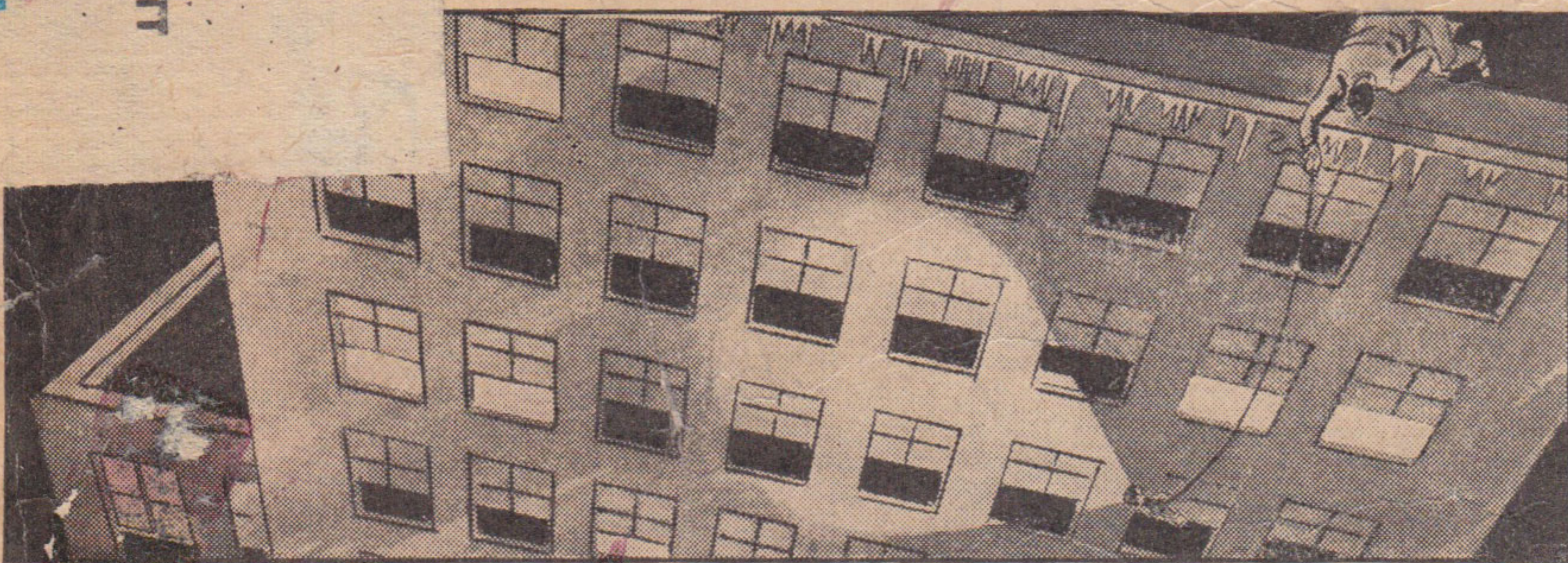
A true experience of ALLEN H. GIPSON, New York City



"ONE BITTERLY COLD NIGHT, my radio went dead," writes Mr. Gipson. "Suspecting that the howling wind had blown down the aerial, I threw on a dressing gown, grabbed my flashlight, and headed for the fifteenth floor roof.



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wind



"NEARLY FROZEN TO DEATH, I had an inspiration. Ripping the aerial loose, I tied the lighted flashlight to it, and swung it over the side of the building. Luckily the light attracted someone in an apartment below. Thanks to those dependable 'Eveready' fresh DATED batteries I was saved.

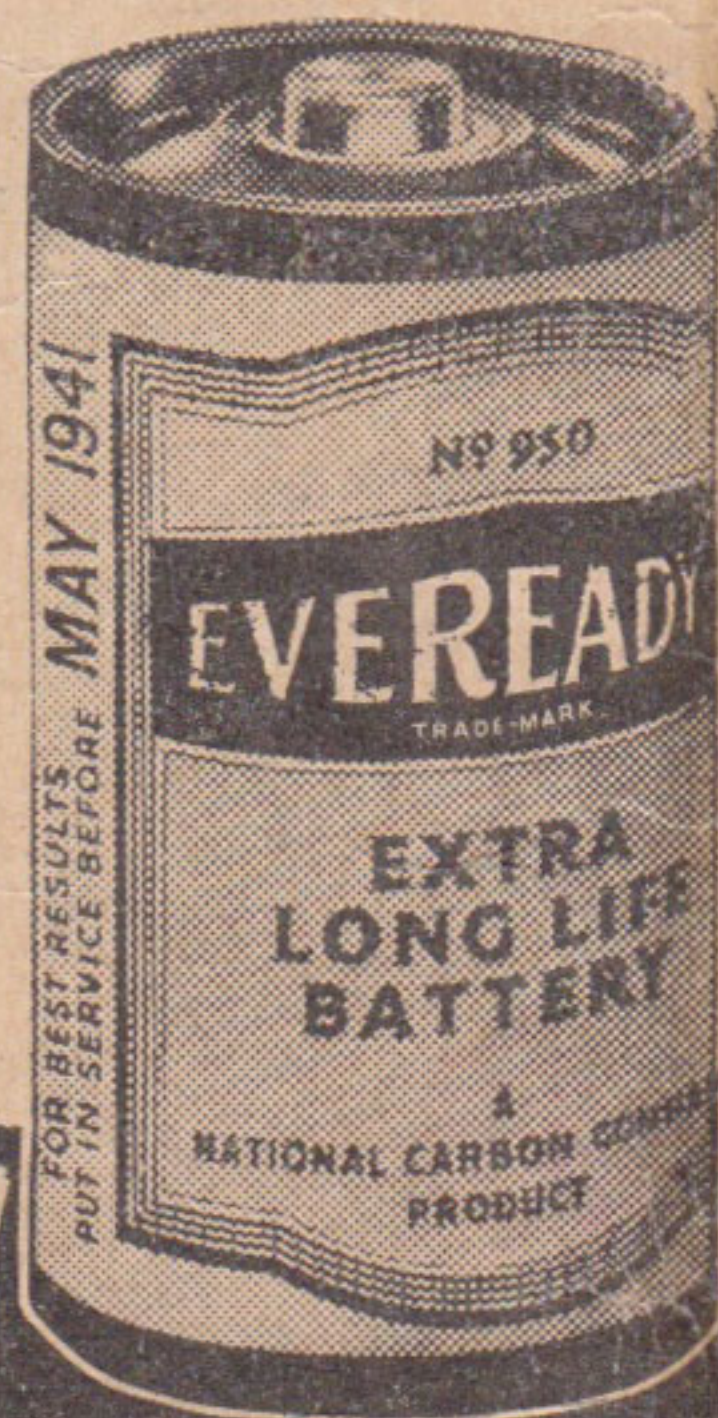
(Signed) *Allen H. Gipson*

The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.

FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... Look for the DATE-LINE

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC., 30 EAST 42nd STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Unit of Union Carbide UCC and Carbon Corporation



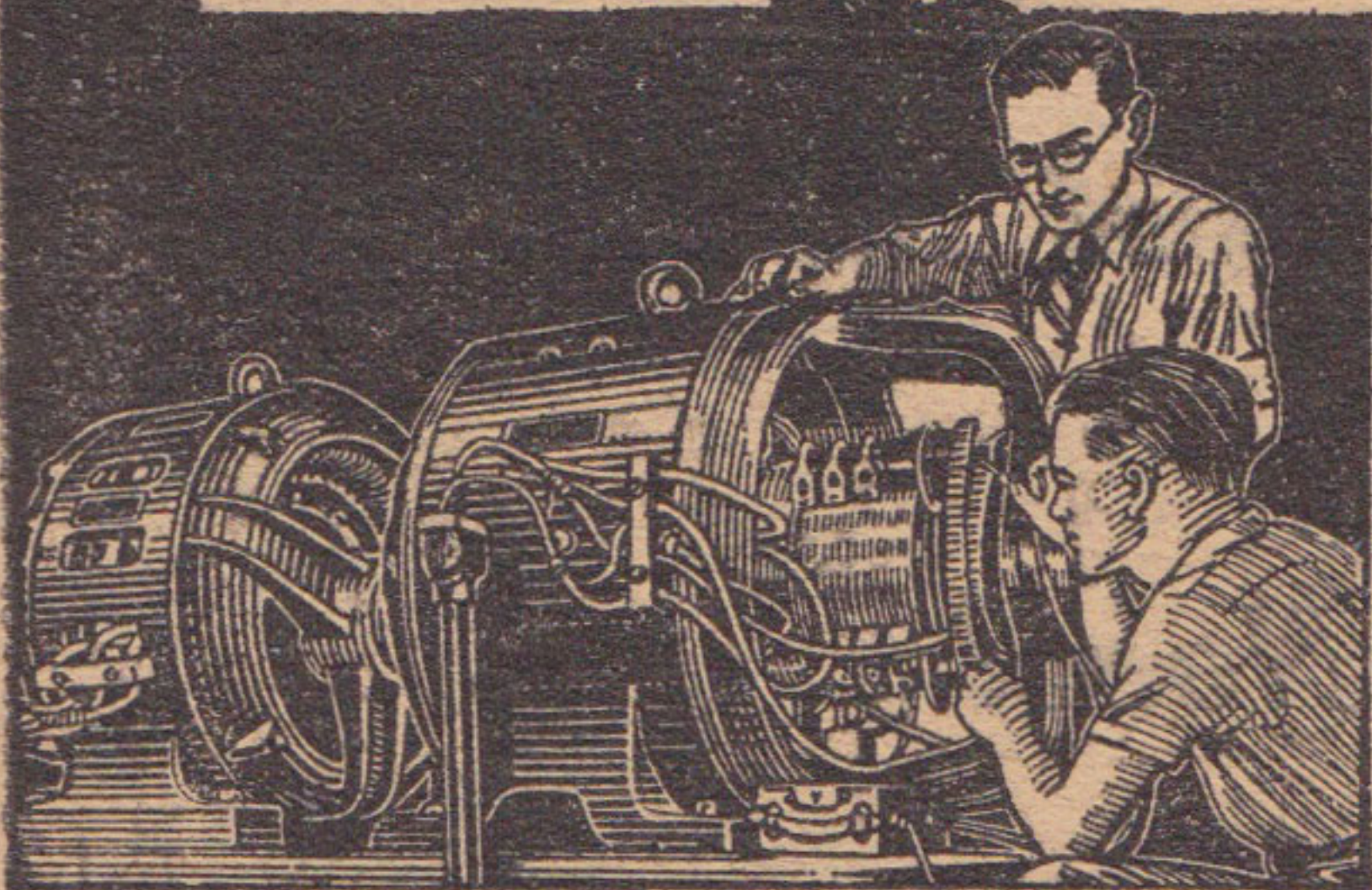
10:00 3 JOSIE AND PUSSY CATS
11:25 3 SPORTS
11:30 8 MOVIES
1:00 30 TONIGHT
1:00 30 MOVIE
SATURDAY, JULY 24
DICK CAVETT



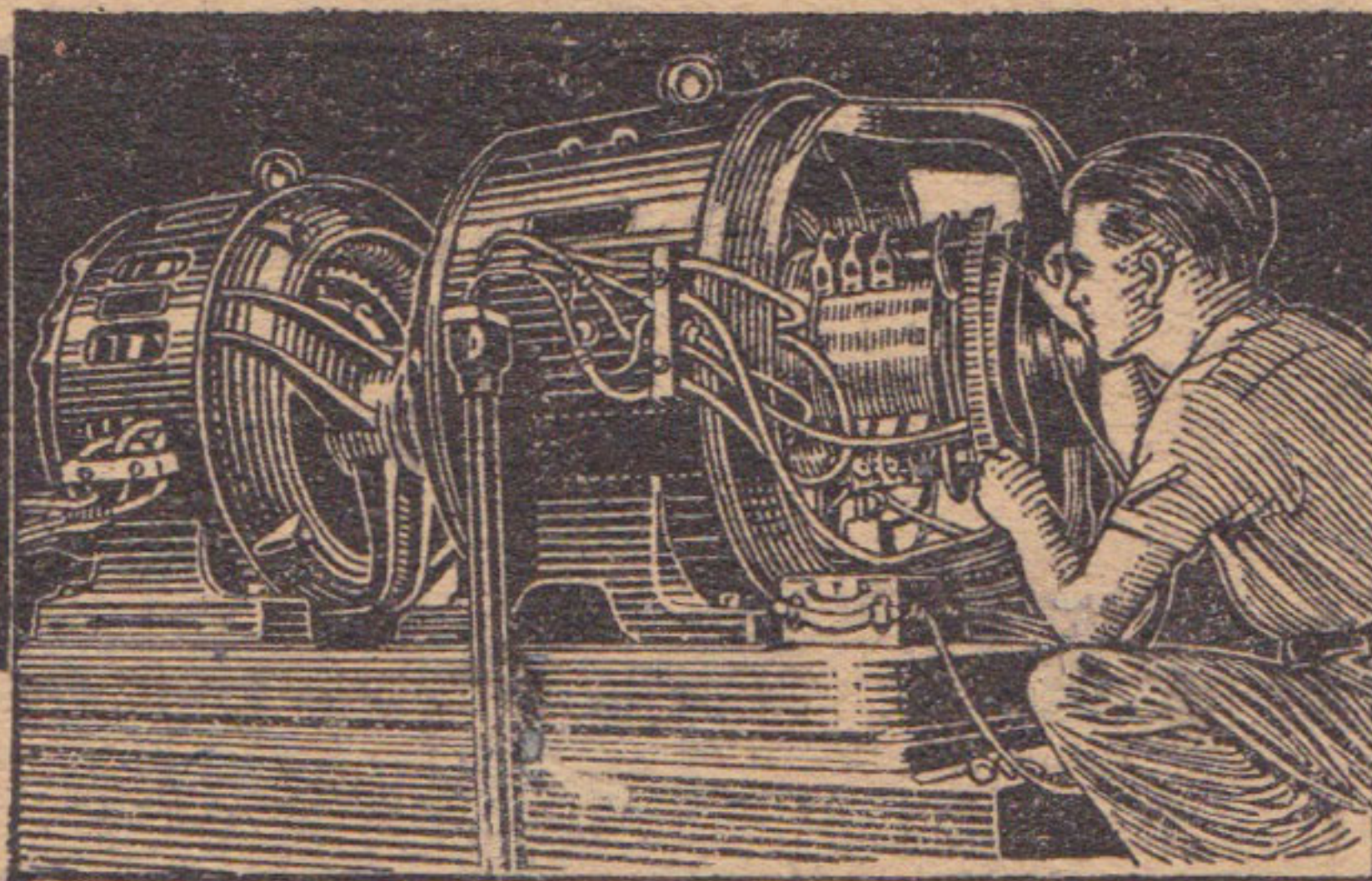
To
TRAIN
FOR

QUICK EASY WAY ELECTRICITY IN 12 WEEKS

by Actual SHOP WORK **NOT BOOKS**



FIRST--You are told and shown how to do it.



THEN--You do the job yourself.



HOUSE WIRING
only one of the many
branches you
"Learn By Doing."

WANT TO EARN MORE MONEY?

Have you ever dreamed of holding down a steady, good pay job? Have you ever dreamed of doing the work you really like in a job that holds promise of a real future in the years ahead?

Well, we all know that you can't get the good things in life by just dreaming about them. Hundreds of fellows are today holding down mighty fine jobs with prospects of a bright future. They are filling these jobs because they had the foresight to equip themselves with the right kind of training.

Most of these men were only average fellows a short time ago, but the proper training helped to lift them out of the low pay ranks of unskilled workers. The same opportunity is now offered to you.

The great fascinating field of **ELECTRICITY** offers a real future to many men and young men who are willing to prepare for a place in this giant industry.

AN EXTRA
4 WEEKS
COURSE IN
RADIO
INCLUDED

Here at my school in Chicago, the world's Electrical Center, you can get 12 weeks' Shop Training in **ELECTRICITY** and an extra 4 weeks Course in **RADIO**, that can help give you your start towards a better job.

You will be trained on actual equipment and machinery and because of our method of training, you don't need previous experience or a lot of education. Many of my successful graduates never even completed Grammar School.

Here in my school you work on generators, motors, dynamos, you do house wiring, wind armatures and do actual work in many other branches of electricity and right now I'm including valuable instruction in Diesel, Electric Refrigeration and Air Conditioning at no extra cost. Our practical shop methods make it easier to learn—First the instructors tell you how a thing should be done—then they show you how it should be done—then you do the actual work yourself.



"... Everything was just as stated in literature. And by Coyne methods plenty of instructors to take care of everything, easy to learn. I really was satisfied with Coyne Training."
J. Halyk, Canada



"... Coyne has first class instructors to teach you the simplest things to start with and they have the equipment to show you these things as you advance."
Ben Rickman, S. Car.

I'LL FINANCE MOST OF YOUR TRAINING

You can get this training first—then if you are short of money you can pay for most of it later in easy monthly payments, starting 60 days after your 12 weeks' training period is over—then you have 10 months to complete your payments. If you need part time work to help out with expenses while training in my shops, my employment department will help you get it. Then after graduation this department will give you valuable lifetime employment service.

Send the coupon today for all details. When I get it I'll send you my big free book containing dozens of pictures of students at work in

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 31-84, Chicago

my shops. I'll also tell you about my "Pay After Graduation" plan, how many earn while learning and how we help our students after graduation. Fill in, clip coupon, mail today for your start toward a brighter future.

MAIL
NOW

H. C. LEWIS, Pres., COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 31-84, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: Please send me free your big catalog and full particulars of your present offer, also your "Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" Plan, and also your Extra 4 Weeks Radio Course.

Name.....
Address.....
City..... State.....



• EVERY STORY BRAND NEW •



Vol. XXXIV, No. 3

MARCH, 1941

Price 10c

*Featuring the World's Greatest Sleuth
in*

A Full Book-Length Novel

MURDER CALLS THE PHANTOM

By ROBERT WALLACE

Taken from the Case-book of Richard Curtis Van Loan
(Profusely Illustrated)

*Sabotage Walks Hand in Hand with Death, Hurling a Mighty
Challenge at the Law! Follow the Ace of Manhunters as He
Battles Against a Desperate Criminal's Bid for Unholy Power!* 16

GRIPPING SHORT STORIES

THE CAT THAT COUNTED John L. Benton 93
A Wily Feline Flabbergasts a Sugary Racket!

A SOCIAL CALL Frank Johnson 96
Hugh Jeffries Comes into a Strange Inheritance!

AND

THE PHANTOM SPEAKS A Department 12
Join FRIENDS OF THE PHANTOM! Coupon on Page 113

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PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.



I Trained These Men



Chief Operator Broadcasting Station

Before I completed your lessons, I obtained my Radio Broadcast Operator's license and immediately joined Station WMPC where I am now Chief Operator.
HOLLIS F. HAYES
327 Madison St.
Lapeer, Michigan

Service Manager for Four Stores

I was working in a garage when I enrolled with N. R. I. I am now Radio service manager for the M. Furniture Co. for their four stores.

JAMES E. RYAN
119 Pebble Court
Fall River, Mass.



\$10 to \$20 a Week in Spare Time

I repaired some Radio sets when I was on my tenth lesson. I really don't see how you can give so much for such a small amount of money. I made \$600 in a year and a half, and I have made an average of \$10 to \$20 a week — just spare time.

JOHN JERRY
1529 Arapahoe St., Room 17,
Denver, Colorado



DRAFT REGISTRANTS!

If you ARE called, and are then a Radio Technician, you'll be eligible for a communications branch of the service; in line for technical ratings with extra pay. If you ARE NOT called, you now have an opportunity to get into Radio at a time when the Government is pouring millions of dollars into the Radio industry to buy Defense equipment, on top of boom civilian Radio business. Either way — it's smart to train for RADIO NOW!

THIS BOOK has shown hundreds how to MAKE MORE MONEY

I WILL TRAIN YOU AT HOME in your spare time for a GOOD JOB IN RADIO

If you can't see a future in your present job; feel you'll never make much more money, if you're in a seasonal field, subject to lay offs, IT'S TIME NOW to investigate Radio. Trained Radio Technicians make good money, and you don't have to give up your present job or leave home to learn Radio. I train you at home nights in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make \$30, \$40, \$50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make \$5 to \$10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, Police, Aviation, Commercial Radio, Loudspeaker Systems, Electronic Devices are other fields offering opportunities for which N. R. I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open good jobs soon.

Many Make \$5 to \$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets—start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped

many make \$5 to \$10 a week extra in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. YOU ALSO GET A MODERN PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

Find Out What Radio, Television Offer You — Mail Coupon

Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Course in Radio and Television; shows more than 100 letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. Smith, President, Dept. 1C09
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.



J. E. Smith, President
Nat. Radio Inst.
Est. 25 years

Mail this to get 64 page book FREE



J. E. Smith, President, Dept. 1C09
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio." (No salesman will call. Write plainly.)

AGE.....

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY..... STATE.....

FALSE TEETH

\$6^{.85} to \$35.00

—BY MAIL—

SEND NO MONEY

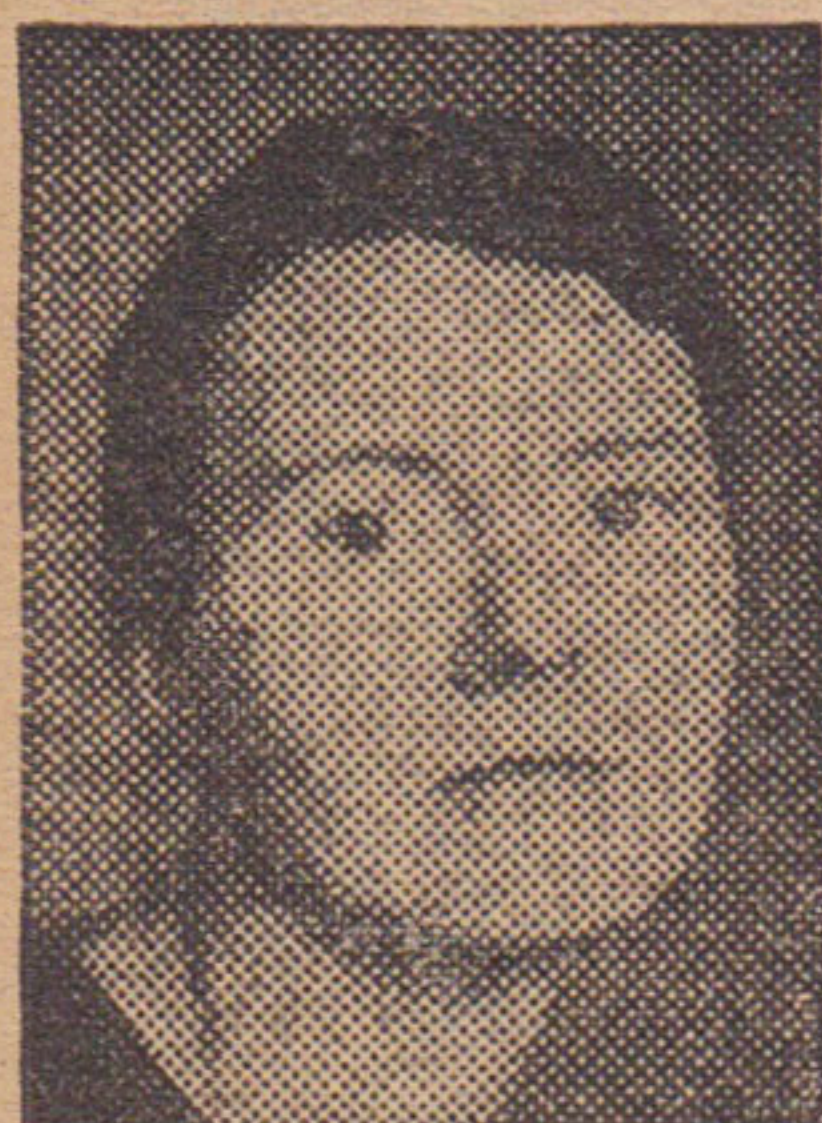


Posed by a Professional Model

THE TESTIMONIAL LETTERS WE PUBLISH are communications that customers have sent to us without solicitation and without pay. We have large numbers of such missives. We never print anyone's letter without previous consent. We believe that each of our customers who has written to us enthusiastically endorsing our dental plates is sincere. We do not, however, intimate or represent that you will receive the same results in any instance that those customers describe. What is important to you is that when you pay for our teeth, **WE GUARANTEE IF YOU ARE NOT 100% SATISFIED IN EVERY RESPECT WITH THE TEETH WE WILL MAKE FOR YOU, AFTER YOU HAVE WORN THEM AS LONG AS 60 DAYS, WE WILL GLADLY REFUND TO YOU EVERY CENT YOU HAVE PAID US FOR THEM.**

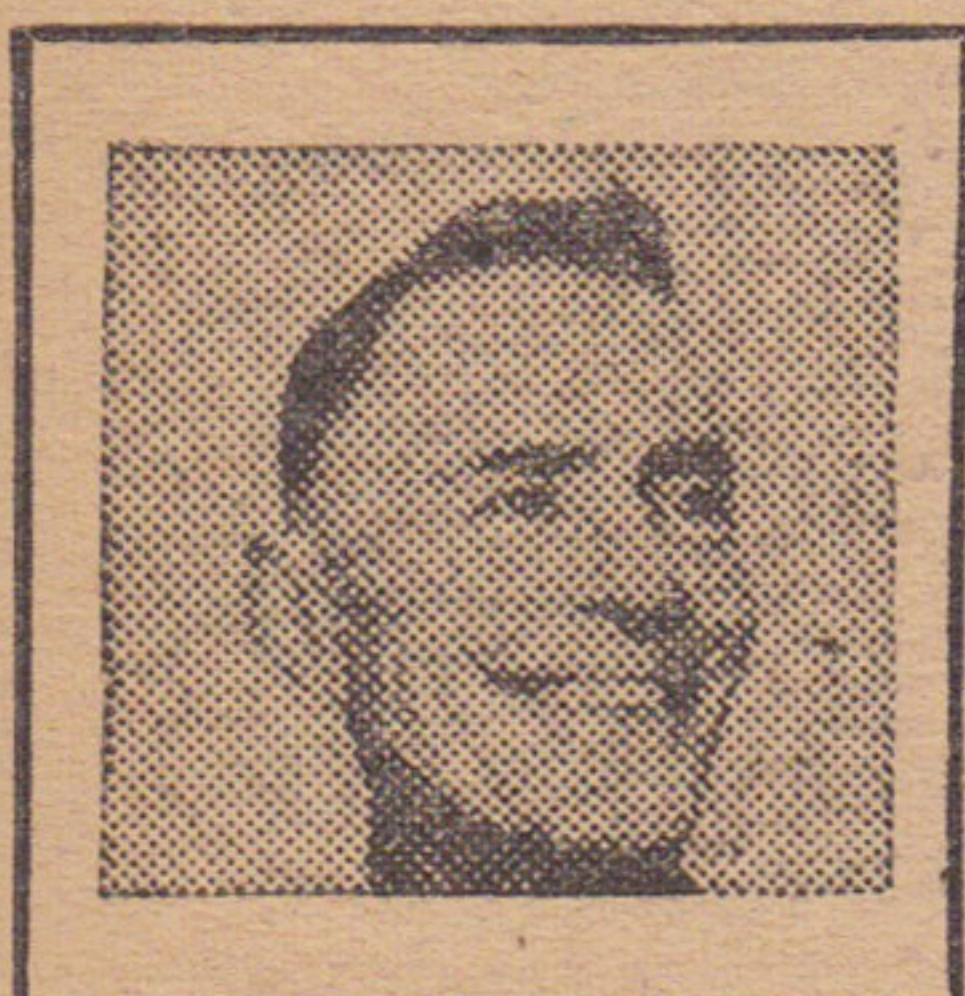
BEFORE

AFTER



Mrs. Elsie Boland of Norton, Kansas, writes:

"Enclosed find two pictures. One shows how I looked before I got my teeth; the other one afterwards. Your teeth are certainly beautiful. I have not had mine out since the day I got them, except to clean them."



Harry Willoughby, Adairville, Kentucky, writes:

"I have received my teeth and am **PROUD OF THEM.**"



Mrs. Geo. G. Conklin, Bridgeport, Connecticut, writes:

"I received my set of teeth. I wear them day and night. I have good reason to be well pleased with them. Thank you very much."

MADE - TO - MEASURE DENTAL PLATES DIRECT FROM OUR LABORATORY TO YOU!

We make to measure for you **individually—BY MAIL—**Dental Plates for men and women—from an impression of your own mouth taken by you at your home. We have thousands of customers all over the country wearing teeth we made by mail at sensible prices.

AT ROCK-BOTTOM PRICES

If you find out what others have paid for theirs, you will be astounded when you see how little ours will cost you! By reading our catalog, you will learn how to save half or more on dental plates for yourself. Monthly payments possible.

ON 60 DAYS' TRIAL

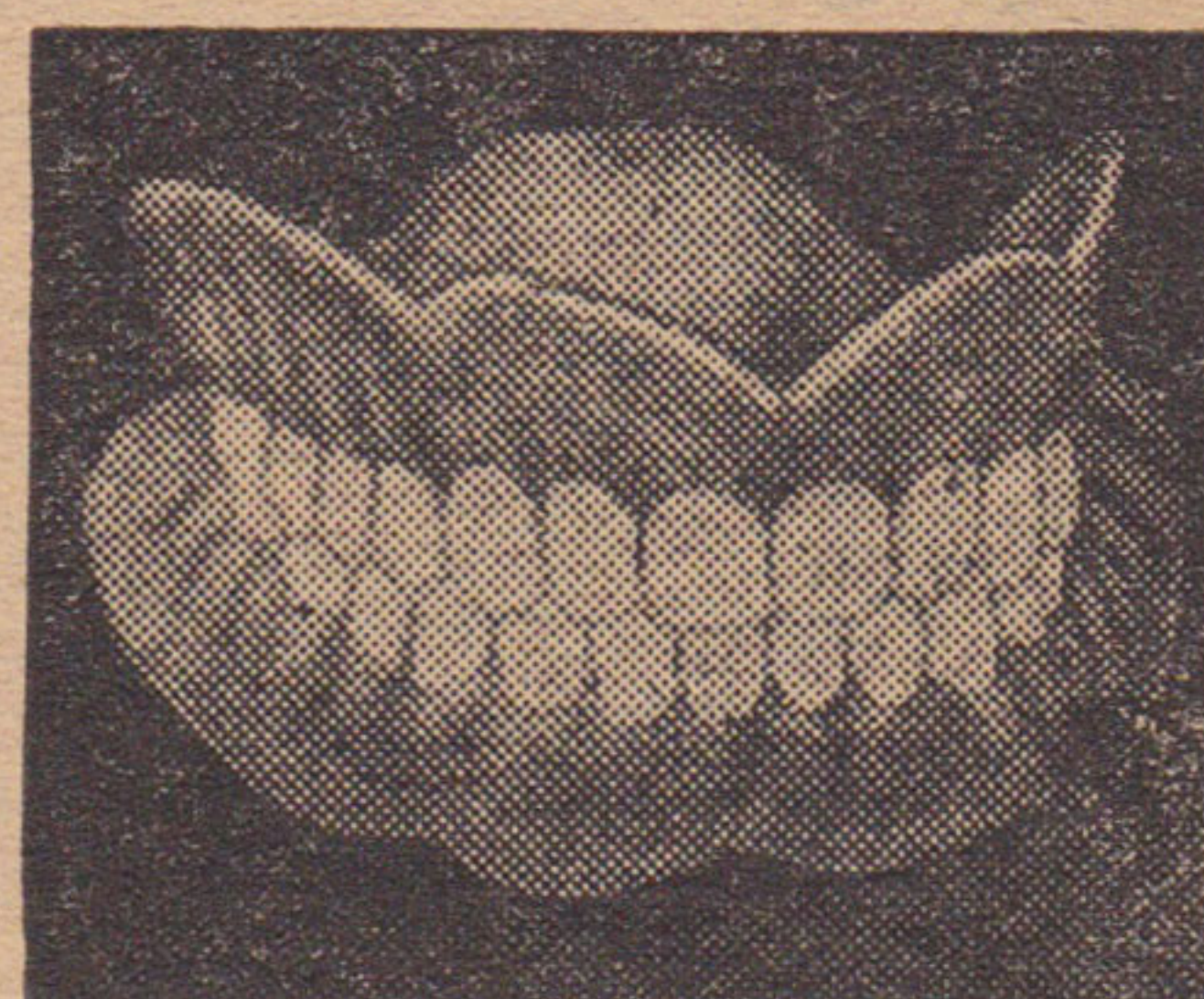
Make us prove every word we say. Wear our teeth on trial for as long as 60 days. Then, if you are not perfectly satisfied with them, they will not cost you a cent.

WITH MONEY - BACK GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION

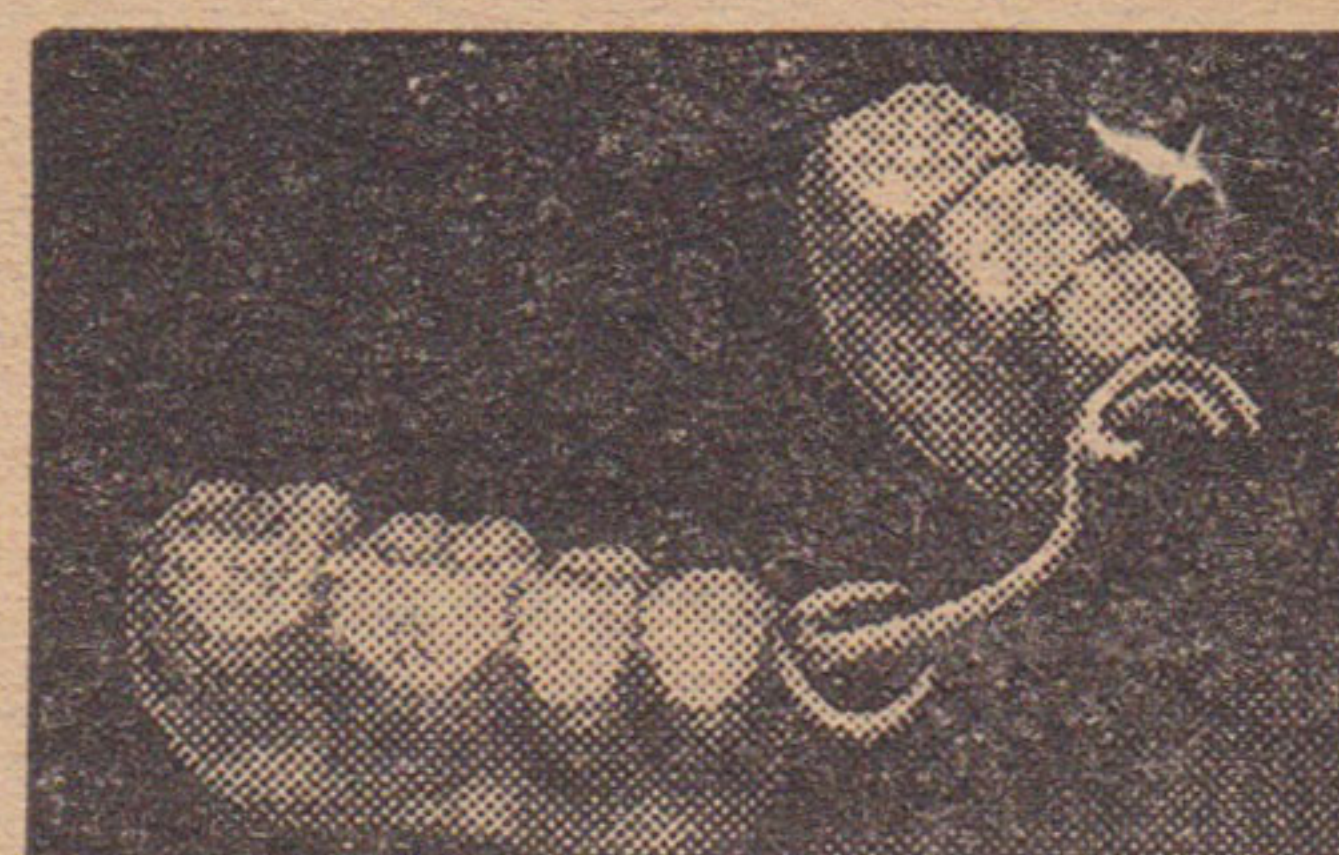
We take this risk. We guarantee that if you are not completely satisfied with the teeth we make for you, then any time within 60 days we will immediately refund every cent you have paid us for them. We take your word. You are the judge.

HIGH-GRADE MATERIAL AND EXPERT WORKMANSHIP

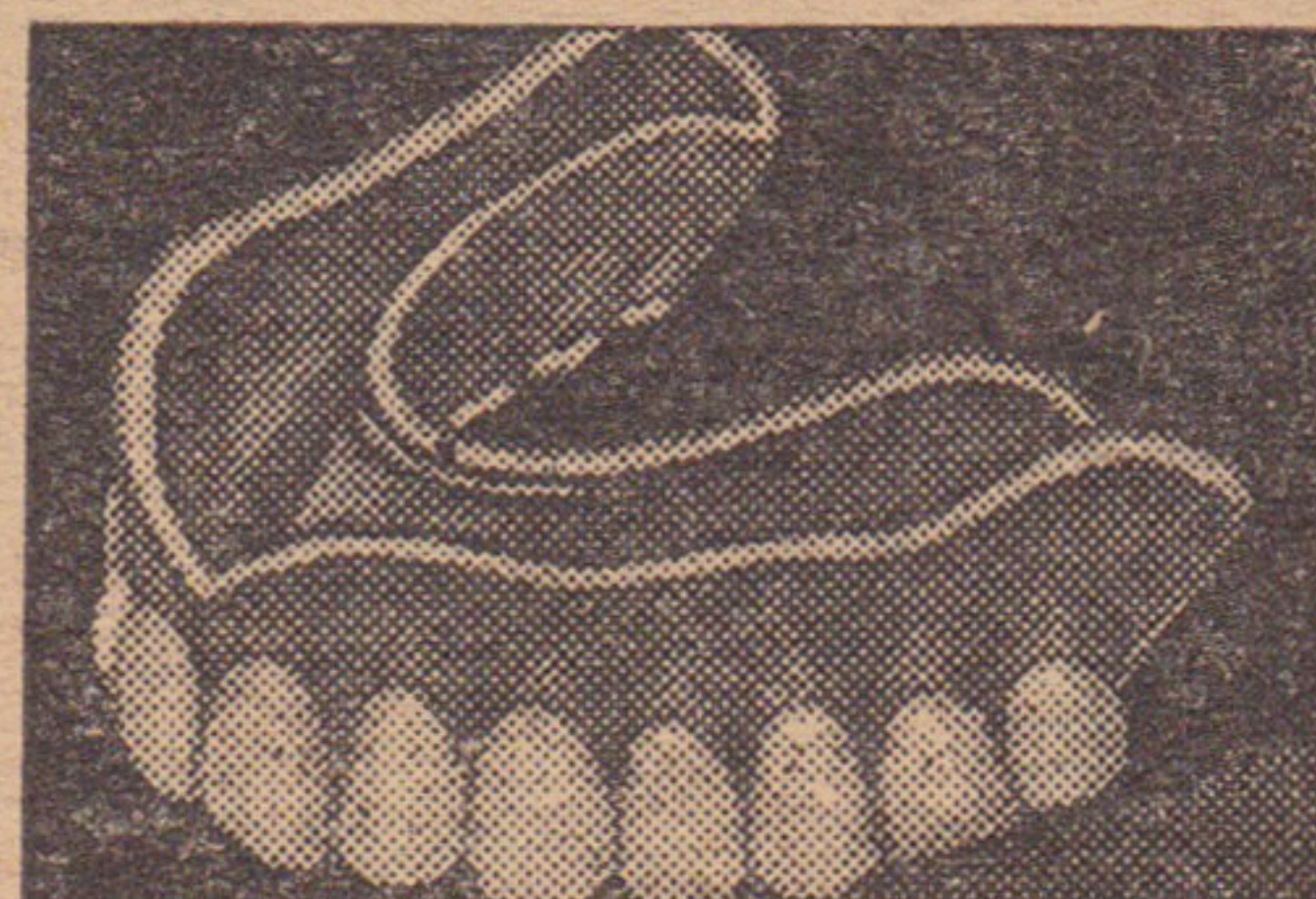
TRY our practically unbreakable **ROOFLESS**, **PARTIAL** and **TRANSLUCENT** plates. Our dentures are set with pearly-white, genuine, porcelain teeth; constructed from high-grade materials, with expert workmanship, to give long service. We make all styles of plates. A dentist who has had many years' experience in making dental plates supervises the making of each plate. . . .



HAND-CARVED SET



PARTIAL



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IMPRESSION MATERIAL. Catalog with our new low prices and information. Don't put this off. Do it TODAY! CLIP COUPON OR WRITE. A one cent postcard with name and address plainly written is all that is necessary.

We also Repair or Reproduce Old Plates—48-hour Service

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Send, without obligation, your **FREE** impression material, catalog, and information.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....
(Print Clearly)

Why Trained Accountants Command

—and how ambitious men are qualifying
by the LaSalle Problem Method

High Salaries

GET this straight.

By "accountancy" we do not mean "bookkeeping." For accountancy begins where bookkeeping leaves off.

The skilled accountant takes the figures handed him by the bookkeeper, and *analyzes* and *interprets* them.

He knows how much the costs in the various departments should amount to, how they may be lowered.

He knows what profits should be expected from a given enterprise, how they may be increased.

He knows, in a given business, what per cent of one's working capital can safely be tied up in merchandise on hand, what per cent is safe and adequate for sales promotion. And these, by the way, are but two of *scores* of percentage-figures where-with he points the way to successful operation.

He knows the intricacies of government taxation.

He knows how to *survey* the transactions of a business over a given period; how to show in cold, hard figures the progress it has made and where it is going. He knows how to *use* these findings as a basis for constructive policies.

In short, the trained accountant is the *controlling engineer* of business—one man business cannot do without.

Small wonder that he commands a salary two to ten times as great as that of the bookkeeper. Indeed, as an independent operator (head of his own accounting firm) he may earn as much as the president of the big and influential bank in his community, or the operating manager of a great railroad.

Some Examples

Small wonder that accountancy offers the trained man such fine opportunities—opportunities well illustrated by the success of thousands of

LaSalle accountancy students.* For example—one man was a plumber, 32 years old, with only an eleventh grade education. Today he is auditor for a large bank and his income is 325 per cent larger.

Another was a drug clerk at \$30 a week. Now he heads his own very successful accounting firm with an income many times as large.

A woman bookkeeper—buried in details of a small job—is now auditor of an apartment hotel, and her salary mounted in proportion to her work.

A credit manager—earning \$200 a month—moved up quickly to \$3000, to \$5000, and then to a highly profitable accounting business of his own which nets him better than \$10,000 a year.

And What It Means to You

Why let the other fellow walk away with the better job, when right in your own home you can equip yourself for a splendid future in this profitable profession?

Are you really *determined* to get ahead? If so, you can start at once to acquire—by the LaSalle Problem Method—a thorough understanding of Higher Accountancy, master its fundamental principles, become expert in the practical application of those principles—this without losing an hour from work or a dollar of pay.

Preliminary knowledge of bookkeeping is unnecessary. You will be given whatever training, instruction or review on the subject of bookkeeping you may personally need—and without any extra expense to you.

If you are dissatisfied with your present equipment—if you recognize the opportunities that lie ahead of you through home-study training—you will do well to send at once for full particulars. The coupon will bring them to you without any obligation, also details of LaSalle's convenient payment plan.

Check, sign and mail the coupon **NOW.**



LaSalle Extension University

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Opportunities in Accountancy—Check below and we will send you a copy of "Accountancy, the Profession that Pays," without obligation.

☐ Higher Accountancy:

Other LaSalle Opportunities: If more interested in one of the other fields of business indicated below, check here:

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|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Modern Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Expert Bookkeeping |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law | <input type="checkbox"/> Business English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenotypy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Correspondence | <input type="checkbox"/> Effective Speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Credit and Collection | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accounting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Correspondence | |

Name

Present Position

Address

*Names available on request.

One

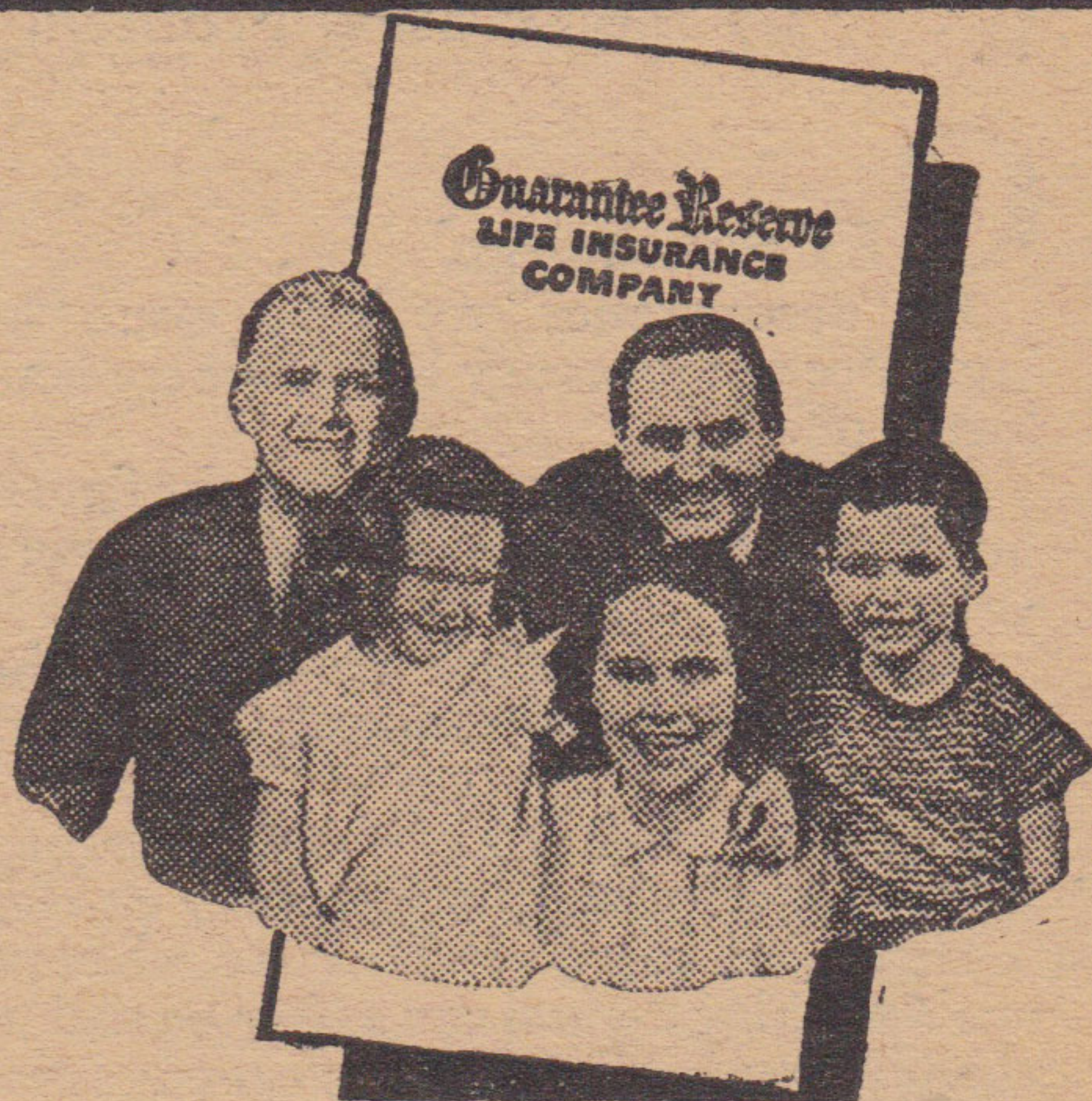
LIFE INSURANCE POLICY INSURES THEM ALL!

LOOK AT THE AMAZING

LOW COST

Only \$1 A MONTH

FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY



THIS **Guarantee Reserve** POLICY INSURES FROM TWO TO SIX MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY . . . FOR AS MUCH AS . . .

\$1,422⁰⁰

For Natural or Ordinary Accidental Death
(The above figures represent the amount of insurance provided by the policy on a typical average family of five persons)

\$2,844⁰⁰

For Auto Accidental Death

\$4,266⁰⁰

For Travel Accidental Death

Insures Men, Women, Children—Ages 1-75

If aching hearts and unbearable grief were all that accompanied death . . . the burden would still be great. But added to that grief and despair are the huge expenses that always follow the footsteps of tragedy. You'll need ready cash to see you through, and unless you carry insurance on each member of your family, some time you're going to have to face these financial burdens.

Computed on Legal Reserve Basis

The Guarantee Reserve Policy is brand new . . . it is actuarially sound . . . figured out by leading insurance experts without using the many misleading or confusing "trick clauses" and "hidden phrases" that are contained in so many low cost policies. Seeing is believing . . . that's why we want you to see the policy before you decide to keep it. We want to prove that this is the Policy you should have for your family's protection.

**Parents, Children (Married or Unmarried), Brothers,
Sisters, Grandparents, In-Laws, Included**

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION

QUESTIONS YOU WILL WANT ANSWERED!

1. Q. Does the death of one or more members of the insured family cancel the Policy?
A. No. The policy remains in effect, insuring the balance of the insured family, as long as premiums are paid.
2. Q. How are premiums paid?
A. Pay your \$1.00 premium monthly. You will receive a receipt and premium notice each month. NO collectors will ever call on or bother you.
3. Q. In what States are policies issued by Guarantee Reserve Life Insurance Company?
A. Guarantee Reserve Life Insurance Company is legally entitled to do business by mail in every State in the Union. It is incorporated under Indiana insurance laws.
4. Q. Is a Medical Examination required?
A. No. But any members of your family who are not in good health cannot be insured.

Selling by mail saves agents' commissions, branch offices, expenses, collection expenses . . . that's why from 2 to 6 members of your family, including relatives, may be included in your Guarantee Reserve Family Policy for a total cost of only \$1.00 a month. You be the judge . . . decide for yourself without agents to

high pressure you . . . without embarrassment or obligation.

Send the coupon below for details of this sound insurance offer made by the reliable Guarantee Reserve Life Insurance Company. Don't delay . . . do it now, while you and your family are in good health.

**NO AGENT
WILL CALL
10-DAY FREE
INSPECTION OFFER
SEND NO
MONEY**

MAIL COUPON TODAY!

GUARANTEE RESERVE LIFE INSURANCE CO.
Guarantee Reserve Bldg., Dept. 17-C
Indianapolis, Indiana

() Please send me your

FREE 10-DAY INSPECTION OFFER

NAME.....

ST. OR R.F.D.....

CITY & STATE.....

THOUSANDS NOW PLAY WHO NEVER THOUGHT THEY COULD

Read this typical letter from one of our students



YES, just like thousands of others, who thought music was hard, this man got the surprise of his life when he tried this easy way to learn music at home. And no wonder! Instead of months of tedious study and practice, he found himself actually playing real tunes in the very first few weeks!

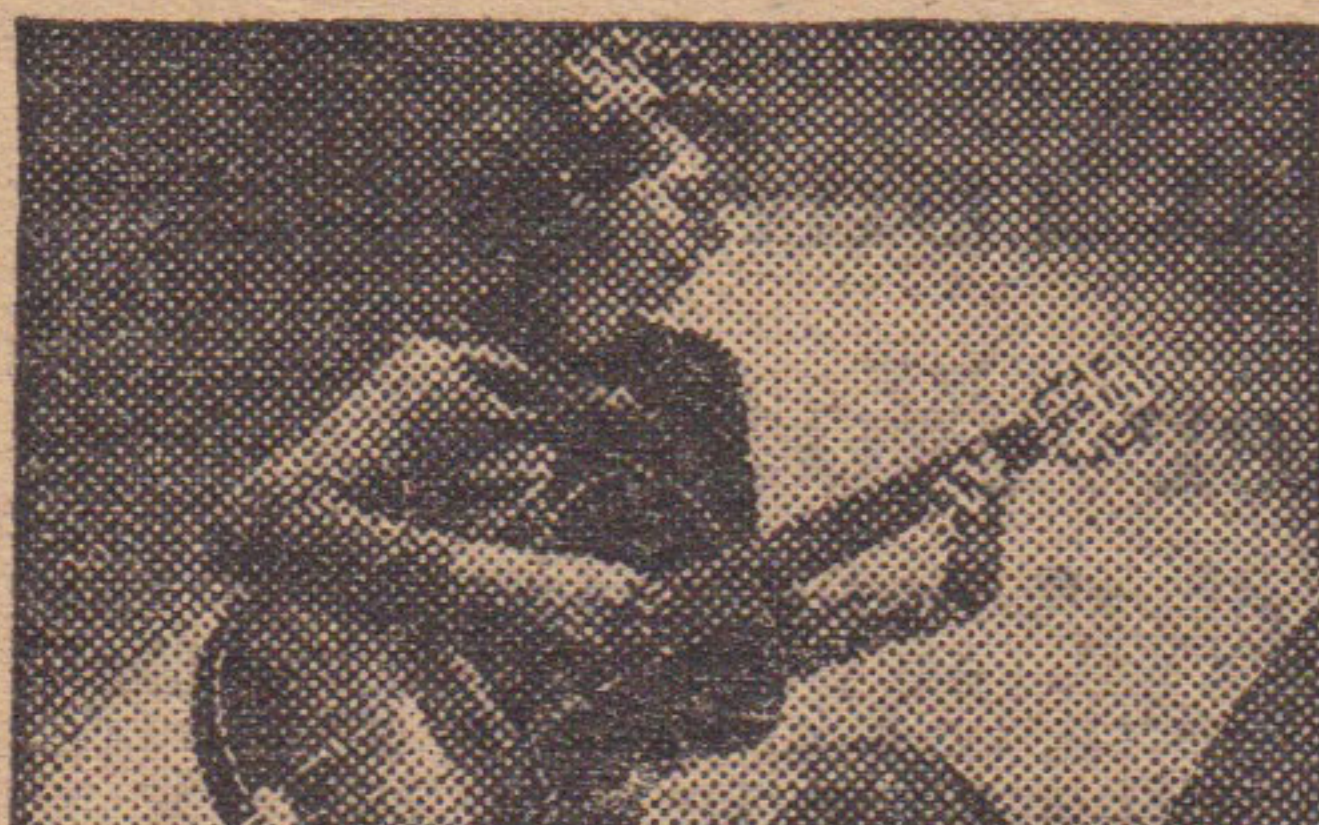
But read this unsolicited letter for yourself: "I didn't even dream that I could actually learn to play without a teacher, because I had always heard that it couldn't be done. I couldn't afford a teacher so I didn't think it would do me any harm to take your course.

"When I received the lessons I took the instantaneous note finder and struck the notes right off. You can imagine my surprise when after three or four weeks I found that I could actually play real tunes.

"Now, when I play for people they will hardly believe that I learned to play so well with just a correspondence course in so short a time. I am getting to the point where even the hardest music holds no terrors for me."

(Signed) *H. C. S., Calif.

FREE PROOF it's fun to learn the U. S. School Way . . . and it costs less than 7c A DAY

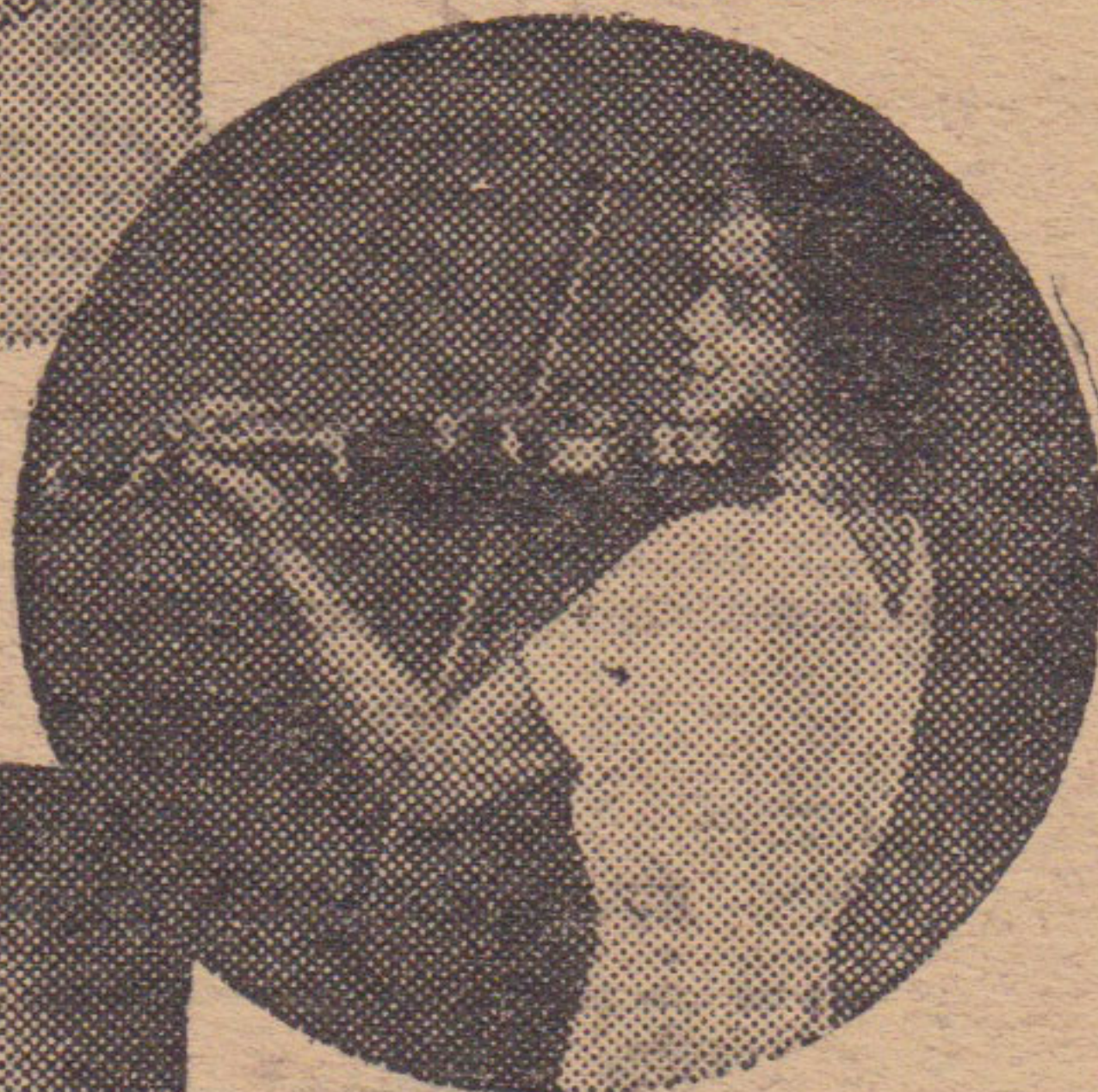


Wouldn't Take \$1,000 for Course
The lessons are so simple that anyone can understand them. I have learned to play by note in a little more than a month. I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for my course.

*S. E. A., Kansas City, Mo.

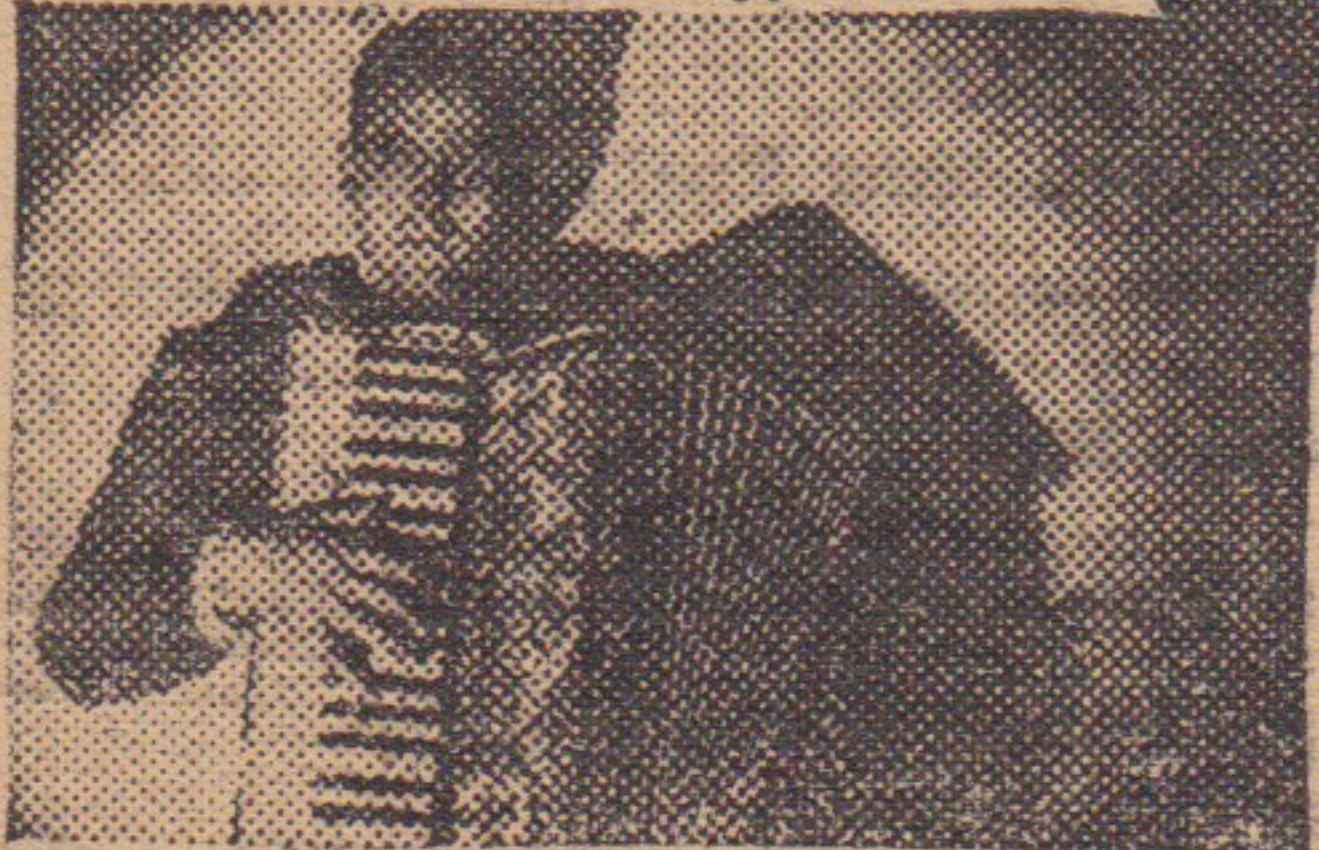
Plays on Radio
I am happy to tell you that for four weeks I have been on the air over our local radio stations. So thanks to your institution for such a wonderful course.

*W. H. S., Alabama.



Easy to Understand
The manner in which the various lessons are explained is very helpful as well as interesting. It makes one feel that the explanation is being given in person.

*W. W., Florida.



*Actual pupils' names on request.
Pictures posed by Professional models.

Here's the best news of all! By this easy, modern method, you can now learn to play your favorite instrument, right at home, in your spare time, for less than **SEVEN CENTS A DAY!** And that covers *everything*, including valuable sheet music. No extras of any kind. What's more, it doesn't take years to learn this way. You learn to play in much **LESS** time than you probably ever dreamed possible.

It's easy as A-B-C. It's **FUN!** You learn to play by *playing*. If interested, send at once for the Free Print and Picture Sample that shows **HOW** and the handsome illustrated booklet that gives complete information. Just mail the coupon. (Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.) **U. S. SCHOOL of MUSIC, 2943 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.**

FREE PRINT & PICTURE SAMPLE

U. S. School of Music, 2943 Brunswick Bldg., N. Y. C.

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument indicated below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home," and your illustrated Print and Picture Sample.

(Do you have instrument?)

Piano	Mandolin	Trombone	Piano Accordion
Violin	Saxophone	Banjo	Plain Accordion
Guitar	Clarinet	Ukulele	Hawaiian Guitar
Cello	Trumpet	Cornet	Other Instrument

Name

Street

City State.....

☐ Check here if under 16 years of age.

BLEEDING GUMS PYORRHEA TRENCH MOUTH

Don't wait until it's too late and lose your teeth. PYRO which has astounded the medical profession. PYRO gets right at the trouble and kills the poisonous germs. One reason why PYRO works so efficaciously is because it actually penetrates the gums, thereby killing the germs inside and out. Remember pyorrhea and trench mouth. If unattended, permits the infection to spread quickly, and before you know it, teeth are rotted and bone construction is destroyed and teeth fall out.

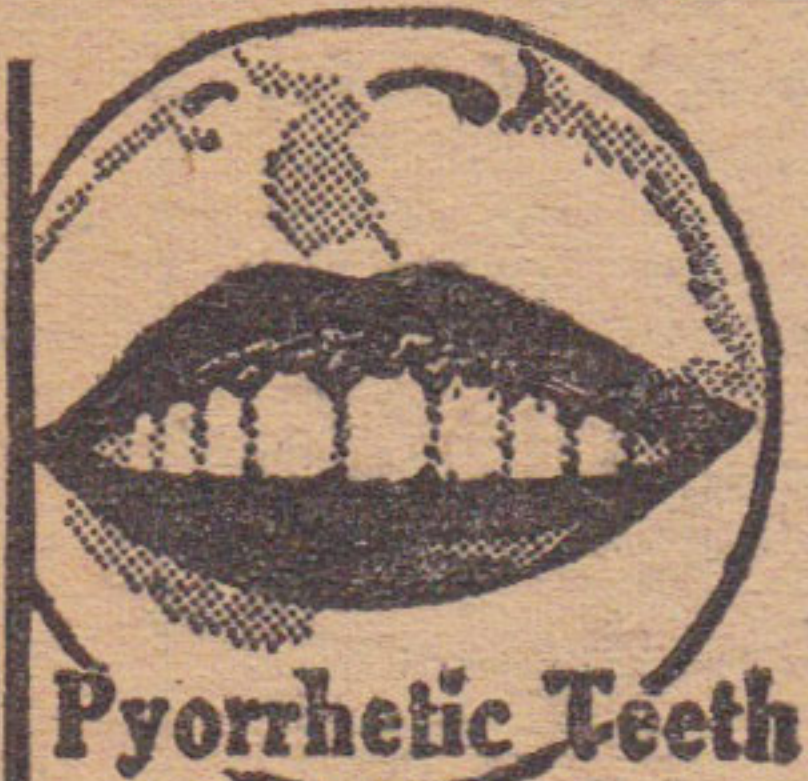
PYRO SAVES YOUR TEETH or *NO COST!*

You can believe the sworn affidavits of doctors and dentists who have tried this new discovery on most stubborn cases of pyorrhea, trench mouth and bleeding gums.

PYRO was used with startling success many times, in cases that seemed hopeless . . . where everything else failed. PYRO is almost uncanny in getting quick and sure results. It gets to the root of the trouble because PYRO has a penetration of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch in 5 minutes and it corrects and heals as it penetrates the diseased areas. If your gums are sore or bleed when brushed. . . . If your teeth are loose or pus pockets have formed, order PYRO today for quick correction . . . act now before you lose your teeth entirely.

A DOCTOR WRITES:—

A well-known physician . . . a member of the American Medical Assn., and many other professional organizations, says: "I do not hesitate to state that this solution has saved me from the nightmare of false teeth."



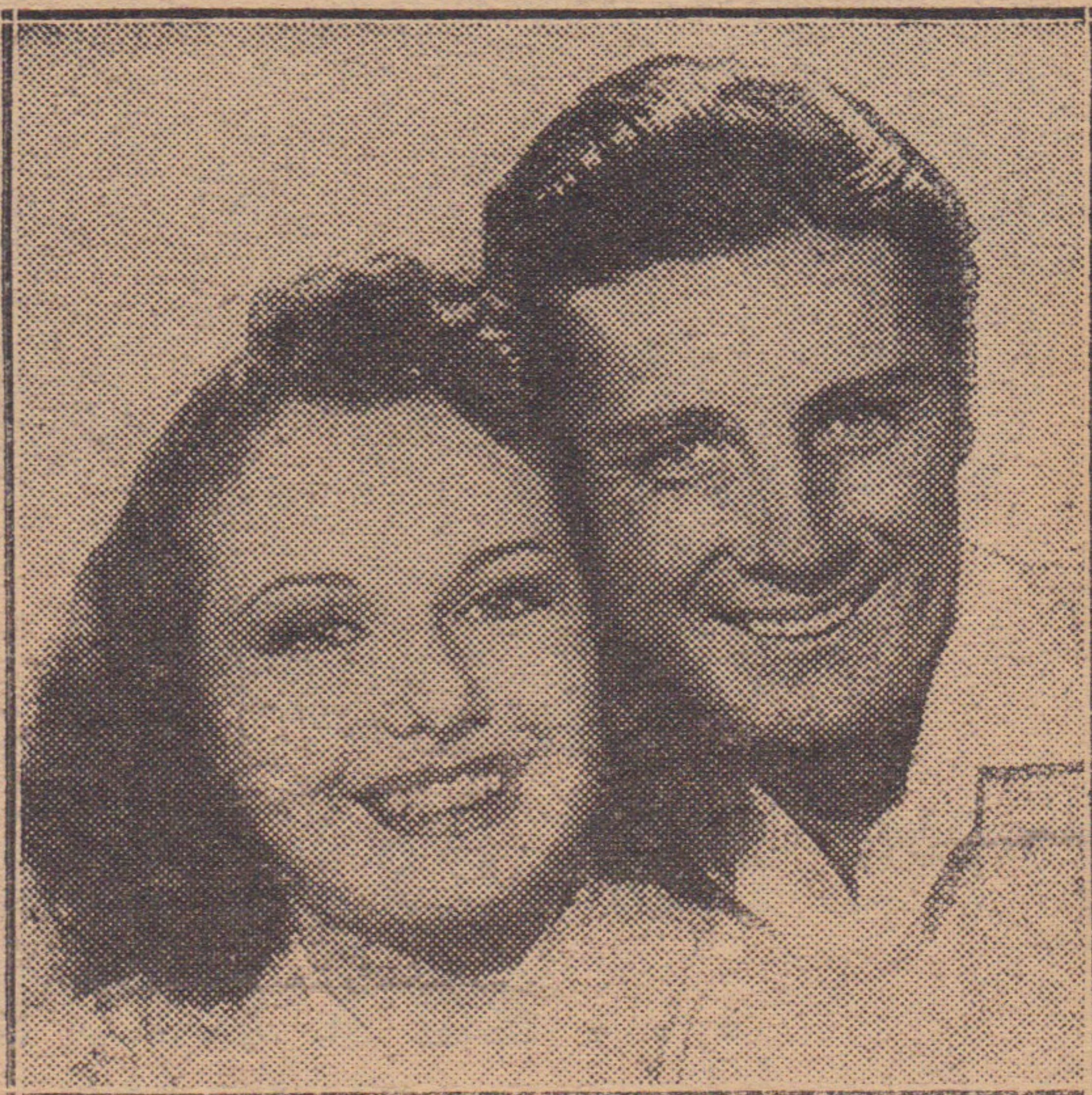
Pyorrhetic Teeth



Too Late!

Read This Proof!

Mrs. W. H. Kirby, 45 East 66th Street, New York, writes: "For a number of years I suffered with an advanced case of pyorrhea, constant treatments seemed only to arrest the disease. I was told I would lose my teeth. Then I heard of this new remedy. Being desperate, decided to try it. Am very happy now. My gums are healthy, teeth tight, and write this hoping that others suffering as I, will try it."



Don't Lose Your Teeth Order Now!

We have 45 pages of affidavits attesting to the wonderful powers of PYRO. So positive are we that it will bring you the health and happiness you have been seeking, that we will send it to you without a single penny of risk. Send \$2 today for the full home treatment or we will send C.O.D. for \$2 plus postage. Use PYRO as directed and if not 100% delighted with results, return the unused bottle and we will refund the purchase price in full.

CABLE PRODUCTS

Dept. 1703

501 West 139th Street, New York, N. Y.

CABLE PRODUCTS,
Dept. 1703—501 W. 139th St.,
New York, N. Y.

Send me your regular size bottle of PYRO and simple instructions for home use.

☐ Send C.O.D. I will pay postman \$2.00 plus postage.

☐ Enclosed find \$2.00 in full payment.

I will return empty bottle and you will refund my money if I am not satisfied.

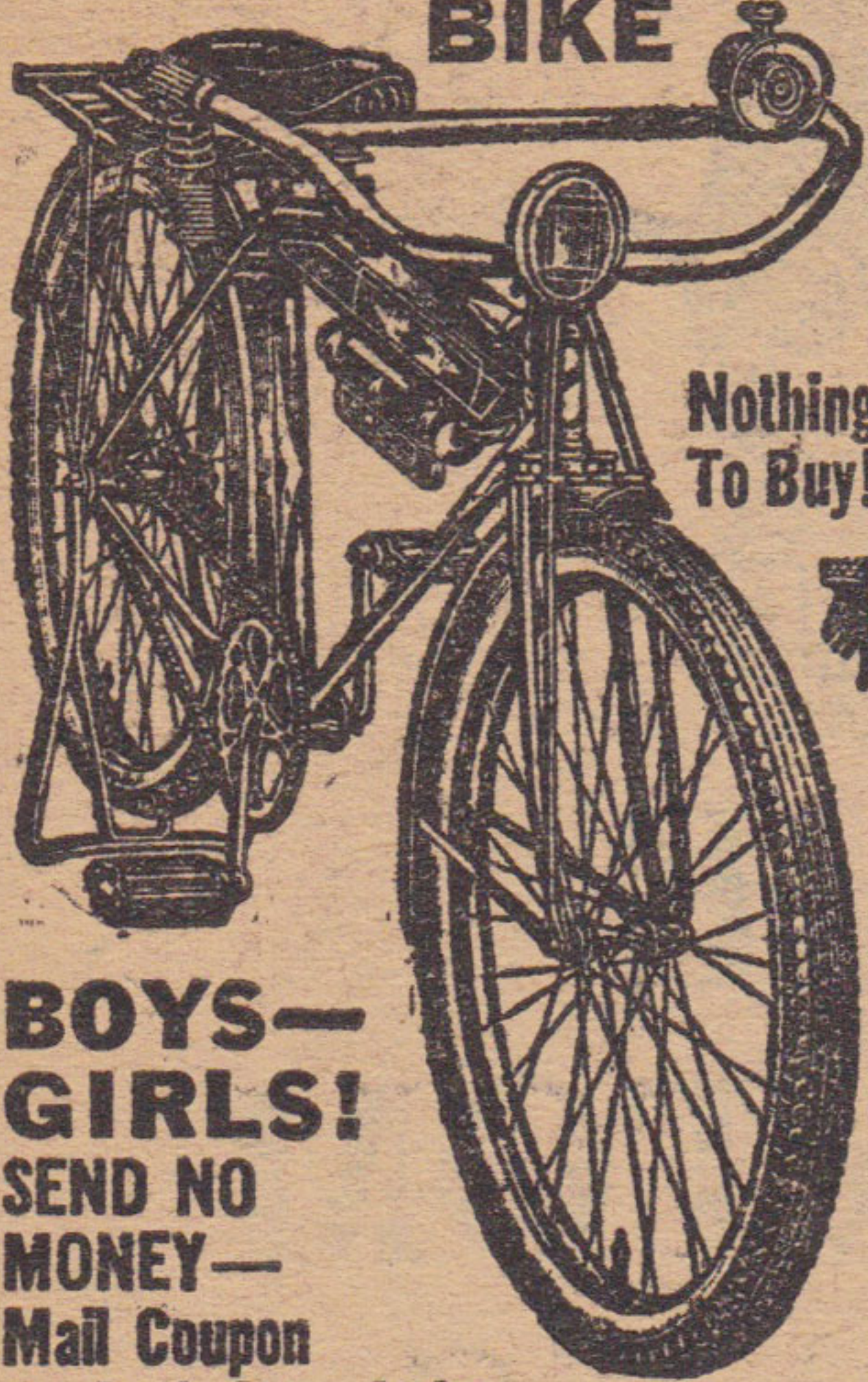
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Canadian orders \$2.25, cash with order.

GIVEN OUR 46th Yr. BIKE



Nothing To Buy!

BOYS—GIRLS!

SEND NO MONEY—

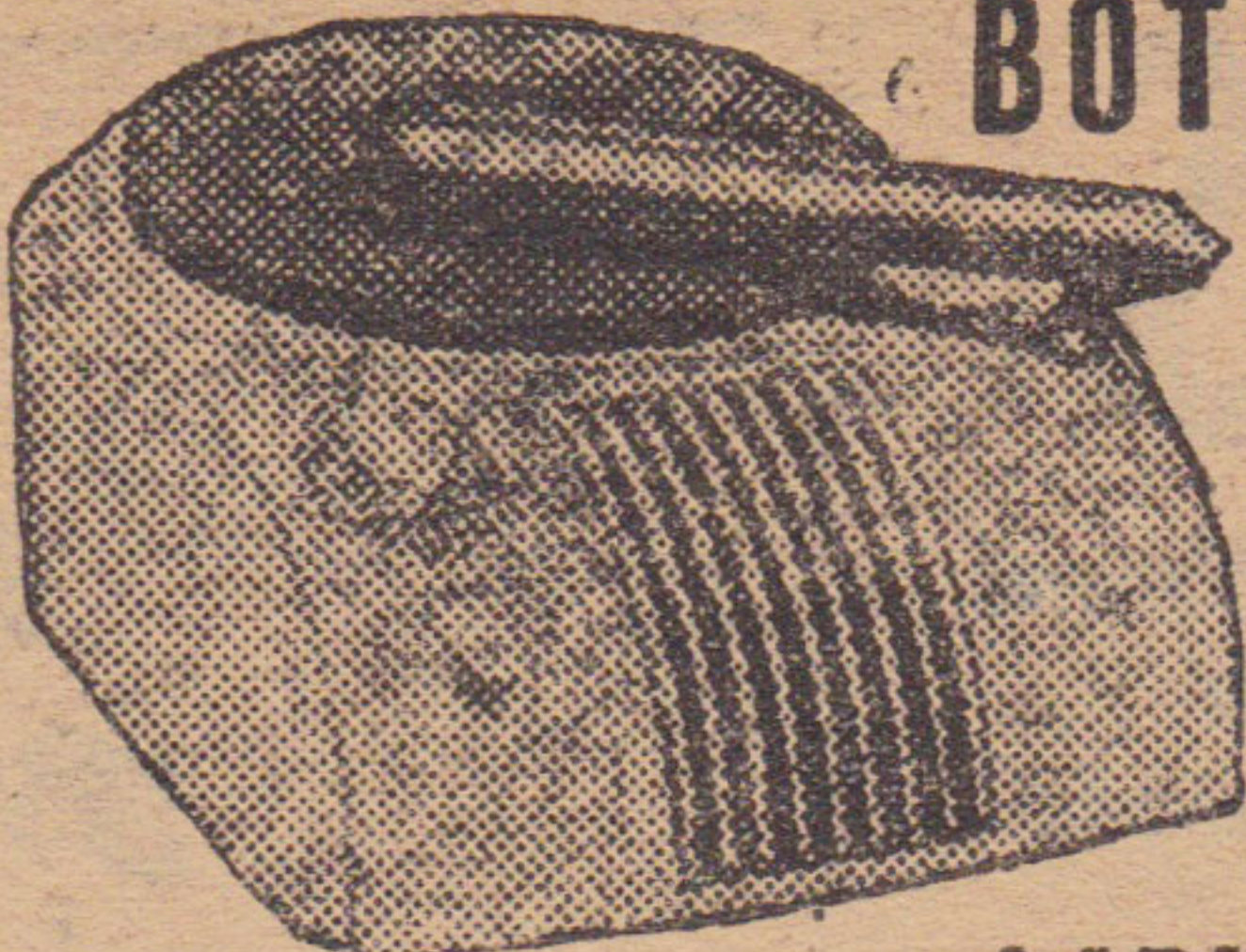
Mail Coupon

Or Cash Commission

Fully equipped—Balloon tires and all. **SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE** colored Art Pictures with our well known White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE, used for chaps, mild burns, shallow cuts. Salve easily sold to friends at 25c a box (with picture FREE). Remit and select premium as per catalog. **SPECIAL:** Choice of 35 premiums given for returning only \$3 collected. We furnish tested list of most likely customers. Nothing to buy! New picture helps sales. Act Now! Write or Mail Coupon! Salve and pictures sent postage paid by us.

WILSON CHEM. CO., INC. TYRONE, PA. Dept. 31-A

BOTH GIVEN



NOTHING TO BUY!

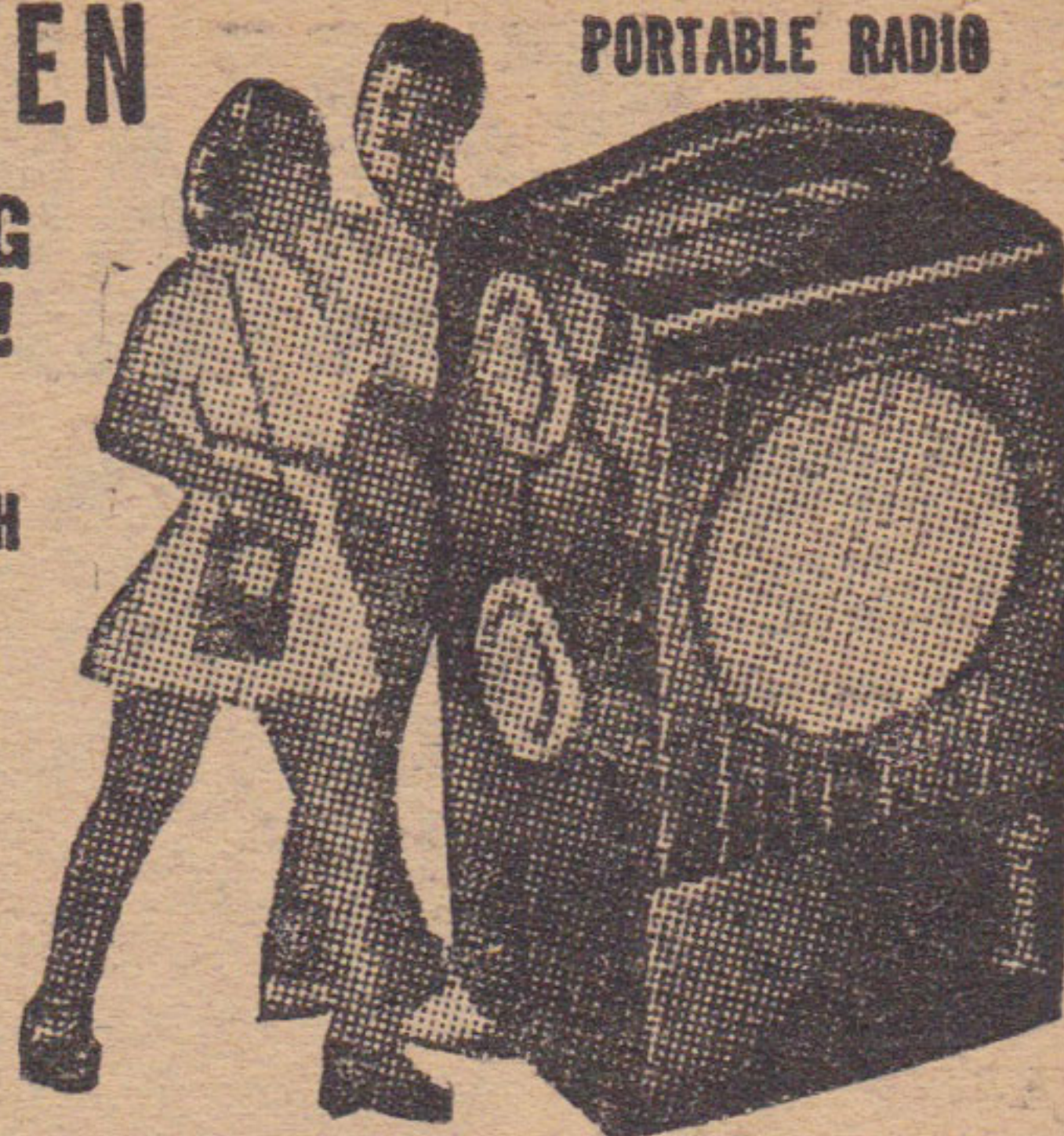
RADIO PHONOGRAPH

MAIL Coupon

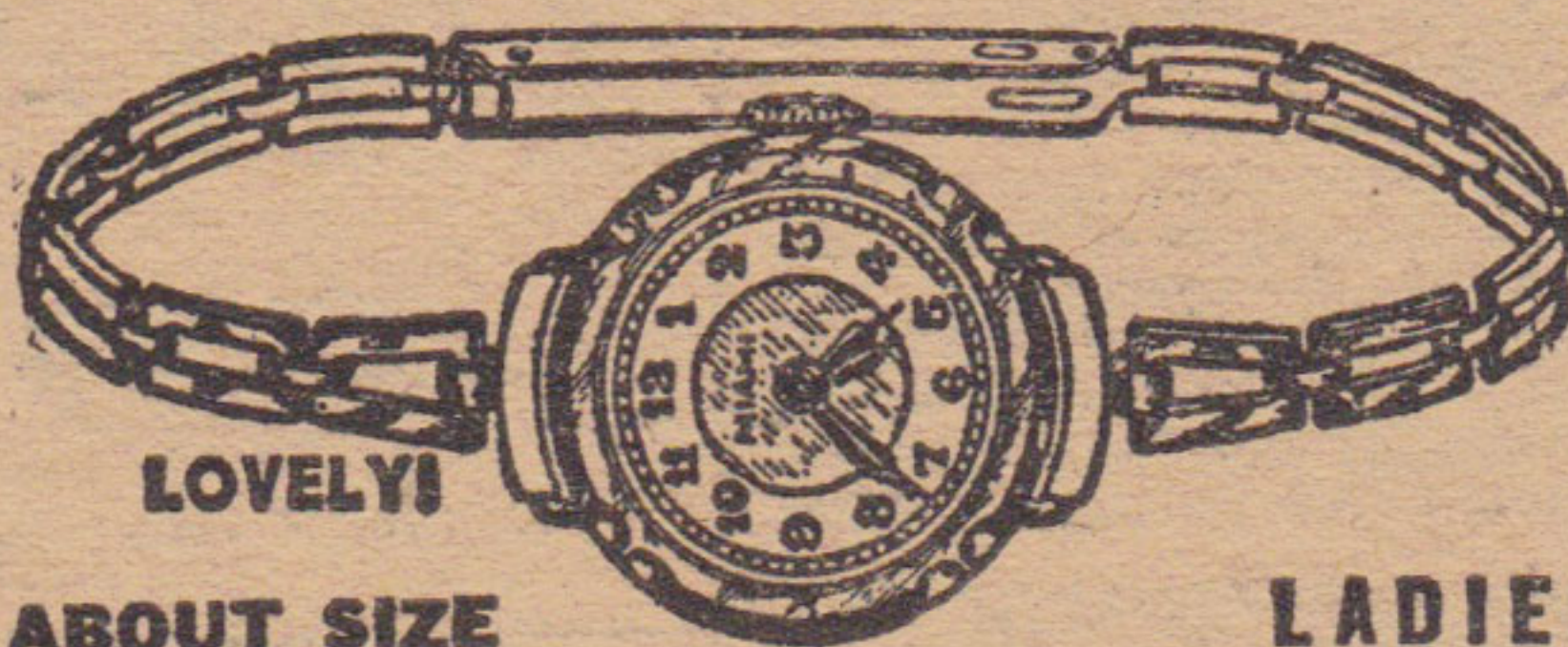
LADIES! BOYS! GIRLS!

GIVEN SEND NO MONEY

Choice of cash commission. Combination Phonograph with self-starting motor, plays 12 in. records, good radio reception, or Portable Dry Cell Radio with four miniature tubes and dynamic speaker, ready to play. Get the news! Simply give away **FREE** beautifully colored art pictures with famous White Cloverine Brand SALVE used for chaps, surface burns. Salve easily sold at 25c a box (with **FREE** Picture). Remit and select premium, or keep cash commission per catalog. Other Radios Given. **SPECIAL:** Choice of 35 premiums given for returning only \$3 collected. 46th yr. Square plan. Nothing to buy. New patriotic flag pictures included. Be first. Write or mail coupon now. **WILSON CHEM. CO., INC. Dept. 31-B Tyrene, Pa.**



PORTABLE RADIO



LOVELY!

ABOUT SIZE OF A DIME

GIVEN

Valuable watches, other premiums or liberal cash commission **GIVEN—SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE** pictures with White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE at 25c a box (with **FREE** picture) and remit as per catalog. 46th year. Be first. Nothing to buy! Write or mail coupon NOW! **WILSON CHEM. CO., INC. Dept. 31-C Tyrens, Pa.**

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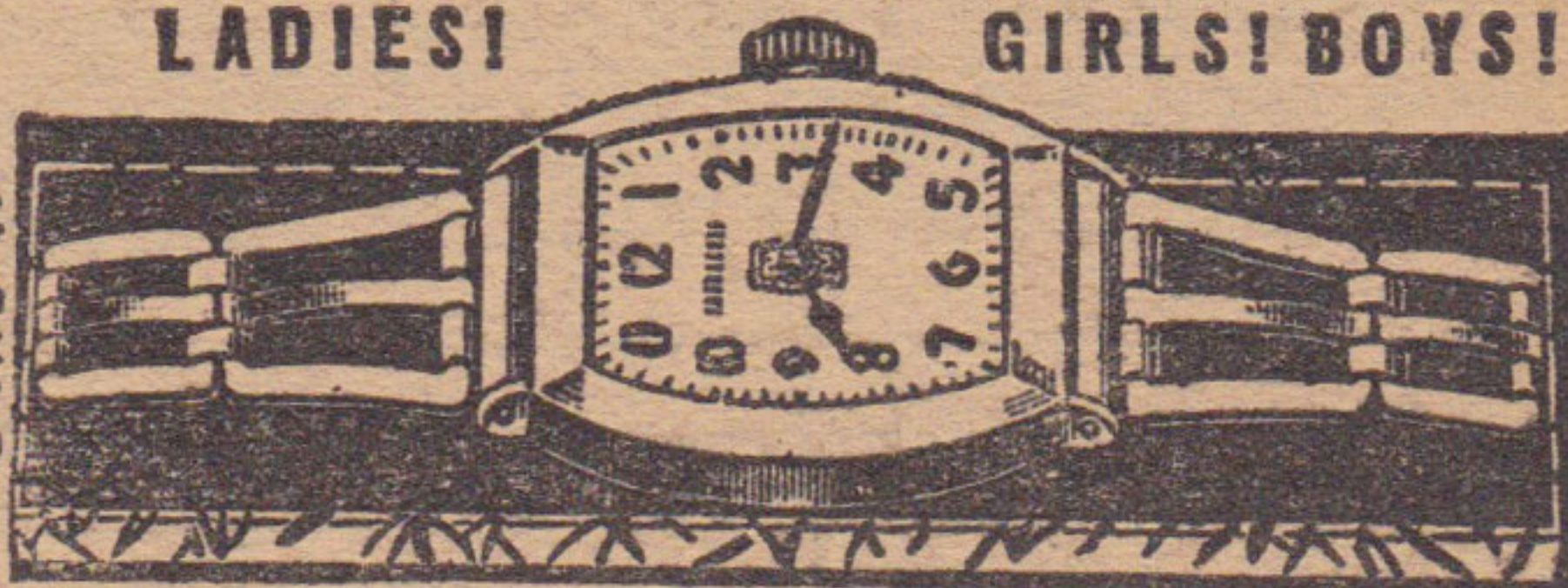
Nothing to Buy—

Send No Money

MAIL COUPON

LADIES!

GIRLS! BOYS!



GIVEN NOTHING TO BUY!



Send No Money

BOYS Mail Coupon!

Iver Johnson Bolt Action 22 Cal. Self-Cocking Safety RIFLE—22" long **STURDY!** THIS Rifle, Cash, or, choice of other valuable premiums given—**SIMPLY GIVE AWAY FREE** beautifully colored Pictures with White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE used for chaps, mild burns, shallow cuts. Salve easily sold to friends at 25c a box (with picture **FREE**). Remit and select premium per catalog. 46th year. Nothing to buy. Be first! Write for Salve and pictures or Mail Coupon. **WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 31-D, TYRONE, PA.**

BOTH GIVEN

NOTHING TO BUY — SEND NO MONEY—

MAIL COUPON NOW Premiums or Cash Commission

Boys Girls Write for Salve or Mail the Coupon



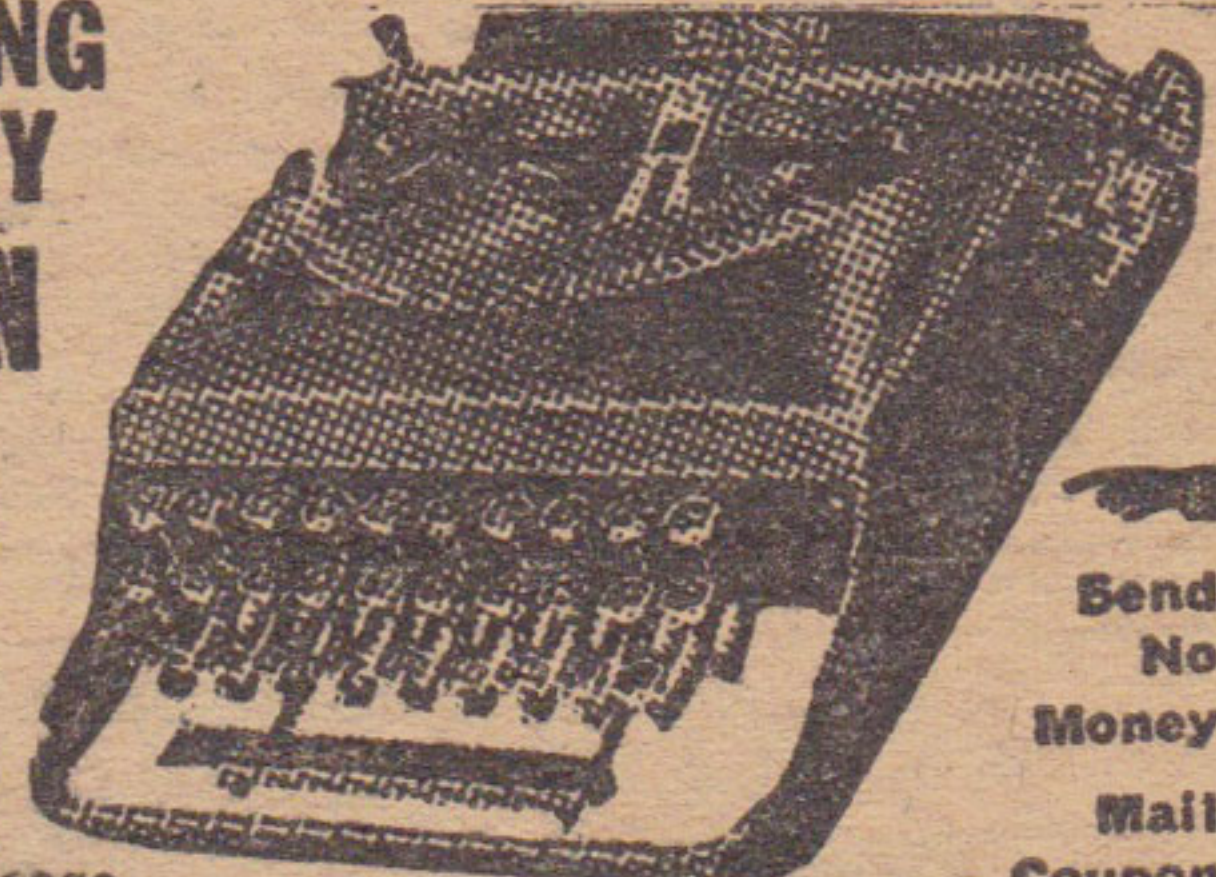
Nothing to Buy

Standard guitar, Indian blankets, other musical instruments, other blankets, other premiums or cash **GIVEN—JUST** give away free pictures with White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE for chaps and mild burns, easily sold to friends at 25c a box (with **FREE** picture) and remit per catalog. Nothing to buy. Write or mail coupon now! **WILSON CHEM. CO., Inc., Dept. 31-F, Tyrene, Pa.**

NOTHING TO BUY GIVEN

OR CASH

Real portable type-writers, with carrying case.



Send No Money Mail Coupon

JUST dispose of White CLOVERINE Brand SALVE at 25c a box (with **FREE** picture) and remit per catalog. Be first. Nothing to buy. Write or Mail coupon. **WILSON CHEM. CO., INC., Dept. 31-E, Tyrene, Pa.**

MAIL COUPON

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NAME

RD. or BOX No.ST.....

TOWN STATE.....

Print Your Last Name Only in Spaces Below:

WRITE, or PASTE COUPON ON A POSTAL or MAIL COUPON in an envelope NOW! Which premium do you like best?

MECHANICS

**KNOW
YOUR
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**NEW FLUID
DRIVE FULLY
EXPLAINED!**

*Ask
to
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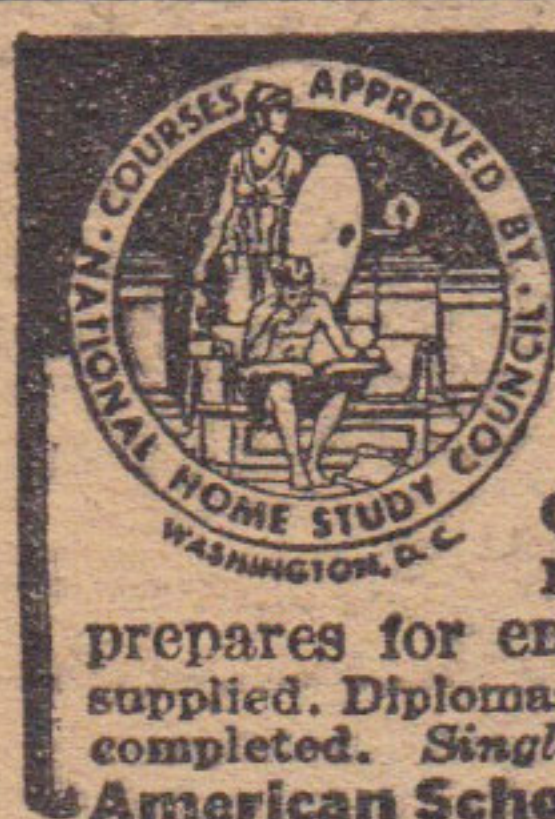
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OUT!**

Every operator and mechanic needs AUDELS NEW AUTO GUIDE. This book saves time, money and worry. Highly endorsed. It presents the whole subject of auto mechanics: 1—Basic principles, 2—Construction, 3—Operation, 4—Service, 5—Repair. Easily understood. Over 1500 pages—1540 illustrations showing inside views of modern cars, trucks and buses with instructions for all service jobs. Diesel Engines fully treated, \$4 fully illustrated. To Get This Assistance for Yourself Simply Fill in and Mail Coupon Today.

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Please send me postpaid AUDELS NEW AUTOMOBILE GUIDE (\$4) for free examination. If I decide to keep it, I will send you \$1 within 7 days; then remit \$1 monthly until purchase price of \$4 is paid. Otherwise, I will return it to you promptly.

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Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Equivalent to resident school work—prepares for entrance to college. Standard H. S. texts supplied. Diplomas awarded. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. Free Bulletin on request. American School, Dept. H-358, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

WANTED

**ORIGINAL
SONG POEMS**

any subject, for immediate consideration. Don't delay—send your poem at once to

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EARNINGS. \$. SUCCESS. \$. ROMANCE! Learn in your home. Courses: Piano, Voice, Accordion, Saxophone, Mandolin, Tenor Banjo, Clarinet, Organ, Cornet, Guitar. Check course. Surprisingly low cost. Easy terms. FREE catalogue. If juvenile, parent's signature must accompany inquiry. Write Dept. 121-N, 1525 East 53rd St., Chicago, Ill.

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Lemon Juice Recipe Checks Rheumatic Pain Quickly

If you suffer from rheumatic or neuritis pain, try this simple inexpensive home recipe. Get a package of Ru-Ex Compound, a two week's supply, mix it with a quart of water, add the juice of 4 lemons. Often within 48 hours—sometimes overnight—splendid results are obtained. If the pains do not quickly leave you, return the empty package and Ru-Ex will cost you nothing to try. It is sold under an absolute money-back guarantee. Ru-Ex Compound is for sale by drug stores everywhere.



THE PHANTOM SPEAKS

A Department for Readers

SABOTAGE! That exasperating, sneaking, insidious sniping on Industry from within the ranks—one of the dirtiest tools of warfare.

Espionage! That deadly gnawing away by brilliant and desperate men and women as they seek to learn the secrets at the very life core of a country.

Murder! That final, last irrevocable step to dispose of an enemy or an obstacle.

Fifth Columns! The new and ghastly style of penetration of innocent and unsuspecting countries, that form of attack against which there is no alarm until it is too late; that ugly form of war and conquest when even a trusted friend turns into a fierce enemy before your very eyes.

A Sinister Challenge

Add all these slimy tentacles together—and you have **THE MURDER BUND**—the most terrible and relentless foe I have ever faced! While the entire world seems on the verge of going up in the flames of crushing and merciless war, I am catapulted into the struggle against the Murder Bund to prevent the destruction and chaos which must result by the overthrow of America, the last stronghold of Democracy!

A group of manufacturers laboring together, urging, arguing, pleading to get
(Continued on page 15)

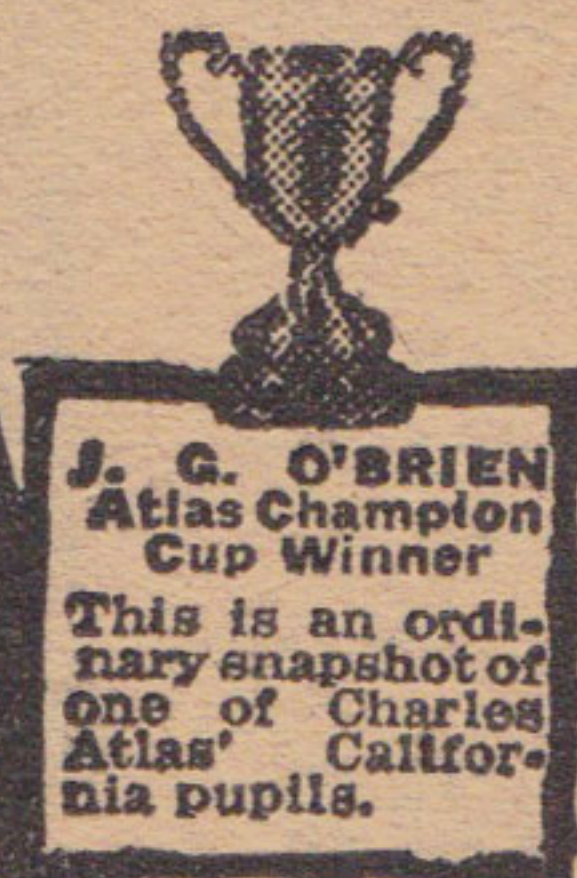
BILL, YOU SURE HAVE A SWELL BUILD! DID YOU TRAIN FOR A LONG TIME?

ABSOLUTELY NOT! THE ATLAS DYNAMIC TENSION SYSTEM MAKES MUSCLES GROW FAST!

Here's the Kind of MEN I Build!

Charles Atlas

An actual, untouched photo of Charles Atlas, twice winner of the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man" — who offers you this 7-DAY TRIAL OFFER.



Will You Let Me PROVE I Can Make YOU a New Man?

MEN—Meet J. G. O'Brien, of California, one of my Silver Cup Winners! Look at that strong neck—those broad, handsome, perfectly proportioned shoulders—that muscled chest and stomach. Read what he says: "Look at me NOW! 'Dynamic Tension' WORKS! I'm proud of the natural, easy way you have made me an 'Atlas Champion'!"—J. G. O'Brien.

I myself, was once a skinny weakling of 97 lbs. I didn't know what real health and strength were. I was afraid to fight, ashamed to be seen in a swimming suit.

Then I discovered the secret that changed me into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man," the title I won and have held *ever since*. My secret is "Dynamic Tension." It is a *natural* method. Its purpose is not only to give you the powerful, rippling muscles you'd like to see in your own mirror, but also—for those whose systems are sluggish from lack of proper exercise—to help them tone up their entire body, inside and out.

Accept My 7-Day Trial Offer

Do you want a better build? Are you dissatisfied with your present physical development? All I ask is a

7-DAY TRIAL. Just one week! In even that short time you will notice your chest hardening and filling out with solid muscle—or the 7-Day Trial will cost you nothing. Surely this is proof enough that by continuing with my "Dynamic Tension" method I will make you a New Man—give you bodily power and drive, and put you in magnificent physical condition which wins you the envy and respect of everyone.

FREE BOOK

"Everlasting Health and Strength"

Let me show you the results produced for other men! I'll send you FREE my famous book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It shows actual photos. Write your name and address carefully on coupon. Mail to me personally today. I'll rush your free copy to you AT ONCE! Charles Atlas, Dept. 77C, 115 East 23rd St., New York, N. Y.



CHARLES ATLAS

Dept. 77C, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make me a New Man—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your FREE book, "Everlasting Health and Strength" and full details about your 7-DAY trial offer.

Name
(Please print or write plainly)

Address

City..... State.....

don't Worry about Rupture

Why put up with days . . . months . . . YEARS of discomfort, worry and fear? Learn now about this perfected invention for all forms of reducible rupture. Surely you keenly desire—you eagerly CRAVE to enjoy life's normal activities and pleasures once again. To work . . . to play . . . to live . . . to love . . . with the haunting Fear of Rupture banished from your thoughts! Literally thousands of rupture sufferers have entered this Kingdom of Paradise Regained. Why not you? Some wise man said, "Nothing is impossible in this world"—and it is true, for where others fail is where we have had our greatest success in many cases! Even doctors—thousands of them—have ordered for themselves and their patients. Unless your case is absolutely hopeless, *do not despair*. The coupon below brings our Free Rupture Book in plain envelope. Send the coupon now.

Patented AIR-CUSHION Support Gives Nature a Chance to CLOSE the OPENING

Think of it! Here's a surprising yet simple-acting invention that permits Nature to close the opening—that holds the rupture securely but gently, day and night, at work and at play! Thousands of grateful letters express heartfelt thanks for results beyond the expectation of the writers. What is this invention—How does it work? Will it help me? Get the complete, fascinating facts on the Brooks Automatic Air Cushion Appliance—send now for free Rupture Book.

Cheap—Sanitary—Comfortable

Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy this remarkable, LOW-PRICED rupture invention! But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine Brooks Air-Cushion Truss is never sold in stores or by agents. Your Brooks is made up, after your order is received, to fit your particular case. You buy direct at the low "maker-to-user" price. The perfected Brooks is sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. Has no hard pads to gouge painfully into the flesh, no stiff, punishing springs, no metal girdle to rust or corrode. It brings heavenly comfort and security—while the Automatic Air Cushion continually works, in its own, unique way, to help Nature get results! Learn what this patented invention can mean to you—send coupon quick!



C. E. BROOKS,
Inventor

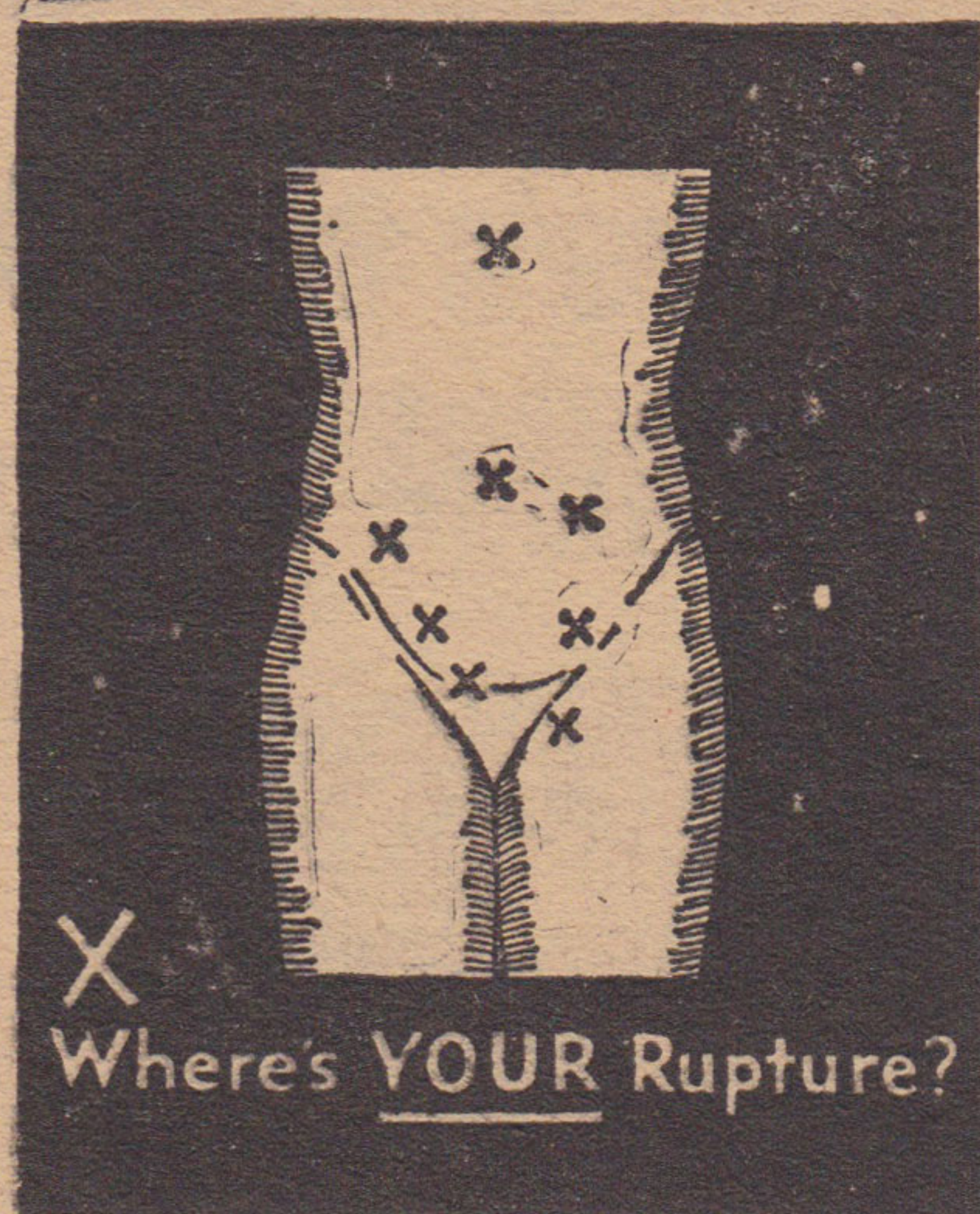
SENT ON TRIAL!

No . . . don't order a Brooks now—FIRST get the complete revealing explanation of this world-famous rupture invention. THEN decide whether you want the comfort—the freedom from fear and worry—the security—the same amazing results thousands of men, women and children have reported. They found our invention the answer to their prayers! Why can't you? And you risk nothing as the complete appliance is SENT ON TRIAL. Surely you owe it to yourself to investigate this no-risk trial. Send for the facts now—today—hurry! All correspondence strictly confidential.

FREE! Latest Rupture Book Explains All!

Sent You in Plain Envelope Just Clip and Send Coupon ➔

Brooks Appliance Co., 480-W State St., Marshall, Mich.



PROOF!

Read These Reports on Reducible Rupture Cases.

(In our files at Marshall, Michigan, we have over 33,000 grateful letters which have come to us entirely unsolicited and without any sort of payment.)

Likes Brooks Best

"I bought one of your Rupture Appliances in 1933, wore it day and night for one year and laid it aside last December. The rupture hasn't bothered me since. I used several others without success until I got a Brooks."—J. B. McCarter, Route 2, Box 104, Oregon City, Ore.

"Runs and Plays"

"My son has not worn the Appliance for over a year. He wore one for ten years and I am very grateful now to think he has laid it aside. He is twelve years old, runs and plays hard like all boys and is never bothered about the rupture."—Mrs. M. George, Route 1, Box 103, Cumberland, Md.

Mail This Coupon NOW!

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.
480-W State St., Marshall, Mich.

Without obligation, please send your FREE Book on Rupture, Proof of Results, and TRIAL OFFER—all in plain envelope.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____

State whether for Man ☐ Woman ☐ or Child ☐

THE PHANTOM SPEAKS

(Continued from page 12)

production under way for Defense Preparedness, are gathered to consider a new weapon which will make the world safe for freedom, life and liberty. The trucking company delivers the huge box containing the working model of the new weapon. The crate is opened. And instead of the weapon, there is exposed the dead body of the inventor!

The Murder Bund has struck, seeking to drive terror, despair, cowardice, and spineless submission to the madmen of Europe home to the hearts of Americans!

The powers of darkness issue a mighty challenge—and I accept that challenge in the name of American democracy!

The whole story's told in **THE MURDER BUND**, by Robert Wallace, one of the most exciting mysteries ever to appear in this magazine. It's the complete book-length novel featured next month.

In addition, next month will bring a number of shorter stories of unusual quality. Be on hand, everybody.

Join Friends of the Phantom

Meanwhile, if you have not yet joined, sign up for membership in **FRIENDS OF THE PHANTOM** right away. It's a great nation-wide organization to encourage the prevention of crime and the enforcement of the law—and there are no dues or fees. Your public spirit is your qualification for membership.

If you elect to wear our insignia, which is not required but optional, you will openly declare your faith in law-enforcement and display your civic pride. The coupon on page 113 gives you full details. Clip, sign and mail it today for membership in **FRIENDS OF THE PHANTOM**.

One word of warning must be given. Membership in **FRIENDS OF THE PHANTOM** does not confer upon you any special privileges in regard to national or local law-enforcement agencies. Membership is purely symbolic of your interest in good government and the high ethical standards of American life.

Our Mailbag

We have established our new headquarters at 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. Please address future mail to the new offices, and write early and often. You

(Concluded on page 113)

"I aint"

"It's me!"

"Can't hardly"

"He don't"

"You was?"



What Are YOUR Mistakes in English?

They may offend others as much as these offend you

IF someone you met for the first time made the mistakes in English shown above, what would you think of him? Would he inspire your respect? Would you be inclined to make a friend of him? Would you care to introduce him to others as a close friend of yours?

These errors are easy for you to see. Perhaps, however, you make other mistakes which offend other people as much as these would offend you. How do you know that you do not mispronounce certain words? Are you always sure that the things you say and write are grammatically correct? To you they may seem correct, but others may know they are wrong.

Unfortunately, people will not correct you when you make mistakes; all they do is to make a mental reservation about you. "He is ignorant and uncultured," they think. So you really have no way of telling when your English offends others.

FREE—Book on English

Sherwin Cody, perhaps the best known teacher of practical English, has perfected and patented a remarkable device which will quickly find and correct mistakes you unconsciously make. Correct English soon becomes a HABIT.

Mr. Cody's remarkable new invention, the 100% Self-Correcting Method, has already improved the English of more than 100,000 people. No useless rules, no tedious copying, no hard study. Only 15 minutes a day required. You learn by creating the HABIT of using correct English. Nothing like Mr. Cody's method has ever been used before!

A new book, "How You Can Master Good English in 15 Minutes a Day," is ready. It explains Mr. Cody's surprisingly easy method. Get a copy free and learn how to stop making embarrassing errors. You do not want others to judge you unfairly. Merely mail the coupon or a postal card, **SHERWIN CODY SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, 33 Searle Building, Rochester, N. Y.**

SHERWIN CODY SCHOOL OF ENGLISH
33 Searle Building, Rochester, N. Y.

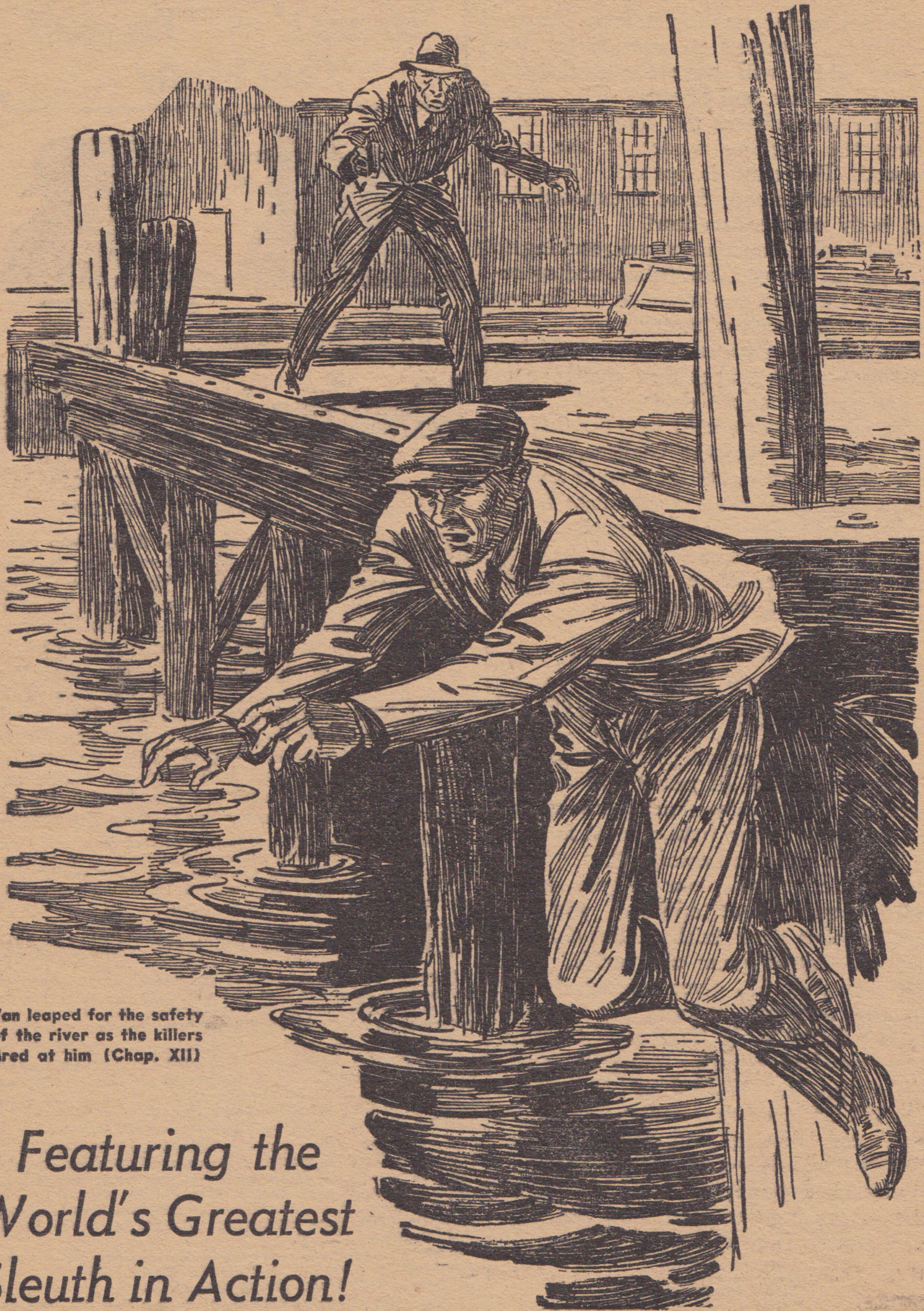
Please send me your free book, "How You Can Master Good English in 15 Minutes a Day."

Name

Address

☐ If 18 years or under, check here for Booklet A.

MURDER CALLS



Van leaped for the safety
of the river as the killers
fired at him (Chap. XII)

*Featuring the
World's Greatest
Sleuth in Action!*

Sabotage Walks Hand in Hand with Death,

THE PHANTOM

EARL MITCHELL

REF 54

NORWICH CONN



A Complete Book-Length Crime Mystery Novel Taken
from the Case-Book of Richard Curtis Van Loan

By ROBERT WALLACE

Author of
"The Phantom and the Curio Murders," "The Phantom's Greatest Gamble," etc.

CHAPTER I

THEY DIE BY FIRE

HOWARD ROTH, nationally known as the "Wizard of Machines," looked down the long row of his gleaming monsters. Perspiration seemed to shine upon the bright steel arms and the polished bodies under the dim lights. The substance that looked like sweat was but the oil to keep the myriad intricate parts alive and working with a thousand times the efficiency of human hands.

Howard Roth's eyes glowed in ad-

miration. He was a tall young man with a thick shock of black hair. These machines were his children, his life. Yet upon his face was a look of grim dissatisfaction. He spoke to himself slowly.

"Some day, and soon I hope, I will be creating things that do not maim and destroy. When all of this hellish nightmare of war is over, the other machines I have made will bind all peoples together in a surer and more lasting peace."

He glanced at his watch.

"I wonder if this Phantom Detective is human enough to understand,"

Hurling a Mighty Challenge at the Law!

The Ace of Manhunters Battles Against a

he murmured, "and if he'll appreciate those things which are not intended as materials of war? Perhaps it was a mistake to summon him until we have something more definite."

A vibrant note sounded in Howard Roth's voice. He had the tone of a dreamer who is sure his ambitions will be realized. Shuffling feet approached him over the floor of the big machine room.

"What's that you're sayin', Mr. Roth?" a cracked, querulous voice questioned. "I've been waiting for Mr. Brand to come into the plant through the guards."

The speaker was old Michael, for many years the watchman of the Burgess Brand Works. He had been with the factory when it started making old-fashioned motorboats. Airplane production in quantity was all new stuff to him. Old Michael disapproved of the planes and the new machinery as much as he did of the guards with rifles outside.

Howard Roth laughed shortly. He turned toward the stairs leading to his office on the second floor.

"I was only talking to myself, Michael," he said pleasantly. "Keep an eye on the dark corners tonight. We go into real production of fighting planes tomorrow."

Old Michael grinned toothlessly and scratched his head.

"Sure an' I'll be watchin' all the corners, Mr. Roth. But with all those soldiers around, I don't think we need be fearin' the presence of any intruders. I thought I heard you say somethin' about a Phantom Detective. What would you be meanin'?"

"Never mind that, Michael," said Howard Roth harshly. "I was talking to myself."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Roth. But I've heard tell that this Phantom Detective ain't human, that he—"

"That will do, Michael!" Roth

snapped. "Forget you heard me speak the name!"

SINCE the Burgess Brand Works had suddenly expanded and its production genius, Howard Roth, had put the plant in line for defense contracts amounting to millions in plane parts, old Michael keenly felt that his services were no longer needed.

The Government was having the plant guarded night and day. Moreover, as Howard Roth had mentioned, because of sabotage and murder at two similar plants, the world's most noted detective had been quietly summoned. To those officials of the Government who called for his services, he was known simply as the Phantom Detective, a Nemesis of crime whose reputation was world-wide....

Howard Roth was on the stairs leading to his office when old Michael called out:

"Mr. Brand has come in, Mr. Roth!"

A tall, bulky man walked between the newly constructed machines. He walked quickly, surely, in the uncertain light. His step had a springy lift. A snap-brimmed hat half hid his face. When he smiled, the gold filling of a front tooth seemed to make his mouth cheerful and friendly.

"H'lo, Michael!" he greeted. "While I'm talking with Mr. Roth, have a look at the windshield wiper on my car, will you? The wiper's on the blink and it's raining. Then keep Mrs. Brand company until I come out."

"Sure, Mr. Brand," said old Michael. "I'll fix it up."

Howard Roth waited for Burgess Brand. Old Michael saw them join each other on the stairs. Then the watchman moved toward the nearest street exit.

Thus it happened that old Michael failed to notice grim shadows that appeared suddenly among the machines.

Vicious Criminal's Bid for Unholy Power!

These furtive figures were so close together, they seemed to move as one noiseless blot.

Three skulking men appeared to have risen from the floor. They were carrying some heavy object. Old Michael missed this. He went out into the rain, making his way toward a parked car nearly a hundred yards away.

Scarcely any traffic was moving

into the car. He went to work on the wiper. He never had liked the present Mrs. Brand very much. He was sure her hair was not naturally yellow, and he disliked women who were always painting their faces.

MANY factories edged the river and the street near the Burgess Brand plant. The Willamette River was a tidal stream. Ships came up



THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE

along the rain-swept street on one side of the sprawling factory. Few persons stirred in this peaceful suburb of Portland on the high bank of the Willamette River, a hundred miles from the Pacific Ocean.

As old Michael reached Burgess Brand's car, a flashily dressed, yellow-haired woman was daubing at her mouth with a lipstick. She was Brand's wife. She greeted the watchman with a mere nod.

Old Michael grunted and climbed

the Columbia and into the lesser river in order to reach Portland.

It being the rainy season, the down-pour was steady. Old Michael tinkered with the windshield wiper several minutes. Finally the wiper began to function. Old Michael was climbing from the car when disaster struck.

With startling suddenness at least half of the Burgess Brand plant flared with white-hot fire! The explosion that boomed in the watchman's ears was squashy. The flames appeared to

leap from dozens of windows at the same time.

Old Michael cursed deeply and started running. He heard the voice of Mrs. Brand screaming in the car, but he did not turn. The old watchman felt that the swift blast of fire was his own responsibility.

The white blaze spread with terrifying rapidity. Armed guards could be seen running away from the intense heat. The nearest wall of the plant suddenly glowed red. There was a mushrooming explosion and a whole section bulged outward into the street.

Old Michael would have dashed blindly into this inferno, if a fleeing guard had not bumped into him and held him back.

"Damn you!" screamed old Michael. "Mr. Brand and Mr. Roth are in there! I've gotta get to 'em!"

Another *whooshing* explosion drowned out the guard's reply. That side of the factory had already become a solid wall of flame. It was hotter than any fire the guard had ever seen. He held onto old Michael, pulling him along the street.

The heat followed the guard like a white finger of torture. Old Michael broke free suddenly. He was crying out in his queer, cracked voice.

"Mrs. Brand!" he shrilled. "The car! Look!"

When the guard looked, he grew sick. Although nearly a hundred yards from the blazing building, the Brand automobile was a flaming torch! Its gas tank blew up. The car itself was then lost to view in a billowing, smoky yellow flame.

Old Michael might have disliked the wife of Burgess Brand, but he was loyal. He ran toward the car until the heat from the blazing factory stopped him like a restraining wall. Then he sat down in the street, as if he were suddenly paralyzed and could not move.

The grizzled watchman scarcely realized when the streets about the

burning factory became filled with fire apparatus and police cars. The armed guard got old Michael to his feet and piloted him to safety. The watchman mumbled childishly, temporarily deprived of his senses.

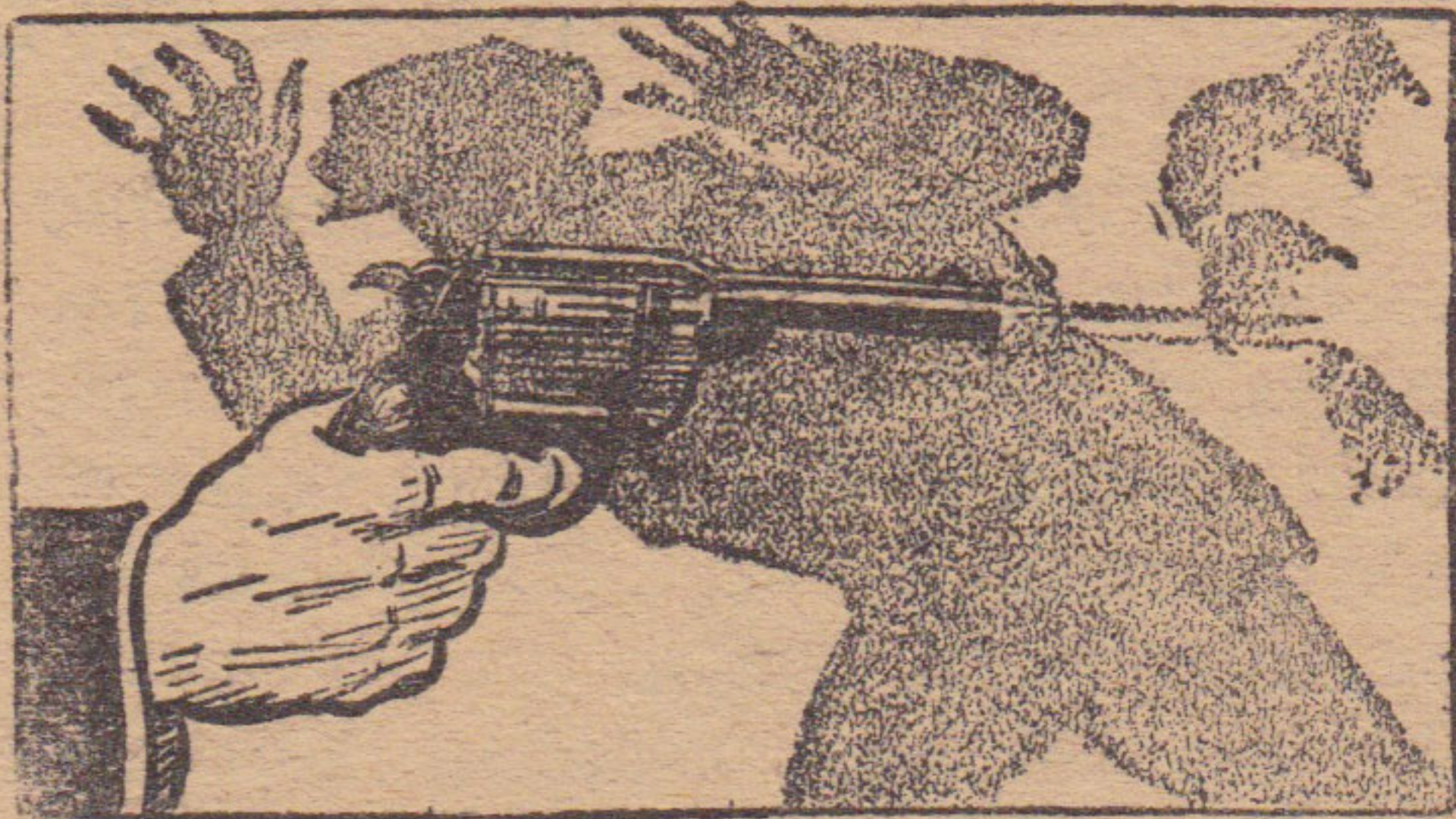
The horror that was in old Michael's mind was being rapidly spread. Streams of water poured into the white-hot fire. More walls crumbled and fell. The intricate machines that had been the creation of Howard Roth were being destroyed, the heat being so intense that the steel was melting like liquid wax.

HUNDREDS of curious citizens were now arriving on the scene. Police cars were busily blocking off private cars. A tall, red-headed man climbed from a car parked near the blaze, carrying a small newsreel camera. His bare head glistened in the rain. A slender, beautiful girl with an oval face framed by blue-black hair came out after him.

Abruptly, almost too suddenly, a slow, penetrating voice spoke from the car they had just left.

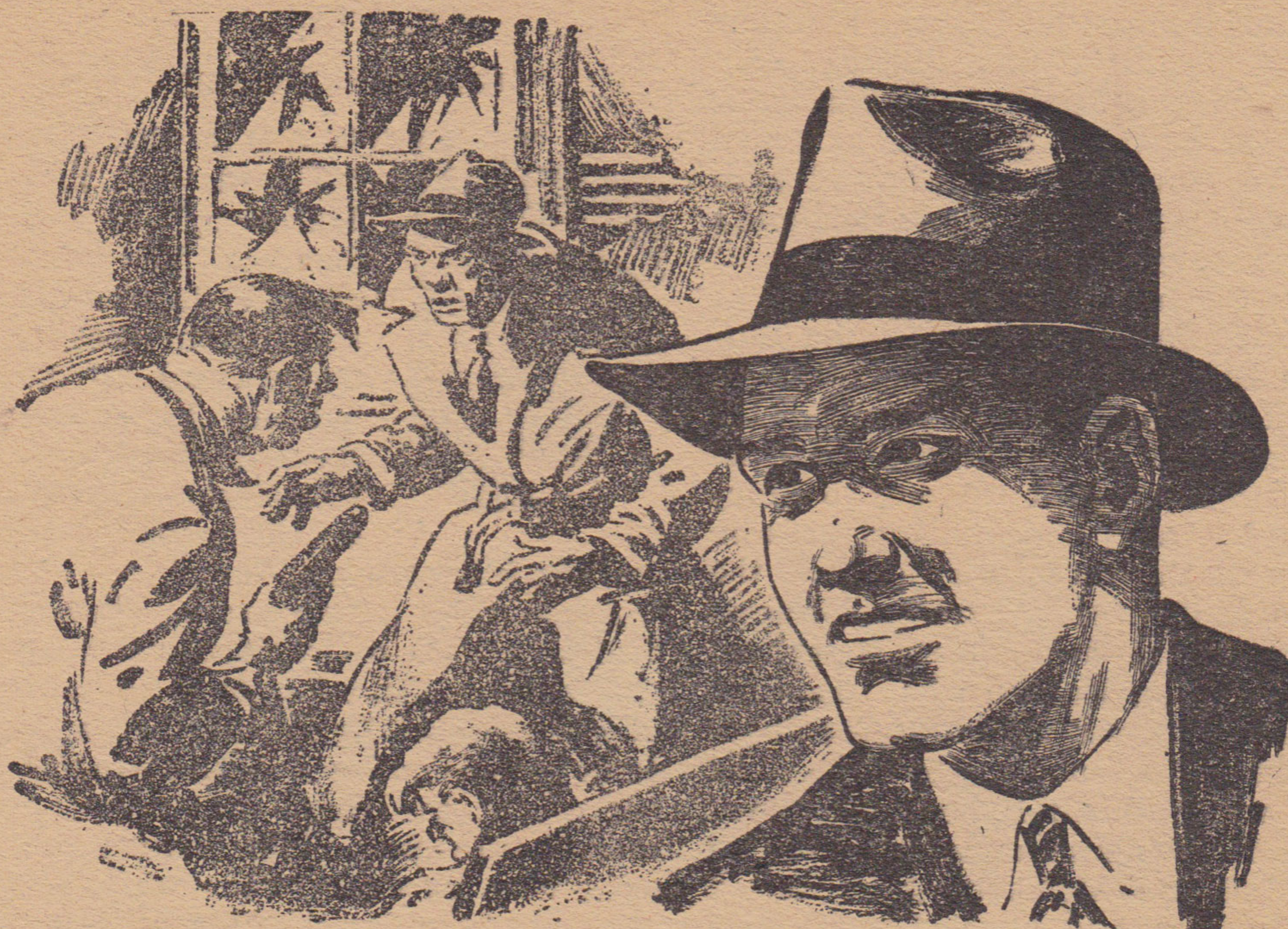
"I've an idea I can be of more service with your camera and your identity, than you could be at this time. Come back into the car."

The redhead spun around immediately and stared. The man who spoke was grayish and middle-aged in appearance, but his voice conveyed a



deep, resonant note of authority. And as the cameraman hesitated, this quiet man was already working with a make-up kit he had removed from a body-fitting case.

The thing this quiet man accom-



STEVE HUSTON

plished so quickly caused the red-haired cameraman and the beautiful girl to gasp with amazement. The grayish hair had vanished and in its place was a mop of hair as red and tumbled as that of the cameraman. Working with the cameraman's face for his model, and in less than three minutes, the man who stepped from the car might have been the red-headed photographer himself!

"Will it get by, do you think, Mr. McMurtry and Miss Minturn?"

The girl and the cameraman stared at him.

"You look more like me than I do myself, Phantom!" said the cameraman, still wide-eyed. "Now I know why you have been truly called the man of a thousand faces."

The man known as the Phantom Detective bowed and smiled.

"Just for the moment I wouldn't want my identity too widely known," he said. "So, McMurtry, if you'll keep out of sight a little while, I'll guarantee to get you some excellent pictures

and to look after Miss Minturn for you."

Of this little group, the cameraman was known as Charles McMurtry, a free lance newsreel man, better known around town as "Red." The girl was the daughter of Charles Minturn, a creator of marine engines whose industrial genius had added to the prestige of the city.

The Phantom had been in Portland but a few hours now. He was here because of a Government call that had come to him through Frank Havens, publisher of the New York *Clarion*. Only Frank Havens, in all the country, was the man who could contact the Phantom.

It had been Charles Minturn, the marine engine genius, who had informed the Government that he had reason to believe a vast murder plot was being hatched. Minturn had said that only the noted Phantom could be expected to cope with the tremendous power of evil that menaced a great industry.

Thus it happened that the Phantom had attempted to make direct contact with Charles Minturn as soon as he reached Portland, disguised as a man named Macklin, a gray-haired middle-aged reporter on one of Portland's newspapers.

At the moment that the alarm of disaster had sounded from the Burgess Brand plant, the Phantom was at the home of Minturn, seeking the inventor. Minturn being absent, the Phantom revealed himself to Mary Minturn and Red McMurtry, who were at the inventor's home at the time, as the world's greatest Nemesis of evil-doers—the Phantom Detective!

When they learned what happened at the Burgess Brand plant, the Phantom insisted that they go there. The girl was clad in a red evening gown, and the cameraman wore white tie and tails. But McMurtry gladly seized his camera and hurried out. Miss Minturn did not complain, though her evening was ruined.

A perfect replica of Red McMurtry, and with Mary Minturn beside him, the Phantom moved through the police lines toward the blazing building. A battalion chief suddenly blocked the way.

"Can't permit you to go any closer, McMurtry," said the chief. "This whole damn—excuse me, Miss Minturn—fire is the hottest I've ever seen. Acts like thermite or something."

The Phantom felt Mary Minturn's small hand grip his tightly. The next instant he had thrust his broad shoulders between her and what appeared to be an undamaged wing of the burning building.

"Look!" The single word was shouted and screamed from hundreds of throats. The Phantom had his arm around the girl and he covered her eyes.

"It's Howard Roth!" someone close by shouted. "He's trying to get out of that window! In heaven's name, do something!"

CHAPTER II

GENIUS IS DOOMED



HOWARD ROTH, "Wizard of the Machines," was doomed. The bare-headed figure, as seen from below, appeared to be fighting to escape from the window. His office was only on the second floor

and the jump was not far.

A bedlam of horror arose. Then it died to a hush of terrified watching and waiting. There seemed no hope of reaching the figure that had suddenly become outlined in that window because of the fierce heat blocking would-be rescuers. The undamaged wing was too close to the white-hot furnace of the fire, which a battalion chief believed to have been caused by thermite.

A new word roared from the tongues of the crowd.

"Jump! Jump!"

"He could easily jump to safety," the Phantom thought. "It isn't far."

Firemen were running a ladder truck toward the wall and the window. Others were attempting to reach the wall with a folded life net. Again and again the crowd screamed.

The Phantom's words were low and tense in Mary Minturn's ear.

"Go back to the car!" he ordered. "This is not for you to see!"

Howard Roth failed to jump. He remained standing in the open window. His hands were reaching out, as if he might find some object by which he could pull himself to safety. To the horrified crowd it seemed as if some invisible trap might be holding his feet.

A policeman, whose uniform was smoking from the intense heat, put out an arm to try to halt a flying, red-headed figure that came racing toward him. It was the Phantom, and

there was a gleaming object palmed in his hand.

The policeman gasped as he saw the platinum badge shaped like a domino mask and set with tiny diamonds.

"The Phantom!" he gulped. "But, Phantom, you'll be burned to death! You can't—"

His efforts did no good. The Phantom was ahead of the ladder truck now, and he quickly passed the fire-

any attempt to rescue Roth was impossible. Still he drove in toward the wall.

ALERT firemen started playing streams of water over the Phantom's clothes. It cooled him a little. He reached the corner of the wall where a roof drain extended to the ground. The metal of the drain was hot upon his hands, but the Phantom started up it, his tremendous



CHIP DORLAN

men carrying the life net. He was studying the smooth brick wall under the trapped Howard Roth. A groan passed from his lips.

There was not a single projection by which he might climb that wall. By now the savage heat was blistering his face and his own clothes were smoking. He saw Howard Roth bend down, though for what reason he could not understand.

Again the machine wizard was in the window, leaning far out to catch any faint breath of air such as there might be. The Phantom realized that

strength carrying him hand over hand toward the roof.

If he reached that point, he would be one floor above the figure of the trapped Howard Roth. Bit by bit, he made his way up. The Phantom heard a faint cheer go up as he reached the third story roof. Even the tiling atop this unburned wing of the building was hot.

"If I only had some way to lower myself," murmured the Phantom, studying his surroundings for some implement that might aid him in his task.

Then he saw a rusty wire cable on the roof where it had been used once for chimney scaffolding. The Phantom's powerful hands straightened the rusty steel and fastened it to the edge of the third story roof.

It seemed to him that his body would become one solid blister as he lowered himself over the edge of the roof. Now he was over the window from which Howard Roth was leaning, and it appeared to him that this wing of the huge plant had escaped the intensity of the fire. Then he remembered that the battalion chief believed this fire to be of thermite origin.

The Phantom knew that thermite would generate a heat of above three thousand degrees. The metal had never been created to resist it. These thoughts left him as he was over the edge of the roof.

"And I might as well have stayed on the ground," the Phantom swore softly. "Howard Roth is as dead as he will ever be!"

He knew Roth was dead by observing the sagging figure of the wizard of the machines. Tongues of fire were running along Roth's clothing. In spite of this, the Phantom had one more object to attain.

Skin tore from his hands as he slid down the rusty cable. He was almost opposite the window when fire blasted up from inside. The force of it literally tore him loose and hurled him toward the ground!

But he had obtained that one object he had sought. He knew that Howard Roth's reason for failing to jump had been the position of his body and legs. The Phantom had one glimpse, but it was enough.

Howard Roth's legs were tightly bound to a radiator inside the window. The Phantom saw no more than this, for as the fire broke through, streams of water slammed into the room from below. It was this water that protected the Phantom as he fell to the ground. He relaxed as he

dropped, and landed without injury. He was sick over his failure to rescue the trapped man, but he had at least made sure that Howard Roth had been murdered.

The Phantom's instant thoughts now were of Mary Minturn. It was because of the girl's father that the Phantom had been called in by the Government. Three noted technicians had been strangely murdered in the near past. And two defense plants had been sabotaged, just as this Burgess Brand plant had been. The Phantom had learned that Howard Roth and Burgess Brand, owner of this airplane plant, had been close associates of Charles Minturn.

And tonight, after arriving at the Minturn home, the Phantom had been informed that Minturn himself was absent. His daughter had expressed great concern.

"My father," she told the Phantom, "has been making mysterious nightly visits to an old boat-building works near the mouth of the Columbia River. He's probably there tonight."

The Phantom now returned to Mary Minturn, and retrieved the small movie camera he had taken from McMurtry. On every side cheers for Red McMurtry were going up, because of the Phantom's heroic attempt to rescue Howard Roth.

It was just as the Phantom reached Mary Minturn that a yellow-haired, disheveled figure appeared, screaming. She was Mrs. Burgess Brand, and she appeared to be temporarily demented.

"Burgess! Burgess!"

HER crying out of her husband's name was heart-rending. Mary Minturn pinched the Phantom's arm hard. Two policemen were attempting to hold Mrs. Brand in check. A plant guard pushed through, followed by old Michael, the watchman.

"We thought Mrs. Brand died in her burned car," said the guard. "The car blew up, but she's all right. Old

Michael tells me that Burgess Brand went inside the plant just before the first explosion. He was in there with Howard Roth."

Old Michael was standing beside the guard. His mind seemed to clear up as he stared at the yellow-haired woman. Mrs. Brand was still screaming her husband's name. An ambulance surgeon hurried up with a hypodermic.

The Phantom was observing Mrs. Brand closely. Now old Michael was talking.

"How did you ever manage to get out of that burning car?" he asked the woman.

There was a momentary flutter of sanity in the gleaming eyes of Mrs. Brand. She looked toward the faithful watchman, muttered hysterically.

"It was terrible," she said, low-voiced. "I'll never want to live through it again. I used to think of fire as such a pleasing servant, the spirit of the hearth, but now— Somehow I felt this was coming, and I was just getting out of the car when the first burst of flames shot from the window. I don't know how I staggered away from the machine before the gas tank blew up."

Gloved hands went to Mrs. Brand's face. She whimpered like a child, then her mumbling mounted to a harsh shriek.

"The poor woman's going out of her mind," the Phantom observed.

"God help us," muttered the watchman. "She has reason to go crazy. Mr. Brand's in there with Mr. Roth."

Mrs. Brand closed her eyes, swayed, and fainted as the hypo was thrust into her arm.

"Get her to a hospital," the surgeon said. "She's had a bad shock. She won't feel much better when she comes out of it."

The Phantom got Mary Minturn to one side.

"Get back to Red McMurtry and stay with him a little while," he said. "I'll meet you over near the bridge. I



The Burgess Brand Works was a blazing inferno that held no regard for human life (Chap. 114)

have an idea that we'll go after your father at that boat-building yard tonight."

A few minutes later the Phantom was with two Federal men and a few of the local police. They were standing in the wing of the building where the water had beaten out the fire. The Phantom was still hanging onto Red McMurtry's newsreel camera.

"We'll not be having any close-up pictures in here tonight, McMurtry," growled one of the FBI men. "What we want, we'll ask for."

The Phantom smiled a little. He palmed his diamond-studded domino badge for the Federal man to see.

"I may or may not take pictures," he said calmly. "In the meantime, I would like you to realize that this sabotage fire and all the rest of it has been solely for the purpose of murder, possibly a double murder. I know that Howard Roth was bound so that he had no possible chance of escaping death."

"Well, Phantom," said the Federal man quietly, "we had word from Washington you were coming out here. It seems that you landed right in the middle of things."

"Not quite," said the Phantom. "We will have to see what develops. In the meantime, I want you to know that I have brought several people out here to work with me. Chip Dorlan, my own aide; Muriel Havens, the daughter of Frank Havens, the publisher; and Steve Huston, a reporter from Havens' New York *Clarion*. If they are encountered in unusual places, let it be understood they are working with me."

THE Federal man nodded. The small group had finally made their way into what had once been the drafting office of Howard Roth. It was inside this office that the battalion fire chief suddenly scooped up an object from the charred floor. The thing was but little larger than a fountain pen. It was a short pipe of

light metal. The fire chief shouted a quick command.

"Get out, everyone!" he roared. "I was right! The fire started from small thermite bombs like this one. The heat was so great it melted even the toughest steel in some parts of the plant!"

The surface of the Willamette River showed one section of wall that had crumbled in from the conflagration. The fire chief glanced quickly over the river, saw that it was clear of craft at this point. He saw only a gray cruiser a little way down the river. It was far enough away, he knew, from an explosion outside.

Without hesitating further, he hurled the thermite bomb into the river, as if it were a baseball. It may have been the concussion, or it might be possible that the thermite bomb was scheduled to go off at that time. No matter what, a dazzling white fire suddenly broke out on the river. But the blaze died down quickly.

The gray cruiser in the near distance glided quickly away as the fire flashed. Now it was heading down the Willamette toward the Columbia. There were a score of hard-eyed men aboard this cruiser, although all wore the customary oilskin slickers of salmon fishermen.

A commander that seemed to be almost invisible appeared to be inside a small cubicle that was equipped with a radio. His orders cracked out through a microphone speaker installed in the cubicle wall.

"They found that concussion bomb!" said his voice. "As your Skipper, I warn you that the Federal men will now be on the lookout for thermite in other plants! We will have to switch our plans. Head down the Columbia for the Deming boatyard. I have one more little job to clean up there tonight."

"Aye, Skipper!" replied one of the men. "You mean, Mint—"

"Button your lip, Sacker!" snapped the voice through the mike. "We name

no names! The one you are referring to has communicated with Washington and I know that the famous Phantom Detective will soon be prying around! I hope that is true! For our own purposes, the best play we can make will be to remove the Phantom—permanently!”

At the mention of the Phantom, understanding jumped into eyes that peered out of thickly bearded faces. Understanding—and hate and fear. These men, of whatever criminal stripe they might be, had heard of the Phantom. And it was evident that many there had reason to fear him.

Another man was in the cabin cubicle with the one called the “Skipper.” The Skipper himself was a midget in size, but somehow monstrous in appearance.

The man with the Skipper was busy with make-up materials. As he worked, his appearance was queerly altered. Finally he leaned back and surveyed himself in the mirror.

“There is nothing better than to have an identity established long before the actual crime is committed,” he said softly. “Soon I will have achieved my aims. The fools, like Roth and Minturn, and all the others. Patriotic fools! Someone sings, ‘God Bless America’, and they’ll pass up the chance at hundreds of millions for a few measly millions out of which the Government will grab most of the profits!”

AS THE cruiser vanished from the suburbs of Portland, making its way down toward Vancouver and the broad Columbia, Federal men, the Phantom and others were examining two charred bodies.

The Phantom got a short newsreel picture never intended to reach the screen. Only bones remained of the two dead men. But strong wire still remained around the leg bones of Howard Roth, binding his remains to the radiator inside the window.

“Everything checks,” a police sur-

geon announced. “We know that Burgess Brand was alone with Howard Roth when the fire started.

The Phantom prevented Mary Minturn from coming into the room. By a swift change when no one was looking, the Phantom was now the gray-haired, middle-aged man he had first appeared to be. Red McMurtry, in his own flaming-topped person, was receiving considerable praise for the effort it was believed he had made to save Howard Roth.

To the Phantom and the others, it seemed that Burgess Brand’s gold front tooth still was grinning at them from his blackened skull. Keys, a watch and other articles were being gathered up that would confirm the police routine identification of the corpses.

“Perhaps we would do well to make our next stop Astoria, down at the Robert Deming boatworks,” the Phantom said quickly to Red McMurtry. “Don’t mention it to Mary Minturn, but I have a feeling that her father is in deadly danger, as well as others.”

CHAPTER III

MYSTERIOUS ORDERS



THE Phantom Detective instructed pretty Mary Minturn and Red McMurtry to wait for him in their car for a few moments. Behind them the glow of the Burgess Brand Works fire was slowly dying out. The Phantom entered a drug store and a telephone booth.

A fair-haired girl with blue eyes, a patrician face and all the fine marks of good breeding in her features, answered the Phantom’s call. She was in a room in a quiet, downtown Portland hotel.

“Muriel?” said the Phantom. “You

are about to become a nurse in one of the hospitals here. I will tell you about it later, but be prepared to leave the hotel at any time."

"For heaven's sake, Phantom!" exclaimed the girl. "What are you talking about? I don't know anything about being a nurse. Where are you?"

"You'll have to learn how to be a nurse," said the Phantom quietly. "I'll call you again in a few hours. In the meantime, remain where I can reach you."

The pretty, fair-haired girl stared at the phone after the Phantom had closed the line.

She smiled a little.

"Well, if the Phantom says I'm to be a nurse, then I'm to be a nurse," she murmured.

Anyone knowing the identity of the girl in that hotel room would have regarded it as amazing that she was taking orders from the Phantom. For she was Muriel Havens, daughter of Frank Havens, owner of the New York *Clarion* and a national chain of other newspapers. And as Frank Havens' daughter, the girl was a member of the East's best known social set.

And although Muriel Havens was unaware of it, the Phantom Detective himself was a leading member of that same society set. For in private life he was none other than Richard Curtis Van Loan! As Dick Van Loan he was one of Park Avenue's most famous playboys and spenders.

Muriel Havens was a close friend of Dick Van Loan, and she was also a close friend of the Phantom, without realizing they were the same person. Only one man knew that secret.

This man was Frank Havens, Muriel's father. In fact, he was really the creator of the Phantom. Some years before he had discovered that Dick Van Loan, the son of a man who had been one of his closest friends, was bored with life. Young Dick Van Loan had too much money to spend. A magnificent physical specimen, tall

and with dark hair, Van Loan cared little for the pleasure to be had from spending money. It was then that Frank Havens interested him in a crime case.

After Dick Van Loan solved his first murder and had his first run-in with clever criminals, that was all he needed to make life interesting. Today he was known as the world's greatest detective. The boundless energy and magnificent brain, that had been wasted, had been concentrated upon making himself into a manhunter who could match wits and nerve with the smartest of crooks.

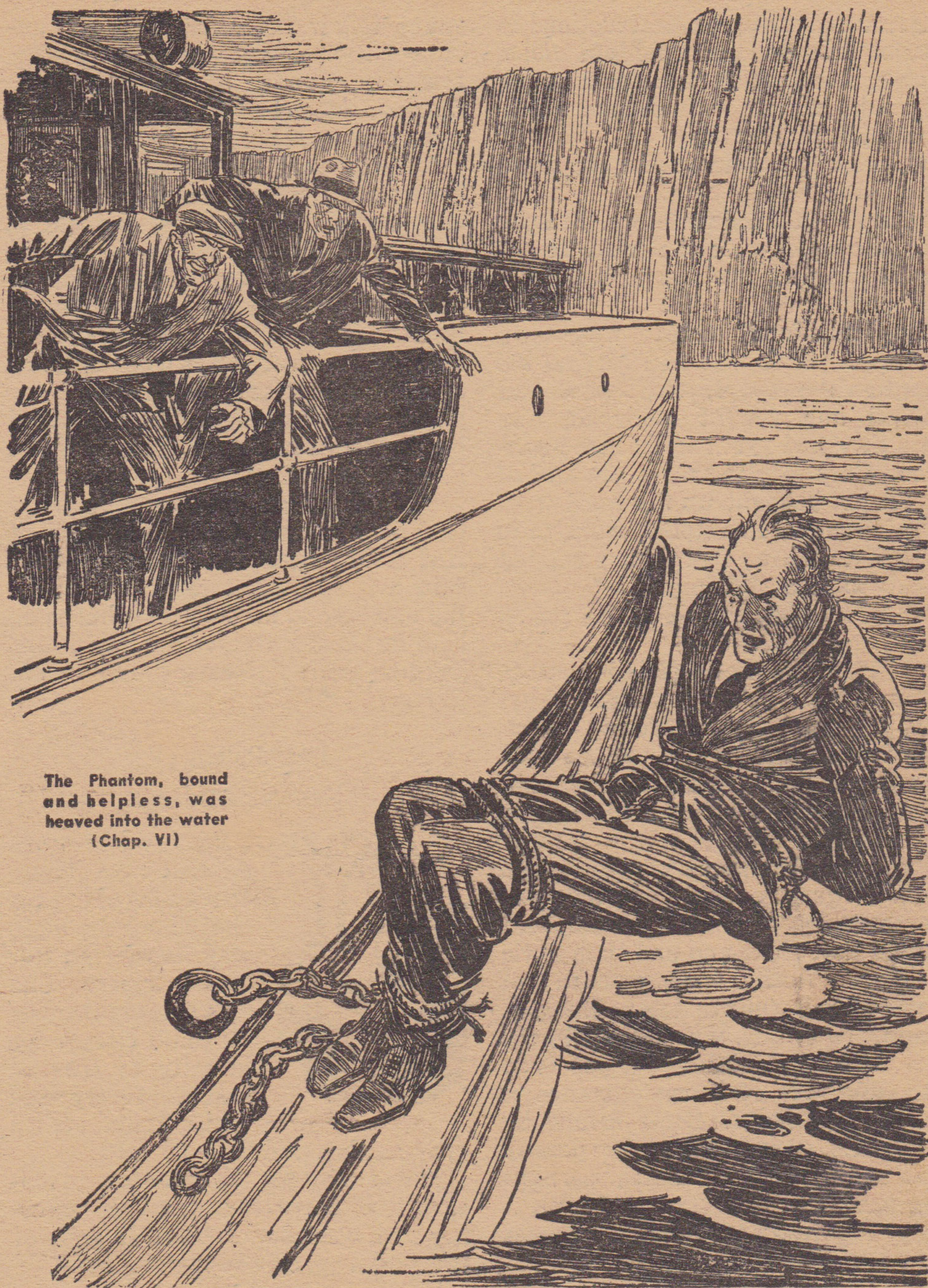
VAN LOAN had become a master at disguise, truly a man of a thousand faces. He could assume the character of any man he had seen. He was trained in every art of physical combat, from ju jitsu to *la savate*. His laboratory contained every modern means for detecting crime, and was the equal of the F.B.I. laboratories.

So it was that with the American defense program in full swing, the Government was quick to call upon the Phantom when its own agents were baffled by clever murderers and saboteurs.

Through a strange message received from Charles Minturn, famous builder of marine engines, and because of what appeared to be sabotage and murder in defense plants of the Northwest, a word from Government forces had brought the Phantom to Portland.

The Phantom's introduction and contact with the first defense works crime had been sudden, startling. It had been brought about because he had been seeking to meet Charles Minturn at the moment thermite apparently had exploded in the Burgess Brand Works.

As usual, the Phantom had a definite purpose in mind when he cautioned Muriel Havens to be prepared to enter a hospital as a nurse. It might



The Phantom, bound and helpless, was heaved into the water
(Chap. VI)

have been that he feared for the safety of Mrs. Burgess Brand.

The wife of the murdered plane works owner apparently had narrowly escaped with her life from her own car when the gas tank exploded.

It was in the Phantom's mind now that Mrs. Brand might, through her husband, have become possessed of some secret that made her a menace to those responsible for tonight's outrage.

After delivering his instructions to Muriel Havens, the Phantom called another number. A thin-faced young man who moved with catlike quickness replied to the call.

He was in a room at another Portland hotel.

"Chip?" said the Phantom. "I have just arranged with the head of the fire department for you to become a fireman."

The thin-faced fellow was Chip Dorlan, a youth who had become the Phantom's protégé, and who had worked and fought alongside him since they had first met in San Francisco. Chip Dorlan was a product of the slums, brought up the hard way.

"A fireman, Phantom?" said Chip excitedly. "Sure. I've always wanted to ride to fires. When do I—"

The Phantom smiled as he cooled Chip's eagerness.

"You'll probably be riding a shovel handle, Chip," he interrupted. "Anyway, you will join the firemen beginning to clean up the ruins of the Burgess Brand Works in South Portland. You are to keep your eyes open, Chip, and keep this in mind.

"The burned plant was surrounded by armed guards. All of its employees are carefully checked. Yet someone entered that plant and had time to tie up Howard Roth, a technician, so that he would be burned to death. Burgess Brand, the owner, was burned in the office with him. Chip, your job is to find some sort of secret entrance to the Burgess plant. Some means by which the guards could be passed. That may mean a tunnel, perhaps long unused."

The eagerness of Chip Dorlan was apparent. His reply was instant.

"I'll go over every inch of the place, Phantom," he said. "When do I contact you?"

"You will get the usual signal when I arrive, which may be some hours from now," said the Phantom.

Dick Van Loan made one more telephone call. This time a rusty-headed

young fellow answered from still another hotel room. He was Steve Huston, ace reporter of the New York *Clarion*. Often he had aided the Phantom in some of his toughest cases.

"Steve," said the Phantom, "you'll have to use your newspaper experience on this. I want you to check at once on all possible insurance protection carried by the Burgess Brand Works, which burned tonight. If you have to get the heads of some of the companies out of bed, I want to know everything connected with both the plant and personal insurance carried by Burgess Brand and Howard Roth. I'll contact you later."

The Phantom left the drug store then and slipped under the wheel of Red McMurtry's car. In spite of the rain and slippery streets, he shoved the machine to an even sixty miles an hour as the car crossed the city limits, heading swiftly toward the Columbia River.

CHAPTER IV

SPIDER OF DEATH



YOUNG Mary Minturn studied the Phantom's face as the car shot along the highway bordering the broad river. She was amazed the way he could change his identity to that of Red McMurtry, and back again to a gray-haired, middle-aged man.

It was easy for the Phantom to discern that Mary Minturn was suffering with some secret fear. In spite of their high speed, the car was quiet.

"Your father is employed by John Prosser, the marine engine builder, isn't he?" the Phantom said then. "I understand that he had completed all plans for the special boat engines ordered by the Government."

"Yes, that's right," said the girl, and Van detected the underlying

strain in her tone. He saw that her lips were compressed.

Big Red McMurtry spoke up now.

"I don't know why you were called on this case, Phantom, but Mary has been worried by her father's actions lately. She tried to persuade him to take a rest after the big end of the John Prosser job was finished, but he refused."

"Sometimes I'm suspicious of the real intentions of John Prosser," said the girl hesitatingly. "My father has been making secret trips of late down the river to the old Robert Deming boatyard. The second time I followed him, I heard some salmon fishermen say they had been warned to keep their boats and nets away from the shore front of the Deming yards."

The Phantom had heard of John Prosser, whose fast torpedo boats depended upon the Charles Minturn engines. He could well see how Prosser might be in a position to make great profit. The Phantom made a mental note to inquire closely into the affairs of John Prosser.

"The Deming boatyard has nothing to do with the John Prosser plant?" queried Van. "Perhaps Prosser is expanding his works to get out contracts faster."

The girl shook her head.

"It's something more than that," she said. "I can always tell when my father has something big in mind. Now he is working on some new idea. But before this came up he has always confided in me. Now he seems afraid, as if he was being watched or followed by someone."

The Phantom said nothing. It was clear to the world-famous detective that Charles Minturn really feared someone or something. Perhaps it was for his own life, or for the lives and property of others. Otherwise, his mysterious message to the Government, seeking the aid of the Phantom, never would have been sent.

Red McMurtry voiced an idea.

"I've had the thought," said the

cameraman, "that some kind of secret company has been formed among a few of the biggest industrialists in this section. I know that John Prosser, Minturn's boss, and J. T. Hamm, who has a steel mill and foundry up at Tacoma, have been seen together lately."

"J. T. Hamm?" said Van. "The same Hamm who had some sort of row over shipping scrap iron to the Orient?"

"Yes," answered McMurtry. "And it was one of Hamm's best chemists who was murdered near the Hamm plant in Tacoma a week ago."

The Phantom mentally added another point of inquiry to his job. The affairs of J. T. Hamm might well bear investigation. Perhaps Minturn knew of reasons for such sabotage and murder as that at the Burgess Brand Works. Hamm had been understood to have made immense profit by shipping iron to the Orient against public opinion.

One of Hamm's chemists had been murdered. Now Burgess Brand and another technician were dead. It would be well to learn of any personal association between Hamm and the other dead men.

VAN was thinking of the many fantastic angles of sabotage and acts of violence that had sprung up with America's defense preparations. Owing to the numbers and variety of nationalities involved in the flaming spread of the World War, many odd and disconnected acts were being committed. So it might be that the murders and sabotage in the Northwestern cities might have no connecting thread or motive.

For a few seconds Van studied the huge, rugged face of Red McMurtry. It was evident that McMurtry knew more than he was telling. Also, while it appeared that the cameraman was in love with pretty Mary Minturn, it struck Van that McMurtry's close association with the girl might have

something more than a strictly personal motive.

A short while later the lights of the small town of Astoria glowed in the rain ahead. Then, between the highway and the Columbia River, an old, high board fence flashed into view. Beyond the fence, Van could see ghostly buildings and skeleton-like cranes.

"This is the upper end of the Deming yards," stated McMurtry. "The works haven't been used for several years. It extends nearly two miles down the river."

Van nodded. He slowed the car some, but did not appear to be watching anything but the ribbon of highway ahead. Yet his glance was focused upon a queer, bluish glow that came from inside the high board fence. Van judged that McMurtry had missed the faint light or was too engaged in watching Mary Minturn.

"It was just along here that my father left the road both times I followed him," the girl said. "But I couldn't find any way into the yards."

Van noticed then that the weird light inside the high fence was steady. It was much like a photographer's light. Then he glanced at the glow over the small city ahead, at the mouth of the great river.

Astoria was below them now. Astoria with its miles of rotting warehouses and wharves. They were the dead reminder of the days when John Jacob Astor founded the town. At that time it had been the center of the Northwest fur industry.

Van spoke suddenly, pulling the car over to one side of the road.

"McMurtry, I'm borrowing your newsreel camera again. You drive on into Astoria with Miss Minturn. Stop at the Sailors Hotel and wait there for me. I've an idea that I may bring your father with me, Miss Minturn."

"But, Phantom—" The protesting words fairly leaped from McMurtry, then his teeth clicked shut. He added: "I could drive Mary in and come back,

Phantom. If there's anything I can do, I want to be in on it."

"Your job at this moment is to keep a close eye upon Miss Minturn," said the Phantom. "I'm not suggesting she may be in danger, or that her father may be, but don't let her out of your sight."

Van was already out of the car. He was carrying McMurtry's small camera, and he was well aware that on part of the film in the camera drum was the scene of horror from the office of Burgess Brand.

McMURTRY nodded, but did not speak again. Van saw the girl's mouth trembling.

"I hope you find my father," she said huskily, before McMurtry shot the car down the road.

The Phantom selected the point of the high fence closest to the faintly glowing blue light. He went along the fence both ways, but returned to his starting point. There was no possible entrance that he could discover.

The fence was old and the long boards were splintered and rotten. Because of the fence's apparent oldness, Van was less cautious than he might otherwise have been as he went up it. He narrowly missed being trapped at the top of the fence by two neatly concealed barbed wires.

Van was instantly alert. He broke a board halfway down the fence and eased under the wires. Perhaps a hundred yards away he could see a ramshackle building with a boat-hauling crane standing out starkly at one side.

Van searched about in the darkness, not taking a chance on using his flashlight. He found a loose iron rod and tossed it expertly toward the wires at the top of the fence. The wires emitted snapping sparks. Van's face was grim.

"Abandoned boatyard, huh?" he said softly. "With electrical death riding the top of the fence?"

Van lived up to his name of Phan-



The killer on the shore sent a shot at the Phantom's swiftly swimming figure
(Chap. XIII)

tom. He was scarcely more than a grayish shadow moving in the rain. He went toward the old building, through the cracks of which filtered the eerie light he had seen while riding in the car. Van could not recall when he had ever before been thrown so quickly into what was beginning to have the appearance of significant intrigue, of a spreading murder menace. At this moment he most desired to come to grips with something or someone definite.

He hurried along.

As he came closer to the old building, Van surmised that it must be believed this weird light was invisible on the highway or even outside the tumbledown structure. Now Van was

adding up the fast moving events of the night.

"An important manufacturer and one of the world's best quantity production technicians are murdered, and it is made to appear as if it is sabotage of an airplane plant," he muttered. "The wife of the manufacturer possibly was meant to die in that burned car, but she escapes. Besides, the plant was closely guarded by armed Government men."

Van found some loose siding and eased himself inside the big, old building.

"And here salmon fishermen are warned to keep away from the Deming boatyard," he said to himself. "Wires are fixed to electrocute anyone

climbing that fence. Still there doesn't seem to be anything of value around this old boat plant even to rate a watchman! What I'd like to know is why Mary Minturn's father has been making secret trips here."

Shortly, Van discovered one reason why the eerie blue light was dimly seen outside. It was because it came from another metal building built within the tumbledown structure. He was making his way toward this, when he came upon a whole line of new packing cases.

ONE of these cases had been broken open. A glance revealed some sort of tool cutting machine of brand new metal.

Van took a chance on using his thin, pencil light.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he grunted. "So what started out to look like mere coincidence does connect up."

He was glancing at a name stamped into the base of the machine. The name was Howard Roth. That meant that all these cases might contain Howard Roth machines.

"And Howard Roth devoted himself to but one angle of industry," said Van. "He went in for machines that made quantity production possible. It could be that these machines have been put here to be transshipped, perhaps smuggled out and sent to some other country."

He snapped out his flash suddenly and his hand went to a heavy automatic under his arm. He was sure he had heard movement near him. But after waiting several minutes there was no other sound. Van edged cautiously closer to the metal shed. Now the blue light struck his eyes through an open window at one side of the structure.

The Phantom stood motionless in silent amazement. From a photograph he had seen, he instantly identified gray-haired Charles Minturn, the marine engine genius. The famous designer of engines was seated directly

under the blazing blue light, his eyes protected by a black shield.

The brilliant light struck upon a broad pane of glass. Also, Van saw a number of square, wooden boxes beside the engine inventor. Minturn was as intent upon his work as if the fate of nations depended upon the results.

To any observer other than the Phantom, or possibly some expert technician in the tool industry, it appeared that the aging Charles Minturn was merely playing a game with spiders. They were big, brown, fat spiders!

Minturn opened a box and a big spider scuttled across the lighted glass. The inventor faithfully followed the spider with a little wooden reel. He was winding up the single thread of web the spider was leaving behind.

"That's one picture worth having," said Van softly. "It may mean something later. To me it seems that Minturn is now engaged in some new idea that requires the world's finest threads, therefore the spiders."

The knowledge possessed by the Phantom was amazing. Just as he had studied all forms of crime detection, so he learned all he could of the many activities of men, animals and insects. Often this knowledge was vital, as it now promised to be.

Van started the movie camera whirring in silence. He knew that he was observing a process whereby a great technician was obtaining the most delicate of all threads used in precision instruments. He was collecting the thread of the spider, probably either one of the *Epeira Diademata* or the *Zilla Atrica*.

Van knew the gossamer of these two spiders to be unique for its toughness and elasticity. It could be had in long lengths, and these threads would be two and half times as strong as steel of the same diameter. Van realized that Minturn was getting this gossamer secretly for some purpose of his own.

"That means Minturn is planning to produce some new instruments, and doesn't want to obtain his spider gossamer from the customary commercial source," Van thought, as the movie camera recorded the strange little scene under the blue light. "But why are some of the murdered Howard Roth's quantity production machines here in boxes? This boatyard is mixed up with murder, so Charles Minturn is either voluntarily or involuntarily producing something new in industry or science."

VAN was thinking quickly now. "Minturn either knows he is in great danger or that others are under some menace. Otherwise, he would not have had me called to Portland."

Van Loan tried to recall all of the things he had learned about Charles Minturn from the New York files of the *Clarion*. And where did the precision instruments fit into Minturn's set-up? So far as he could remember, Van knew of no earlier experiments of this type by the marine engine genius.

This might be one angle worth investigating. The threat to Charles Minturn might be due to something entirely foreign to his marine engine work. In this war-torn world there was a highly profitable market for

bomb-sights, aiming circles, gonimeters, and other optical instruments. Perhaps one of the groups representing the subversive forces of a foreign power had learned of Charles Minturn's undercover experiments and was determined to capitalize upon it.

Only now, Van Loan began to realize just how much depended upon his gaining an opportunity to talk with Minturn at some length. This might be the time, and the isolated neighborhood would certainly make it an ideal place, at least as far as privacy was concerned.

But was this abandoned shipyard as isolated as it seemed? At this moment, Van imagined he heard a car's brakes squeal out on the highway. He wondered quickly if Red McMurtry might have returned.

Van looked about him. There was no evidence of any other person being in or about the little metal shed, and it was apparent that this particular shed had been constructed recently.

Van watched Minturn return one big spider to its box. At this moment Van grew tense. He was sure he saw the shadow of a bulky figure appear just back of Minturn in the darkness. Due to the size of the man, it might have been the figure of Red McMurtry. But before Van could see the

[Turn Page]

Private Notes from Mrs. M--'s Diary



3 Slept like a top all night. Ex-Lax worked fine this morning and didn't upset me a bit. Headache's all gone now and I feel bright as a lark.



1 Suffered all day with a terrible headache. Felt dull, tired and out of sorts. Remembered that I needed a laxative and decided my headache was due to that.



2 Took an Ex-Lax tablet before going to bed. It tasted swell — just like a piece of fine chocolate.

The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet gentle! No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family.

10¢ and 25¢

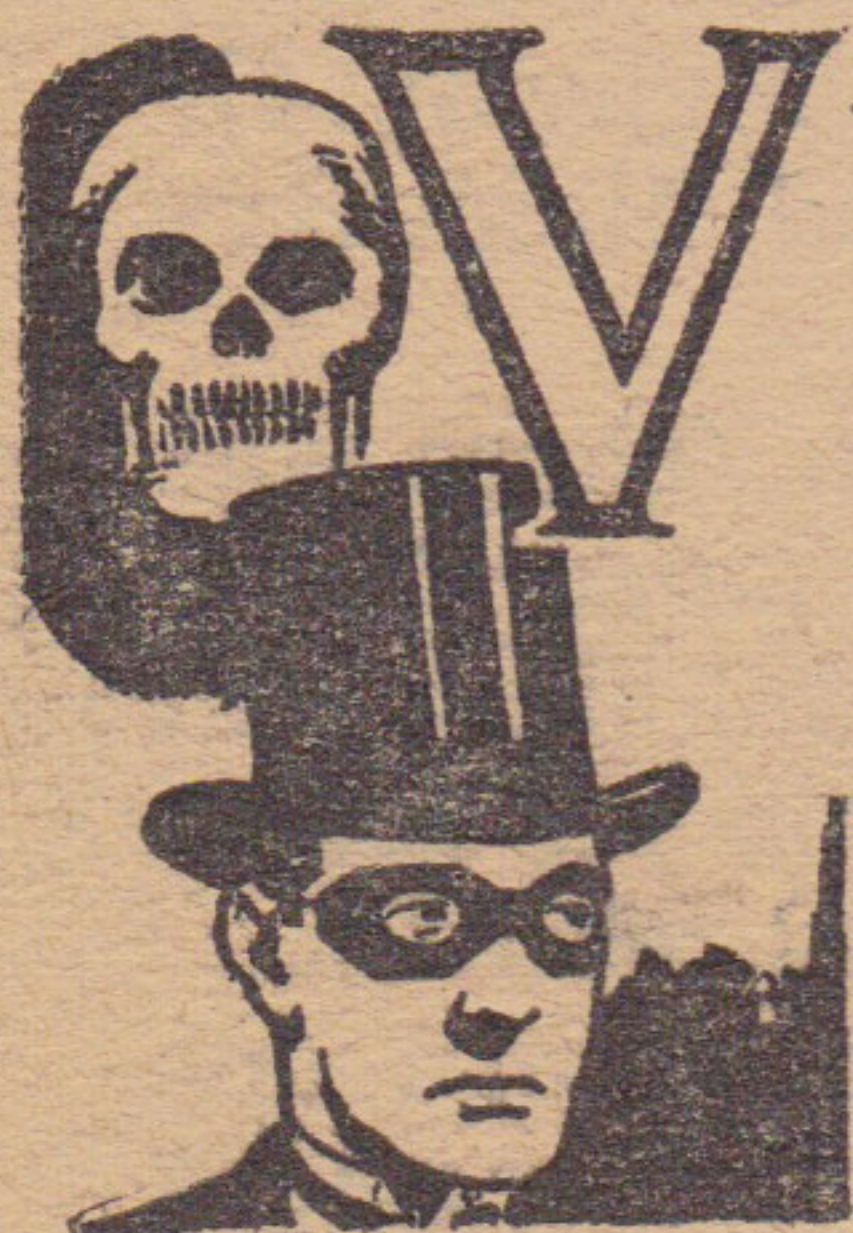


shadow more clearly, Minturn was opening another box. Suddenly the super-trained senses of the Phantom sent him hurtling forward, leaving the camera still whirring.

There was a flash of scarlet and white at the opening of the little box the marine genius had opened. Charles Minturn cried out, leaping to his feet. He jerked his hand to one side. The brilliantly colored thing fell toward Van. He saw it was a small Fer de Lance, the deadliest of all poison snakes!

CHAPTER V

"MANY WILL DIE!"



VAN LOAN crushed the deadly little snake under his foot as he reached Charles Minturn. The gray-haired man was clutching at his wrist. He looked at the Phantom. There was wildness, the fear of ghastly, instant death in his eyes.

Van knew that the poison of the Fer de Lance was as quick-acting as that of a cobra. Minturn evidently knew it, too, for he smashed at the pane of glass under the light. He was catching up a sliver of glass and Van knew what his intention was. Minturn hoped possibly to cut the poisoned flesh. Van's brain worked faster, more surely. His left hand darted out, his fingers locking around Minturn's thin forearm.

The best tourniquet could not have been any tighter than the Phantom's steel-like fingers. At the same time he had his heavy automatic in his hand. He could see the marks of the snake fangs on the little hump of the wrist bone under Minturn's little finger.

"Don't — don't shoot!" Minturn cried out. "I haven't finished! I lied—"

Van had not the slightest idea what Minturn was trying to tell him. He triggered the automatic. It was drastic treatment, but it was the only way. The automatic slug and the searing powder ripped through the hump on Minturn's wrist. The gray-haired man was writhing, attempting to free himself, not quite understanding Van's intention.

Van hurled the inventor to the floor. He saw that the snake wound had been gouged out cleanly, and that the gunpowder had burned deeply into the flesh. But Van took no chance on this being sufficient. Holding Minturn supine, for the next few seconds Van drew any possible remaining poison from the gun wound with his lips. By this time, Minturn was sick, already weak with the tiny bit of poison that must have reached his bloodstream.

"Who—" Minturn began fearfully.

Van did not wait for the remainder of the question. He was aware that the explosion of his automatic might already be bringing killers down upon the metal shack. The presence of the Fer de Lance in the spider box plainly told him that someone intended to murder Charles Minturn.

"I'm the Phantom, Minturn," said Van in a low voice. "You will be very sick, but we must get out of here. Tell me all you can as we go. We must not wait."

Van caught up the movie camera. He carried Minturn's light figure easily in his right arm. Minturn was whispering over and over again:

"The Phantom? The Phantom?"

"You had me summoned, Minturn," explained Van. "There have been murders and great sabotage. Tonight Burgess Brand and Howard Roth were murdered and the Brand Works was burned. Why, Minturn? Has it anything to do with your calling me?"

Van heard several men moving in the darkness, but in the rain he managed to carry Minturn to a corner of the high fence without being seen.

"Brand and Roth?" muttered the inventor. "Yes, that's the way I thought it would be. Then it was my turn. Only they made a mistake about me. I was too smart to finish the vital part of the whole thing. Red McMurtry had a picture of it, so they must have figured they don't need me any more. Prosser and Hamm are ruthless. I don't know that they have committed murders, but they didn't need Robert Deming any more, so—"

MEN'S feet tramped nearby, too close. Van cut off Minturn's speech with one hand. The searchers went by. When he talked again, Minturn was only whispering hoarsely.

"If I die, tell Mary it was Prosser or Hamm who started it. Red McMurtry knows. They killed Brand and Roth. They don't need Deming, but they have to have me."

While Minturn's rambling speech made little sense, he did establish exact points of inquiry. John Prosser? Hamm? Red McMurtry? It came to Van now that Red McMurtry especially knew something he had not revealed to him, something concerning Charles Minturn.

Minturn had quit talking, but his pulse was good. Van heard no one moving now. He made quick work of an old board in the high fence. Then he carried Minturn in the darkness along the highway.

When a big truck rumbled onto the concrete and started in his direction with its headlights glaring, Van dropped quickly into a flooded culvert. His instinct had warned him. The truck was proceeding slowly.

As the big vehicle went by, Van made out three men in the driver's cab. The barrel of a gun showed clearly through a window. He made no movement as the truck passed on. He was quick to judge that the two miles between this point and the city of Astoria would become a murder road, if he was found with Charles Minturn in his arms.

"It wouldn't be a safe bet either to try hailing a car," muttered Van. "I'm glad you're not a big man, Minturn."

Minturn was unconscious, but still he was breathing regularly. By this time Van was sure the inventor would live. And at this moment, from what he had hinted in his rambling words, Charles Minturn undoubtedly was the key figure in some sort of wholesale, ruthless murder plot. Van wore a hard grin. Minturn was more of a key figure, if he had spoken the truth about holding back something from those who had tried to murder him.

The Phantom crossed the rain-swept road quickly. But few men could have attempted what he then undertook. The lights of Astoria showed about two miles away. With Minturn over one big shoulder, and the movie camera under his arm, the Phantom started toward the lights.

He climbed the hill above the highway and kept to the rocky fields. Several cars passed by on the road below him. Van judged he might have received a ride in several of them, but it was impossible to say in which one that ride might be the last for Minturn and him.

As he came down the last hill into rainy Astoria, Van picked out the sign of the Sailors Hotel. At the same time he saw a small building with a physician's sign not far away.

A middle-aged doctor attended to Charles Minturn's wound. He eyed Van suspiciously as he worked. Once he moved toward the telephone, but Van stopped him.

"I'll call the police myself when the time comes," suggested Van. "You have an idea your patient has only been shot, but keep on with that serum. If you doubt that your patient was bitten by a poisonous snake, have a look at this."

The doctor gasped as Van deftly produced the small, dead Fer de Lance from one pocket.

"I'd never met Charles Minturn,"

the medico said, "but I'll take your word for it."

"It will be worth your while to see that Minturn stays here until you hear from me," Van said. "He will be too sick to want to leave for several days. There are good reasons why I do not want the police to find out about this just yet. I can assure you that the lives of many persons may be at stake."

The doctor studied the Phantom for several seconds. Then he nodded and smiled a little.

"I'll keep Minturn here, and I'm doing it for a strange reason," he said. "I don't know you, but you're the only man I've ever met who could have thought fast enough to have used a gun on that snake bite. Perhaps I'm just as well off not to know too much about all this. There have been some queer happenings among our salmon fishermen lately."

"What queer happenings, Doctor?" asked Van.

"This is in strictest confidence, of course?" the doctor said hesitantly.

The Phantom nodded.

"Well, up until a year or so ago," the doctor began, "we had a gang of pretty tough eggs along the waterfront here. They dressed and acted like salmon fishermen, but everyone in this neighborhood knew that they spent a lot of their time in smuggling, racketeering, outright theft from the salmon traps, and all sorts of waterfront piracy."

"I recall something about that," the Phantom replied. "But I understood the Department of Fisheries and the Coast Guard got busy on that bunch and cleaned them out."

"They did," agreed the doctor, "but now some of the old gang has drifted back. They still dress in fishing regalia, but they don't seem to bother the salmon fishermen at all."

"Probably learned their lesson the first time," Van opined.

"Maybe," declared the doctor, "but they seem to have plenty of money."

"Any individuals you might name?" Van suggested.

"I wouldn't know," the other said quietly but firmly. "Any more than I would know positively that you're working under cover for the Government." He paused. Then: "Charles Minturn will be a patient here for a reasonable time, until I hear from you."

The Phantom left the doctor's office, smiling a little. Without talking too much, the physician had done all he could to tip his visitor off to queer happenings among the salmon fishermen. It was a puzzle, though. What connection might exist between the salmon industry and sabotage and murder in plants devoted to national defense?

One thing was certain. If any crooked czar wanted to gather a tough bunch of murderers about him, he would have an excellent choice from among the ranks of the waterfront thugs that had been mixed up in the Pacific Coast doings of a year ago.

Almost involuntarily, the Phantom was eager at the prospect of coming to grips with these fellows and their halibut clubs, sailor knives and other concealed weapons. Even a rope end was a deadly thing in the gnarled hands of one of these weather-beaten outlaws. But little things like that didn't bother Van.

CHAPTER VI

IN A SALMON TRAP



DICK VAN LOAN surveyed the small lobby of the Sailors Hotel. Mary Minturn was seated near the entrance, and Van marked that she was alone. Anxiety was etched upon her clear, pretty features. Her eyes

were fixed upon the door.

Red McMurtry was nowhere in

sight. Van had been forced to form his own judgment about the big news-reel cameraman.

He was convinced it had been McMurtry who had stopped a car on the highway out at the boatyard, looking for him.

"And he could have been with the bunch that came prowling around after that gunshot," mused the Phantom. "Anyway, I'll have to permit Mary Minturn to keep on believing in him until I'm sure of what her father meant by his rambling talk."

Still in his grayish, middle-aged make-up, the Phantom caught the girl's eyes. She came over to him, her face was clouded by anxiety. He was glad he could set one fear at rest. She need not know how close her father had been to death.

"I ran into your father, Miss Minturn," said Van quickly. "He's all right. I left him to attend to some business and came on here. Where's McMurtry?"

"Red was worried," the girl said, relief in her voice. "He said he knew the old Deming boatyard better than you, and he was afraid you might run into trouble."

"I missed trouble by a narrow fraction," Van said grimly. "Now, if you'll go up to a room, I have some phone calls to make to Portland. Your father will be in later, or he will see you in the morning, at least. Here, keep McMurtry's camera with you."

AFTER the girl's graceful figure disappeared in the one elevator, Van went into one of the phone booths, put in a call for Steve Huston in Portland. In a moment the connection was put through. Van was cautious in his conversation.

"About those accounts, Steve?" he said briskly.

"Sure, Mr. Macklin," replied Steve, knowing instantly who it was. Mr. Macklin was the name the Phantom was using in the disguise of the gray-haired newspaperman from Portland.



Muriel Havens

"They run seven hundred and fifty on the plant, fifty on the owner and fifty on the other man. The last two are double indemnity."

Van knew what that message meant. The Burgess Brand plant was insured for \$750,000; Brand for \$50,000; and Roth also for \$50,000. In the event of violent death, including an accident or murder, coming to the two men, the Brand and Roth policies were worth \$100,000.

"Good," Van said approvingly. "Get in touch with our friend now and see that she has a nurse's uniform for tomorrow morning. I'll see you in a few hours."

"Okay, Mr. Macklin," agreed Steve. "But wait! I have also learned that several persons who are interested in the Brand Works fire are holding a meeting tonight. I contacted a John Prosser and they are flying down the river to the Robert Deming boatyard."

That was welcome news to the Phantom's ears.

"Thanks," he said. "I'll look after it."

The Phantom was watching the hotel lobby now. Two bearded men clad in shiny oilskin slickers entered. They might have been any of the

hundreds of boatmen or salmon fishermen in Astoria, but Van's keen attention caught their eyes roving over the hotel lobby.

THE two men saw Van in the phone booth. They turned away to the cigar counter. None but the Phantom would have detected the quick interchange of glances between them. Van knew they had found a man they were seeking, and that he was the man.

Salmon fishermen were common enough around here, Van knew. Out there in the darkness of the rainy Columbia River, millions of tons of Royal Chinook and Spring salmon were coming from the Pacific. Then Van recalled what the friendly physician who had attended to Charles Minturn had told him about salmon fishermen—about some who had ceased fishing, but who seemed to be plentifully supplied with money.

Still in the phone booth Van called Steve Huston back.

"If you can do it some way, Steve," he said, "it might be well to make sure of all who intend being at the boatyard meeting."

Van hung up then. Through the phone booth glass, he noticed that one of the slickered fishermen was at the cigar counter. He laid down a dollar, selected one cigar. But he took no change.

This put Van on guard.

"Salmon fishing must be booming to justify dollar smokes," he mused, easing his heavy automatic down from its shoulder holster to his coat pocket.

The slickered fishermen stayed near the phone booth. Van debated his next move. He might have been trailed here, or he might be battling in the dark in his suspicion. Just then, he saw big Red McMurtry come into the lobby. McMurtry was soaked from the rain. He glanced around quickly and Van imagined he was seeking Mary Minturn. The cameraman's

rugged face turned toward the phone booth and he came toward it.

Van breathed more freely. He felt he had no real reason to suspect Red McMurtry. The cameraman had a look of honesty about his blue eyes that Van seldom misjudged. He was relieved that McMurtry should have come in at this moment, if it happened that the slickered fishermen were really trailing the Phantom.

Van opened the door of the phone booth and walked straight over to McMurtry. It struck Van that McMurtry had grim lines around his mouth, and that his eyes seemed to have become furtive. McMurtry moved closer to him. Something hard in the cameraman's pocket jabbed Van's ribs. McMurtry's voice was low and hard.

"Walk right on out with me, Phantom," he said. "Once outside, you keep right on going. Never mind why. I'll have to drill you if you make one wrong move."

Van's teeth clicked shut. He saw the two men in oilskins fall in behind McMurtry. The little procession of four men went out into the drenching rain.

"Cross over and head for the docks!" snapped McMurtry. "And don't look around!"

In spite of his tight situation, the Phantom was cold with rage. He was half tempted to prove to the red-headed McMurtry that the human fist, especially when it belonged to the Phantom, could beat a bullet. McMurtry's next words stopped him.

"Mary Minturn's already on the boat where you're going," he said. "You gave her my movie camera when you came to the hotel. We intend to see that she informs us where she put it. The camera has disappeared. And you're telling us what you did with Charles Minturn."

ANGER boiled inside the Phantom. He let it boil. Only the certainty that the men who had so neatly trapped him must also have the girl

prevented him from exploding into action. He realized now that the camera would be most valuable to those who had tried to murder Minturn with a Fer de Lance, because it contained a film of the actual attempt. And the Phantom himself had been a witness to the intended murder.

"You can't get away with it, McMurtry," Van said grimly. "If Mary Minturn hid your camera, I know nothing of it. As for her father, no man lives very long after he has been bitten by a Fer de Lance. Minturn's dead."

"That's a damn lie!" snarled one of the other men.

They crossed a flooded street. A gray river cruiser lay there, waiting. The craft was taking with ease the heavy ground swell coming in from the Pacific. The Phantom's arms were pulled behind him and tightly bound with tarred salmon line.

Mary Minturn was sitting on a bench at the side of the cabin. Van saw the girl's tear-wet, accusing eyes looking at Red McMurtry. The cameraman walked past her and went through the door of a small cubicle set in the middle of the cabin.

The girl was trussed up tightly. There were a dozen or more slickered men on board who might have been salmon fishermen. Mary Minturn's eyes suddenly flashed like liquid fire.

"Don't tell them anything, Phantom!" she burst out. "I know Dad's—dead! They are after the camera, and—"

"Cut it, baby!" snarled one of the men, smacking a hairy hand across the girl's mouth. "You'll get a chance to do plenty of talking! How about it, Skipper?"

A muffled voice spoke as if from nowhere. Then Van saw a gleaming speaker set in the wall of the metal cubicle.

"Lay off the girl!" commanded the speaker. "Make out to mid-stream! Lash the Phantom's ankles and tie him to one of the trolling lines. Then

hook a chain on to weight him down. He'll make good bait behind the boat to loosen the dame's tongue! Or perhaps she's ready now to tell us where to find the camera."

"Don't talk, Mary!" urged Van. "They intend to kill us both, anyway, if they get the chance! We might as well die leaving something for the police to—"

A fist smashed into Van's mouth, cutting him off. Rough hands seized him. Van had a brief glimpse of Red McMurtry again. The cameraman was standing just outside the door of the small cubicle. Then he moved back inside. The speaker on the wall sounded again.

"Lash the Phantom and heave him over. Ride him by the ankles and play the lights so Mary Minturn can see everything."

As the Phantom was being lifted over the stern to be dropped into the cold, boiling wake of the cruiser, he saw a remarkable figure step from the enclosed cubicle in the cabin. The figure was tiny compared with the other big-bodied thugs.

He might have been a child or midget, judging from his size alone. But he was ridiculously clad in big sea-boots and a rough pea jacket which seemed to be worn for the purpose of making him appear a little taller.

Beside this little man appeared a huge, black police dog. It was the largest animal of its kind Van had ever seen. The dog must have weighed all of eighty or ninety pounds, almost as much as its queer master.

WHEN the little man spoke, Van was convinced that the beard upon his face was the result of more than usually clever make-up. The voice was thin and high.

"Heave him over, but see that he doesn't drown!" the small man commanded. "Or perhaps Miss Minturn is ready to tell us about that camera. If not—"

"Okay, Skipper," the man holding Van growled.

It was amazing. This dwarf-sized Skipper was the oddest leader of killers the Phantom had ever seen. As he moved, the little Skipper seemed to swagger. Van was sure that he was keenly conscious of his small size and made every effort to appear bigger. Van sensed something monstrously cruel about the man.

Mary Minturn spoke suddenly. Then Van saw the rugged face of big Red McMurtry. The cameraman was behind the little Skipper. The girl's face was drawn and white as she looked at McMurtry.

"You dirty killers!" cried out the girl. "I warn you, if you kill or harm the Phantom you will destroy the last chance you have of accomplishing what I know you're planning! If my father is alive, and the Phantom has hidden him, you are fools! You still haven't got what you want from my father!"

The men holding the Phantom were frozen to instant attention. It was Red McMurtry who sprang past the little Skipper and cut off the girl's speech with a hand over her mouth.

"You little fool!" he snarled.

The look Mary Minturn gave McMurtry was like that of some child who had been unexpectedly hurt by someone it loved greatly.

At a sudden order from the Skipper, Van was roughly hurled into the black river. The speed of the cruiser and the taut trolling line seemed almost to unjoint his legs. Van whirled over and over, at first. His hands being bound and the chain dragging at his legs, he was nearly strangled before he achieved the trick of riding on his back. The bright ray of a spotlight sliced from the boat and hit his eyes. No doubt but that Mary Minturn could see his dragged, bounding body.

Even in his present predicament the Phantom was still seeking for some means of saving others from

this foul murder scheme. Who was it, he wondered, who entered the little shack as Charles Minturn had been struck by the deadly Fer de Lance? His face might or might not have been trapped by the movie film. Could it have been Red McMurtry? Or possibly John Prosser or J. T. Hamm, who had apparently been distrusted by Charles Minturn? The question seethed in Van's dizzied brain. He was being bruised by this ride, but he was confident he would be kept alive.

Then, what about the strange statement Mary Minturn had made concerning her father? She had said there was something these killers had failed to get from her father. He knew for certain that the effort to murder Charles Minturn had been premeditated. It struck Van that Mary Minturn had held out on what she knew about her father's nightly visits to the old boatyard. Apparently she had not fully trusted the Phantom.

THE Phantom's random thinking was suddenly broken. Due to the slashing movement of his body through the river, he was partly in and partly out of the jumping finger of light.

Abruptly, it seemed as if a giant hand had reached from the river and fastened upon the Phantom's wrists. His arms were jerked back and almost pulled from their sockets. A man of lesser strength than the Phantom would have been seriously hurt by the pull.

Van set himself, all his muscles tense. The trolling line fastened to his ankles snapped. The spotlight jumped away. Then Van went under the surface of the water, the salty brine of the tide stinging his eyes and nose. The chains on his feet were pulling him down now.

For several seconds it seemed that Van had been caught by some monster of the sea or the river. His body jerked wildly about. He had difficulty



The thug in the car
slammed a shot at Van,
knocked the gun from
his hand
(Chap. XIII)

in kicking himself to the surface. Then it was that he felt many thin, cutting cords across his face.

More than one plunging body was striking him. Van managed to get his body across one of the invisible cords. They kept him on the surface. More

lunging bodies smashed into him. A stiff, rough post rasped Van's shoulder. Even in his strange situation he grinned to himself.

"I'll wager," he thought, "I'm one of the first men ever to be caught in a salmon trap!"

CHAPTER VII

TUNNEL OF DEATH



AT THE same time the Phantom was caught in one of the big Columbia River salmon traps, Chip Dorlan was at work in the still smoking ruins of the Burgess Brand airplane plant.

As a youngster back in the slum district of San Francisco, he had often dreamed of some day wearing the uniform of a city fireman. He was wearing one now, that of the city of Portland. But this failed to come up to his hopes and dreams.

There was no dashing to a fire with an equipment siren screaming. There was no climbing heroically up a ladder and bringing some trapped victim from the flames. Except that he realized the Phantom had a direct purpose in sending him here, Chip Dorlan would have walked out on the whole fire department.

Chip was digging now in hot rubbish left by the fire. With other fire eaters, he was obeying orders to look for some other bodies that might still be in the destroyed plant. If there were, they could scarcely be more than bones now. But the Phantom had hinted that there might possibly be a secret tunnel in the plant, and that really was his main assignment.

Chip was now among what once had been Howard Roth's almost human machines. The steel of these machines was melted into mere lumps of metal now. It was apparent that the thermite bombs had been planted widely and well by those who had set out to sabotage the defense factory. His quick eyes noticed that one big machine had seemed to sink several feet on its foundation.

Apart from the other firemen at the moment Chip was disgustingly digging

away behind the big, melted machine, when suddenly he felt the ground give away! He went down to his shoulders.

Chip, who had been taught by the Phantom never to overlook the unusual, however trivial, spread his arms to support his light body. He glanced quickly around to see if he was observed. Seeing that he wasn't, his sharp, blue eyes took in all the other firemen at a distance.

He drew in his arms and dropped from sight. He was jolted some as he landed on solid ground. Cautiously, Chip produced a pencil flashlight, of the same type as the Phantom always employed. In fact, he copied the Phantom in everything. Some day he hoped to have his own platinum badge and his own domino mask. Some day he hoped to be as expert in make-up as the Phantom who had brought him to a new world. Mostly now, all Chip could do was help the Phantom when he had a chance.

Chip's pencil ray showed a rocky tunnel and some old timber supports that had nearly rotted away. There was room to stand erect. Chip moved cautiously. He wished the Phantom were here.

"Golly," Chip muttered. "I'll bet this is it! It looks as though it is some old abandoned tunnel that has been covered up for years. But there wasn't any other opening into the plant, unless maybe it was covered up by the fire."

Then the Phantom's phone conversation came to him. Entrance had been made into the Burgess Brand Works despite armed Government guards surrounding it. There was more than a possibility that this old tunnel had been used.

CHIP felt a cold whiff of air. It was damp and it had the salty smell of sea water. Then Chip discarded the idea, for the Willamette River never contained salt water from the ocean, although its own fresh water

was backed up by tides from the Columbia.

Then Chip's keen nose went to work. His pencil light hit on the little bundle of seaweed from which the smell had come. That meant that someone had come in here from the sea.

"Might have been years ago," muttered Chip, examining the rocky floor for possible footprints.

There were none, due to the hardness of the rock.

Chip had progressed nearly a hundred yards over the downward sloping floor, when he was sure he heard a suppressed human sneeze. The sound was directly ahead of him. He flicked out the light and froze to the side of the tunnel.

Minutes passed. Still no suspicious sound was repeated. Then Chip had the idea he had imagined the sneeze. He flicked on his light and moved ahead with infinite caution. Now he could hear the suck and gurgle of the tidal river not far ahead. . . .

"It's a chance," he said to himself, "that if someone came from a boat on the river and knew about the tunnel, the plant could have been entered easily."

But all of his close examination showed no evidence of any person having been in the old tunnel for years. At some places it was fallen in and almost closed. A light appeared dimly ahead.

Chip realized that must be the city light shining on the river. His discovery probably was worth nothing to the Phantom. The floor still revealed no telltale footprints. Chip decided to go all the way to the river, anyway. Then he halted abruptly, his flashlight remaining upon one small object. It was a bright green and red paper. Chip bent down, picked up a little paper book that had contained matches. All of the matches had been torn out.

Chip turned the match book over, reading the advertisement on the

cover. His thin nostrils quivered and his blue eyes became brighter.

"Green Spruce Club, Grand Opening, Thanksgiving Day, Nineteen hundred and forty," he read.

Chip repressed a shout. This tunnel *had* been used. Someone had been lighting matches, possibly to see, or more likely to light a cigarette. Chip hunted around patiently until he found the remains of a single burned match.

The youth became doubly cautious. He flicked out his light, listening. Checking back in his mind, he knew that the book of matches had been dropped here within the past few weeks.

"They came in from the river," whispered Chip. "There may be something there the Phantom would want to know."

He followed the side of the tunnel until the floor ended almost abruptly in what seemed to be a growth of bushes on the river shore. He moved into these bushes, listening and watching.

A fist that hit him seemed to come from nowhere. Chip was lifted by a blow at the base of his skull, and hurtled on through the bushes. Luckily, he was still conscious as the cold water of the river swiftly closed over him.

TRAINED by the Phantom, Chip was an expert swimmer. He stayed under the surface until his lungs ached. Finally forced to emerge, he came up with only his face showing. Luck was all against him. A quick light suddenly beat into his eyes from a small boat just above him. It was flicked off, and hands as strong as steel claws hooked round his throat. He was being forced back under the surface.

One of two roughly clad men in the boat said:

"Hell! Don't drown him, Croaker! Maybe he ain't alone! Anyway, if he's one of the Feds, we'd better find

out what he knows. The Skipper don't like any loose ends bein' left around."

Consciousness had already deserted Chip. And when the thin-faced youth opened his eyes, he had the queer sensation of floating. Someone was slapping his cheeks.

"That got him, Croaker!" snarled a guttural voice. "Now we'll find out what he knows. He's wearin' a Portland fireman's clothes, but he's carryin' a New York driver's license! He's a phony! If he's connected up with this Phantom, we'll find out how far his boss has got into this thing!"

Chip stared unflinchingly into cold, pale eyes. He discovered he was lying on a broad board. He was floating, but he wasn't on water. The ripe smell of wheat hit him. He could see white-dusted beams in a dim light high over his head.

The plank on which he lay was shifting, seemed to be sinking. He was lying on his back. His captors had left his hands and feet free. One man was holding an end of the plank, and Chip instantly realized that was to keep it from sinking.

"Okay, kid!" said the pale-eyed man. "Just to give you a rough idea of where you are, this is in the top of a river elevator. You have a few thousand bushels of wheat under you. If we let go of this plank, you'll drown, but it won't be as nice as drowning in water. You'll choke until your ribs crack before you're dead."

Chip's teeth clicked together. So these men knew the Phantom was on this case! That was all they would ever know if they were counting upon Chip Dorlan to talk. It suddenly occurred to Chip that thus far he had nothing of value to tell, anyway.

That was unfortunate. If they found out he was the only one who had discovered the use of that tunnel, his life would not be worth a grain of the tons of shifting wheat upon which he lay.

"What's the Phantom found out?"

snapped the pale-eyed man, his hands holding to the end of the plank that was keeping Chip on top of the loose wheat. "Give us something worthwhile, and we'll hand you a chance to live. Keep silent—and you die! Well, what'll it be?"

Chip Dorlan came from the West. He had known of men falling into tall wheat elevators. It was not pleasant to think about. Once the board on which he lay was released, he would sink into the suffocating grain. He would die slowly, horribly. He had to think fast if he wanted to live. Chip Dorlan remembered the Phantom's teachings well. He knew what he was going to do.

"I was afraid when the Phantom put the papers in my room," he gulped out. "No, I don't know anything. Nothing you would want to know—"

CHIP saw the nearest man's pale eyes flick to his partner.

"What papers?" snarled the pale-eyed man. "So the Phantom has found out something! Where's your room? What hotel?"

Chip mumbled unintelligibly, shaking his head. He was showing every evidence of being frightened to the limit of his endurance. That did not prevent him from studying the beams and the wall of the big wheat elevator in the faint light.

His heart pumped faster when he saw one of several ladders built on the wall. It extended down into the wheat elevator only a few yards from where the men were holding him.

"C'mon, damn you!" snarled the pale-eyed man. "Either you talk and give us your hotel address, or I'll let you go!"

Chip was convinced he had said enough to prevent his being killed at the moment. These thugs would want to find out all they could. But once out of the wheat elevator, Chip knew he would still be subject to any means of torture they could devise.

It has been stated previously that Chip Dorlan was brought up the hard way. He was small, but he was dynamite. The pale-eyed man clung to the plank and leaned over him, cursing, demanding that he talk.

Chip's eyes centered then upon the built-in ladder. Already he could feel his legs sinking into the engulfing wheat. Now the pale-eyed man was drawing the plank closer to him. The thug wanted to know about the mythical papers which Chip had suggested the Phantom had left with him.

The other man was hunched down, close to the thug holding the plank. Chip put every ounce of his rawhide strength into one desperate effort. His thin but strong hands shot up and clasped around the pale-eyed man's neck.

As the thug cried out in surprise, Chip swung his full weight in a cat-like spring. He almost missed, because of the yielding wheat. But not quite. One of his heels caught the second thug hard under an ear.

The plank skidded out from under Chip. Shifting wheat came up and enveloped his skinny figure. He heard an oath, a scream of fear as his head went under the grain. His hands never left the neck of the pale-eyed man. He was sure the other thug had been kicked, sprawling and screaming, out into the loose wheat.

Chip had never before experienced such a sensation. It was different from diving in water. Wheat dust

clogged his nostrils, it was impossible to draw any air into his lungs. The pale-eyed man he held flailed out with his free fist. There was little power as the knuckles smacked Chip's face through the cloying wheat.

YOUNG Chip never had deliberately killed, except in self-defense. It was a principle the Phantom had taught him. So he made every effort to force his way along the elevator wall toward the ladder he had kept in mind. He held on to the thug he had carried down with him.

His brave attempt failed. The pale-eyed thug got one foot up and drove it into Chip's stomach. Chip was forced to let go his hold as nausea gripped him. That foul kick signed the death warrant of the man Chip intended to save.

Chip finally reached the wall, his body feeling like that of a swollen toad. His fingernails scratched the wood, and he encountered one flat rung of the wall ladder he had sighted.

His breath gone, his heart pounding wildly, inch by inch Chip pulled himself upward. It took perhaps but seconds, yet it seemed hours before Chip came free of the wheat and drew pure air into his lungs.

He clung there to the ladder for a long minute, in order to regain his lost strength. It seemed as if his

[Turn Page]



blood must have turned to water. He was looking out across the dimly lighted elevator. All he could see was wheat, millions of grains of wheat, tons of it that extended downward.

Perhaps it was a hundred feet, maybe two hundred. Chip had no means of knowing. The surface of the wheat was smooth and still. No life breathed through it. Chip tried to tear his mind away from the two thugs who had meant him to die in there.

Slowly he climbed the ladder. Fresh, clean air blew off the Willamette River. Chip climbed through a window and found himself on an outside platform. He was dizzy as he made his way toward the ground below. He tried to keep from thinking of what was inside that tall, red-painted wheat elevator. But for his own quick wit, he now would be in there.

Chip brushed wheat dust from his Portland fireman's uniform. He must contact the Phantom as quickly as possible. The old tunnel, he now was sure, was a direct link in the sabotage and murder at the Burgess Brand airplane factory.

CHAPTER VIII

DEATH WALKS CLOSELY



SWIRLING tide rips, plunging bodies of steel-like brightness, invisible cords that cut through the flesh held the Phantom almost helpless. It was the strangest death trap in which he had ever been caught.

The tide rips were the running sea of a strong flood tide coming into the Columbia River from the Pacific. The lashing bodies were hundreds of Chinook salmon fighting desperately to escape the torment of the web that held them from escaping. The cords

were the strands of an outlawed salmon trap, constructed in the form of an immense square.

The net extended from the rough surface of the river to its bottom. Schools of salmon had run along a straight line of net wall until they had found themselves hedged into this final trap, from which there was no escape but the small entrance they had come through.

Not one in a thousand of the salmon could ever find that way out again. Presently, a schooner would appear and the square trap would be lifted upon pulleys set in the poles to which the net was fastened. Salmon by the thousands of pounds would be dumped into the hold of the schooner.

Because of his intensive study of every industry, as it might be associated with crime detection, the Phantom identified his position at once. Lashed by the fighting salmon, he found and clung to one of the poles with his legs. There he started the torturing, slow process of freeing his arms and legs.

This was accomplished by rubbing the line binding his wrists along the rough surface of the trap pole. His hands were numbed, but they were being loosened bit by bit.

It was then that he saw the gray cruiser returning. The broken trolling line had been discovered. Light sliced out, seeking the Phantom. His hands free, it was the work of only a few moments to undo the chains that bound his legs. Van dived, going down deep among darting bodies of the frantic fish. Before he went under, he saw that the gray cruiser, commanded by the odd little Skipper, was going in reverse.

The spotlight from the rear cockpit was playing over the water. Again the Phantom speculated upon the strange words of Mary Minturn. She had suggested that her missing father held some secret that would undo all of the murderous war that now was being waged.

And, as the Skipper and his killers realized, only the Phantom knew the whereabouts of Charles Minturn, if he was still alive.

If any of the strange individuals involved in this case had seen him save Minturn from the Fer de Lance, then they were more than certain that the marine engine genius was not dead.

So, going on from there, it was

Van's powerful hands tore through one long section of the web-like salmon net. He lifted only his face and his sleek head above the rough swell.

THEN he heard the little Skipper's thin, penetrating voice ring out.

"You blundering fools!" rang out the clear, piping voice. "You run us through a salmon trap an' lose the

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apparent that the killers still wanted the Phantom alive, even though they thought that he had been drowned. The gray cruiser came up the river in reverse, stern first, slowly, the spotlight darting here and there.

By this time, the remarkable physical endurance of the Phantom had restored much of his strength. Although in a salmon trap, alone in the wide Columbia, he was amazingly prepared to pit his quick wit against all of the cruiser killers.

one man that can upset everything the big boss is payin' for! If he finds that out—"

Van dived, with the words impressing themselves on his senses. So this odd-appearing, half-pint of a man was not the real chief! There was another boss who was in command of these evil operations.

Because of the playing searchlight, Van was able to judge when the gray cruiser was directly above him. One of his chief assets was his ability to

equal almost any South Sea diver in staying under water.

The cruiser's immense bulk was above him when he drove powerfully for the surface. All of his amazing strength was required, for he was bringing with him nearly one whole panel of the net from the salmon trap. In the darkness, and because of the sea salt, Van was compelled to judge his position by the swirling of the water rather than by vision. Nevertheless, he realized that if he missed his objective by even an inch now, it would mean more than failure.

It would mean the probable crunching of his skull by the whirling blades of the cruisers' propeller. With his lungs almost bursting for lack of air, at last he thrust a section of the salmon net upward.

He had to dive again and permit himself to drift to the surface. But he could hear the sudden grinding of marine motor gears. There was a moment when the gray cruiser seemed to be tearing itself apart. There in the wet, salty darkness, Van smiled to himself. The biggest, most vital part of his fight lay ahead. But the gray cruiser lay disabled, unable to function properly. Its propeller was entangled and twisted to uselessness by the stout cords of the salmon net.

Van swam under water a short distance, then rose to the surface. He clung to one of the frayed rope bumpers used for the gray cruiser while in dock. He was close to the prow. The forward cockpit was just above him.

The high, raging voice of the little Skipper was a squeal now. Chief of murderers he might be, but his tone and manner was that of some angered child. One of the other men cursed.

"The damn net's wound around the blades!" the man growled. "We'll have to go down and cut it off, or we'll twist the shaft out of the motor!"

Judging by the voices, the Skipper and all of his men were jamming into

the rear cockpit. One of the men said:

"The Phantom won't trouble us any longer! And we can find a way to make the dame tell if Minturn was holding out anything. Hell, how could he? We've got all the blue-prints."

The little Skipper fairly shrieked with rage. Raising himself until his eyes were level with the edge of the cockpit, Van saw the Skipper hurl his tiny figure at the other man. The tiny fists pounded into the bigger thug's face.

"All of you have been told we ain't supposed to know a damn thing about the details of this!" screamed the Skipper.

THE big thug hurled the Skipper to one side with a sweep of his strong arms. Several other men cried out. Van himself had wondered at the brazenness of the little fellow in tackling the big mobster.

Van knew then why the Skipper acted so recklessly. There was a tearing snarl like that of some jungle beast. Then the heavy, black form of the police dog flashed over the little Skipper as he fell. The big man who had made the mistake of striking the Skipper threw up his arms and screamed.

But the black police dog drove in with killing speed and fury. Knife-like fangs slashed, joined forces in the man's throat. The man's scream ended in a hoarse gurgle. Blood welled in a thick stream. Scarlet lines ran down over the dog's black fur. It was then that Van witnessed a fantastic horror surpassing anything he had previously encountered.

The small Skipper sprang forward. A shrill laugh rang out from his tiny, round mouth, as his little hands reached and were bathed in the blood on the dog's coat. The little Skipper stood there, watching the big man dying to the tune of his demoniacal laughter.

Others of the bigger men, of whom it seemed any one could have broken the Skipper into small bits, shrank away. Then one big thug cursed and sprang toward the Skipper. The tiny figure pivoted, faced him. One small hand was raised. Glowing, liquid fire shot from the Skipper's sleeve. Doubtless it came from a concealed device prepared for such an emergency. The big man staggered back as the fire seared his face.

The thug attacked by the police dog threw up his arms. He tripped over the cockpit edge and went into the river. The other man backed away, rubbing at the burns on his face. Again the little Skipper laughed shrilly. The other men moved like automatons. It was evident to Van that the Skipper ruled them by a monstrous ruthlessness he had never before seen equaled.

"You bungling blockheads!" the Skipper squealed. "Get down there and cut off that net! We must get ashore and look for Charles Minturn! I'll find a way to make the dame talk!"

Van could not repress a shudder. From what he had just witnessed, he had little doubt but that the Skipper had his own terrible methods of making any prisoner talk.

The motor cabin lay between the forward and rear cockpits. The Phantom saw the girl still bound to a bench. Then he saw one figure in the cockpit near him. The Phantom never permitted personal anger to be stirred too deeply. Experience had taught him the value of coolness. Yet now Van was aroused. Big Red McMurtry was in that forward cockpit. Van resented the cameraman's apparent treachery toward Mary Minturn and her father.

AS SILENTLY as a ghost arising from the water, Van heaved himself into the cockpit. The slapping of Van's feet upon the planks turned McMurtry. One of Van's fists drove

into his face like a thunderbolt.

"You—still alive?"

The exclamation strained from McMurtry's throat as Van's fingers vised upon his neck. Luckily, the efforts of the pseudo salmon fishermen to free the boat's propeller were creating considerable disturbance. Van quickly discovered that Red McMurtry was not to be dropped with a single blow or to be put out by ordinary strength.

McMurtry lashed into Van's face with his fist, and Van had the salty taste of blood in his mouth. Attempting to free his throat from Van's grip, the cameraman employed one booted foot with agonizing effect. The toe drove into Van's kneecap, his right leg virtually collapsing from the pain. Van was compelled to use a ju jutsu hold. He shot one hand to McMurtry's shoulder, and as his fingers topped the shoulder bone, Van's thumb went into McMurtry's armpit.

There is no more painful or effective hold known in the Oriental fighting art. A shiver of agony ran through McMurtry's big body. The cameraman was trying to free his throat to talk. Van judged McMurtry would summon help, so he only tightened his grip.

In spite of the critical situation, Van was enjoying some of it. He always extracted the greatest sport out of meeting a foe who was somewhere near his own match. Red McMurtry was all of that. Moreover, with his body half numbed by Van's ju jutsu hold, McMurtry fought on with sheer grit. At any moment, Van was aware that the Skipper's men might get their boat free, or by chance discover the queer duel being fought in the forward part of the cruiser.

McMurtry's elbow slammed into Van's ribs and the Phantom's breath was driven out. It was at this moment, to his amazement, that he saw Mary Minturn. He would have said it was impossible for the pretty, dark-haired girl to have freed herself. But now she was on her feet.

Van used his weight to jam McMurtry back into the wall of the cabin. His next thought was to employ his reserve strength to hurl both of them into the river. There he would have every advantage over the cameraman. But if the killers freed their cruiser, Van realized he would be quickly run down. Besides, the Phantom was trapped by another circumstance.

He was strongly desirous of capturing Red McMurtry alive.

There was black madness in the eyes of Mary Minturn as the cabin light revealed her pretty face. The girl had picked up a heavy wrench, holding it in both hands. She was crouching, coming toward McMurtry and Van.

"No, Mary—no!"

The Phantom made his voice as low as possible to reach the girl only. He was sure that the maddened girl had in mind only to smash Red McMurtry's skull for his treachery toward her and her father. Van recalled the bitter look the girl had given McMurtry when he had stopped her from talking.

"Don't, Mary!"

Abruptly, Van discovered he had made a mistake. The girl threw herself forward, striking out with the heavy wrench. Too late, Van realized it was aimed at his own head! Only his lightning reaction enabled him to permit the falling wrench to graze his ear and land heavily upon his shoulder.

It was then that Red McMurtry saw the girl was free for the first time. The cameraman lunged unexpectedly toward the side of the boat, hurling himself and Van over the rail. For the second time tonight, the cold, salty tide of the Columbia River closed over the Phantom.

Then Van became aware of another, slimmer figure swimming near them in the water.

Mary Minturn had plunged with them into the Columbia!

CHAPTER IX

WHEN MURDER FAILS



ON BOARD the gray river cruiser, its crew of slickered killers attempted to find the origin of the wild splashing that had come to them. The little Skipper had the spotlight playing across the murky Columbia. He was cursing and squealing with fierce rage.

It was now almost dawn and a thick, gray fog was rolling in from the Pacific. Struggling divers succeeded in clearing the propeller, but by the time the cruiser was in motion, the cursing, squealing Skipper could only dance about on the deck like some peevish small boy. But his joy was short-lived.

Never had such rage been seen in so small a person when the Skipper discovered that Mary Minturn was missing. He howled at his men, lashed out at some of them with his small fists. Not one man replied or attempted to subdue the tiny madman.

For the huge, black police dog stayed close beside his master. One demonstration of the dog's devotion was enough for the thugs. It was also apparent that the hulking men feared the Skipper as if he might have been some demon.

"We'll have to contact the boss, Skipper," one of the Skipper's men said. "Anyway, it's not so bad. We got rid of the Phantom, and the loss of the girl and McMurtry won't mean much."

"Won't mean much?" screamed the Skipper. "You heard what the dame said! Old Minturn was holding out something! If that's true, just one thing like that can upset all of it. You bungling fools don't understand!"

The bearded men stared at each

other. From the look in their eyes, it was evident they did not fully understand what the odd little Skipper was yelling about. They acted more like men who were paid a certain amount to do a job of killing, and that was all.

Perhaps that was somewhere near the truth. The Phantom would have been more able to cope with the menace soon to be spread over all of the Northwest, if he could have been here to understand this cryptic conversation.

At this moment, however, the Phantom was performing what any swimmer would have recognized as an amazing feat. Perhaps luckily, as they had plunged from the cruiser, Red McMurtry's thick skull had banged against the side planking of the boat. So the cameraman was dead weight, all the fight gone out of him, when they went deep into the boiling tide.

Possibly the most notable asset of the Phantom was his quickness of thought and the instant coordination of mind and muscle. Instantly, his hand shot out and grasped Mary Minturn around the waist. The girl struggled as they went into the river, but somehow she was still gripping the wrench she had employed as a weapon.

Under the water, Van became aware that Mary Minturn must be an expert swimmer. She was twisting away from him, striking out for

the surface. Van was convinced now that the sweep of the tidal current would carry them out of range of the boatload of killers.

As they emerged, Van was supporting McMurtry's heavy body, permitting him to float alongside. The girl's free hand and her expert legs kept her afloat. And once again she started to swing the wrench at the Phantom's head. Van twisted the weapon from the girl's hand. She screamed as he disarmed her.

"You're one of them!" she cried. "You tried to kill Red! You're not the Phantom! You have made my Father a prisoner to find out—"

AT THAT instant, the swinging searchlight of the cruiser, or some other boat revealed the girl's face. Van dived, pushing the girl's head and face below the surface to remove her from the light. She must have gulped in some of the salty water. As Van again attempted to reach the surface, he was supporting both Red McMurtry and Mary Minturn. He drew air into his lungs. Everything now had been blotted out by the shrouding fog.

Suddenly a deep, bull-like voice of a floating fog buoy came to Van's ears. But this afforded him no sense of direction with regard to the distant shores. Van was swimming slowly, permitting the water to uphold the weight of McMurtry and the girl.

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He was tiring now. The chilled river cramped his muscles. But he fought doggedly on, swimming with his feet. He angled across the tidal current. Suddenly a humming sound permeated the air. It grew louder. Then Van heard an airplane circling out over the Columbia. Through the fog he twice caught a glimpse of lights on the plane. Then up from one side, an intense blue ray shot into the mist.

Van breathed more easily. The blue light was on the shore. He was much closer than he had hoped. As he heard the plane motor rev down and knew the ship was planning to land on the river, Van found himself close to shadowy buildings that jutted out into the river.

He had no means of judging his location, but a moment later his feet touched the shoal bottom. He was some little time recovering his strength after he had brought Red McMurtry and Mary Minturn ashore.

In a small, dry building, the Phantom was able to make out that he must be once more in the old Robert Deming boatyard. Hoisting cranes loomed up in the fog. An old track for small boatways extended from the building where he had come out of the river.

Not far away, Van saw lights appear in the windows of an old building that stood upon pilings far out into the river. Nearby, he saw the outline of the plane that had landed a few moments before.

What Steve Huston had told him by phone came back to the Phantom now. A number of persons interested in the tragic fire at the Burgess Brand Works were to fly down the river for some quick conference. This information again connected the tragedy of the night with the obsolete boatyard.

The Phantom made sure that McMurtry and Mary Minturn were only unconscious and without serious injury. He removed his body-fitting

make-up case, which was wrapped in the finest waterproof oilskin, from under his clothes. A moment later he administered a harmless sedative that would make sure of McMurtry and the girl remaining asleep for some time.

As he stood there for a moment regarding the two, the Phantom was attempting to straighten out the tangle of the night's events, in order to guide his own future course. First of all, Red McMurtry's role in aiding his captors, and especially in the cameraman's apparent treachery to Mary Minturn, had him puzzled.

VAN seldom misjudged another man's character, and something about big Red McMurtry had made him like the chap from the first. As he reviewed it now, he considered it possible that McMurtry might have been forced to assist with his capture. That would be simple enough, if the little Skipper's killers had informed McMurtry that Mary Minturn would suffer if he refused to obey them.

On the other hand, Van was thinking of the car he had heard outside the Robert Deming boatyard, of the elusive figure that had probably been trapped on the film of the movie camera when the attempt had been made to murder Charles Minturn. He had only had a vague view of that figure at the time the Fer de Lance had struck. Against his explicit advice to remain with Mary Minturn, it was certain that Red McMurtry had left her. McMurtry could have been the vague figure in the spider shack with Charles Minturn.

That brought him again to the point where Mary Minturn had cried out that her father had held out on something that was wanted. And Red McMurtry had stopped the girl from finishing what she was saying. At that moment Van had been sure that Mary Minturn hated McMurtry and believed that he had been disloyal to her. But, just before they had gone

into the river, why had the girl made a desperate effort to knock out the Phantom when he was trying to subdue Red McMurry?

For the time Van was forced to put a big question mark against all of these thoughts. No matter what part the Skipper had in this grim business, Van was sure that the fire at the Burgess Brand Works must have far-reaching significance. That suddenly reminded him of something. Steve Huston said that John Prosser, the engine maker, and others were involved, and were flying down here for a conference.

Also, he knew that killers, posing as salmon fishermen, were involved in some widespread plot. And the freakish little Skipper would not be easy to handle. Van had already seen him in action.

The Phantom's idea of the queer situation had not delayed him in acting. A grim smile came over his face.

"Perhaps some of those so interested in the Burgess Brand fire might be more willing to talk to Red McMurry than to the Phantom," he said softly.

For the second time tonight, Van worked swiftly with his skilful make-up. Moulages broadened his cheeks, widened his nostrils, created new features. The invisible eye-shells he employed gave him the blue-orbed vision of McMurry. His own hair was changed from its grayish hue, as Mr. Macklin, to the flaming red of the cameraman.

Van looked at his watch, saw it was halfway between midnight and dawn. That scheduled meeting called by John Prosser ought to be in progress now. Knowing Steve Huston's inquisitive sense and his "nose for news," Van suspected that Frank Havens' ace writer probably would be with those who had arrived on the plane recently landed in the river.

When his own little light had flicked out and he was sure no one would mistake him for other than Red

McMurry, Van decided to keep his identity from Steve Huston for the time, if the reporter was in that lighted building a little way down the river.

Leaving Mary Minturn and Red McMurry temporarily dead to the world, the Phantom followed the shore toward the lighted windows of the building set out upon river piling. In the fog he could but dimly discern the old buildings, cranes and other machinery that had once been a part of the Robert Deming boatyard.

THE lighted building on pilings afforded narrow platforms around its upper side. The Phantom never had lived up to his name more than now. He was little more than a shadow as he attained the platform and reached a window whose panes were dirty and covered with cobwebs.

A tiny unobstructed space enabled Van to see several men inside, and with them was Steve Huston. The reporter had somehow managed to attend this mysterious meeting. And that circumstance in itself sounded a warning bell in the Phantom's mind.

Without being informed of those who might be in that building, Van went over the tragic events of the passing night. He had requested Steve Huston to get information concerning the insurance on the Burgess Brand Works, and upon the lives of Burgess Brand and Howard Roth.

Through obtaining that information, Steve Huston had gained other knowledge. Someone had told Steve Huston of this mysterious meeting, the nature of which was dangerous. Maybe someone had found out about the reporter's investigations, and wanted to draw Steve Huston into some kind of trap.

At this time the Phantom knew nothing of what had been discovered by Chip Dorlan. He knew only of the attempt to murder Charles Minturn, the effort to find McMurry's

movie camera, the bogus salmon fishermen commanded by the monstrous midget Skipper, and some inexplicable connection of the old Robert Deming boatyard with the fire and the murders in Portland.

The Phantom always went on from any point he had reached, however puzzling it might be. Now he found a tiny clean space on the window of the building out over the river and he could clearly see the figures of several men around a long table.

Although an expert lip reader, Van was unable to bring all of those in the room into view, and he could not tell what all were saying. He brought a small instrument from his body-fitting case. One part of this was a small rubber vacuum. This clung to the window pane.

Tiny rubber plugs fitted into Van's ears. This was one of his many devices, perfected in his laboratory in New York. He called it a vibraphone. Every spoken word, low or loud, came to him from the room.

Now he saw Steve Huston. The reporter was beside a bald-headed man. This man was bulky. He had heavy features and thick lips. Only fringes of hair showed over the man's ears. It was instantly apparent to Van that this man with Steve was deaf. Black cords connected a microphonic lapel instrument with the man's ears. When Steve Huston spoke, he put his mouth close to the lapel microphone.

Because of this, Van's vibraphone failed to pick up Steve's words. Van maneuvered into position to watch Steve's lips, and was finally able to read the reporter's speech.

"You didn't know Burgess Brand had interests here, Mr. Shotwell?" Steve was saying. "He never told you about it?"

Because, like many deaf men, Mr. Shotwell shouted his reply, Van heard it clearly through his vibraphone.

"It's all news to me, Mr. Huston!" were Shotwell's words. "I've been

Mr. Brand's attorney for only a few months, in connection with his Government contracts. When you called me tonight, I had to look up the insurance angle. Then John Prosser called me and said he thought I should represent Mr. Brand at this hastily arranged meeting."

By this, the Phantom gathered that Mr. Shotwell was the attorney for Burgess Brand. Steve Huston must have made contact with him while inquiring about the Brand insurance. And Attorney Shotwell had informed Steve Huston of this meeting.

Van's keen eyes took in more of the interior of the building out over the river. His vision turned from the men at the table to various other puzzling items. He saw what appeared to be a model of some advanced type of marine engine. At one side of the room was the model of what might have been a new kind of warship, whalebacked and of dull gray metal. On one wall were a number of enlarged blueprints. As he saw these, again Van sensed the warning bell of danger.

CHAPTER X

LOST ENGINE PART



NEVER had the Phantom encountered a group of men whose attitude toward each other held more suspicion. Because he had been well informed in advance of the Government defense works in the Pacific

Northwest, and had carefully studied photographs and personal histories of manufacturers and technicians, Van was able to make immediate identifications.

This was abetted by the clipped conversation between the men assembled in the long room out over the river. John Prosser, the engine

maker, had been named. It had been the genius of Charles Minturn in marine engine building that had put John Prosser in the lead of others in Government contracts for fast torpedo boats.

Prosser was a sort of underslung fat man. He had double chins and tried to make his paunch pull up into his chest. He talked with a wheezing accent.

His eyes were nearly buried in rolls of fat, but they seemed to miss nothing.

Sitting next to John Prosser was a human skeleton. He had a chin that was long, long legs, long arms and long ears. This man would have had but little to add to make himself up as a Mephisto in Faust.

In simple words, he looked like the devil. This rack of bones was J. T. Hamm, as Van identified him. Hamm, who owned blast furnaces, a steel foundry and iron works up the coast, in the narrows of Puget Sound, near Tacoma.

J. T. Hamm was staying close to John Prosser. The fat man and the thin man seemed to have much in common. Hovering near these two was a young, long-nosed chap who appeared to belong behind the cashier's cage in a bank. He watched Prosser and Hamm as if trying to be sure to say, "Yes, sir," at the right moment.

"Burton Thayer, the metallurgist whose new elastic steel could make him a personal fortune at any time," Van identified the man. "And he seems as dependent as a child upon every word spoken by Hamm and Prosser."

Burton Thayer? From the open hearth pits of the East, the metal mixing genius had gone West. There he had become an employee of J. T. Hamm. Van recalled that Burton Thayer's work for Hamm had brought the Hamm foundries into line with the great, new defense works of America.

Even then, before his quick vision had shifted farther, the Phantom was realizing something momentous, paralyzing in its possibilities.

"That was it," he thought. "Here, in one spot, are men who individually mean more to the nation than many thousands of others."

Listening through his vibraphone, watching lips where he failed to pick up speech, within a few minutes the Phantom learned the grave implications of the mysterious meeting on the fog-shrouded, early morning river.

Van saw a stoop-shouldered old man near the end of the table. His gray beard was short and scraggly. He leaned on his elbows, his thin neck crooked as he looked at the other men.

"Robert Deming?" said Van softly. "The owner of the old boatyard? And he seems past knowing what importance there may be in his being summoned here."

Even as he spoke, a question developed in Van's mind. Was Robert Deming as unaware of the importance of the evening's happenings as he seemed to be? Had Deming's boatyard been picked for Charles Minturn's experiments merely because of its isolation? If so, was John Prosser entirely responsible for the transshipment of the Howard Roth machines, for the electrification of the barbed wire on the fence, for the newly constructed shed? After all, Minturn was presumed to be working for Prosser.

NATURALLY, Robert Deming would share in any work done on his premises. But with all of the regular shipyards throughout the country engaged in top-speed production, and many of the more or less derelict yards being rehabilitated, there was every reason to believe that Robert Deming, once recognized as the biggest shipyard owner on the Pacific Coast, might properly be inter-

ested in getting his share of the profits.

Here again another problem presented itself. So far there seemed to be very little real money mixed up in this case. The only huge sums mentioned had been the insurance payments involved in the burning of the Burgess Brand plant and the deaths of Brand and Roth. If this interpretation was true, Deming's part in the shipbuilding operations might involve a partnership that would bring considerable financial returns.

Van Loan's attention shifted from the old shipyard owner to the other men in the room, then came back to Deming. Most of those in the room were familiar to him. But, sitting close to Robert Deming, was a young man whose hair was coal black and whose eyes were brilliant and watchful, as if he had not been fully informed of the purpose of this meeting.

Van watched Steve Huston leave Attorney Shotwell, saw him walk over to the young man with the brilliant, watchful eyes. Van watched Steve's lips.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Steve Huston. "Larch Smith, in person! The magician of the assembly lines in Detroit! I didn't know you were on a vacation, Larch."

Van watched Larch Smith extend a reluctant hand. He had not needed Steve's introduction to tell him all about Larch Smith. For this Smith was industrial royalty—the royalty of efficiency and production engineers.

It was widely reported that Larch Smith could make three automobiles roll from an assembly line where only one had rolled before. The Phantom didn't know that Larch Smith was using his talents on the Pacific Coast. It was reported that Smith had offers from half a dozen foreign countries.

Now, Larch Smith seemed to be mostly tied up with old Robert Deming, the vacant-eyed boatyard man.

It was but another angle to the several puzzles of the night. Van watched Smith's lips, and he heard him through the vibraphone.

"H'lo, Huston! What am I doing out West? Oh, it's only a little matter of getting some of the John Prosser torpedo boats rolling for the Government. But whenever you show up, I'd look to see the detective known as the Phantom! Didn't know we rated—"

Van selected this moment to appear. He banged open the low window where he had been standing. He was the image of Red McMurtry, the cameraman, as he crawled inside.

"Hi'ya!" he greeted. "Heard there was a powwow, an' happened to be in Astoria."

Where there had been muttering conversation, instant silence fell. He heard John Prosser mutter:

"McMurtry? Perhaps it's a good thing he came along."

J. T. Hamm gave Van a graveyard grin and said:

"Well, Red! Glad to see you! Didn't know but what you'd been trapped in the fire up at the Brand Works."

Van noticed that Larch Smith's bright eyes were upon him steadily. The great production expert seemed to have even more interest than the others in his unexpected appearance.

"That's right, Red," he backed up J. T. Hamm. "Heard you rode down this way with Mary Minturn and the Phantom. I was afraid you—"

THERE is a certain quality about sudden, listening silence that will stop any man. It got Larch Smith now. Every eye in the room was turned upon him. Every man there seemed waiting for him to go ahead with his speech. Larch Smith detected it. He appeared to realize he had been talking out of turn. His eyes went from Van to Steve Huston. Smith was quick to find an out for himself.

"Steve Huston here just told me you had been with the Phantom," he finished his speech.

Van's left hand went to his ear lobe. He tugged at it gently. It was a signal to Steve Huston that he was the Phantom and not Red McMurtry. Steve Huston was quick on the uptake.

"Sure, sure, Smith," he said quickly. "I knew McMurtry was with the Phantom when he came down to Astoria."

That covered a tight moment for Larch Smith, but it failed to relieve the tension among the men present. From John Prosser to Larch Smith himself, Van judged all had an idea that Red McMurtry was possessed of some knowledge that they should have, but no one wanted to ask the question.

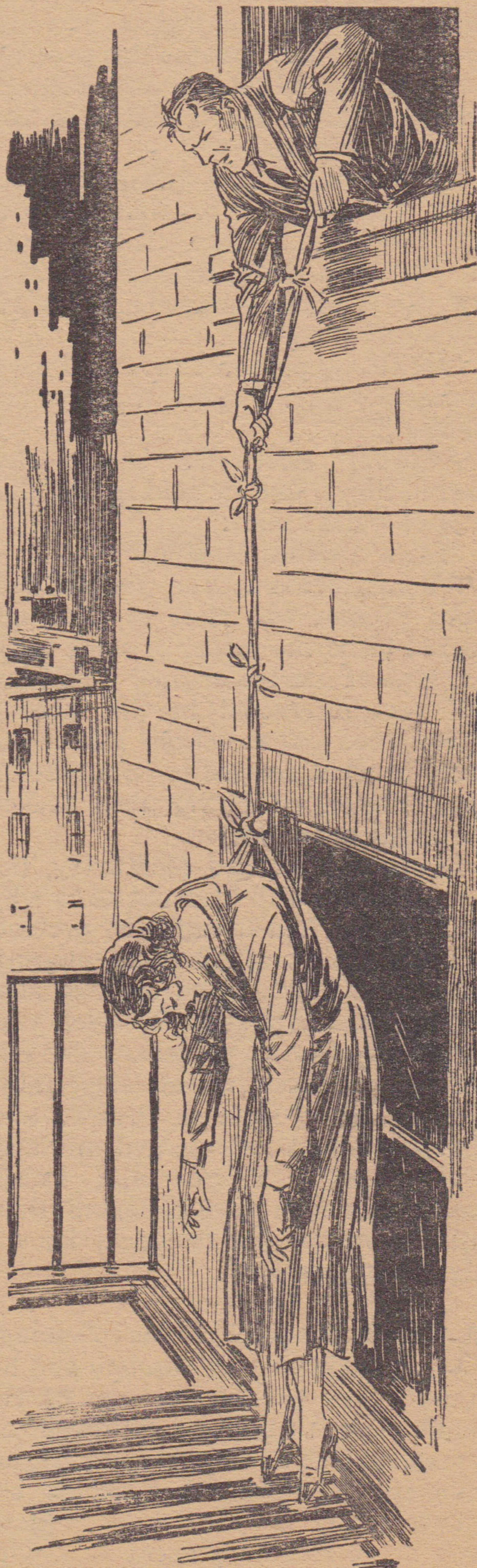
Only the deaf Attorney Shotwell, with his huge face and rather dumb expression, stared at the others, as if he were trying to understand what Red McMurtry's appearance signified.

John Prosser broke the silence with his wheezing voice. His fat-hidden eyes swept over the group. They held longest upon Steve Huston and Attorney Shotwell.

"We have come here for a definite reason, gentlemen," said Prosser. "All of you except Attorney Shotwell and Mr. Huston are aware of our plans. As a representative of Burgess Brand's widow, Attorney Shotwell has a right to know of our purpose. As for Mr. Huston, it seems he is close to the Phantom Detective. But I imagine we have not reached the stage where we wish interference from the law, either public or private."

Van was watching Attorney Shotwell. His big head was craned forward in an effort to hear John Prosser. Apparently he got most of his words, for he reached out a big hand.

"I invited Steve Huston, a friend of the Phantom, here," said Attorney



Van lowered the unconscious girl to the fire escape below (Chap. XIII)

Shotwell. "Whatever there is to be revealed by you gentlemen, I would prefer that Mr. Huston be present. I am only Brand's—now Mrs. Brand's—legal representative, and it is well to have a witness."

The ensuing silence was impressive. John Prosser, J. T. Hamm, Robert Deming, Burton Thayer and Larch Smith drew together, talking low. Steve Huston stayed close to Attorney Shotwell.

"Hell!" exploded Steve. "I'm a newspaper guy. I know when I'm not wanted!"

Attorney Shotwell's heavy arm barred Steve, and he said in the loud tone of a deaf man:

"Stick around, Huston!"

At this moment, Van noticed that John Prosser was close to what appeared to be the model of some modern type of marine engine. Van himself was interested in the model's streamlined construction, and especially in what seemed to be a tubular transmission of power that lacked the usual propeller.

In the role of Red McMurtry, the Phantom was still in doubt as to why his presence had brought no protest. It seemed that of all those present, only Steve Huston had aroused suspicion. And Attorney Shotwell was backing up Steve's presence. The situation was queer indeed. Especially, as Van knew, because Prosser and Hamm at least represented millions, while Burton Thayer and Larch Smith were even more important than millionaires in the technical knowledge they possessed.

AS FOR the senile Robert Deming, his business was obsolete and he himself was beyond the age of rehabilitation. Attorney Shotwell as representative of the Burgess Brand interests, whatever they might be, was a smart lawyer in desiring to keep Steve Huston present as a witness. But all this left Red McMurtry an unknown quantity in the case. And

what connection had all of these gadgets and blueprints with the night's fire and murders at the Burgess Brand Works?

Or what had any of all this to do with that midget monster called the Skipper out there on the wide Columbia, ready to kill or torture? Or how did any of it apply to the attempt to murder Charles Minturn, the marine inventor? Or to the secret that Mary Minturn had threatened to reveal to save the life of the Phantom?

In all of his highlighted career, the Phantom had encountered but few such crowded hours of tragedy, intrigue and treachery. He was sure that he had guessed correctly in assuming the role of Red McMurtry. As such he was important, for no one had intimated that he should be excluded along with Steve Huston.

Van was watching John Prosser over beside the marine engine model. Prosser may have been fat, but his hands were quick. Van was convinced that Prosser had disconnected and snatched away some delicate part of the engine model. Then John Prosser suddenly moved to one side, away from the engine, wheezing loudly.

"The engine?" he said hoarsely. "Who tampered with it? The whole connection system is missing?"

Van's reaction was quick. His eyes were like a camera shutter, taking in one face and another. Hamm's bony features wore a hard grin. Burton Thayer, the metallurgist, was simply showing his teeth. Larch Smith's brilliant eyes held a gleam of satisfaction. Even the rather dull features of Attorney Shotwell showed a hard glint of amusement. It was Attorney Shotwell who spoke first.

"I am surprised, Prosser, that you didn't know," said Shotwell. "Brand told me about that some time ago. The engine part was removed. It's all down on paper."

"Down on paper?" wheezed John Prosser. "You're crazy! I never permitted Charles Minturn to put any-

thing like that on paper. He couldn't—"

Then Hamm's voice broke in.

"But that's why we have Red McMurtry, isn't it?" he demanded.

Van's mind was following the various exclamations. Then he guessed he knew what Mary Minturn had meant when she had said that the death of her father, or his imprisonment would fail to gain anything for the Skipper's salmon fishermen killers.

This was all going much deeper than a mere sabotage fire at the Burgess Brand Works. John Prosser's fat face appeared to become red with rage, as if he had not been informed of some vital part Red McMurtry was supposed to be playing.

It seemed as if Prosser was deliberately simulating rage. Then Van noticed that Prosser was close to a window of the building. Prosser suddenly produced a cigarette and his lighter. Van saw the lighter play its little flame directly into the window.

At this moment came the humming of a salmon cruiser. Van saw the exhaust glow of a darkened boat through the window beside which John Prosser stood. And Prosser was undoubtedly moving quickly away from that same window!

CHAPTER XI

DEATH ON THE RIVER



G RIMLY, that salmon cruiser was headed straight for the old building set out upon the river pilings. Van could see only the motor exhaust sparks. There were no other lights.

It was remarkable how much keen observation the Phantom could crowd into split seconds of time. He noted that Hamm, the skinny steel producer, was farthest out in the build-

ing, and was at the point of greatest danger in event of a collision.

And beside Hamm was Burton Thayer, the metal magician, and Larch Smith, the production marvel. Next there was old Robert Deming, owner of the defunct boatyard. Then came Van himself, with Steve Huston between him and Attorney Shotwell.

Of all the group, Attorney Shotwell, John Prosser and Steve Huston were now nearest to the shore exit, in event of a crash. But it struck Van as absurd that a collision of the salmon boat with the old building could have serious consequences. True, a few pilings might be knocked out, but all the same, that warning bell of danger once more was ringing in the Phantom's brain. Perhaps it was the ragged course being steered by the oncoming cruiser that warned Van, or it may have been the lack of proper lights.

No matter what, it seemed apparent there was no wheelman on the cruiser, or if there was a pilot, he was very drunk.

"All of you!" Van called out. "Get back! There'll be a bad crash!"

It suddenly seemed to Van that a blunt weapon hit him under the ear. That may have been only the first shock of the explosion that boomed under them. He turned, his first thought being for Steve Huston.

Van had a flashing glimpse of Steve. The reporter was lying on the floor. Van had been staggered by the sudden blow but he had remained on his feet. It was apparent that Steve was completely out.

Deaf Attorney Shotwell and John Prosser were back toward the door leading to the shore. Van whirled toward the others. He was too late to observe much of their positions. He did see the brilliant-eyed Larch Smith on his feet, staring at a window.

In that same split second, that window vanished. So did that side of the wall and a whole section of the floor over the piling. Van had time enough to realize this was much more than

the ordinary crash of a runaway boat into a shore building.

Where the salmon cruiser had yawed its way into the old building there was now a lurid sheet of white-hot flame. The lucky break for those in the room was that the exploding salmon schooner sheered off half of the flooring.

The Phantom felt himself falling. He saw the others, including Steve Huston, dropping into the Columbia tide. It was a poor time for a sense of humor to assert itself, but it did strike Van that about all he had been doing all night was getting into the river and out of it.

This time, as he hit the water, his hair was scorched by the intense heat from the exploding boat. He ventured a guess that the salmon schooner was running without either pilot or crew when it hit the building.

BEING closest to Steve Huston in the wreckage of the old building, Van reached the surface looking for the reporter. He had the satisfaction of seeing Steve's head moving nearby. The reporter was conscious and swimming. Van saw then that two other men were making it to shore. He identified them as J. T. Hamm and Burton Thayer. He also heard Larch Smith's sharp voice calling out:

"Is everybody present?"

There was but one reply. It was the loud tone of Attorney Shotwell, and the lawyer was well up on the shore now.

"All are safe!" called out Attorney Shotwell.

Of all who had been in the building, one man was not safe. Old Robert Deming had either been trapped by the fire or rolled under the tide upon which his lifetime had been spent launching boats.

When the checkup had been completed, Van wondered whether Robert Deming had been merely unfortunate, or whether he had been the chief victim marked for death by the unknown

crime master that had sent the salmon boat into the side of the wharf. There were about him any number of people that might be able to answer the question regarding Deming's connection with the tragic and sinister train of events.

Had Deming been helping Charles Minturn for personal reasons? Would he have been able to supply the Phantom or the police with information as to who might have been in the old shipyard when Charles Minturn had been attacked by the Fer de Lance, Van Loan added these conjectures to his mental catalogue for future reference.

If Deming and Minturn had been working alone, then the assault on Deming and the latter's ultimate death by drowning or fire was explained. Recalling Deming's lackadaisical air, Van Loan even considered the fact that the shipyard owner might have been doped beforehand, and thus would have little or no chance to escape the collision and the subsequent explosion and fire.

This was one more reason for fighting to save the lives of Minturn and his daughter, and for seeking some explanation from Red McMurtry. Robert Deming's secret might have gone beneath the waves with him, but there was an outside chance that Minturn shared this secret as he seemed to share so many others.

Even as he weighed these factors, Van's powerful arms were driving his body toward the shore.

As Van reached the muddy banks alongside Steve Huston, fat John Prosser was sitting there swearing. His own life seemed to be of less importance at the moment than other things.

"The models! Every damn one of them's gone!" raged John Prosser. "And the blueprints! I'm telling you it was the same crowd that burned the Brand Works! That means we're cleaned out in putting over the new—"

Van Loan saw lean, bony Hamm reach John Prosser at that moment. A knuckled hand smacked across Prosser's mouth.

"You blathering fool!" cried out Hamm. "All of us are supposed to keep our mouths buttoned up until the war's over! What if the models are gone, and the prints? There's Red McMurtry! He got out alive! Now shut up!"

The Phantom was sure of one thing. That salmon boat had been laden with an incendiary explosive. He was sure it had no crew upon it, and its hitting the old building had been expertly timed. And for a reason of his own, the Phantom was sure that one man who had been in the building had known that boat was about to hit. One man had wanted the engine and other models and the blueprints destroyed.

Van Loan attempted to segregate the incidents of the incendiary explosion. His memory first picked up Steve Huston's and his own position. Steve had been knocked down. So had the Phantom.

"There must have been a timed explosion before the concussion of the collision," muttered Van. "But that will be difficult to determine. Yet I am convinced there was one man

among those in the room who knew the blast was coming. It's peculiar that of all, only old Robert Deming should have died."

Apparatus of the Astoria Fire Department was screaming into the old boatyard now. The old wooden building was a mass of fierce fire. To Van it appeared that the blaze contained the quality of thermite about it, the same substance that had destroyed the Burgess Brand Works.

Van looked out over the river. The plane in which the queerly assorted industrialists and technicians had arrived was no longer visible. Apparently it, too, had been destroyed. Then Van reached Steve Huston.

"Who was piloting the plane?" he queried.

"Larch Smith, the productions expert," stated Steve. "It was his own private plane."

"So Larch Smith called this meeting together?"

"No, the call for it was sent out by John Prosser," said Steve. "Attorney Shotwell told me about it when he invited me. The lawyer said he did not want to be alone with a group whose purpose he didn't understand."

"And what was the purpose, Steve?" the Phantom asked.

[Turn Page]

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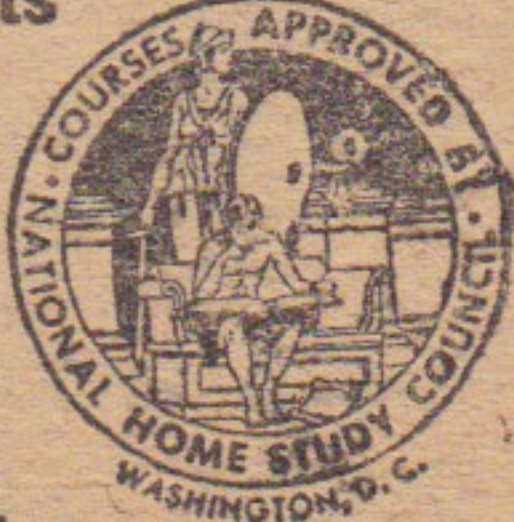
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"That's something that wasn't mentioned in my presence."

Hamm came over to Van Loan, drew him quickly to one side. Van saw that Hamm still believed him to be Red McMurtry, the cameraman.

"After tonight, Red," whispered Hamm, "you'll make a change in the hiding place. We can't leave the films where they have been kept. There is a traitor among us."

Van played up to the rôle of Red McMurtry. He had no idea of what Hamm was talking about, but he was quick to reply.

"I'll see that it's done tonight," he said quickly, trying to guess what Red McMurtry might have recorded on films that were valuable to Hamm.

"No!" snapped Hamm. "You'll be followed tonight. You oughtn't to have come here at all. Wait until you're in the clear."

All of this was making it more apparent than ever to Van that big Red McMurtry was playing a queer game. Did J. T. Hamm know about the murderous Skipper, he wondered. Adding two and two, Van judged that the films he was supposed to have hidden must have something to do with the queer models and blueprints now in the burned building.

J. T. Hamm wheezed profanely.

"The truth is, McMurtry, all of our own plans have been stolen, and this fire tonight leaves only the films we can count upon," he said. "I'm afraid Charles Minturn is dead, was murdered. So we have lost him—"

"What makes you think Charles Minturn was murdered?" Van interrupted. "Was he supposed to be here tonight?"

Hamm's bony face grew red and his thin lips rubbed together.

"Why, I—I was told," he stammered. "Someone said that before the fire was started."

"No one mentioned Charles Minturn before the meeting, so far as I know," said Van. "So what makes you believe he is dead?"

"You fool!" Hamm growled at Van in a low voice. "Are you trying to be funny? Wasn't that your own little job, getting Minturn out of the way?"

ON HEARING that, Van felt as if he would like to get back to the real Red McMurtry at once and shake some truth out of him. But he only grinned a little.

"I saw to it that Minturn didn't interfere, isn't that enough?" he grunted. "I'm slipping away now. Perhaps I can find a new hiding place for the films tonight."

Van had the sudden, unalterable purpose to return to Red McMurtry. Give him a few minutes alone with that big red-headed cameraman and he would know more about this mystery, or Red McMurtry would be a hospital case. But he was suddenly halted by two other men from the shadows. He saw the brilliant eyes of Larch Smith, and the owl-eyed Burton Thayer.

"Psst!" said Thayer. "A word with you, McMurtry."

Larch Smith hustled up and pushed Thayer to one side.

"It's this way, Red," he said brusquely. "We're paying you well, so we want those films put in some safer place. Even a bank vault isn't safe. I don't mind saying that both Thayer and myself have been robbed of our blueprints. Then the engine and boat models are done for, even if old Minturn hadn't removed his new transmission device from the engine."

"What are all of these things?" Van wanted to say, but he was in no position to put the question. Instead, he said aloud: "I'm putting the films in a safer place right away."

Larch Smith edged closer to him.

"Suppose we made it worth your while, Red," he said. "If Hamm didn't know the new place you're hiding the films— Perhaps you could use a few extra thousands. Remember, we already know about you making away with Charles Minturn."

The Phantom was beginning to add up circumstances. Someone was behind the Skipper and the killers on the river. It might be any one of these men. Now Larch Smith and Burton Thayer had come out with virtually a bribe offer, although Van could but guess for what he was supposed to be paid, disguised as Red McMurtry.

So he was supposed to have made away with Charles Minturn, and a building had just been wrecked and burned by an explosion. The way it now shaped up, it appeared as if any one of at least four men would gladly dispense with the others.

"Whatever all this is, it seems that those involved are out to cut each other's throats," muttered Van.

HE SWIFTLY instructed Steve Huston to return to Portland, but to keep a close, careful eye on Attorney Shotwell.

"And tip off Muriel Havens to be ready for a hospital job in the morning," said Van. "I hope to be in the city early. In the meantime, I have to discover how and why I was supposed to murder a marine engine expert, and what it is I'm holding that several of these gentlemen are so willing to commit a crime to obtain."

Van slipped unobtrusively from the group.

But an instant later he realized he was being followed closely. A side light showed up the bulky figure of Attorney Shotwell.

"So he has an idea that I know something, too," said Van softly. "But perhaps his line of argument runs more to violence. Possibly he thinks he's big enough to force me to disclose the hiding place of the mysterious films." He grew grim. "Wait until I snap that Red McMurtry out of his coma."

Five minutes later, the Phantom swore under his breath. Red McMurtry had disappeared from the shed where he had been left. So had Mary Minturn.

CHAPTER XII

LITTLE FOOTPRINTS



MOMENTARILY, the Phantom overlooked the shadowing Attorney Shotwell. He went over the dry ground inside the shed and down to the muddy shore. There were many footprints in evidence, but one set stood out. They were the small boots that might have been worn by a half-grown child.

"That damnably cruel Skipper," muttered the Phantom.

Then he halted. He could see where two pairs of prints went deep in the mud. Two of the pseudo salmon fishermen must have been carrying some weight to make those impressions. A minute later, Van stared bleak-eyed at prints leading away into the shadowy boatyard.

These were heavy and big. To Van's keen mind, there was every evidence that Red McMurtry had apparently escaped. He had departed, leaving Mary Minturn to her fate. But Van wasn't sure about that. Perhaps McMurtry had gone seeking help. He followed the prints. They ended at the pavement. McMurtry had made no effort to return. At this moment, Van became aware of a thick shadow trailing him. He thought again of the deaf lawyer, Shotwell.

Wanting to make sure of this, Van kept on walking down toward the waterfront. Suddenly he grew grim. Where there had been one person following him before, now there were three!

Quickly, the Phantom raced onto a small dock that had some boxes ready to be shipped on it. He dodged out of sight behind these crates, waiting for something to happen. Not taking the trouble to make their approach as noiseless as possible, the three thugs

trailing Van ran out onto the pier. One of them cursed.

"Hell, he ain't here!" another grumbled.

"Shut up!" growled the third member, playing his flashlight around the dock.

Too late, Van saw the ray spear toward him.

"There he is!" the leader of the trio shouted triumphantly. "Get him!"

With a curse Van went into action. He heaved his body up against the piled crates and shoved. Making loud noises the boxes toppled over, pinning one of the thugs beneath one of the crates. Abruptly then, shots filled the early dawn. Van knocked another of the killers to the ground and raced for the doubtful safety of the water.

The man he had knocked down leaped up suddenly, aiding in the fusillade that was meant to be the end of the Phantom's career. But they didn't know Dick Van Loan. For he hurtled his body through the air at a furious speed and sailed over the pier's edge and into the water.

"C'mon," the thug Van had hit, growled. "I think we hit him. Besides, the cops'll be here any minute."

They left abruptly then, thinking the Phantom to be no more. But they were wrong, for Van was very much alive. He had plunged as deep as he could in the river so as to avoid any slugs they might be sending down his way. Then, feeling certain that he was no longer under attack, he came to the surface under the dock.

HE LOOKED cautiously about him to make sure he was alone once more, then pulled himself up to the shore and started back toward the city interior. . . .

Dawn was graying in the late morning light as Van cautiously approached the small building where the physician's sign was hung. When Van rapped at the doctor's office door, the door swung inward from his

knocking. Cold air blew in his face. The lights in the house were out.

Two minutes later, the Phantom was unwrapping the doctor from his bindings. Van temporarily overlooked the fact that he appeared in the person of big Red McMurtry, and that the medico didn't know him in that disguise. The doctor swore at him in a hoarse whisper.

"Damn you!" he raged. "So you've come back! I've told you all I know! I do a Government man a favor, and what do I get?"

Van's instant change of tone was convincing, in spite of his disguise.

"I'm the agent," he assured the little doctor.

"But you were here with those crooks and you saw them take my patient away—"

Van's firm hand reassured him.

"Where did they take Charles Minturn?" he asked. "I am the Phantom Detective."

The doctor's eyes were still unconvinced, but Van could see the man wanted to believe him. He palmed his platinum badge, and with a quick movement of his two hands, he changed the color of his eyes from blue to brown.

The doctor nodded. "There's no time to lose," he said. "I heard one of them say they were going down the shore beyond Seaside. To Tillamook Head. They had a girl with them. A little fiend said Charles Minturn would talk. He was a little mug who stole half of my surgical instruments. Acted as if he wanted to use them, too."

"The Skipper himself!" Van grated. "The road to Seaside, Doctor?"

"Turn at the canneries and go along the ocean straight west! You can't miss it!"

Van gave the doctor a quick, stiff drink, and went out.

What his next move would be was something that gave the Phantom pause. The Skipper might have given

the doctor the information he had transmitted for the express purpose of drawing the Phantom into a trap at Tillamook Head. At the same time, Van Loan decided, the Skipper probably had the doctor's house under observation to see whether or not he snapped up the bait.

If that was the case, the easiest way to get in with the Skipper's gang would be to make it appear that he wasn't going to follow the obvious trail. Let the midget think that the doctor's clue had petered out.

The Phantom clumped along the raised sidewalk, heading for a garage sign. At the moment his faith in Red McMurtry was at a new low ebb. Apparently the red-headed cameraman had been on hand when the father of Mary Minturn had been seized, just as he had supervised the Phantom's capture by the pseudo salmon fishermen.

As Van Loan looked ahead of him on the sidewalk, he sensed that his plan to surrender himself was going to be brought to quick fruition. Just how the kidnaping would be arranged would be determined in the next few moments.

A PAIR of high-booted salmon fishermen clumped along the boardwalk. They were opposite Van now. Then the attack came. Thick, oil-skinned bodies hit him unexpectedly. Van threw out his hands to soften the impact. Abruptly then, some hard object crashed against his head. Being prepared for something like this, Van was able to temper the blow. . . .

He was next fully conscious of a car purring fast over concrete. But, somehow, he could not see clearly. Then he knew what caused his dimness of vision. He was wearing a pair of dark glasses, obviously put on him by his captors and held firm by adhesive tape.

Even now the Phantom's senses were alert. He caught the tangy smell



Van felt a gun prod into his back (Chap. XVI)

of tidewater and the odor of Scottish fir. He realized he was on the highway that ran from Astoria to Seaside, and then through to Tillamook Head.

Tillamook Head was so named because the rocks that formed it jutted out into the open Pacific. Behind it was a great Government game preserve. This was one of the last great wildernesses of the nation. On this preserve roamed deer and elk and bear.

The automobile was taking a stiffish grade. That would be the climb to the wooded ridge back of Tillamook Head. A narrow, winding road jolted the car around. Van became conscious of small feet striking at his head. These were like the feet of a child, but they were booted. They kicked at his cheeks and face. Van could picture the tiny, bearded, but wolfish face of the little Skipper. A heavy voice spoke now.

"Will we hold up at the top, Skipper, or wind down on the shelf road?"

"Down the shelf road!"

After the car had proceeded a short space, the Skipper ordered a halt. Another command, and Van was roughly lifted. Then the glasses were removed so that he could peer down at the roaring surf below. Involuntarily then, he let a shudder wrack his powerful frame. For there, down on the jagged rocks below, he could see the small figure of a girl helplessly bound. There was no mistaking the blue-black hair of pretty Mary Minturn.

"Damn you, Skipper!" raged Van. "Are you planning to murder that helpless girl?"

The fiendish little man grinned.

"But she knows nothing!" Van protested.

"Maybe not," the Skipper said. "But you do, McMurtry"—he called Van that, for Van was still in the disguise of the red-headed cameraman. "What about the films you have hidden?"

VAN said nothing.

"I suppose it's no news to you that Charles Minturn has taken away some important parts of an engine he was working on," the other continued evilly. "And he insists that he won't tell me where he has concealed the plans of the new precision instruments. I guess that neither of you would want to see the girl drown when the tide comes in in all its wrath?"

So that was it. The old engine expert—Van saw Minturn after the Skipper had pointed him out—was bound to some rocks above where the girl was, so that he could look down upon his daughter, unable to help her.

Even now, Van was as much in the dark as ever concerning all of this mystery. He realized that Minturn had taken the vital part out of an engine. Yet, from what he had heard, there were supposed to be blueprints of all the valuable mechanisms.

Now, someone was using the girl to try to extract from Red McMurtry something about his hidden films. The Phantom did not know anything about these films, would not have surrendered his information if he had. Regardless of all this, Mary Minturn was in a desperate spot. The tide was rising. Soon she would be a sodden corpse. Each swell brought green kelp higher upon the rocks. Each backwashing wave threatened to envelop the girl and carry her body free from the ropes that bound her.

That tiny murder demon, with his bare feet barely touching the Phantom, seemed to be dancing a jig of death. Van discovered that he was jammed upon the floor under the front seat. He was looking at the menaced girl through one of the half opened doors. The pallid face of Charles Minturn, framed by its gray hair, swam into view then. Van noticed two other cars above that in which he was a prisoner. He had apparently been knocked out so thoroughly that ropes or cord had been regarded as unnecessary.

"Get down there, you bungling fools!" squealed the little Skipper. "Make the old boy talk! Then we'll work on this redhead up here!"

A small toe kicked Van's ear viciously. He could see the little eyes of the Skipper's blazing at him. They were like small emeralds, having a greenish color, toned with black.

"How about it, Red?" squealed the Skipper. "Where's that camera? Where's those other films that the boss wants? Maybe you know what the old man did with the engine parts. Or do you want to keep your tongue buttoned up and watch your girl die?"

Red McMurtry again was the question mark in Van's mind. First it seemed that the big cameraman was the ace of all crooks and traitors. And now it appeared that McMurtry was himself a victim of this plot that held

such grim possibilities of mass disaster.

On the other hand, from what he had seen, any one of several men might be backing the murderous Skipper. It could be J. T. Hamm or more likely, John Prosser. Van was surer than ever now that Prosser had signaled the salmon boat that had killed Robert Deming.

From time to time, the Phantom had been presented with many queer problems. This affair, beginning with the Burgess Brand fire and progressing through the strange happenings upon the river, was a crossed-up tangle. There were wheels within wheels. Apparently, the Burgess Brand blaze was only the beginning, or perhaps a small part of a gigantic plot against the American defense works.

Much less intelligence than the Phantom's astute brain was required to arrive at the conclusion that some super-great invention must have been evolved by these men. Murder seemed but a small price to pay for desired information about it. Even as he watched the incoming tide bringing pretty Mary Minturn closer and closer to death, Van assorted the whole situation in his mind as he had encountered it.

Burgess Brand, owner of an airplane defense plant, and his wizard machine builder, Howard Roth, had been murdered. The crime had included the destruction of Roth's machines, except—Van's mind jumped to the boxed machines he had come upon in the old Robert Deming boatyard.

Next, John Prosser, engine builder, had big contracts for torpedo boat motors. Charles Minturn was the creator of these motors, but here was something beyond that. Something that Prosser wanted. And apparently either Minturn or Prosser had taken the transmission parts from another motor, now lost under the building destroyed on the Columbia.

J. T. Hamm, the living skeleton of the steel furnaces and foundries, was in this intrigue, for J. T. Hamm had made Red McMurtry a quick offer for those much desired films. Van could but judge that those films were blueprints of the whole new invention.

THEN Burton Thayer, expert metal man, and Larch Smith, a magician in production, came into this somewhere. For both had secretly made a separate offer for films they believed Red McMurtry possessed. And Van did not overlook Attorney Shotwell, who represented Burgess Brand's interests. He was convinced that he had been trailed by Shotwell through the old boatyard to the point where Mary Minturn and Red McMurtry had disappeared.

Summing it all up, Van could arrive at but one conclusion. Some one of the men he had in mind must be behind this murdering, torturing midget known as the Skipper. Van knew that more destruction and crime were in the offing.

The smash of the sea upon Tillamook Head was thunderous. Now, Van could see two of the Skipper's men down beside Charles Minturn. They were holding the old man's head so his eyes were compelled to see his daughter's body.

The Skipper's small boot toe again cracked into Van's ear.

"Where are the camera and the films, McMurtry?" the voice squealed.

Van glanced up and saw the red, lolling tongue of the black police dog behind the Skipper. He noticed that the driver of their car had stopped the machine on the steep grade and set the emergency. Now, the driver climbed out of the car. One other man was in the back of the car behind the Skipper. As Van looked down again, it seemed to him that Mary Minturn's eyes were turned toward him imploringly. Maybe it was his imagination.

At that moment the Skipper had the dark glasses put on the Phantom. Van felt the forty-five degree tilt of the car. It seemed to be hanging upon the shelf-like road above the rocks upon which the girl and her father were being held. Van's right hand slipped forward quietly, and released the emergency brake.

The Skipper squealed, the police dog barked savagely, and the man in the rear of the car cursed. None of these interfered with the car's weight as it hurtled downward and off the road!

CHAPTER XIII

QUEER RED MCMURTRY



WITH a roaring, crashing sound, the car skidded off the shelving road, and smashed into a tree. Of all those in the car, only the Skipper and his killer dog were knocked unconscious. The thug in the back seat was shaken up, stunned for a moment. But already Van was out of the car, ripping at the adhesive that glued those glasses to his eyes with one hand. The other was gripping the Skipper's gun.

He had taken it just before he extricated himself from the wreck. Abruptly then, the thug in the car came to life. He leaned out the window, slammed a shot at Van. His slug grazed Van's wrist, knocking the gun from his hand.

Van dropped to the ground to prevent himself being the killer's human target, at the same time getting the glasses off his eyes. Now he could see clearly again. The thug fired again, missed. Van reached the gun he had dropped, picked it up as he lay flat. Quickly then, he spun and fired at that grim figure.

No more bullets whined his way. The thug was dead, a slug just between his cruel eyes.

Van knew that the Skipper's unconsciousness would be but a brief one. He would be coming out of it soon, and Van knew that what he had to do next had to be done in a hurry or it would be complete disaster for him, as well as Mary Minturn and her father. Van was thankful that the roaring surf had silenced the gunplay that had just ended, for none of the Skipper's criminals were racing his way.

Moving cautiously, yet with the speed of a runaway locomotive, Van scrambled down the steep embankment toward the pounding sea. When he was but a hundred yards from the girl, Van stopped, saw two men hovering near her.

Bit by bit then, the Phantom moved toward them.

Then, setting himself for a furious dash, Van hurtled his body over the remaining distance and crashed into the two men, whose backs were still toward him. Without a sound they toppled into the sea, never to be heard from on this earth again.

A green wave washed up over Van as he tore at the ropes binding the girl. The rough rocks helped him sever the bindings. A second high wave found him with the girl in his arms, starting away from that grim scene.

Van turned his eyes toward the girl's apparently helpless father. It was impossible for him to save the girl and reach Charles Minturn. Possibly it was because the Skipper's men were already beginning to use rods, that old Minturn was given a chance.

It seemed that Charles Minturn possessed an amazing amount of recuperative strength. Having released himself from his bonds after hours of painful effort, Van saw the old inventor come tumbling over the rocks

with one of the Skipper's killers sprawled out behind him.

"Red! Red! You came for me!"

This was the anguished yet happy voice of Mary Minturn in Van's ear. She had to scream the words, for an ocean swell suddenly swept them off the rocks and into the sea. As Van came up, supporting the girl, he saw one of the Skipper's pseudo salmon fishermen on the shore lifting an automatic.

The killer, his smoking gun and the figure that hit him went into the ocean swells together. It was but a photographic glimpse that Van had had of the new arrival, but there was no mistaking the flaming red hair and the huge body of the real Red McMurtry!

FORTUNATELY, the undertow was sweeping along the rocks, and Mary Minturn was being carried

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Van realized that if they remained on the surface for too long, it would be their finish. Then he saw the gray head of Charles Minturn bob up nearby. The little Skipper was conscious once more. He was on the rocks, dancing up and down like some frustrated demon. Plainly, he was issuing an order to shoot to kill.

Van heard the first shot from the automatic. What happened next was beyond even his own strained apprehension of all that had taken place. A man's figure, like some great ball, came flying from the rocks above.

with Van toward a small beach of black sand. That being the case, the girl failed to see this amazing appearance of the real Red McMurtry.

"It would be worthwhile to know just where McMurtry stands, and whom he is fighting for," muttered Van.

There was a fight ensuing in the water not far away. The red head of McMurtry emerged. Van saw the cameraman's fist rise and fall on the jaw of the machine-gunner. The water near him grew quiet. Then Red McMurtry turned and swam de-

liberately away from the beach where Mary and Van had landed.

A few seconds later, Van saw McMurtry supporting the gray-haired Charles Minturn. The girl with Van missed this. For Van crossed the beach with the girl in his arms and headed into the rocks and the wilderness of the national game preserve above. . . .

The Skipper and his killer crew, leaving one wrecked car, must have quickly vanished from Tillamook Head. The Phantom had Mary Minturn in Astoria within an hour, having come upon a friendly milk truck driver. Sure that she was in a safe place this time, the Phantom replied to her questioning eyes.

"Yes, I am the Phantom," he said. "Perhaps I made a mistake about Red McMurtry. Anyway, I know Red was all right the last time I saw him and he had just saved your father's life."

Pretty Mary Minturn was white-lipped. She had been slow to speak.

"The Phantom?" she said slowly. "Yes, I believe you. You say Red saved my father's life. Phantom, I'll be honest with you. Something has happened to Red McMurtry recently. I don't know what it is, but I have been afraid. He won't talk to me much."

Van considered this.

"You think Red knows more than he is telling?" he said gently then.

The girl buried her face in her hands.

"More than that!" she cried. "I love him, Phantom! But I'm sure that he knew of that fire at the Burgess Brand Works before it happened! And I know that my father doesn't trust anyone! Why, my father even removed—"

Van Loan realized that the girl was talking about a subject that was unpleasant to her. He decided that it might help to change the subject somewhat. He touched her arm with his hand.

"Let's not think about the fire," he said. "I can understand, too, why your father wouldn't want to trust anyone. But he must have put some of his trust in you. Did you know anything about his work with those spiders, his new precision instruments, and what they were for?"

"I knew that he was working on them," she said. "They are new type aiming sights and guides for steering equipment on his boats. But further than that I can tell you nothing."

They were in a quiet room of a small hotel in Astoria. The Phantom had been positive they had reached this place without being observed. But as the girl spoke, there was a sound as if a dry stick had snapped.

Mary Minturn cried out suddenly, started to fall. Van caught her. A groove in the flesh over the girl's eyes welled as if a solid blow had been struck. Van's instinctive sense told him that this was not the impact of a bullet.

He whirled toward the single window. A long, skinny figure was dropping down the fire escape. The face was hidden, but J. T. Hamm, the big steel man, was the only person out here who so nearly resembled a skeleton.

VAN'S automatic leaped into his hand. Then, suddenly, he saw another, bulkier figure hitting the ground below. A flashlight revealed the hair of Red McMurtry. Van shot twice, but each time the iron ladder deflected the lead.

"Hamm and Red McMurtry!" growled Van. "It doesn't seem possible!"

Back beside the girl once more, he discovered she was slowly opening her eyes, moaning. He knew that if that groove had been a quarter of an inch lower she would have been dead. He bathed the wound, but his eyes were constantly searching the opposite wall.

Only a minute later he dug out a

queer projectile. This was of steel, an inch long and smooth. There was no evidence of its having been fired from a gun. Van pocketed the missile. At this moment his quick brain was associating something he had seen with this class of missile. It was strange, too, but he was thinking of a man's ears.

"Air-gun," he murmured. "Something new and deadly. That steel rod was meant to kill."

And it had been the face and head of big Red McMurtry at the bottom of the fire escape! He had last seen McMurtry attempting to save Charles Minturn.

"Possibly all that he wanted was the secret of what was removed from the marine engine," said Van softly. "Anyway, from here on, Miss Minturn needs police attention. She knows too much."

At the same time, Van Loan sensed that the killers would probably have the small hotel under surveillance. The fact that the man with the air-gun had been able to find them indicated that others of the gang might well beat a path to their door. It was essential that the Phantom get Mary out of this hotel without the knowledge of anyone.

Moments later, he was prepared to make his unscheduled exit. He had torn up the sheets on the bed and fashioned a usable rope out of them. He tangled these up for added strength, then fastened them around Mary's waist, and adjusted the rope under her shoulders. She was still unconscious when he lowered her to a fire-escape platform on the floor below.

This action of the Phantom's would not only make it possible for him to elude the Skipper and his gang for the time being, but it would also avoid the possibility of embarrassing explanations regarding Mary Minturn's injury.

About a block away from the hotel, the Phantom hailed a car and asked

to be taken to the home of the chief of police, explaining that his companion was injured. The motorist was obliging, and since the destination was the police chief's home, he was not unduly curious.

The chief of police of Astoria was a bustling fellow, with his capability definitely marked by the prompt manner in which he accepted the Phantom's credentials and undertook the task of looking after Mary Minturn. Minutes after they had entered his home, he had called a police doctor and two guards to watch over the girl. One would remain somewhere in the house, while the other one would constantly patrol the grounds.

When the Phantom left the room where the police chief of Astoria had installed a competent guard, his personality had been changed. Again he was the grayish "Mr. Macklin." The Astoria chief was ready enough to join forces with the Phantom.

"Never expected you to visit this small fishing town," said the rubicund chief cheerfully. "But what we have is yours. And by the way, the Sailors' Hotel has turned in something peculiar."

Police Chief Newell brought out a small movie camera. Its drum was still intact.

"Yup," said Newell. "They found it among the clothes in the laundry chute."

"Would you know about that, Miss Minturn?" said Van to the revived girl.

"It seemed like a good idea when those men were hammering at my door," she said, with a wan smile. "From all the trouble it's caused, it may be important."

THE Phantom nodded. He liked this Mary Minturn, and it went against the grain to know what he did about Red McMurtry. He still hoped there might be some big mistake. But now it seemed that Mc-

Murtry was in the murder intrigue all the way up to his ears.

Believing Mary Minturn would be safe in the police chief's own house, Van left. He wanted to see what was on that movie film. Newell accompanied him. The department afforded developing facilities. He ran the film slowly through the acid, then he watched it dry.

As he put the film through the movie viewer, little scenes came into view. A fat brown spider crawled across the lighted glass. A bulky human figure showed briefly. It was only a man's back, though. The shoulders were shapeless, and they were covered by a salmon fisherman's slicker.

"And all of that torture and murder for nothing," mused the Phantom. "But—"

He was peering closer now. Hands, big white hands had appeared from under the fisherman's slicker. They were apparently reaching toward the stooped figure of Charles Minturn, who was intent upon winding the spider web. The white hands advanced, but they were quickly snatched back. Then the brown spider on the glass moved toward the hands.

"That's it," breathed the Phantom. "Fat white hands like those of John Prosser. He was afraid of the big spider. He probably intended to make sure that Minturn was unconscious when the Fer de Lance hit him, and then—" He paused. "What's this?"

The oil-slickered figure had turned part of the way about. The face was still hidden, but the snap-brimmed hat was pushed back a little. A flashback of memory clicked in the Phantom's brain. On the film he had only a hat, an invisible face, hands pulled away from a brown spider and—

It was then that the deadly Fer de Lance flashed into view. Van saw the whole film darken. He realized that at that time he had jammed the

camera into his pocket and leaped in to save Minturn's life. Apparently he had not released the automatic catch on the camera, thus exposing a portion of the film.

"And perhaps it was that that saved Charles Minturn's life, and at the same time prevented the camera from identifying his would-be killer," Van said angrily.

He ran the film again, but he could glean no more of its details. The first part of it revealed the ghastly figures of Burgess Brand and Howard Roth, burned to skeletons in the airplane plant. These could be of no value now. But suddenly the Phantom was intently studying the bony skull and the horrible gold-toothed grin of the thing that had been Burgess Brand. His vision took in the upper bone formation of the face.

Van ran the film to the broader-boned skull of Howard Roth. It was an unpleasant picture. Certainly none of it was ever destined to appear upon a screen of a movie theater.

VAN placed all of the film away with care. He left the negative in care of the Astoria police. The rubicund police chief had been watching him closely.

"Sometimes I'm glad I haven't anything tougher than a few salty salmon fishermen to contend with," Newell said.

Van smiled a little. As the gray-haired Mr. Macklin he had the appearance of a college professor.

"I'm afraid I would be a failure at fighting with your salty fishermen," he said pleasantly. "One word of advice, though. If you happen to run onto a salmon boat with a midget for a captain, bring him and its crew in. And watch out for the little Skipper. He's likely to be dynamite."

"Sure," agreed Newell. "I'll bring him in under one arm. And we'll look out for Miss Minturn until we hear from you."

"Remember, she is not to be visited by Red McMurtry," warned Van.

"McMurtry?" exclaimed the chief. "Why, he's her boy friend. We couldn't keep him out."

"I'd not only keep him out," said Van slowly, "but I'd put him in irons. Don't do that, however. I'll keep in touch with you from Portland."

A noon sun bathed the Columbia River Highway with its radiance as the Phantom drove a car he had hired alongside the big river.

CHAPTER XIV

KIDNAPED PATIENT



ENTERING the private room of the big, cool hospital, the brown-eyed intern had a smile for each of the nurses. He was wheeling an empty stretcher. Now he slid the stretcher into an unoccupied corner.

"Sorry, Miss Davis," he said to the petite, blond nurse in charge. "The chief thinks it might be well to take a metabolism of Mrs. Brand. Nothing important, just routine."

The little blond nurse had a pretty, oval face. Her eyes were bright and blue. She glanced at the yellow-haired woman resting in a nest of pillows.

"Surely, Dr. Toler," she said. "It's all right, Mrs. Brand. These tests take a little time, but from what I've seen, you're almost one hundred per cent."

Seated near the head of the hospital bed, a bulky, bald-headed man frowned heavily. He leaned forward as if he failed to hear the conversation. The intern went nearer to the man and leaned down with his lips to the bald-headed man's lapel microphone.

"I said we're taking a metabolism," he stated. "It'll be half a day before

Mrs. Brand is permitted any visitors."

The bald-headed man smiled a little. The blond nurse was shifting the patient about, preparing for her removal.

"I don't see why I should leave," the almost deaf man said plaintively. But he made no impression on the intern.

"Chief's orders," Dr. Toler said cheerfully. "Sorry, but you'll have to leave, Mr.—"

"I'm Attorney Lionel Shotwell," the deaf man said. "I'm Mrs. Brand's counsel. It is important that she should—"

"All that's important to us is Mrs. Brand's health," Dr. Toler interrupted. "I'm afraid you are rushing your business, Mr. Shotwell. You may be her attorney, but Mrs. Brand has suffered considerable shock. I'd suggest you hold off for a couple of days."

Attorney Lionel Shotwell arose grumpily, pushing some papers into a brief-case. He never would have believed the quickness of the intern's hands. This "Dr. Toler" apparently stumbled, and apologized instantly. He kept on talking as he helped Attorney Shotwell restore the spilled papers to the brief-case.

"Well, I never saw such awkwardness!" Mrs. Brand exclaimed.

"Dr. Toler" bowed and apologized again. The blond nurse administered a restorative and used a damp towel on Mrs. Brand's face. Her bright eyes flashed to the intern. He smiled with a slight twist of his lips.

Muriel Havens was doing very well for a new nurse. "Dr. Toler"—better known as the Phantom—was most satisfied with her. The grunting Attorney Shotwell shut his brief-case and prepared to leave.

"I'll be back Marg—Mrs. Brand, tomorrow," he said, quickly, correcting his familiar manner.

Van did not miss the "Marg—" and the lawyer's quick change of tone. As

he issued instructions to prepare Mrs. Brand for the metabolism test, Van walked out with Attorney Shotwell. The lawyer exhibited the usual testiness of nearly deaf men. He shouted when it was absolutely unnecessary.

Van Loan walked with him to the lower stairs. The broad stone steps slanted to a traffic street, and Van watched Attorney Shotwell reach the intersection. The lights had not changed yet.

A POLICEMAN'S traffic whistle sounded several blocks away, and Van caught its faint signal. He was watching Attorney Shotwell. The big lawyer stepped back to the curb, glancing both ways. He glanced up at the lights before he again started across the street.

"That's about the best mike I ever knew a deaf man to wear," said Van softly.

Half a minute later he had doffed his intern's uniform. Now he was close behind Attorney Shotwell. Van glanced at a paper in his hand as he walked. It had come from Shotwell's brief-case. The paper was a policy on the Burgess Brand Works. Mrs. Brand's lawyer certainly was wasting no time. . . .

Back in the private ward of the big hospital, Muriel Havens was watching the petulant look in the green eyes of the yellow-haired Mrs. Brand. The patient's lips were twisted like those of a spoiled child.

"I don't want whatever it is that intern said," she muttered peevishly.

"I want my own personal doctor."

"Dr. Barton himself recommended a metabolism test," said Muriel Havens brightly. "I'll give you a sponge bath, Mrs. Brand."

"You'll do no such thing!" snapped the patient. "I'll call the head nurse."

Muriel smiled at her.

"I'm acting under the orders of the head nurse," she said. "And you are to have an hour's nap at once."

Muriel went over and pulled the shade in the face of her patient's grumbling. She could see across a wooded bit of land to the blue river. When she came back, Mrs. Brand had her eyes closed. Muriel smiled grimly and sat down near the window. In many hours she had failed to elicit anything but complaints from her wealthy patient. The Phantom had not clearly indicated what he had wanted. She was to keep an eye upon Mrs. Brand, that was all.

Muriel Havens began to doze off. She regarded her bit of assistance to the famous Phantom as a decidedly tame job. All at once, she dismissed that idea.

Perhaps it was the window shade that rustled. But she had no time to find out. Strong fingers encircled her dainty white throat. A damp cloth slapped over her nostrils. She was forced to try to breathe. The world and all that was in it floated away from Muriel Havens. It returned on the wave of a murderous headache. Her stomach trying to hit her under the chin, Muriel staggered to her feet.

Abruptly, she came to her senses, and stared. Mrs. Brand's bed was empty! The window shade slapped inward on a cool night wind. Muriel instinctively reached for the emergency button, but held her hand away from it.

Putting it simply, Muriel was on the spot. A new nurse, here under the direction of police authority, it would be difficult to explain that vacant bed. Mrs. Burgess Brand was missing. So was the silk coverlet of the bed. Muriel's keen eyes found some of the silk caught on a corner of the fire-escape at the window.

Muriel had her choice. Call immediate help, or find Mrs. Brand by herself. She decided her own status would not be improved by calling for help. Now she looked out of the window into the darkness. Glancing at her wrist-watch, she judged she had been unconscious only about five min-

utes. Two ambulances and some taxicabs were lined up in back of the hospital. Muriel forgot her white uniform and went out through the window.

Perhaps the Phantom's aide from Park Avenue, the socialite daughter of Frank Havens, would have hesitated if she could have seen the oil-skinned figures crouched close to a huge fir tree near the hospital.

One of these men said out of the corner of his mouth:

"The Skipper had it all doped out. That nurse dame's workin' with the Phantom! There'll be some fun on the river tonight!"

"Button your trap, an' make it fast an' sweet," growled the other man. "We've slipped on enough now to start the Skipper into one of his fits. An' he's got a new set of knives he took off that Astoria doctor!"

MURIEL HAVENS came down off the fire-escape then. She was between the two slickered men when her breath was cut off once more that night. Then Muriel was handed an unexpected respite.

A thin, squealing voice spoke from nearby:

"Let the nurse go, you dopes! Get back to the boat! We have followed out the orders of the boss!"

Muriel Havens, prepared to scream, found herself suddenly standing alone. But there was a high-pitched scream, and it hadn't come from her. Through the trees a woman came running. She had yellow hair, and was clad only in an expensive nightgown.

"Save me! Save me!" The woman was crying out. "They're kidnapers! They want my money! Somebody help me!"

Muriel Havens was amazed to see Mrs. Burgess Brand running toward her. The woman's face was bleeding and her arms were badly scratched. Muriel reached her as quickly as she could.

The widowed heiress to a million or so in hard cash fainted in Muriel's arms. Blood was streaming from a cut over one eye. Muriel called out loudly to some ambulance drivers, who came hurrying toward her.

CHAPTER XV

SILENT DEATH AGAIN



PORTLAND newspapers screamed the attempted kidnaping of Mrs. Burgess Brand. One newspaper's headlines read:

WIDOW HEIRESS TO
MILLION IN INSUR-
ANCE IS SEIZED!

The Phantom read the lines and the story beneath them, while standing on the rear platform of a trolley car. The car was being eased down one of Portland's steep hills. Another man in the front of the car was reading the same lines. He was none other than Attorney Lionel Shotwell.

At this moment, the Phantom might have been mistaken for a back street derelict who had borrowed the necessary carfare in order to ride the trolley. He had swiftly turned his reversible suit inside out and changed his identity in a secluded telephone booth. Up to now he had been trailing the attorney for hours since leaving the hospital.

His glance went from the paper to his quarry.

Now he saw Attorney Shotwell roll up the newspaper and push it under his coat. The lawyer's big face had little expression. The kidnaping story related how Mrs. Brand had been taken from her hospital room, then had broken free from her captors. The story also mentioned that a Miss Davis, a nurse, had been the first to find Mrs. Brand. The Phantom had an odd look in his eyes.

"Kidnaped?" he muttered. "Then she was permitted to get away! She

may be the insurance heiress, but any smart abductor would know he could not collect a penny of insurance ransom. It doesn't seem reasonable."

THE car stopped. Van moved fast as Attorney Shotwell was swinging to the street. Van could see the afternoon sidewalk crowd. Walking side by side near him were Burton Thayer, the owl-eyed metal expert, and Larch Smith, the production manager. Van's attention was instantly riveted upon this pair.

Here were two men who had made an offer to buy films when they had believed him to be Red McMurtry. Van hit the street as the car started. He noticed Attorney Shotwell getting into a taxicab.

Van judged it had to be more than coincidence when he saw the furtive figure of J. T. Hamm not far behind Burton Thayer and Larch Smith. For Hamm was showing exactly how an amateur proves he is not trailing someone he is trailing. Hamm was darting from one doorway to another.

Van moved closer to Thayer and Larch Smith. He noticed they were reading the Burgess Brand kidnapping headlines. He heard Larch Smith say:

"That was a damn fool play! They'd have a tough time collecting ransom from insurance! You know, Thayer, I believe I can put my finger on the murder boss of all this sabotage out here—"

He stopped abruptly, a puzzled look on his face. Larch Smith gave no cry or other sign that he was injured. He simply sat down suddenly on the sidewalk and was still. Burton Thayer quickly bent over him.

"Smith! Smith!" he cried. "What happened?"

What had happened was that Larch Smith had died suddenly, mysteriously. The Phantom could see that at a glance. Smith had keeled over, his eyes wide open and staring.

Van's vision took in the crowd, saw the skeletonlike J. T. Hamm coming toward the grim scene. The steel man was pushing past other people as easily as a knife going through butter.

"Here! Here!" called out Hamm. "Get back! I know this man— Why, Thayer! What are you doing here?"

Hamm seemed to see his own metal expert for the first time. Hamm and Thayer lifted Larch Smith's head, but it rolled sideward in a sickening fashion.

"Great Scott!" exploded Hamm. "He's dead! Look—"

Hamm meant to say: "Look at the blood on his hands!" Smith's life stream welled from a wound in his throat. It was a peculiar, jagged wound. A bullet or some other missile had penetrated deeply.

Van remained the humble bystander, looking the part of some frowsy hanger-on. He noticed that the taxicab carrying Attorney Shotwell had disappeared. Apparently the Brand lawyer had missed the tragedy that touched his own client's affairs so closely. Van waited and watched. He remained motionless, keeping to the edge of the crowd even when a police doctor emitted a profane exclamation.

"Hell!" said the police doctor. "What in thunder is this, anyway?"

The doctor was holding up a bit of rounded steel that he had taken from the dead man's throat. Van connected it instantly with the missile that had narrowly missed killing Mary Min-turn in Astoria.

Then they were putting what was left of Larch Smith into a black wagon. Van edged close to the men handling the stretcher. J. T. Hamm and Burton Thayer were nearby, and it was apparent they expected to ride along with the police to make a final identification. Van was watching the lips of the two men. Hamm's bloodless mouth was moving.

"With Robert Deming gone, and

now Smith, that'll make two less for the final division, Thayer," he was saying.

The owl-eyed Burton Thayer nodded in agreement. But the way Hamm was looking at Thayer, Van could have sworn he was thinking:

"And if you were gone, Thayer, that would be one less with whom to divide."

"But we've got to get Red McMurtry on our side," Hamm said aloud. "He'll have to know there can't be any payoff unless we have the films."

"Yes, sir," said Burton Thayer. "But McMurtry may already think that Charles Minturn took away part of that engine model. He might even have a film of the part."

Hamm's bloodless lips danced into oaths that meant little. Van was considering his next move. He had not yet made contact with Chip Dorlan. Perhaps some angle at the Burgess Brand plant might give a lead to the series of tragedies.

"It would seem at this moment that these men have some new war machine about ready for the market," Van thought. "Or is the whole plan a widespread sabotage plot for which they expect to receive a huge amount from some foreign power?"

THE Phantom went into a drug store, contacted Muriel Havens by telephone. This whole murder series was beginning to assume greater proportions than he had expected it would.

"Mrs. Brand is putting on a good show of being a hysterical woman, Phantom," said Muriel Havens. "There is one queer angle to all of it, though. I am sure that two men were watching when I followed her from the hospital. They could have grabbed me, but I was not molested."

"Your job is about finished, Muriel," said Van. "You might as well resign as a nurse. Register at the Willamette Hotel under the name of Jane Horton. I'll call you later."

The Phantom was thinking deeply. The snatching of Mrs. Brand had a false note in it somewhere. In quick succession, Van contacted Steve Huston and Chip Dorlan. Steve had learned nothing new. For the first time, Van heard the story of the attempt to kill Chip Dorlan and of the old tunnel under the Burgess Brand Works. His mouth tightened when Chip told him of his experiences at the airplane plant.

The Phantom instructed both Steve and Chip to stay on call. It was late in the evening now, but Van found an address he wanted in the telephone guide and called a taxicab. There was a light in the fifth floor of the office building when he finally arrived.

Once again, Van had assumed the role of Red McMurtry. His tap on the glass admitted him to the office. It was partly dark inside. The man who opened the door was broad and bulky.

"Hi'ya, Red!" greeted the big man.

Van's reply was silent and solid. His fist shot out and the big man started down on his heels. Again Van's fist caught him on the jaw. The big man went limp with a wheezing groan.

Van's hands worked deftly. He produced what might have been a dentist's forceps or a bright surgical instrument. After he had done his impromptu dental work, he replaced everything in the big man's sagging mouth as it had been. He swiftly went through two desks. From one he lifted a wig of red hair. He put it back with a hard grin.

It was with a queer, hard smile that Van made a further examination. The big man was still an unconscious heap on the floor. Van stepped to a phone and put in a call for Chip Dorlan.

"We'll have a look at that tunnel now," said Van. "Meet me there in half an hour."

After meeting Chip in the airplane

plant, the Phantom examined the green book of matches that Chip had picked up. They went carefully through the old tunnel. It was empty. Only the river tide gurgled at its lower end.

Van again studied the empty book of matches. He read:

GREEN SPRUCE CLUB

The Phantom, together with Chip, left the Burgess Brand Works and went to the Green Spruce Club. Upon entering it, Van saw the tiny figure seated in the cashier's cage. The man was small and his face was mottled, as if he had suffered with smallpox. There was no hint of recognition in the man's small green eyes as he gazed at Van, who had changed back to "Mr. Macklin" while on his way to the club. The little, round mouth of the man in the cashier's cage did not seem to move, yet Van was sure that his eyes and mouth had transmitted a signal.

"Chip," said Van in a low voice, "we are about to be kidnaped. Don't put up a fight. Possibly we will find ourselves in direct contact with the sabotage murder boss."

Van's deduction was correct. Three men with hard faces stepped alongside Van and Chip in the check-room.

"Keep right on walking, Phantom," said one of the men in a low voice. "Out the side door and into the first car at the right."

As their captors headed them for the automobile, Van Loan wondered whether he and Chip Dorlan would be as lucky this time as he had been when on the jaunt to Tillamook Head. On the previous trip the criminals had been lax in guarding him, but this time, with Chip Dorlan, perhaps already known as the Phantom's aide, things might not go off so easily.

But Van Loan found that he was not going to be given much oppor-

tunity to examine his captors and to chart their course. As they stepped into the car, black bags were thrown over their heads, and they were pushed down on the floor of the tonneau. At least there was one compensation in the fact that the Skipper himself was not along to play his foot tattoo on Van's ribs, the Phantom thought.

They rode for perhaps an hour. Then the car was halted, and a snatch of conversation between a man and the chauffeur came to Van's ears. Apparently they were at the gates of some sort of factory or mill. The sounds of heavy metal pounding together, the odor of fiery furnaces, the clatter and rattle reminiscent of the old boiler factory, all mixed in the mêlée of sound that came to Van's ears.

Suddenly he was conscious of the fact that someone was gripping his shoulder tightly, and a moment later a sap came down and connected just at the base of his skull. Even as blackness oozed over him, he knew that Chip Dorlan had probably been subjected to the same ruthless treatment.

CHAPTER XVI

STREAM OF DEATH



FINALLY when the Phantom recovered consciousness it was to discover that he sat with his back up against cold iron. He was held there rigidly. Weighted buckles extended down the side of the huge iron ladle in which he had been placed. They were strapped over his arms.

Chip Dorlan's miserably contrite face could just be dimly seen. He was similarly buckled to the side of the huge iron ladle. Constructed to convey fifty tons of molten steel, the ladle

was a great pot set upon wheels. These ran on a small track.

The ladle moved slowly, and Van's voice was lost in the explosive thunder of pouring iron and steel. He could see the small contrivance at the bottom of the big ladle from which melted steel could be run. Outside, a dinky engine puffed. The ladle moved forward only a few feet. White-hot light glowed murderously over the top.

The Phantom suddenly realized that this was the huge steel plant of Thurston Hamm. Checking back in his memory, the place selected for Chip's and his own execution was not surprising. Van was recalling how Thurston Hamm had been shadowing Larch Smith when Smith had been silently murdered. Van was disappointed that he had not been taken to the murder boss. It was this he had planned for, but apparently if J. T. Hamm was the real murder boss, he desired only to get rid of the Phantom.

It would be over quickly, Van knew. Tons of hot liquid steel would engulf them. Every part of their bodies would be consumed. Nothing would remain of either Chip Dorlan or the Phantom.

The ladle was moving again. The Phantom glanced at the bottom of the big pot and saw more than the mechanical contrivance intended to pour out the melted steel. There was a round cylinder that should not have

been there. Van's lips moved as he caught Chip's eye.

"Anyway, Chip, we'll never know what happened to us," he said with his lips. "I heard enough to know that the murder master intends for this ladle to destroy all of the open hearth. Other cylinders of high explosive are planted, ready to go. All of the assembled steel of the J. T. Hamm foundries will become a mixture beyond the power of any chemist to segregate."

Chip's face was white, but his blue eyes were bright. He forced a grin. He had always dreamed that some day he would go out like this, with the Phantom. Only he wished that he could, in some way, save the Phantom.

Biting sparks showered into the ladle from the open hearth now pouring its deadly contents into the big pot next in line. The sparks bit into Chip's clothing, smoked and seared his skin.

"I've heard of men being caught in the open hearth ladles," said Chip with his lips. "If they know you're there, they take the tons of steel out and bury it. Perhaps they put a headstone of steel over it. I don't know."

CHIP'S mouth was white, but he was still forcing that grin.

In the meantime, the Phantom was adding up this and that. Van had

[Turn Page]



learned that the chief purpose was to destroy the J. T. Hamm foundries. It was especially desired to bring about an explosion that would leave no trace of any particular metal now on hand.

That was it! Burton Thayer had evolved a master metal. No doubt J. T. Hamm had the formula and the master of murders wanted the metal itself destroyed beyond any analysis. Could it be that this secret alone would be worth to Hamm the destruction of his own foundries? Van considered John Prosser and the theft he had seen of a part from the Minturn marine engine model. And there was still Red McMurtry.

But now Van's mind became clear. Hamm, or even Thayer, might want the metal itself destroyed to prevent others from discovering the chemical formula. No other metal chemist could reproduce their secret from a mass of wreckage and slag.

The open hearth heat over the big ladle was becoming insufferable now. One more movement of the dinky engine, then metal, as fluid as water, would consume all inside that ladle. The Phantom exerted all of his strength against the iron buckles holding his arms. His skin and his flesh yielded, but the iron held.

Never in all of his long career had the Phantom been closer to such a horrible death. He was angry now, not so much because of the imminence of death, but for the reason that a gigantic plot was about to succeed and he would not be around to thwart it.

The big ladle moved again. A few more inches and the ladle would be under the death spout. Van studied the mechanical device at the bottom of the ladle, at the same time hooking one foot under and putting all of his strength into the heave of his body. The lever loosened and the metal trap came open! Automatic brakes abruptly locked the ladle upon the steel rails.

An overalled workman slipped

over the edge of the ladle. Van lifted his feet and kicked him across the big pot. Chip was quick. His heels caught the unlucky workman, kicked him in the head. The man bounded back to where Van was held. Cries sounded along the open hearth furnaces.

The whole system was stalled now. Van locked his legs around the workman. His words hissed out:

"Unfasten the buckles, or you'll stay here with us!"

Quickly the workman did as he was bid. Van's legs were weak and shaky as he pulled Chip up to the rim of the big ladle. They dropped to the ground and Van raced toward the engine room where the immense pumps were pouring a blast into the cupola furnaces.

Somewhere inside that engine room was the deadly explosive that would wipe out the J. T. Hamm foundries. He was halfway to the pumps when he saw a loaded ore car slowly ascending the steep track of a cupola.

Van gasped as he saw the pretty, white face of Muriel Havens over the edge of the climbing ore car! Forgetting the explosives, Van started climbing. Muriel was supposed to be in Portland. For some reason her removal had suddenly become important.

The ore car moved slowly upward. Muriel's white face was filled with dread. Abruptly then, Van heard the minor crack of a gun. Gray lead painted the rail close to him. Then the explosion of the gun was diminished by the bedlam of thundering lime and ore chutes. The rising car would automatically discharge its contents into the seething inferno of power-blasted coke and gas when it reached the top of its climb.

FOR A minute, the Phantom was compelled to cling to the cable below the ore car. Then his vast strength reasserted itself. His hands bled as he drove himself upward un-

der the car, clinging to the cogged rails.

Van saw an impeding brake hook trailing the car. He put his weight against it, hoping it would accomplish its purpose. Smoky sparks tore from the metal. He went over the edge of the car then. In a moment Van released the girl from her intended tomb. Then she was in the Phantom's mighty arms.

Van lifted the girl clear as the car started to tip over. He came down the cogged track, supporting her and clinging to the steel. It was then that Van saw the bald-headed, fat figure of John Prosser waddling through the molding sand below. Beside him was the skinny Thurston Hamm. And near them was the flaming-haired Red McMurtry.

The Phantom released the girl a few feet from the sand, went charging into Red McMurtry and bore him to the ground. The two figures rolled together into the sand, fighting savagely. It was then that McMurtry identified the Phantom in his guise as Mr. Macklin.

"One of us is crazy, Phantom!" he cried out. "Look!"

Van had but a brief glimpse of a tiny figure, that of the Skipper! It seemed then as if all of the middle of J. T. Hamm's steel foundries exploded in a single blast. The big pump engines disintegrated almost instantly.

J. T. Hamm was running to escape certain death. John Prosser was attempting to keep pace with him. Red McMurtry had halted, spellbound at what was happening. The Phantom held the limp figure of Muriel Havens in his arms.

It was into this inferno then that the strangely calm figure of Attorney Lionel Shotwell appeared. The big lawyer, his bald head shining in the light, walked as any deaf man would. He did not seem to be affected by the thunder of sound. And with him was Burton Thayer. But Thayer was a

frantic man. His hands were waving. He was pointing at something. His hand was directed at one of the last of the dissolving cupolas.

ONLY because he could read lips was the Phantom able to understand Burton Thayer.

"The molding steel!" the metal expert was yelling. "The molding steel!"

The Skipper had already vanished from sight. Van saw Attorney Shotwell's lips. The attorney was saying over and over again:

"My client demands her rights!"

It was like someone saying, in the face of a hurricane:

"I demand that the wind be stopped!"

Van stood beside Red McMurtry now.

"All right, Red!" snapped Van. "What is your part in all of this? Where is that air-gun? And why did you try to kill Mary Minturn?"

What McMurtry might have replied was abruptly lost in what followed. White-hot fire ran along the Tacoma Narrows fronting the Hamm plant. It was a fierce heat that drove everyone back from the shore.

In the pandemonium that ensued, Van was sure he heard a shrill, demoniacal laugh. Again he saw the tiny figure of the Skipper high on the top of the ore piles. The Skipper was holding a bundle of papers in his hand, and these he allowed to blow away and into the molten liquid.

A blaze like the heat of hell was driving up from the Narrows. Van shielded Muriel Havens in his big arms and picked his way through high-piled scrap and ore away from the river.

The owl-eyed Burton Thayer stumbled into Van. He was wringing his hands like some stricken woman. His gaze followed the blowing papers that fluttered all about the plant.

"All gone!" the metal chemist was crying out. "All gone!"

Van caught his shoulder and halted him.

"What's all gone?" he demanded. "Pull yourself together!"

"The ships!" cried out Burton Thayer. "The world's ships! They are all gone! I've lost the secret! I'll never find it again!"

"He's lost his mind!" Van muttered pityingly.

CHAPTER XVII

ANOTHER MURDER ADDED



BURTON THAYER watched fascinatedly as some of the papers settled on top of the burning liquid and almost immediately burned to a crisp. With a wild shout, he ran straight toward the stream of liquid hell. Van himself was traveling fast now. He might have intercepted Thayer, but a small plug of metal cracked across Van's shinbone with such force as to throw him from his feet.

Hamm and Prosser were closest to the distracted Burton Thayer. Van sought the source of the blow across his shin. Then Muriel Havens screamed and sank down as Burton Thayer leaped straight into the air. He was at the edge of the river of fire, his back bent as if he had been struck a mighty blow. Van and the others could see that Burton Thayer was dead before he hit the ground. The momentum of his body carried it ahead. Smoke arose from the river of fire.

"And Burton Thayer died of the same kind of air-gun slug that killed Larch Smith!" grated Van.

Van's eyes whipped all around. Either Hamm or Prosser could have fired that murder slug. Van saw Chip Dorlan over close to deaf Attorney Shotwell. The lawyer had fallen

on his face. Chip was helping him up.

Attorney Shotwell appeared to be partly stunned. He clung to Chip to remain on his feet. Blood welled from a cut in the lawyer's forehead.

Again Van saw the murderous midget Skipper skipping along the ore piles, saw a tall man dressed as a salmon fisherman throw up his hand in a gesture to the Skipper. At the same time, the fisherman turned, flinging his weight upon fat John Prosser. It was so evident to the Phantom that the Skipper's killer intended to send Prosser after Thayer that Van went instantly for his gun.

As Van's heavy automatic jumped, the fisherman killer went down. John Prosser quickly recovered his balance and stood beside Thurston Hamm.

Steve Huston put in an appearance at this point, and sought out the Phantom. Van knew that the newspaper man had been checking on the various elements involved in the wrecking of the Hamm plant and the loss of Burton Thayer's discoveries. Perhaps he had discovered something important, Van thought. Perhaps not.

"How did you get here?" Van Loan asked abruptly.

"Flew down in one of the planes belonging to Havens' Portland paper," Steve explained. "Seems as though everyone's using the river for a parking space. I spotted several craft out there when my pilot came in for a landing."

"Lucky we got a plane," Van said. "We may need it. If I'm any judge of the situation, this is just the beginning. We can expect some other terrorism at any moment. But, Steve, what about Mrs. Brand?"

"I've got a fellow from the Portland paper watching her. If you've got things in hand here, I'll get back on the job and contact you later."

"Okay," agreed the Phantom. "But if I have this figured right, the showdown will probably be at Deming's boatyard. I'd like to have Mrs. Brand

on hand when it comes off. See if you can't hop a car outside and get her down there."

"Right," Steve said, and he hurried off.

IT WAS then that the murderous Skipper whistled so shrilly that his signal sounded above all of the crashing bedlam of steel and the screams of hurt and dying men. Because it was impossible to pick out friends or foes among the workmen and others running helter skelter to avoid more explosions of falling iron, the Phantom was balked in selecting the group that replied to the Skipper's signal.

Van also was unprepared for the rising of the big two-motored plane that took off from the bay. He heard the heavy tone of Attorney Lionel Shotwell cry out.

"They're escaping! It's wholesale sabotage! The Navy Yard would be next! Hamm! Prosser! Can we signal? Can we get our plane into the air?"

The wholesale destruction of the J. T. Hamm plant had wrecked all its communications apparatus. With the start the midget Skipper already had, it appeared impossible to overtake him in mid-air. It seemed probable that the fiendish saboteurs must be equipped to use fire bombs, loaded with the thermite, or some explosive equally destructive.

With the help of workmen, the Phantom found a four-seater plane still standing in the J. T. Hamm hangar. Van could but guess at the reason for attempting to remove Muriel Havens. And it was only by sheerest luck that he had been in time to save the girl from the terrible fire of the cupola.

Again, it was apparent that the brain behind the deadly Skipper must be directly among those of the steel man's associates. The Phantom had a fairly good reason to be sure of this. He was certain that the horrible death of Burton Thayer had been

caused by a soundless shot, the same kind that had killed Larch Smith.

Now, as Hamm, Prosser, Attorney Shotwell and two of their men broke toward their own plane, the Phantom caught Chip's arm. His keen vision had never lost the high-riding lights of the Skipper's plane.

"I thought so!" Van growled. "The killers have turned south instead of north! It's a safe bet they've headed for Astoria, and that means the Robert Deming boatyard!"

Once again Van was puzzled. At the time of the apparent suicide of Burton Thayer, big Red McMurtry had vanished. And at this moment a small plane shot into the sky from a cove. It was in the air ahead of the plane in which Hamm, Prosser, Attorney Shotwell and two other men were now appearing.

In spite of their terrifying experience, Muriel Havens was first to climb into Van's plane. She was white-faced, but game. The Phantom secretly determined at this time that Muriel Havens would not again risk her life with him.

Which proved how little Van knew about women. On the fast hop southward from Tacoma narrows to the mouth of the Columbia River, Muriel voiced something she had in mind.

"You know, Phantom," she said, "one of the strangest bits of all the terrible things that have happened tonight was the kidnaping of Mrs. Burgess Brand."

Van's cool eyes appraised the girl.

"I'm sure it wasn't the kidnaping itself that interested you, Muriel," he said. "It was her escape from abductors who apparently had means of collecting a hundred grand or more."

"That's it, Phantom," said Muriel eagerly. "It did seem strange that Mrs. Brand escaped from supposedly desperate kidnapers with but little injury. Also, don't forget I was set free even more easily."

The Phantom's fears that the Robert Deming boatyard was the next target of the sabotaging Skipper and his boss was clearly reflected in his deep, all-seeing eyes. Van's lips were tightly set.

"If only it doesn't mean more murders!" he said harshly. "I'm fairly convinced now of what is being destroyed in the old boatyard. But at the same time I'm inclined to believe that Howard Roth and Burton Thayer have died in vain. Roth felt that he could never duplicate his intricate machinery, and Burton Thayer was laboring under the belief that he could never duplicate the formula for whatever brand of plastic steel has been destroyed at the Hamm works.

"None of these discoveries can come full-blown into the mind of an inventor. He must experiment and make copious notes. All of those notes can't possibly be destroyed. If the interest of the Skipper and his friends in the McMurtry films is any indication, I wouldn't be surprised to find much of Roth's intricate plans on celluloid as well as everything that Burton Thayer developed. The mere thought of those two great brains being forever stilled is enough to goad me to new efforts."

He was silent for a moment. Then:

"And Howard Roth and Burgess Brand were the first of those to be murdered with deliberate purpose," he added thoughtfully.

Having been in Robert Deming's boatyard, Van was certain that it was the building containing the boxed Howard Roth machines that was being destroyed at this moment. A fierce blaze appeared a few miles distant. But the Phantom was prepared for something like this to happen, so he wasn't amazed.

What had appeared to others to be widespread sabotage, now was clearly in the Phantom's mind as a deliberate, diabolical plot. Back there in

the J. T. Hamm steel works, the wholesale murder and destruction had undoubtedly been directed at destroying some amazing discovery of Burton Thayer.

It was well apparent to Van that those engaged in dealing with Burton Thayer's product and the machines produced by Howard Roth had centered their activities about the old Robert Deming boatyard. The words cried out by Burton Thayer just before he had died came back to Van.

"The ships! The world's ships! They are all gone!"

THE Phantom's reasoning did not have to be profound to name at this moment what was now and would be for a long time to come one of the world's most valuable commodities—ships!

But Van's reasoning suddenly came to a blank wall. There must be direct, definite reasons for wishing to destroy the new steel discovered by Burton Thayer, the machines produced by Howard Roth, and the new and unannounced marine engine invented by old Charles Minturn. Either someone was in possession of the plans for all of these elements, or had plans to rival them.

Considering these several angles, it was just as he was setting his own plane down smoothly upon the bobbing surface of the river that the Phantom's brain flashed back to big Red McMurtry. He closed his eyes momentarily to recapitulate the train of events that had led him here.

Could it be that all of the complicated plans had been blueprinted, then filmed? Again that flashed Van's thoughts all the way back to the moment when he had saved Charles Minturn from being murdered by a Fer de Lance.

It could have been Red McMurtry who had trailed him. He could have been either upon one side or the other. Pretending to be in love with

pretty Mary Minturn, could it be that the red-headed cameraman was so treacherous as to be merely seeking to steal the secret of her father's marine engine?

SOMEHOW, the Phantom went by his own personal instinct. He had liked big Red McMurtry when he had first met him. Sticking to that theory, then Red McMurtry had been fighting all the way to protect Mary Minturn and her father.

Suddenly Chip Dorlan cried out, pointing, as Van held the plane on the long slow swell of the river.

"Out there, Phantom!" cried Chip. "See? Away off from the big fire! I can see funny blue lights!"

Van instantly cut off all lights of his plane. He could see the high skeleton work of a ship crane projecting far out over the water. Long, spidery arms extended into space high above them. And, as Chip had pointed out, strange blue lights were showing in the blacker steel below these arms.

"Cutting torches!" Van shouted, slewing the plane in that direction. "And look! There's a white light above! It's all so far away from the main fire that it hasn't been noticed!"

This was apparent. For several of the huge old buildings of the Robert Deming boatyard were lighting the sky for miles around. Such apparatus as there was at Astoria was concentrated there. Holding his darkened plane in the shadows, Van sent it closer to the high, spidery arms of the steel ship crane. It was then that Muriel Havens cried out.

"A woman and a man!" she exclaimed. "They're fastened up there! That's why the light is being pointed toward them! They're cutting—"

"Be quiet!" commanded Van. "We haven't been seen. The torches are cutting through those steel arms! They'll— Say, it's Red McMurtry up there!"

CHAPTER XVIII

FIENDS WIELD TORCHES



IT WASN'T amazing to those who knew him that the Phantom's keen vision could pick out figures in the darkness where lesser eyes could see but shadows. His keen ears had been trained beyond those of most living men.

It was because of this that he was the first to see that gnome-like spirit of murder, the Skipper. Other thugs in the oilskins of fishermen were applying electrical torches. These were attached to lines extended from a point back in the big boatyards.

"This reveals every evidence," murmured Van, "that plans were going ahead for some extensive production." He suddenly reached out and placed a cool hand over Muriel Havens' eyes. "It is just as well there are some things you do not see," he said quietly.

As he spoke, Van was slipping from his topcoat. He carried his usual guns, but he paused suddenly. For he had been looking at the stretched, tortured figure of old Charles Minturn caught in that blue light. Van seldom swore, but he uttered a silent oath now. The aging engine expert was getting much more than his share of the suffering for one night. Van could see the strutting, fiendish Skipper standing on a steel beam.

"Hold the plane here and don't speak or move," he directed Chip. "If action becomes necessary, make sure you don't miss that midget killer. We have escaped notice so far and I hope to reach the Skipper before I'm seen."

Slipping into the water, Van was as noiseless as an eel. He quickly be-

came apparent of a new torture in progress. The high-keyed voice of the Skipper informed him of the fact without knowing it.

"Damn you, Minturn!" raged the Skipper. "Tell us what was done with the films and the parts you stole off your engine, or you'll see your girl go down in a mess of steel!"

Van could barely see the white face of the tortured old man. Minturn was tied in such a position that he was forced to watch his daughter, Mary, and Red McMurtry, fastened to the high arms above.

The electrical torches were fast eating through the steel. Once the steel was cut through, the girl and McMurtry were doomed. But old Charles Minturn was stubborn.

"You wouldn't dare kill them, or your boss never would find the blueprint film we held out of the big layout!" cried out the old man shrilly. "And without those parts, what would be the world's fastest ships ain't worth a damn!"

RAGING, the Skipper seized one of the sizzling torches. He held the flame near Minturn's body.

"If you won't talk, then perhaps your girl won't want to see you roasted slowly!" shrilled the Skipper.

"She doesn't know, and Red McMurtry is too smart to talk and sign his own death warrant!" taunted Minturn.

Again the sizzling torch caused Minturn's flesh to burn.

"The man who gives you your orders will burn in hell for this!" Minturn screamed at the Skipper.

Van was swimming in among the steel supports of the crane now. He was outnumbered by at least twenty men, but under these circumstances there was but one course of action open to him. Van swam silently through the water, making for the girder upon which the Skipper was balanced.

It was then that the voice of big

Red McMurtry boomed out from above.

"It's one sure bet, you little snake, that you'll never find the missing films with us dead!" he roared. "You thought you had me dead to rights on that film taken by the Phantom! But the Phantom's too smart to be taken in, and too smart for your boss, whoever he may be, to beat out in the end!"

"Good boy, Red," murmured Van softly, grateful that his judgment of the big cameraman was justified.

His hands were reaching for the Skipper's legs when there was more movement back among the supports. Van heard an oath that he identified as in the voice of John Prosser.

"You fools!" growled Prosser to other vague figures, as the group approached the tall crane. "If that part of the Minturn engine is lost, it means we've thrown away a ship that would double the speed of any cargo carrier! And Howard Roth's plans would roll them off the ways at a ship a day!"

Someone grunted in reply. Then Van recalled who had been in the other plane. Prosser, Hamm, Attorney Shotwell and a couple of other men. It seemed to the Phantom the new arrivals were walking right into trouble. Perhaps they had not seen all of the set-up.

One of the Skipper's hands snaked from his sleeve. Van caught the bright flash of a heavy knife. He judged the blade was meant for Prosser. Acting with superhuman speed, Van caught the midget by the legs and yanked hard. The throw missed, as Van swept the deadly Skipper into the water and under.

Never within his memory had the Phantom ever encountered a tougher fighter for his size. Van was trained in every hold of the Occident and the Orient. He especially understood what the Hindus called the "falling away" fight. It is a system that reverses the ordinary method of at-

tack. When properly used, it makes every blow and hold of another man count against himself. Van was taking no credit for finally overcoming the midget killer in the water.

Least of all did the Phantom want to destroy the Skipper. Through him, Van was sure he could reach the boss who had conceived the whole murderous plot. For it was fixed in Van's mind now that all of the murder, the wholesale destruction was meant for the profit of but one individual.

And that man stood there close to the Skipper's killers. At any moment, the boss might find it to his advantage to destroy all who might stand between him and what might be one of the world's greatest fortunes. Coming to the surface the Phantom held the little murder Skipper securely, shutting off his wind so that he could not cry out. Perfect in the imitation of any other man's voice, Van called out in the tone of the Skipper:

"Okay! I've drowned the Phantom! Put the pressure on Minturn! We have no time to wait!"

VAN could hear Prosser, Attorney Shotwell, J. T. Hamm and the men with them blundering from the shore, swearing. It was clear to Van that Charles Minturn and those on top of the crane could not be observed from the shore side of the tall crane.

"Drowned the Phantom?" bellowed John Prosser. "Who the hell are you?"

"Killed the Phantom?" echoed the heavy voice of Attorney Shotwell. "Somebody flash a light over here!"

Abruptly a gun cracked in the hand of one of the Skipper's men. Van heard Hamm's high voice cry out as the bullet wounded him. From the top of the crane, Red McMurtry shouted:

"Stay back, you fools! You're running right into the murdering snakes!"

Once more Van used the little Skipper's voice.

"Stop that gunplay!" he ordered the midget's men. "You want the whole damn town down on us?"

The Phantom was still holding the little Skipper in such a position as to prevent the midget killer from drowning. His new command to stop all gunplay was obeyed with dissenting growls of protest. And the wounding of Hamm appeared to have definitely checked the men back on the shore.

Now Van could see the little group clearly outlined. There was the bulky John Prosser. He was bending over the wounded Hamm, who was lying across a stringer. The deaf Attorney Shotwell was a shadow in the darkness, but his extra-loud voice rang out.

"Keep back!" he shrilled. "There are enough of the killers to erase all of us! Someone will have to get word to the police over by those burning buildings! If the ship crane falls and Charles Minturn is killed, Mrs. Brand, my client, will lose all of her share in the final product! Who'll go?"

One of the men who had come with Hamm, Prosser and Shotwell said:

"I'll bring the whole town of Astoria down on 'em! I hope I'll be in time!"

The little Skipper moved feebly under Van's strong hands. Van saw the speaker on the shore start back into the shadows to summon help, as he had said. At the same moment, one of the Skipper's men working with the cutting torches called out.

"She's about ready to let go, Skipper!" he yelled. "Do we cut on through or wait?"

Van gave the curt order to wait, still employing the tone of the Skipper. Just as he did, the man who had started away to bring help appeared to leap suddenly into the air. He screamed with pain. Then his body turned over and went splashing into shallow water.

There had been no sound of a gun-

shot. It was like that same damnably silent death that had struck down Larch Smith on a street in Portland. The same kind of murder machine that had prevented Burton Thayer from going mad over the destruction of his great discovery. And it was the same instrument that had struck at Mary Minturn, but which had failed to blast out her brain.

"That air-gun again!" the Phantom growled. "I certainly would like to get my hands on whoever is using it!"

John Prosser cried out then.

"Look! The crane's going over! It's been cut through!"

Because his eyes were directed upon the sudden, terrible swaying of the high crane arm which bore the bound bodies of Red McMurtry and Mary Minturn, Van failed to detect other and more furtive movements.

Van had no means of knowing that gleaming eyes had been upon him a moment before that moment when he had snaked the little Skipper into the water. And he was wholly unprepared for the heavy, slashing figure of one of the Skipper's men that came driving down upon his head and his shoulders.

The unexpected attacker struck downward with a short salmon club as he threw his weight at the Phantom. Van's skull took the fury of the blow and he was driven under the surface, compelled to release the little Skipper in an effort to bring his hands up in his own defense.

His snarling assailant crooked an arm around Van's head as the river engulfed them. Half stunned, Van still got in one solid smash at his attacker's face. Salty water choked Van's breath then as he was carried down deeply under the high ship crane.

Above the spot where Van disappeared, the tall steel crane holding the bodies of Mary Minturn and Red McMurtry swayed and came crashing down into the Columbia tide!

CHAPTER XIX

UNDER THE RIVER



CRASHING downward, tons of smashing crane girders plunged into the fifty-foot depths of the old Robert Deming ship dock. Locked with the big killer of the Skipper mob under the water, the Phantom felt himself being whirled helplessly in the maelstrom caused by the sinking steel.

Because of the darkness and the murky salt water, Van had to depend entirely upon his sense of feeling. Although partly stunned by the first blow, the Phantom had strength enough to fight off his assailant's attempt to throttle him.

Then it seemed as if great iron bodies were rushing past him. Van arched his back and snapped upward with his knees. Abruptly, his attacker was torn loose from his hold. But at the same instant, a mighty weight caught Van's shoulder and carried him swiftly to the river bottom.

It was fortunate that the weight trapping Van was moving slowly as one side of the giant crane turned over. It was a strut that pressed him into the mud, then was caught by other steel.

Nevertheless, it held the Phantom securely enough to push him into the soft river bottom.

With his breath gone, an inner blackness was coming over Van's brain. He still fought instinctively to free himself, as his senses faded. Then, when it appeared to Van that his position was hopeless, something happened that brought a final, desperate surge of strength through his failing muscles.

Van's groping hand touched a face. His fingers entangled in long hair. As nearly unconscious as he was, Van's

trained touch was able to read the features of the face.

"Mary Minturn!" thought Van grimly.

He realized then that the pretty girl, who had been bound to the ship crane with Red McMurtry, had been carried down to what appeared to be certain doom. Never before in all of his death-taunting career had the Phantom called more desperately upon the vast reserve of sheer will power that his years of training had given him.

Van Loan imagined he may have partly lost consciousness for a few minutes. But if so, during all of that time, he was freeing the girl, forcing both of their bodies from the river mud. With the last ounce of endurance, Van was bringing the girl from under the heavy steel when a fantastic blue light glowed suddenly at the bottom of the river.

It seemed as if a huge ball lying upon the river bottom had leaped into luminous life. Something like a steel arm, with a hand on its end, shot out and gripped Van's arm. It was like the tentacle of some undersea monster, such as never had existed in the Columbia River or any other Northern waters.

Suddenly Van saw the face of big Red McMurtry. The features of the red-haired cameraman seemed to be magnified and distorted. In what it seemed must be his last few seconds of life, the unerring sense of the Phantom caused him to cling to the girl.

THEN Van was helping the queer steel arm draw both of them to safety. For a door was opening in the side of the glowing blue ball! Red McMurtry's face was out of proportion, because he had been looking at the Phantom and Mary Minturn through a thick glass.

The door was the underwater air-lock of a huge diving bell of the type employed in heavy ship hull work.

The bell was so constructed as to contain from two to five workmen. They used automatic arms that handled heavy tools in deep water work. As Van was drawn in, the automatic air compression forced the water from the inside of the lock. Then the outer door was operated, the air compression released, and Van was able to draw oxygen into his lungs. He realized what appeared to be a fantastic miracle was simply the result of special knowledge that McMurtry possessed.

McMurtry was busily reviving the unconscious girl then. There was sufficient oxygen in the diving bell to supply the three of them for several minutes at the most. At such times as the diving bell would be in active service, it would be supplied with air pumped in from above.

Van's eyes took in everything about him. Then they returned to the red-headed cameraman, regarded him soberly.

"Suppose you explain this diving bell, Red," he stated.

McMurtry stared around, obviously wondering where to begin.

"Well, Phantom, Charles Minturn was a genius on marine engineering. He was constantly experimenting with new devices for undersea work, like this bell we're in now. The tragedy of the *Squalus* affected him pretty deeply, made him think about the problem of fast repair work of damaged vessels at the bottom of the ocean. If divers could have reached the submarine quickly, they could have made temporary patches and fastened chains to the hooks in her hull, so she could be raised.

"Well, he invented this bell to give divers a base of operations. One man controls the bell. The divers leave through air-locks, work as long as they can while the bell supplies floodlights, and then return for short rests. In that way they can go on working for whole days, taking shifts of two or three hours, and complete-

ly disregarding storms and other disturbances on the surface.

"Naturally Minturn was cautious. He believed the bell would work perfectly, but he never left anything to chance. So he equipped this machine with an escape hatch and diving lungs, in case the men who were supposed to test it had to get out in a hurry, if something he hadn't foreseen went wrong.

"The escape hatch is the usual kind—a tube that leads up from the top of the bell, with a buoy that carries a strong rope to the surface. You put the mouthpiece of the lung in your teeth, breathe through it as you climb slowly from one knot in the rope to another. It never was necessary, though. Minturn was too good an engineer to make mistakes."

Van was thoughtful for a moment. "Just how did you escape when

that crane toppled into the river?" he asked then.

"I was pretty lucky. My bonds were fairly loose before the crane toppled over, and when it did, I was thrown free."

Red McMurtry wore a hard grin as he looked at the Phantom.

"That's twice I owe you for saving Mary, Phantom," said McMurtry. "I'll do all that I can to even up the score."

Van was looking now at several objects inside the diving bell, saw they were waterproofed drums of movie camera film.

"You've done plenty, Red," said Van grimly. "You knew this diving bell was here, because this is where you've hidden the films for which murder and destruction has been wrought. I thought for some time,

(Continued on page 100)

NEXT MONTH'S NOVEL: THE MURDER BUND

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The Cat that Counted

By JOHN L. BENTON

Author of "Three of a Kind," "The Refugee Murders," etc.



THE little white ball rattled down onto the revolving wheel, skipped over a row of numbered cups then dropped with fateful fixity into the 23.

There were five roulette players. But none had the 23 covered. The pale dealer smiled thinly under his green eyeshade, scooped in the house winnings.

Patrolman O'Hara plunged his hands in his empty pockets and slowly descended the stairs to the street. He was in plainclothes, for it was his day off. For six weeks, every Wednesday, he had been a visitor at Big Mike's layout. He had lost plenty.

He strayed back to the station house, his broad shoulders hunched, his broad, Irish face furrowed with a worried frown. Sergeant Muldoon was on desk duty. In front of Muldoon's glassy stare, Patrolman O'Hara shrugged hopelessly.

"I guess I'm just like all the other suckers, Muldoon," he reported. "I'm sure as I'm alive that Mike's joint is crooked. But I can't spot how—"

Muldoon snorted.

"So you're the bright laddie who bragged he could show up the Detective Bureau! Who claimed he could finger Mike for something hotter than a gambling charge! My own notion is the cups are wired!"

"But they can't be, Muldoon!" protested Patrolman O'Hara. "Mike's wheel is mounted on a block of glass

four inches thick! If there were any wires, I'd have seen them! And the ball's ivory, not metal!"

"Well, he controls the ball somehow, doesn't he?"

"He does that!"

"Some of the cups are deeper than others, likely."

"Old stuff, Muldoon! Mike just wouldn't risk—"

"Forget it! It's plain to see you won't be winning a quick promotion as a crooked gambling expert, O'Hara. It's the pavements for you, me boy."

But Patrolman O'Hara couldn't forget the positive way that little roulette ball dropped. And how Big Mike always managed to dodge the numbers that carried the heavy play, the sucker money. He left the station house and strolled dejectedly across town, along the sidewalks that he had patrolled for so long that he knew every crack in them.

As Muldoon had pointed out, perhaps this was all he was fitted for, just a plain, dumb copper. He found himself suddenly at the river. A knot of small boys were swimming from one of the old docks.

They saw O'Hara and greeted him with welcome yelps. None of the urchins on O'Hara's beat feared him. He was their friend. They had not forgotten that time when he pulled the Conterno kid out of the river.

One of the boys came pattering across the dock.

"Hey, Mr. O'Hara, didja ever see a cat that could count?" he asked.

O'Hara blinked, then grinned.

A Wily Feline Flabbergasts a Sugary Racket!

"Go on with you, Johnny," he scoffed good-naturedly.

"No foolin', Mr. O'Hara! The Blaine kid, he's learned their cat a swell trick! If you don't believe it, c'mon over an' see for yerself!"

O'HARA allowed himself to be tugged excitedly to the dock end, where a dozen youngsters squatted around the freckled-faced Blaine kid who hugged a bored-looking yellow tomcat against him. In the center of the circle was an empty tin can.

"What's goin' on here?" O'Hara demanded. "If it's dice I catch you spalpeens with, I'll—"

"These ain't dice, Mr. O'Hara!" the Blaine kid shrilled quickly. "Look! They're just tiny pebbles we got off Lacy's gravel barge."

O'Hara stooped down.

"I see, and it's numbered they are! If this is a gamblin' game, sonny, there'll be no more swimmin' for you on this dock!"

"It's not a gamblin' game, is it, fellas?" protested the Blaine kid. "No, sir! That is"—he squinted shrewdly up at O'Hara—"not unless you want to bet us fellas, ice cream all around, that my cat can't count!"

O'Hara eyed the cat.

"Y'see," the Blaine kid went on, "these here pebbles, I got 'em numbered, one up to ten. You tell the cat what number you want. I drop the pebbles into the can. And then the cat fishes out your number!"

"You don't say!" drawled O'Hara. "All right, sonny. It's seven I pick. And don't forget I'm watchin' you."

The group gathered closer, all eyes intent on the performing cat and the Blaine kid. He picked up the ten pebbles and held them up in his palm. O'Hara saw that they were numbered with a lead pencil, one to ten. He made sure that the number, seven, was among them.

"All right, go ahead," he said, squatting down with the huddled youngsters. "If that tomcat can pick

my number out of the can, I'll treat the lot o' you."

The Blaine kid's hand poised over the top of the can. One by one the pebbles tinkled into it. Then the Blaine kid drew the can in front of the cat.

"Mr. O'Hara wants Number Seven, Tiger," he said. "Now get busy!"

The cat sniffed at the top of the can, then slowly raised one paw and reached into it. The curved, sharp claws rattled the pebbles. It raised one to the rim of the can. The cat sniffed at the pebble, then dropped it.

It was Number Three, O'Hara observed. He gave a doubting chuckle.

The cat explored the bottom of the can again. Up came the nine. Back in it fell.

The third time the cat reached. It lifted a pebble, thrust its nose close. For an instant the pebble balanced on the rim of the can. Then it fell out onto the splintery dock.

O'Hara reached out and snatched it. He turned it in his fingers. His face lengthened with amazement as he beheld "seven" scrawled on it.

He got to his feet as the youngsters leaped up and started a noisy war dance around him. He grinned again, and fingered his vest pocket.

He found enough change to buy a dozen ice cream cones and dropped it into the outthrust paw of the delighted Blaine kid.

"Now hold on, sonny!" he called out, as the boy started a dash for the Popoulos Confectionery a block away. "Come back here!"

O'Hara fingered the rest of his pockets. There wasn't much left after an hour at Big Mike's. He found a quarter and a nickel.

"I'm giving you this," he said, holding out the quarter, "if you'll explain how you worked it. And five cents more for liver for your cat. That busts me, but I'm just like all the other suckers."

The Blaine kid's grin widened and he held out his grimy hand again,

thrusting it up close to O'Hara's puzzled face.

"It's easy, Mr. O'Hara," he laughed. "You just smear a little smelly cheese on the side of your hand, see? Tiger, he sure likes cheese. And then—"

"And then you smeared some cheese on my Number Seven. And that pop-eyed feline naturally went for it. Look here, sonny, I—"

O'Hara suddenly broke off. A new light came over his face. Then his square jaw abruptly clamped shut.

He turned and rushed away from the dock and back to the station house. He dashed in and Sergeant Muldoon raised his scornful eyes to the red-faced, panting O'Hara.

"Now what—" he began.

"I want a detail o' three men, right now!" O'Hara blurted. "I'm goin' back to Big Mike's an' pull the joint!"

Wonderingly, Muldoon called out a trio from the locker room. O'Hara was back in twenty minutes. He had Big Mike, still wearing his eyeshade,

a little paler than usual. O'Hara's blue, Irish eyes gleamed with victory.

"It was easy, Muldoon," he said as they booked the prisoner. "When this gets told around, Mike will be finished in this town."

"But how—" Muldoon started to say.

"The cups in that roulette wheel were magnetized, some of them. They didn't need any wiring for that. And here's the evidence." He laid the small roulette ball on the desk. "Mike had a extry one, which he switched for the regular ball when he saw a chance to trim the suckers. If you'll look at it close, Muldoon, you'll notice that it's smeared with something. Something that magnetizes."

"Wh-what?" breathed Muldoon, glassy eyes on the ball.

"Mercury paste," O'Hara informed him. "He has a bit of it on the edge of his hand, you'll notice."

O'Hara grinned. The way that cat had counted, certainly counted.

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A Social Call

By
FRANK JOHNSON

*Author of "Emergency,"
"Sign of the Crimson Mask," etc.*

*When a Paralytic Dies,
Hugh Jeffries Comes
Into a Strange Inheritance!*

EVERY Friday evening Hugh Jeffries paid a social call on his stepfather, Ralph Brecken. A morbid curiosity drove him there, and—diplomacy. When the old man died, Jeffries would inherit a cool half-million.

Invariably, he would ask when he entered the gloomy old house, "And how is Mr. Brecken this evening, Mrs. Ryan?"

And the answer would always be the same, maddeningly disappointing:

"Very well, Mr. Jeffries."

The old spinster, Brecken's housekeeper for the past sixteen years, was quite aware of the motive behind the question. She hated this foppish young dandy as much as he hated the untidy drunkard who stood between himself and a fortune. Hence the malignantly ironic emphasis: "Very well, Mr. Jeffries."

She was dressed to go out when Jeffries rang the bell. She let him in; then, because she was in a hurry, slightly varied the formula.

She said: "Mr. Brecken is in his room expecting you, Mr. Jeffries. And he's feeling quite well this evening."

Jeffries gritted his teeth.



Jeffries practically crawled across the dark room

"Thank you."

He had the impression that the housekeeper was laughing at him. Not outwardly—it was impossible to associate merriment with her yellow, bony, sour face; but certainly laughing to herself.

He waited until she had gone out, closing the door behind her, then cursed her softly, in words that no one would dream delicate, fastidious Hugh Jeffries was acquainted with. Slowly, he climbed the stairs, walked the length of a short corridor, and knocked on his stepfather's door.

"Come in!"

Ralph Brecken sat in his wheelchair at the head of a long, narrow table. He was a paralytic, alive only from the waist up. But that part of him, as Jeffries noticed with a sickening sort of helplessness, was vibrantly, dynamically alive. As usual. Red cheeks, hugh shoulders—long, muscular arms which were still strong enough to break every bone in Jeff-

ries' body once the old man grabbed him.

"A little late tonight, son." His voice was loud, booming. It grated unpleasantly on Jeffries' ears. "Have a li'l drink." He pointed to the half-emptied quart bottle of brandy.

"You know I don't drink, sir," Jeffries replied impatiently.

"The more fool you are. To refuse Napoleon brandy—why, it's sacrilege."

The old man grinned, shook his head pityingly. He filled his glass, tossed it off, filled another. He was considerably more than half drunk already.

"You know," he added, pointing a broad forefinger at Jeffries, "give me enough of this brandy, and I'll live forever!"

JEFFRIES' lips relaxed in a polite smile. He sat down at the other end of the table, and lighted an Egyptian cigarette. He felt viciously bitter. For six years now, ever since Ralph Brecken had had that paralytic stroke, he had waited for the old man to die. At first, he had given him six months. Then a year. Now it had dragged out to six years. And the old man still looked as well as ever.

It wasn't fair, damn it! His youth was passing. Now was the time for him to enjoy that money. Yet the old man persistently clung to life. What if he lived ten years longer, twenty years? Jeffries shuddered.

Brecken was quite drunk now, and paid no attention to his stepson. He was hunched over the table, his massive head swaying from side to side. Jeffries knew that in a few minutes the old man would fall asleep. Then he could get out of here.

"If he'd only never wake up!"

He lighted another cigarette, threw the match away angrily. His eyes followed it, and suddenly came to rest on a gray-painted little iron pipe protruding from the wall. The old-fashioned house had once been lighted by

gas. The gas outlet still remained. Gas was still used for cooking.

Jeffries stared in fascination at the outlet. His own words echoed in his ears: "If he'd only never wake up!"

And it was so easy! So easy that it frightened him. A matter of one second to turn on the gas. Then Brecken would never awaken! Not in this world!

Jeffries hunched his body forward. All right, suppose he turned on the gas? "The old man would die—yes; but what about the investigation that would follow?"

"Well," he thought, "what about it? The old man is a paralytic. Knows he's doomed to the wheel chair for the rest of his days. And he had been drinking. In a moment of alcoholic depression—"

There was a feverish glitter now in Jeffries' eyes. He dragged the smoke from his cigarette deep down into his lungs. It was so confoundedly, absurdly simple! Of course, the medical examiner would bring in a suicide verdict. The natural, logical conclusion.

True, some suspicion might fall on him. That was inevitable. He was the last person with Brecken. He had much to gain by the old man's death. He might have easily turned on the gas himself. But such things must be proven. He might have—certainly, but they could never prove that it was his hand and not the old man's that had turned on the gas.

The circular plug had been painted years ago with gray enamel. Now the paint was warped, cracked. It would not show any fingerprints.

"Good Lord," he whispered savagely, "why hadn't I thought of it before. Six years—"

He got up, edged over, practically crawled—although there was no necessity for it, as the old man was already asleep—to the little iron pipe, reached up and twisted the plug. A sinister hissing sound—and the smell of gas! It was done!

Outside, Jeffries paused and listened. Not a sound. On a sudden impulse, he opened the door again and looked in. Brecken was hunched over the table in a drunken stupor. He would never come out of it, for the odor of gas already permeated the room. He closed the door, went downstairs, put on his hat and coat. Without a backward glance, he went out into the street. He took a cab to his apartment. No sense economizing now. Wouldn't he be worth a half-million dollars before the sun rose again.

His phone rang at exactly 11:30. Jeffries hadn't gone to bed; he had expected the call. He said: "This is terrible. I'll be right over, Doctor."

He hummed in the cab taking him back to Brecken's home, Dr. Werlin, Brecken's physician, had said that his stepfather "had committed suicide." Five hundred thousand dollars! It had been so simple! Jeffries tipped the driver fifty cents, an hitherto undreamed-of extravagance.

DR. WERLIN was a plump little man, with huge, horn-rimmed glasses. He was excited, repeating again and again, "This is terrible. Terrible! Who would have thought that Mr. Brecken, a patient whom I admired for his great courage—" And so on.

Jeffries agreed dutifully. There was a shocked, grave expression on his face — although inwardly he wanted to do a jig. "Have you notified the proper authorities, Doctor?"

His question was answered by heavy footsteps on the stairs. First entered Medical Examiner Stebbins, small, waspish. He was followed by Mrs. Ryan, the housekeeper.

Police-sergeant Kenny was grumbling, even as he entered the room. "If people do want to commit suicide, why can't they do it during the day? I ought to be home asleep now."

"It's not suicide, Officer!" Mrs. Ryan cut in, grimly emphatic.

"Eh? Why do you say that?" Kenny no longer looked sleepy.

And Jeffries suddenly lost his desire to do the jig. Fists clenched, he awaited the woman's answer.

"Oh," she said, "I know Mr. Brecken is not the sort of man who would commit suicide. I've been his housekeeper for twenty-four years. I feel it's my duty to tell you that I had left Mr. Brecken alone with Mr. Jeffries there at eight tonight."

"Don't you think we ought to take a look at the body first, Bill?" the medical examiner interrupted dryly.

Kenny nodded. In spite of the three open windows, the stench of gas still lingered in the room. Stebbins examined the body.

"Asphyxiation, all right, all right," he muttered. "Dead a couple of hours now."

"Find a note?" asked Kenny.

Kenny grunted. He glanced at the empty brandy bottle, then back at Brecken.

"What was wrong with him?"

"Paralysis," said Dr. Werlin. "From the waist down."

"Poor devil."

"I tell you, Officer—" Mrs. Ryan began shrilly.

"Sergeant, madam. Sergeant Kenny. And you don't have to yell."

The housekeeper cooler down a bit.

"Well, Sergeant, I must repeat—I don't believe it was suicide. Mr. Jeffries was alone here with Mr. Brecken. He's Mr. Brecken's sole heir. I don't want to insinuate anything, but facts—" Her voice trailed away significantly.

"Now, now," said Dr. Werlin. "That's a grave accusation, my dear Mrs. Ryan. I'm sure—"

"That'll do," Kenny cut in roughly. "You people just answer questions—when I ask 'em. Who found the body?"

"I did," said Mrs. Ryan.

"When?"

"Thirty minutes ago. I immediately telephoned Dr. Werlin."

"You weren't at home all evening?"

"I had left at eight, just after Mr. Jeffries came in. I sent him up to Mr. Brecken's room, and then went out. The front door has an automatic lock—would lock itself after Mr. Jeffries left."

Kenny turned to Jeffries. "How long were you with Mr. Brecken?"

"Only a few minutes," Jeffries replied coolly. "He had been drinking, and he seemed terribly depressed. Didn't seem to want my company. So I left."

"I see— Well, what do you say, Tom? The guy was paralyzed, lapped up a quart of liquor. Depressed—thought he might as well get it over with. Not much fun spending one's life in a wheel chair."

Kenny shrugged and walked over to the gas outlet. He glanced at it carelessly. Then he stiffened, looked at it again, glanced back at the dead man. There was a queer expression in his eyes now.

"You stand to inherit quite a bit of money, eh, Mr. Jeffries?" he asked.

"Quite," Jeffries agreed calmly.

Kenny's eyes narrowed.

"Anything here been touched?"

"No," the housekeeper replied. "I just opened the windows."

"The front door was locked when you returned, eh?"

"Of course."

"And who has a key to it?"

"There's only one key, and it's always in my possession."

Kenny nodded. He began strolling up and down the room, his eyes obviously searching for something. Then he paused and threw over his shoulder to the housekeeper:

"Can you account for your actions between eight o'clock and eleven?"

"Of course," Mrs. Ryan said indignantly. "I was with my sister and her family. You don't think I—"

"Certainly not," Kenny drawled. Casually, he moved closer to Jeff-

(Concluded on page 112)

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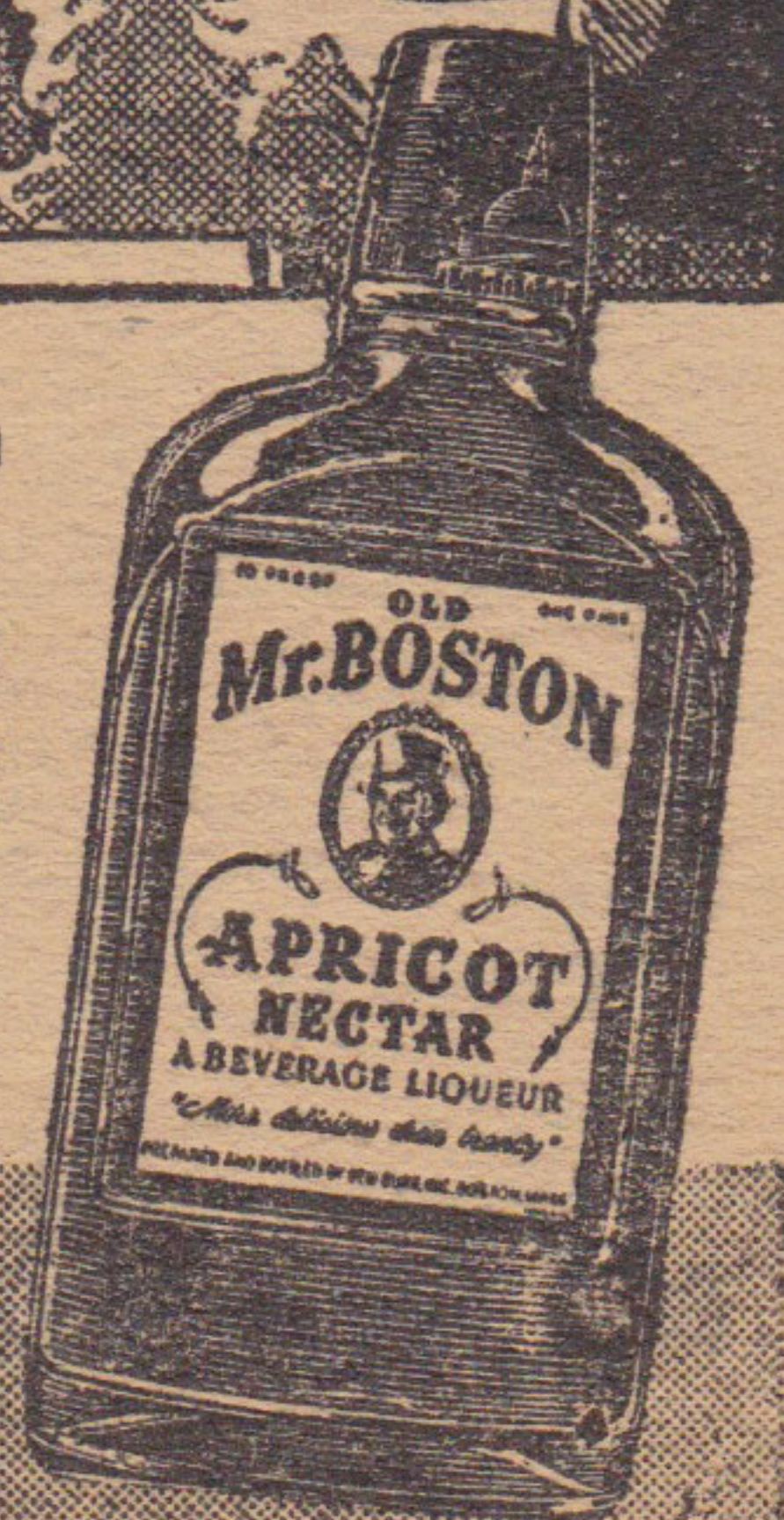
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MURDER CALLS THE PHANTOM

(Continued from page 92)

Red, that you were on the wrong side."

"I had the same feeling toward you, Phantom," said McMurtry. "I didn't identify you in some of your roles. There was the night in Astoria when Mary barely escaped being killed. Remember?"

Van nodded. "Yes, and that night I was fairly sure you were the one who had attempted to kill her. I was convinced that I saw you outside the window, and I shot at you twice."

Again McMurtry grinned.

"You see, Phantom, knowing your miraculous ability at make-up, I was equally convinced once or twice that you were taking my place. I wasn't within miles of the spot when that attempt was made to kill Mary. You know how that was done, Phantom?"

"I know," the Phantom said. "Just as I know exactly how Larch Smith and Burton Thayer were killed. Also, how a man was killed only a few moments ago in back of the ship crane. But we have no time to lose. The real boss killer, the man who would kill any number of persons to possess these camera films, is up there."

Red McMurtry nodded, his mouth a grim line. He glanced at Mary Minturn. The girl was breathing regularly, but she was still unconscious.

"You know the boss, the real brain behind that murdering little snake, the Skipper?" asked McMurtry. "All I want is a chance at him. You see, Mary's father is dead. I saw him die when the ship's crane fell."

Van's lips formed a silent oath.

"I know the boss," he said, "but taking care of him happens to be my job, Red."

"Then he's one of the men that I know!" McMurtry raged.

This time Van shook his head very slowly.

"You do and you don't know him, Red. The boss, the one I have to

prove is the man behind the most insane murder plot I have ever known, is a man who is already dead, officially."

McMurtry stared at the Phantom. All of their conversation had required less than a minute. Now the oxygen supply was low in the diving bell. Suddenly the blue light began to fade out.

"A man who is dead, Phantom?" McMurtry said. "But that's impossible!"

Before Van could give further proof of his contentions, the light in the bell went out. Abruptly a wave of cold air passed through the bell. Mary Minturn, having just regained consciousness, stared about her in the darkness. She screamed hysterically. Van shuddered involuntarily. Then, without warning, a figure crashed into Van in the blackness!

CHAPTER XX

AT GRIPS WITH DEATH



RICHARD CURTIS VAN LOAN imagined for a fleeting instant that Red McMurtry must have tricked him. A slashing fist smashed up against Van's face, drove him into the side of the diving bell.

Then the narrow space seemed filled with flailing fists and kicking feet. The Phantom realized instantly that the position of the bell had been discovered, probably because of its blue illumination.

"Red!" yelled Van, sending a blow at his antagonist's face. "Red, get Mary out of here through the escape hatch! Hurry! Don't wait for me!"

McMurtry, who was trying to help the Phantom in this grim battle un-

der the river, knew better than to argue at a moment when seconds counted. He felt his way along the wall of the bell, found the girl standing there. She was gasping in fear. Quickly taking her by one arm, McMurtry hustled her to the escape hatch.

There he put a diving lung on her, one on himself. Then he pressed a lever which opened the escape hatch and shot the buoy and its guide rope up to the surface.

"Quick, Mary," he ordered. "Get into this tube and grab hold of the guide rope. There are knots spaced along it all the way up to the surface. As you come to each one, stop, count up to ten, then proceed to the next one. Understand?"

She merely nodded in reply, did as he bid her. Taking a last glance at the Phantom, who was fighting savagely against the killer chief, McMurtry followed her into the hatch.

Van knew he couldn't last much longer. The air in the bell was beginning to have a sour odor, and Van, like any other mortal being, couldn't last without oxygen. Neither could his opponent, for that matter. Suddenly Van felt himself being drawn into the other man's arms. He smiled to himself. He would make the other's attack turn against himself. Van was prepared to employ a ju jutsu hold, of which he was a past master.

If the Phantom had completed that hold, he would have died right there. It was the abrupt, hard pressure of a circular object that warned Van in the split second of time needed. So that was it! A missile of deadly steel was about to be sent crashing into his vitals!

Van employed the heel of one hand, driving the other's chin upward and back. That way, he was able to force his body to one side in the nick of time. Even so, pain like a red-hot iron tore at the flesh under one arm-pit.

"That's it," Van growled deep in
[Turn Page]

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his throat. "I might have known it was the deadly air-gun that killed the others. As for the rest of it, now I'm sure."

Quickly measuring the man in the darkness, Van threw out rights and lefts that sent the other crashing to the floor. The Phantom leaped on him, gripped the circular object that might have cost him his life and tore it free. Not wasting a second then, he raced to the escape hatch, found another diving lung and put it on. Not caring a whit whether the murder master lived or died, Van went out through the escape hatch, and proceeded slowly up to the surface of the river.

A GROAN escaped Van Loan's lips involuntarily. For there, near him in the water, someone was trying to down Red McMurtry!

Looking at the shore, Van saw another thug holding Mary Minturn in his hairy hands. They must have seen the buoy rise to the surface, Van thought, and were waiting for McMurtry and the girl when they emerged. As he neared the battlers in the river, Van heard the Skipper's voice ring out.

"Don't harm the girl!" he shouted. "I want her! She may not talk to the boss, but she'll talk to me before I've finished with her!"

So the fiendish little Skipper was the man who was engaged in deadly combat with McMurtry! Van started swimming swiftly. As he neared the Skipper, one hand shot out, closed around the Skipper's neck. In spite of the midget's efforts to free himself, Van held on and then there was a sickening, cracking sound. A moment later, the vilest murder character ever done up in a small package was sinking beneath the tide of the Columbia River, never to commit evil again. The Skipper was dead, his neck broken.

Had Van not been so busy with the little midget, he might have

seen the grim figure that emerged to the surface at the buoy. It was the ringleader of these killers. He had found another diving lung in the bell and used the escape hatch as the others had done.

As soon as his head broke water, he got rid of the lung, as Van had done, and made swiftly for the Phantom and McMurtry, swimming as silently as possible. Van didn't see his approaching figure, but the cameraman did.

"Look out, Phantom!" cried out McMurtry. "The knife!"

Van turned at the outburst, saw the flash of the killer's death weapon. If he had continued ahead, using either his fingers or his fists, his throat probably would have been slashed. It was then he employed an aquatic trick, one that only the most skilled swimmer could have tried.

Van dived. Rather, he somersaulted in the water with the speed of a giant shark. So it was his heels and not his hands which reached their mark. That mark was the chin of the knifing killer.

The murder master's big body was lifted by the force of Van's kick. His head snapped back as Van's heels struck. Then the gleaming knife disappeared. The killer, not wishing to follow his murder Skipper to the bottom of the Columbia, plunged deep, began swimming under water. But Van did not follow him. He had to get the thug holding Mary Minturn before the fellow killed her in panic. As McMurtry and Van neared the shore, the pseudo salmon fisherman released the girl and fled in terror for his life.

Dancing lights of cars were descending upon the wreckage of the toppled ship crane now. Hoarse shouts of many citizens of Astoria could be heard. Van looked out across the river. Finding what he was looking for, he used a pencil flashlight three times. A plane's motor thundered abruptly, and the thin face of

Chip Dorlan was revealed above the controls of the craft.

Van breathed with relief. He had a glimpse of Muriel Havens' fair hair and her white face beside Chip. Once more, Van resolved that Frank Havens' pretty daughter was concluding her last adventure with the Phantom.

City police and firemen rolled from the first cars to reach the river. As they came on, Van moved swiftly to one side. He took time only to glance at the spot in the Columbia where he had last seen the man he believed to be the murder boss of the most diabolical plot he had ever encountered.

But he saw no trace of the man. Dead or alive, the one man who had discovered the secret of Red McMurry's movie films and had then attempted to kill the Phantom in the darkness, had disappeared. Van wasted no time in searching along the shore.

Already the city police and others were surrounding the wounded J. T. Hamm. The steel magnate was sitting up. It appeared to Van that Hamm had not been seriously hurt. His clothes were soaked from the river. And close beside Hamm, John Prosser also had the appearance of a man who had just come out of the water.

CHAPTER XXI

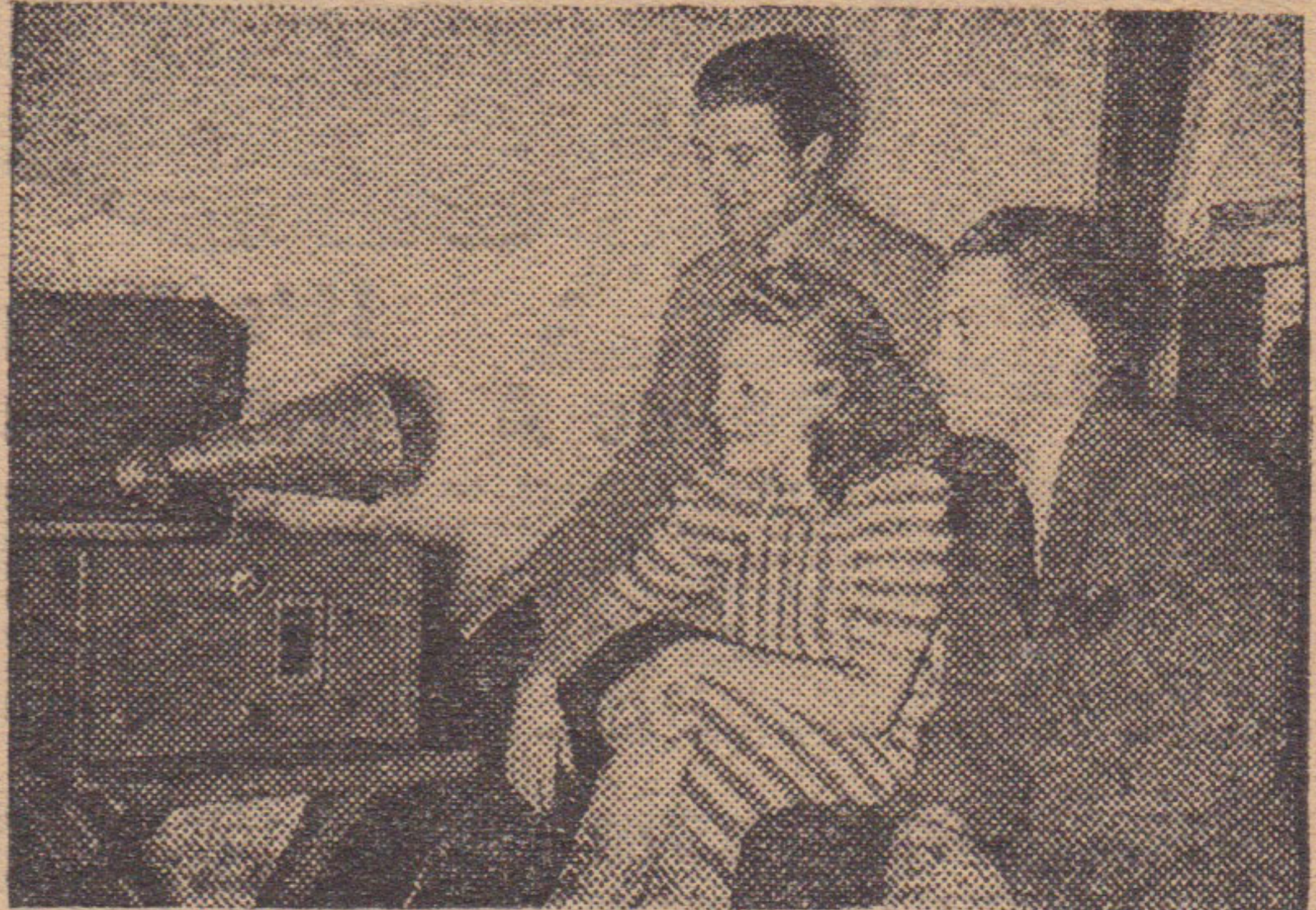
MURDER'S GRIM FEAST



NEVER before had such a grim array of murder been presented at one time to the police of Portland and Astoria. Having identified himself quickly to the first officers of the law, the Phantom checked some of the latest violence with an Inspector Cardigan of the Portland Headquarters.

[Turn Page]

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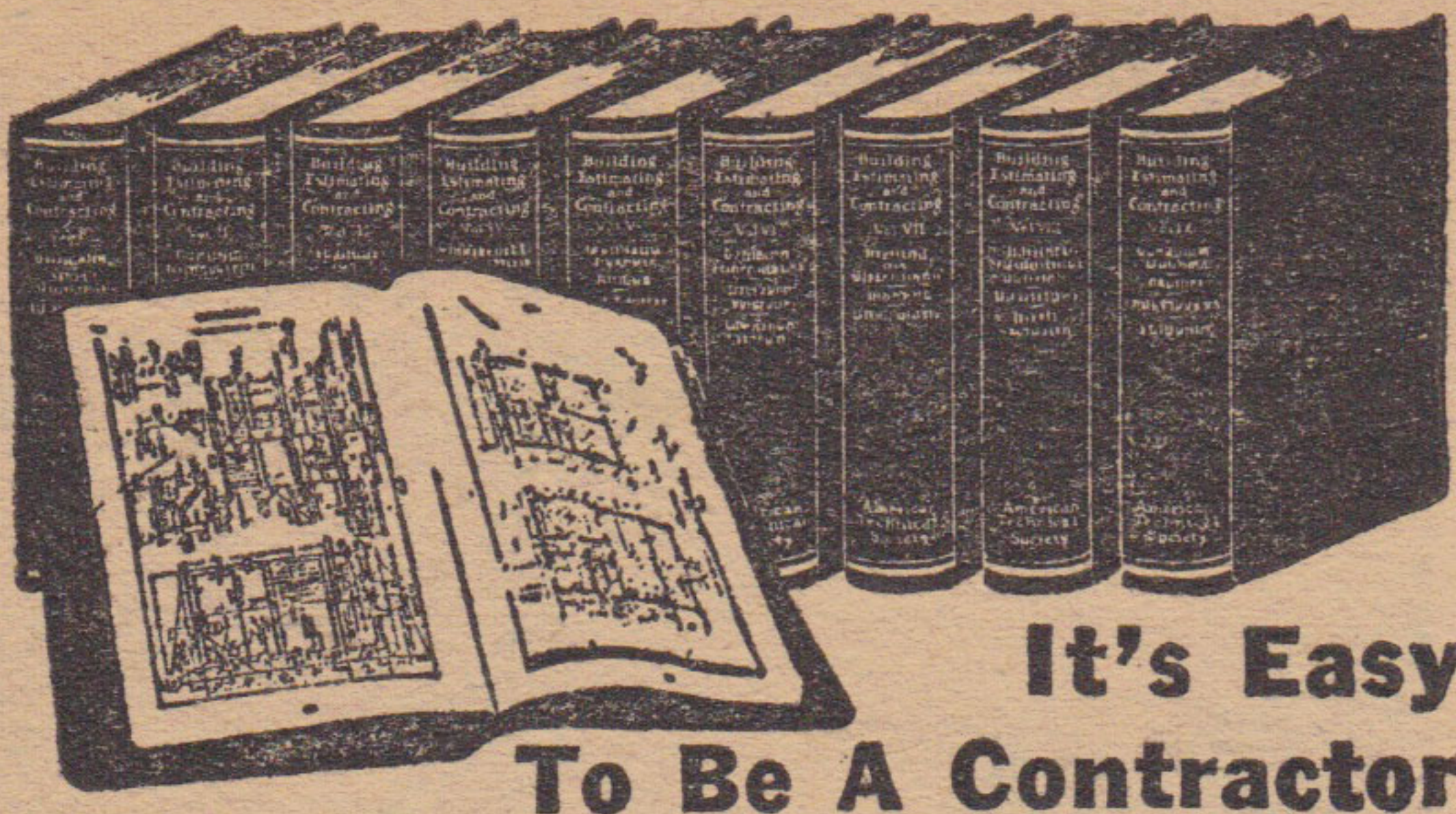
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"Yes, Inspector," said the Phantom, "several have died on this spot within the past few minutes. Perhaps the most important of these was Charles Minturn. He was being tortured and died when that ship crane crashed."

"That's right," said big John Prosser unhappily. "For what he has already done and what he might still have accomplished for the marine engine industry, Charles Minturn cannot be replaced."

"That other dead man, killed by an air-gun slug, was an employee of J. T. Hamm," Van went on. "He was going for police help when he was shot in the back."

J. T. Hamm nodded.

"Yes, he was a good man," he said. "But our greatest loss tonight was the killing at my wrecked plant of Burton Thayer, my metal expert. He died of a similar wound."

The Phantom's somber eyes turned toward the dark reaches of the Columbia River.

"A leader of the killers, known as the Skipper, is dead in the river," said Van. "Two or more of his mob masquerading in the rôles of salmon fishermen also died. But we need not grieve over their loss. They were killers, vicious and ruthless. At the J. T. Hamm plant, at Tacoma, many workmen were killed and a great discovery in metal is believed to have been destroyed."

J. T. Hamm again nodded.

"The greatest of all discoveries in metal," he said. "Right after the first World War, ship producers tried mass production by pouring concrete hulls for ships. My man, Burton Thayer, had evolved a light metal that could be poured and shaped like concrete. It meant the turning out of faster, lighter and better ships at the rate of one a day."

The Phantom smiled a little.

"Which connects up the murders tonight with the deaths of Burgess Brand and Howard Roth in Portland," he said. "Howard Roth was

producing the machinery that would have used the Burton Thayer metal. Then there was the street murder of Larch Smith. He was organizing this old Robert Deming boatyard to use the Thayer metal and the Howard Roth machines. So we have every evidence of the formation of a group of manufacturers and technicians to establish a vast industry in naval production now, and freight and passenger ship construction as soon as the present World War is ended."

At this moment there was a flurry of interruption. A woman's voice was raised in anger.

The woman was yellow-haired and she was coming from a car among many others.

"I tell you I don't know why I have to be brought all the way down here!" she was protesting loudly.

The woman was Mrs. Burgess Brand. Beside her walked Steve Huston, the ace *Clarion* reporter from New York, grinning a little. Huston spotted the Phantom with Muriel Havens and Chip Dorlan.

"Mrs. Brand doesn't believe there's a story down here to interest her, Phantom," said Steve. "But I convinced her after I got your call, and here she is."

THE yellow-haired woman continued protesting. The Phantom nodded. He had called Steve Huston upon reaching Astoria and suggested that Mrs. Burgess Brand might be interested in coming down here. Since all that had happened, the Phantom had his own reason for believing more than ever that Mrs. Brand would be interested.

Inspector Cardigan looked at the Phantom. Van smiled.

"It will be explained in due time, Inspector," he said.

At this moment, his loud voice uttering a protest, Attorney Shotwell appeared. He was muddy and wet.

"What is this?" demanded Attorney Shotwell. "Mrs. Brand, stop talking!"

[Turn Page]

Getting Up Nights Makes Many Feel Old

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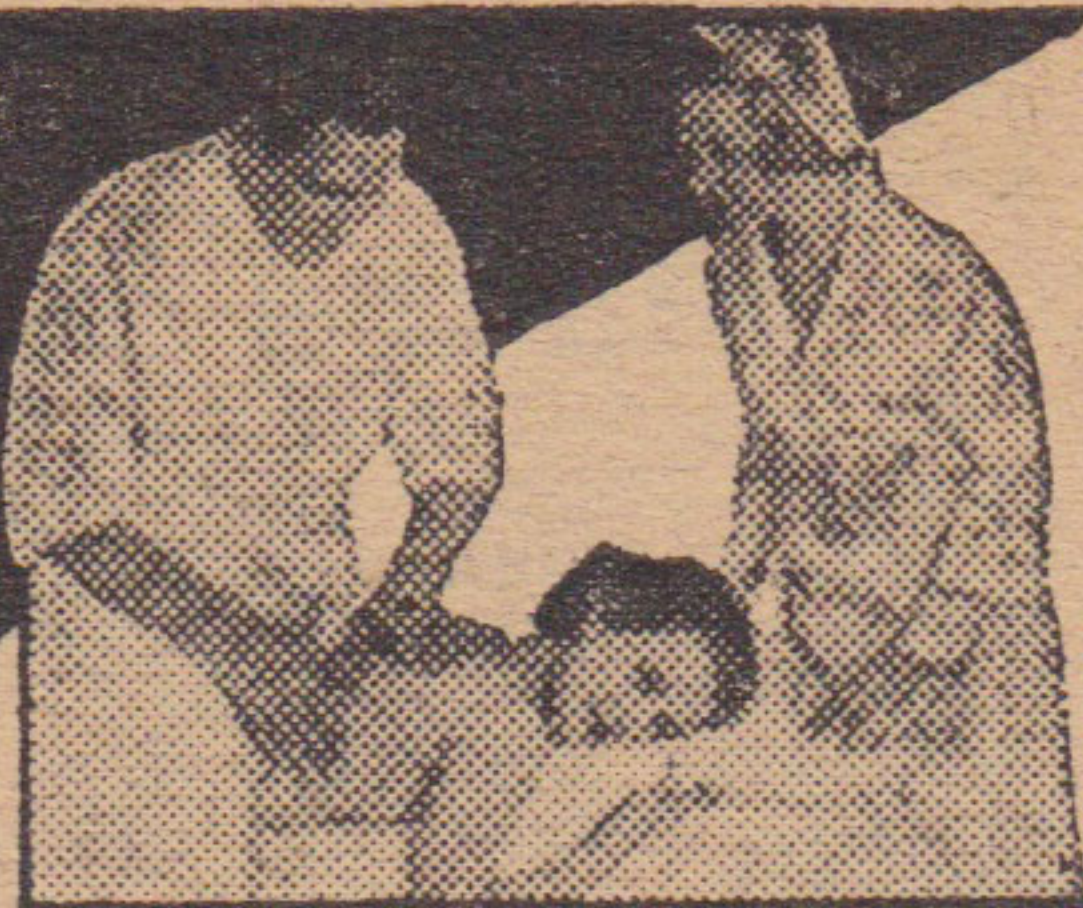
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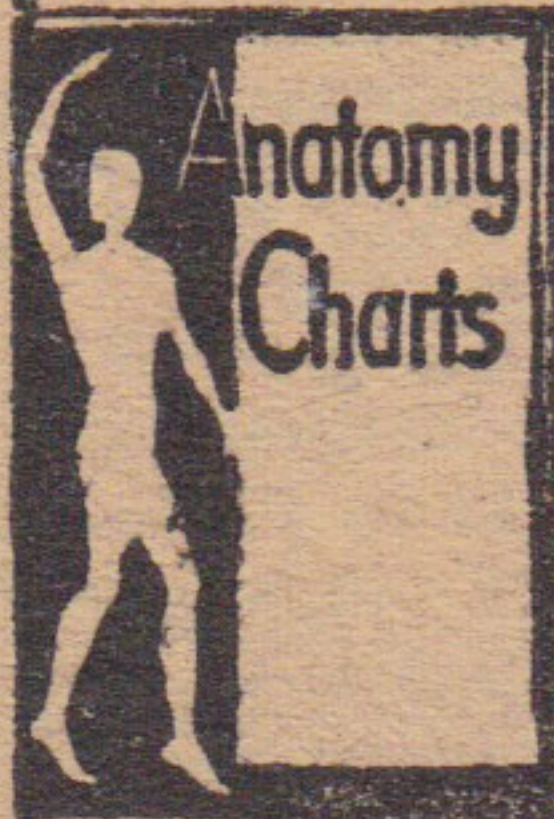
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Attorney Shotwell was mad all over. The bald head above the tufts over his ears glistened. Steve Huston spoke to him, and the attorney put one hand to his ear.

"I can't hear what your saying!" he shouted. "I lost my earphones!"

The Phantom moved closer to Attorney Shotwell, Mrs. Brand and Steve Huston. He held up his hand.

"Summing up all the killings," Van said quietly, "we have to include the murder of Robert Deming, the boat-yard man. It seems that the group having the metal marine engine and the precision machines also had duplicate blueprints made of everything and each man was protected by having his own copies. But robberies took place. Several lost some of their blueprints. Charles Minturn was smart. He devised an idea of his own for protecting his marine engine. He removed vital parts, but he had blueprints of everything, including all of the engine. Then Minturn had Red McMurtry, the cameraman, make films of everything, including all of his marine engine. I understand that engine will double the present speed of cargo ships."

Attorney Shotwell glared at the Phantom.

"I've been reading your lips, Phantom!" he shouted. "You are only telling what all of us know! There was a group to build the ships. Burgess Brand and Howard Roth were of that group. That makes my client, Mrs. Brand, equal with others who have survived. Only right now it would appear that the films, like everything else, have also been lost or destroyed. Which leaves nothing upon which to continue the work."

At that moment, the Phantom saw

Red McMurtry. The big cameraman was muddy and his face was bruised. But his arms were loaded with drums of movie films.

"That's a mistake about the films being gone!" McMurtry announced. "They were taken from a diving bell a short time ago, but I just found them where they had been buried up along the shore!"

ATTORNEY SHOTWELL stared at Red McMurtry. Then he moved swiftly.

"The films, huh?" Shotwell shouted. "That's good! Then Mrs. Brand will have her share after all—"

The Phantom moved so quietly and quickly that none saw how he happened to be beside Attorney Shotwell. But the Phantom was there. And one of the Phantom's lightning hands suddenly pinned Attorney Shotwell's wrist and twisted an arm behind his back.

"Damn you!" shouted the lawyer. "What is this? I call upon the police to protect me from this interfering fool!"

The yellow-haired Mrs. Brand sprang abruptly toward Van and Attorney Shotwell. But Steve Huston was close to her and he moved fast. The woman screamed as he grabbed her.

Inspector Cardigan was gravely puzzled. He saw the Phantom bend suddenly as Attorney Shotwell attempted to free himself.

"What is this, Phantom?" demanded Inspector Cardigan.

"Before we go any further, I'm recommending the arrest of Mrs. Burgess Brand and her attorney," Van said. "The charge will be complicity and responsibility in the widespread murders of the past few days."

Inspector Cardigan and the other police were unbelieving.

"All this is crazy!" Shotwell roared. "Why, everyone here knows me as Burgess Brand's lawyer! I've been

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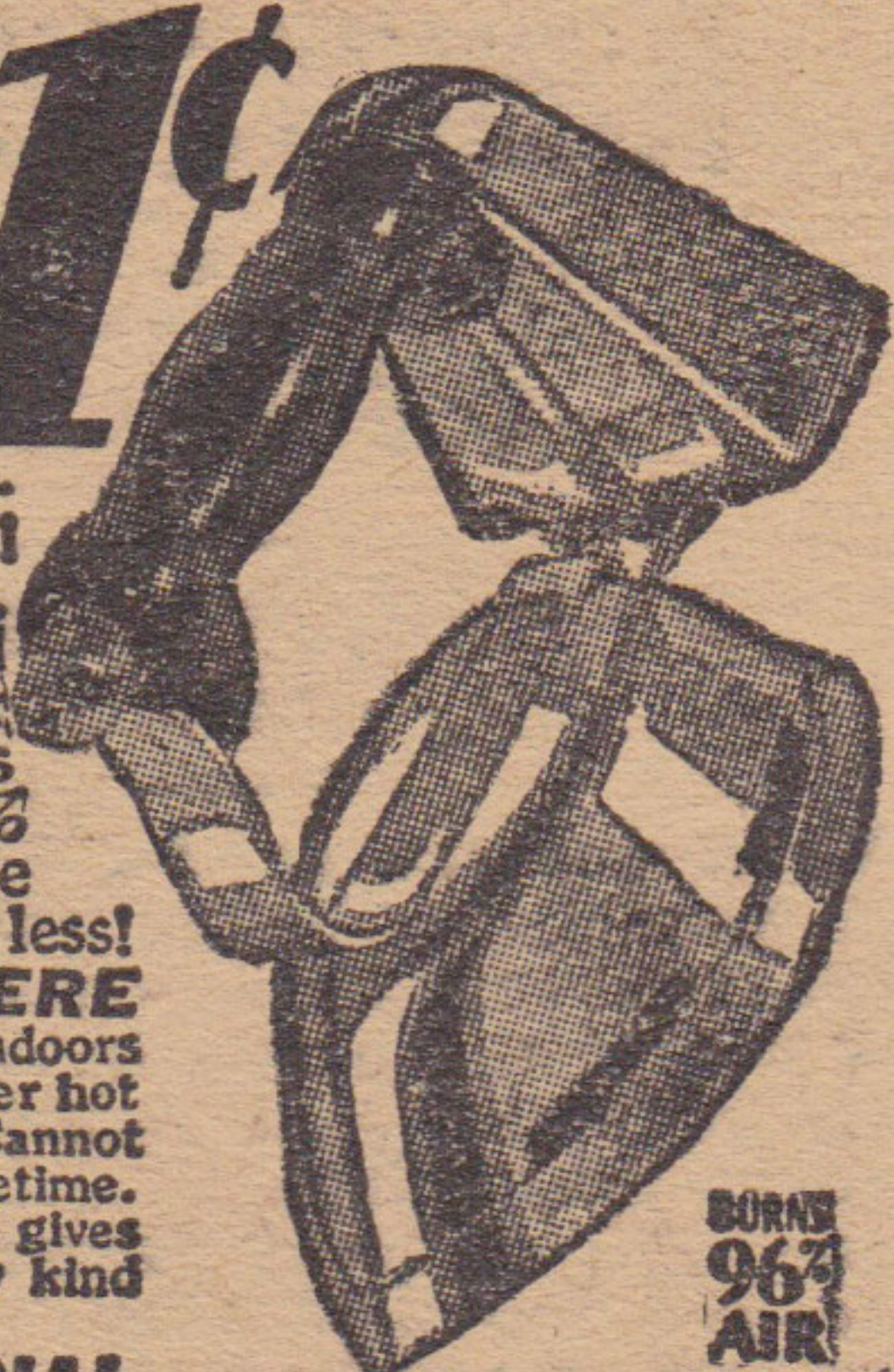
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with most of the others when the murders were committed! I couldn't have—"

Van suddenly thrust Attorney Shotwell into Inspector Cardigan's big hands.

"I'd advise the handcuffs for both of the prisoners," Van urged.

Then the Phantom was taking a peculiar metal arrangement from inside his coat pocket. It looked like a deaf man's microphone and earphone connections. He held it up for all to see.

"This supposed set of earphones worn by Attorney Shotwell is really a clever air-gun with which at least three murders have been committed," Van began. "I offer it as evidence."

A minute later, Attorney Shotwell was still protesting.

"That doesn't prove a thing!" he thundered. "I've had to wear a real set of earphones, and that isn't it! You have nothing on me! And it is an outrage to bring Mrs. Brand into this!"

Even to Inspector Cardigan, the irate attorney sounded convincing. But Van suddenly stepped close to him. The attorney groaned and struggled under Van's quick hands. Then Van stepped back. He held up a front tooth. It was a false pivot tooth. He rubbed one hand across the bald head of Attorney Shotwell.

"I understand that Attorney Shotwell has been the Brands' lawyer for about seven months prior to this date," the Phantom said. "I'll venture that no one has heard of him before that."

VAN balanced the pivot tooth in his right hand.

"Inspector," he went on, "if you'll rub Attorney Shotwell's 'bald' head, you will find stubbly hair is growing in. He hasn't had time to shave his head for several hours."

It was then that Mrs. Burgess Brand started putting on an act of screaming hysterics. Van silenced her.

"It sounds good, Mrs. Brand," he said. "Almost as good as the act you put on when your husband died in the fire at his plant. You knew the thermite bombs had been planted. That's how you got out of your car in time. You were smart. But I am afraid it doesn't work out this time. Inspector Cardigan, I will withdraw all of my charges against Attorney Lionel Shotwell. But I will substitute the same charges against none other than Burgess Brand himself. There is no such person as Attorney Shotwell!"

THE hysterics of Mrs. Brand died out abruptly.

"For months, Burgess Brand has been building up his new identity as the bald-headed, deaf Attorney Shotwell, lawyer for the Brands," Van explained. "That new identity involved shaving his head. Also he had to substitute an enamel pivot tooth for a gold tooth he had always worn as Burgess Brand. That same gold tooth was in the mouth of the burned skeleton left in the Burgess Brand Works with Howard Roth. Undoubtedly the dead man with the gold tooth was some derelict doomed to die in the place of the real Burgess Brand.

"Burgess Brand and his wife plotted carefully. Brand was last seen inside his own works by guards and a watchman. How did he get out? Through an old tunnel which leads from inside the Brand Works to the river. The murder master's own men entered through that tunnel, bringing in thermite bombs and the fake corpse with the gold tooth. Burgess Brand left with his men, the murder mobsters, and assumed the identity of Attorney Shotwell on the outside.

"Mrs. Burgess Brand was, of course, in a position to collect the plant and personal insurance. Queerly enough, that million in insurance was only a small part of the hundreds of millions that Burgess Brand hoped later to win when he had murdered

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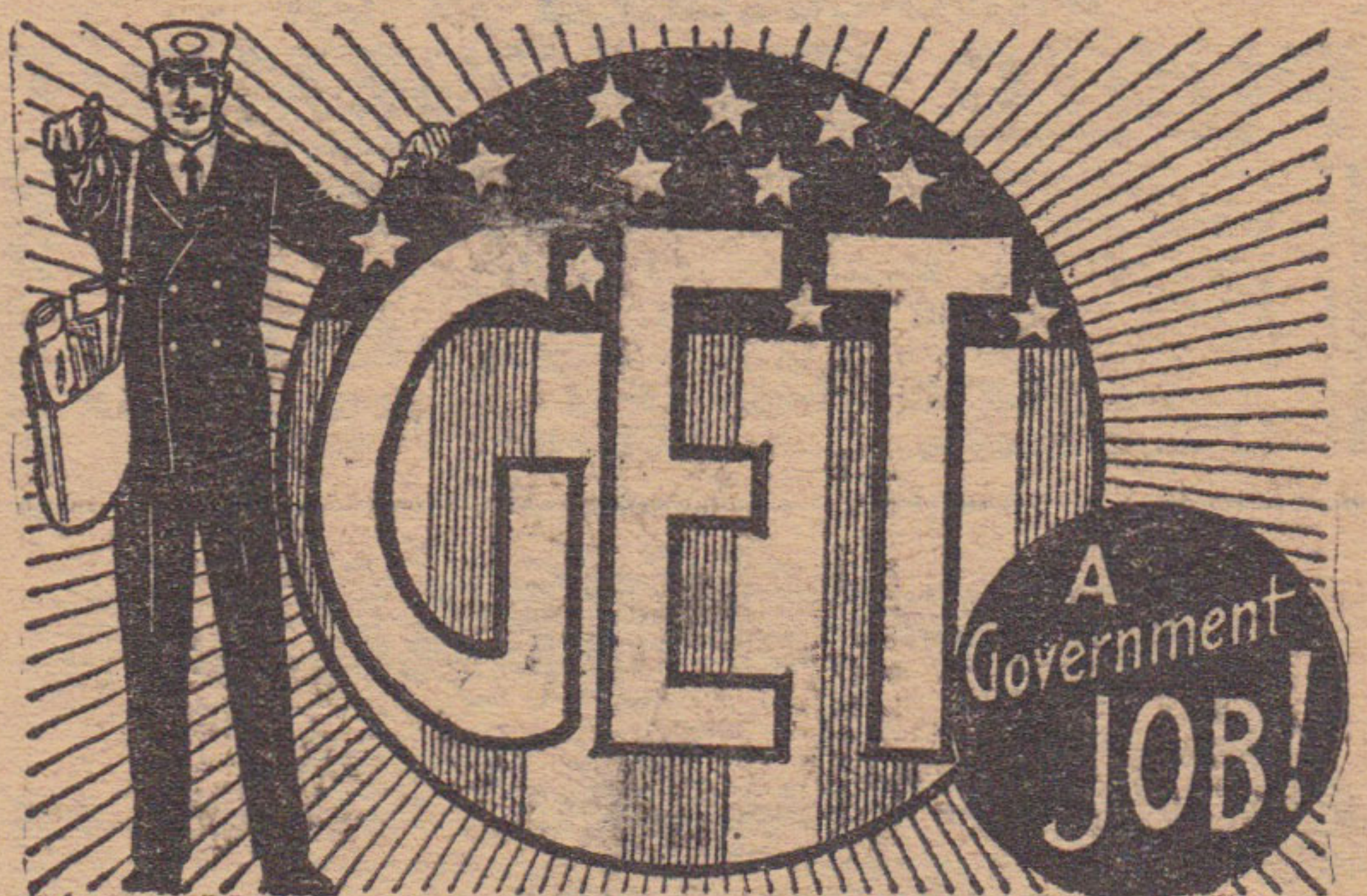
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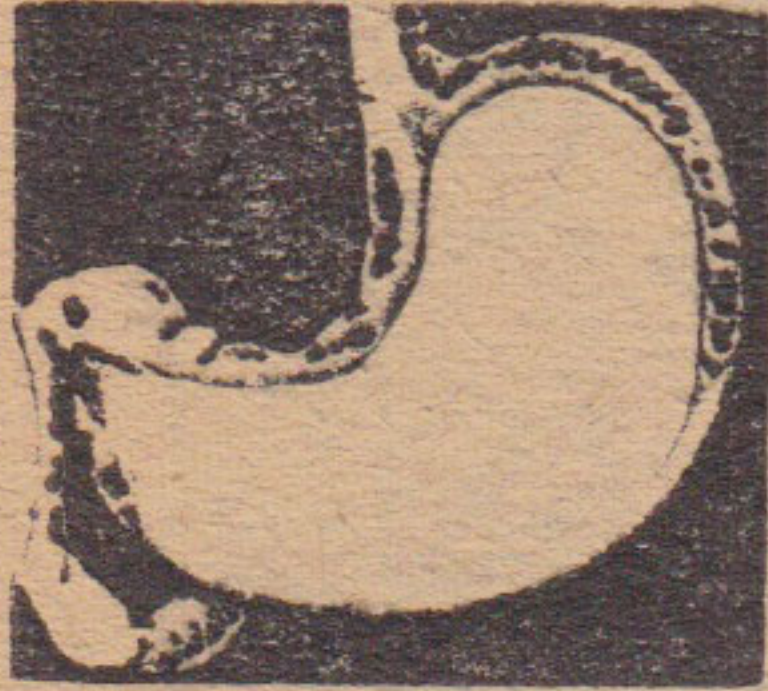
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his former associates and gained possession of all the plans for the new ship that would revolutionize the industry.

"Brand needed the insurance million only for paying his mob-killers and saboteurs, who were headed by a midget known as the Skipper. Immediately after the Brand Works fire, an attempt was made to murder Charles Minturn. Brand did not know then that Minturn had held out vital parts of his engine and that blueprint plans were in the possession of Red McMurtry.

"Brand discovered the truth as he went along. I knocked out Attorney Shotwell in his office and discovered the items about the tooth and the hair. This was after I found out that Shotwell's deafness was only a pose, which he missed on carrying out when I was watching him at our first meeting. I also found a wig of red hair. At times Shotwell appeared as Red McMurtry, in an effort to get at the hiding place in the blueprint films.

"Tonight, Burgess Brand must have caught on where those films were being hidden. How he did, I don't know. But I do know that it was he who tried to kill us and get the films in the diving bell. Somehow, he got hold of a diving lung and attached some heavy weight to his feet so that he would sink to the bottom of the river. In my haste to get to the surface I forgot to take the films with me. At first I thought that McMurtry did when he left with Mary Minturn, but it seems that he didn't.

"Brand found them, fastened them inside his clothing and came to the surface. He tried to kill me, but disappeared before I could stop him. But Red McMurtry remained on the shore. He saw Brand come out of the water, and followed him. A short distance from the boatyard, Brand buried the films, only to have McMurtry dig them up when he left. Then, as Attorney Shotwell, Brand returned here.

"It was my own idea to have Mrs.

Brand brought down here. I thought she would be interested in learning about all the destruction and killings and havoc she was helping her murderous husband to create."

INSPECTOR CARDIGAN scratched his head.

"But how would there be so much money in this fast ship production, Phantom, and who would pay for it?" he inquired.

"It was the safest and smartest bet that Brand could have made," the Phantom answered. "It was safe, because after this war is over all those nations so involved would be at once in the market for hundreds of new cargo ships. Those nations would pay huge amounts for a foolproof ship-a-day plan that would produce cargo carriers twice as light and twice as fast as any ships now afloat."

"But Mrs. Brand was kidnaped, and escaped from her abductors," Inspector Cardigan suggested.

"Escaped?" said Van. "You mean was set free. It was only a little touch to add to the apparent tragic light of the widow of a man who was supposed to be dead."

"But as it now stands, Phantom?" asked Red McMurtry.

"There are still hundreds of millions to be made by those who have survived the murder master's bloody plans," Van explained. "With the photographs of the blueprints available, Roth, Deming, Thayer and Minturn need not have died in vain. Their contributions to the advancement of American shipbuilding and machinery may well be a lasting monument to them.

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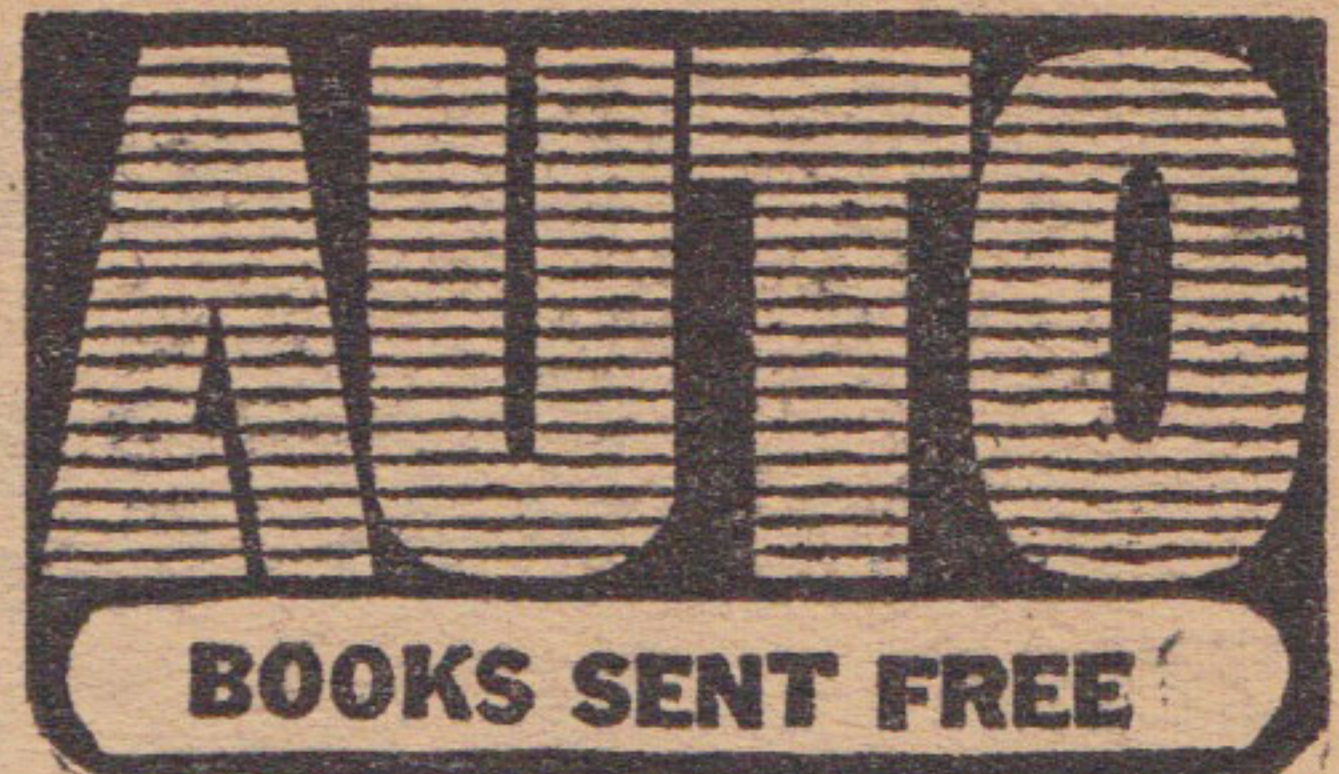


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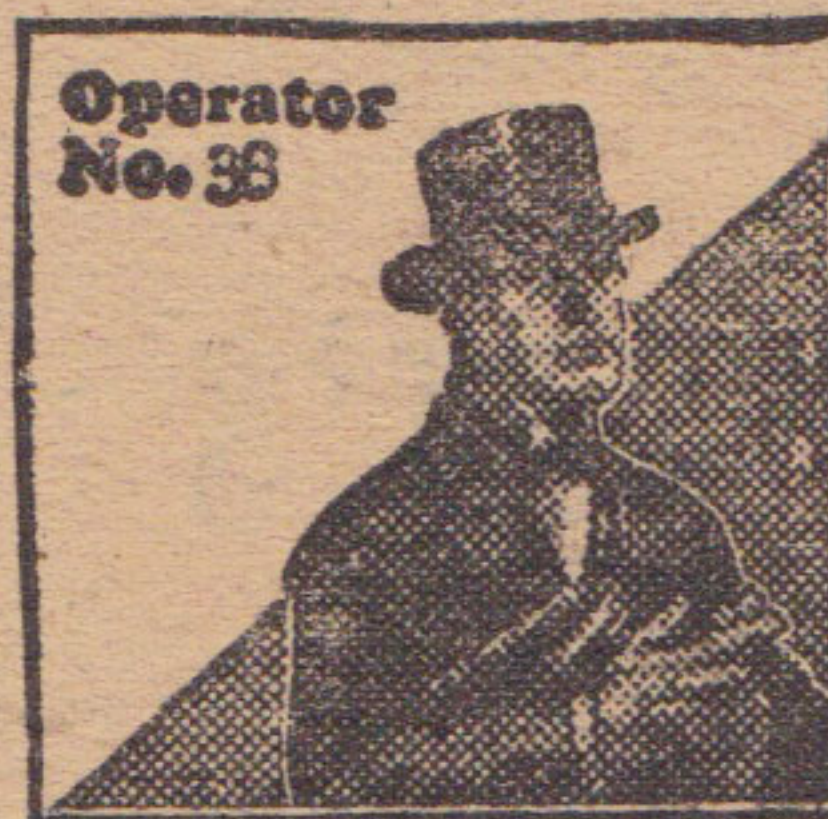
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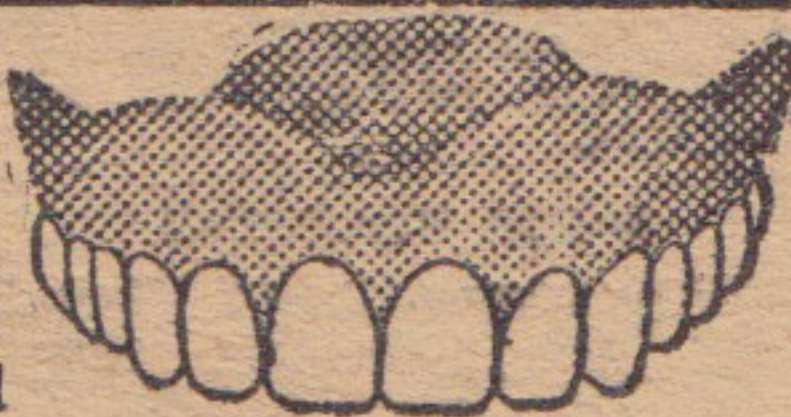
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Mary Minturn nodded as she gripped Red McMurtry's arm.

"I'll see that Father's name is alive, even though he has left us," she murmured.

Muriel Havens stood beside the Phantom. "I hope our next case has as much excitement as this one," she whispered.

"If it has," said the Phantom grimly, "I'll see that you read all about it in your father's New York *Clarion*, while comfortably resting in your apartment."

Somehow, Van Loan knew that things probably wouldn't work out that way.

Next Issue: THE MURDER BUND

A SOCIAL CALL

(Concluded from page 99)

ries. And before the latter knew what was happening, a pair of handcuffs was snapped about his wrists. Gray-faced, Jeffries stared back at the detective.

"Why?" he asked hoarsely.

Kenny yawned.

"Murder, bright boy!"

He approached the wheel chair in which Brecken's body was still slumped and wheeled it beneath the gas jet. Then he raised up the dead man's arm. There was at least a foot of space between Brecken's fingertips and the plug on the gas outlet.

"You were the last man with him," Kenny drawled to Jeffries. "You admitted it yourself. Since there is only one key to the house and the place hasn't been broken into, I guess there's little doubt about that. Well, Brecken here was paralyzed. Think your defense attorney could explain to the jury how in the devil Brecken could have turned on that plug without getting up? And there's nothing in this room to help him do it."

He grinned at the medical examiner. "Ever run across anything more simple, Tom? Remind me to tell the missus about it."

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3-41

THE PHANTOM SPEAKS

(Concluded from page 15)

don't know how much your letters of criticism and comment mean to us. They literally make this magazine the swell book it is—for we have given special heed to all you have had to say ever since THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE embarked upon its career.

Here are excerpts from just a few recent communications:

I think your latest story is great. Once a Phantom novel is started you can't separate yourself from it. —Homer Perier, Sacramento, Calif.

THE PHANTOM AND THE CURIO MURDERS is the best novel I have ever read. Sure a mystery thriller! —Edward Cassidy, Tulsa, Okla.

What about that idea of putting the Phantom's characterization on a separate page instead of weaving it into the story? I rather like the idea and hope you will start doing it soon. Not only your long novel, but also the short stories, are mighty entertaining. —Frank O'Farrell, Richmond, Va.

For clean, wholesome reading, give me THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE every time.

—Elsie Cranzer, Toledo, O.

I am joining FRIENDS OF THE PHANTOM because I think that in this time of emergency every citizen should help to eliminate the menace of crime.

—John Strickland, New York City.

Thanks to everybody! See you next month.

—THE PHANTOM.

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28x5.25-18	2.45	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.50	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.80	1.15
6.50-17	2.75	1.15
28x5.50-18	2.75	1.15
29x5.50-19	2.75	1.15
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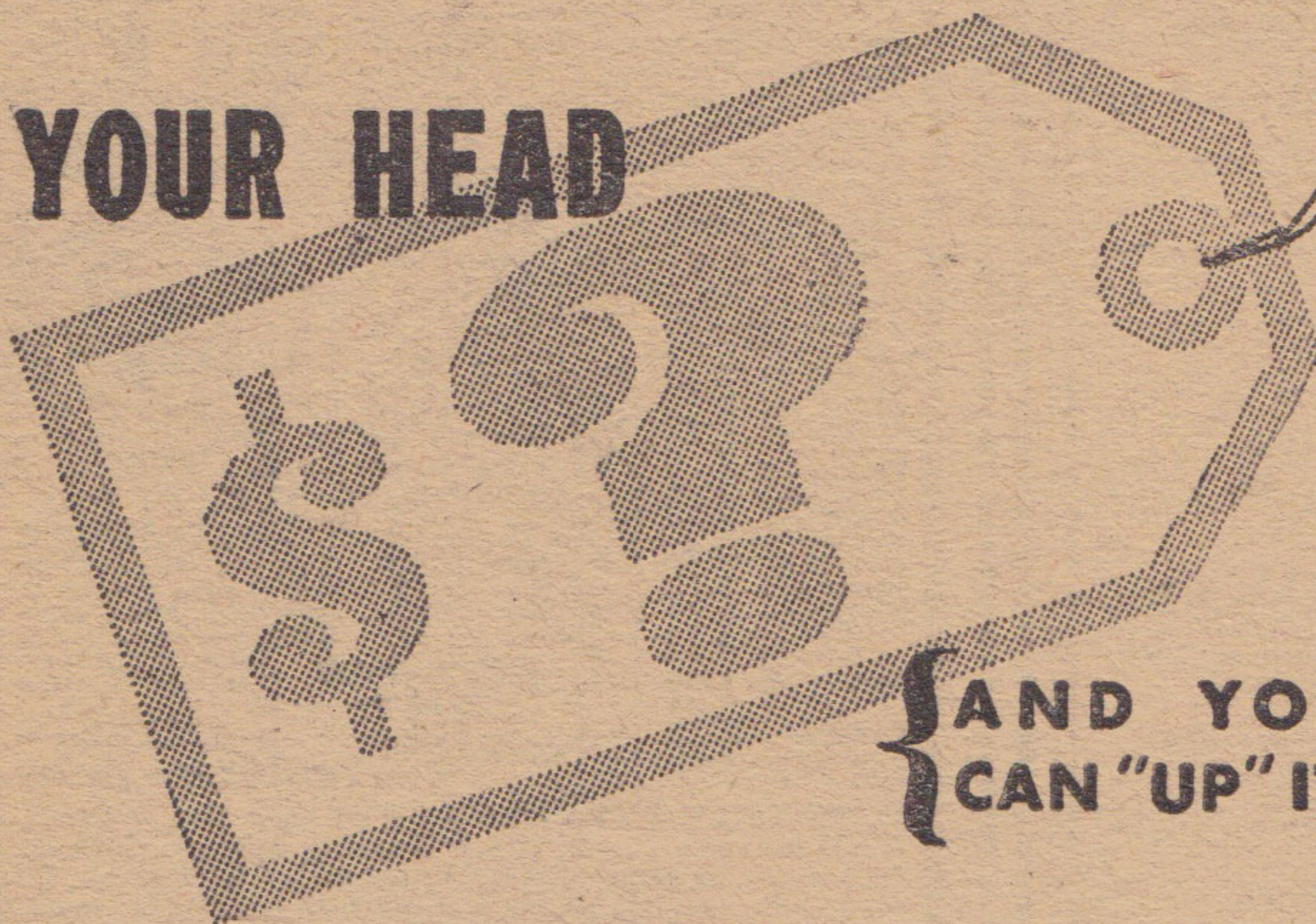
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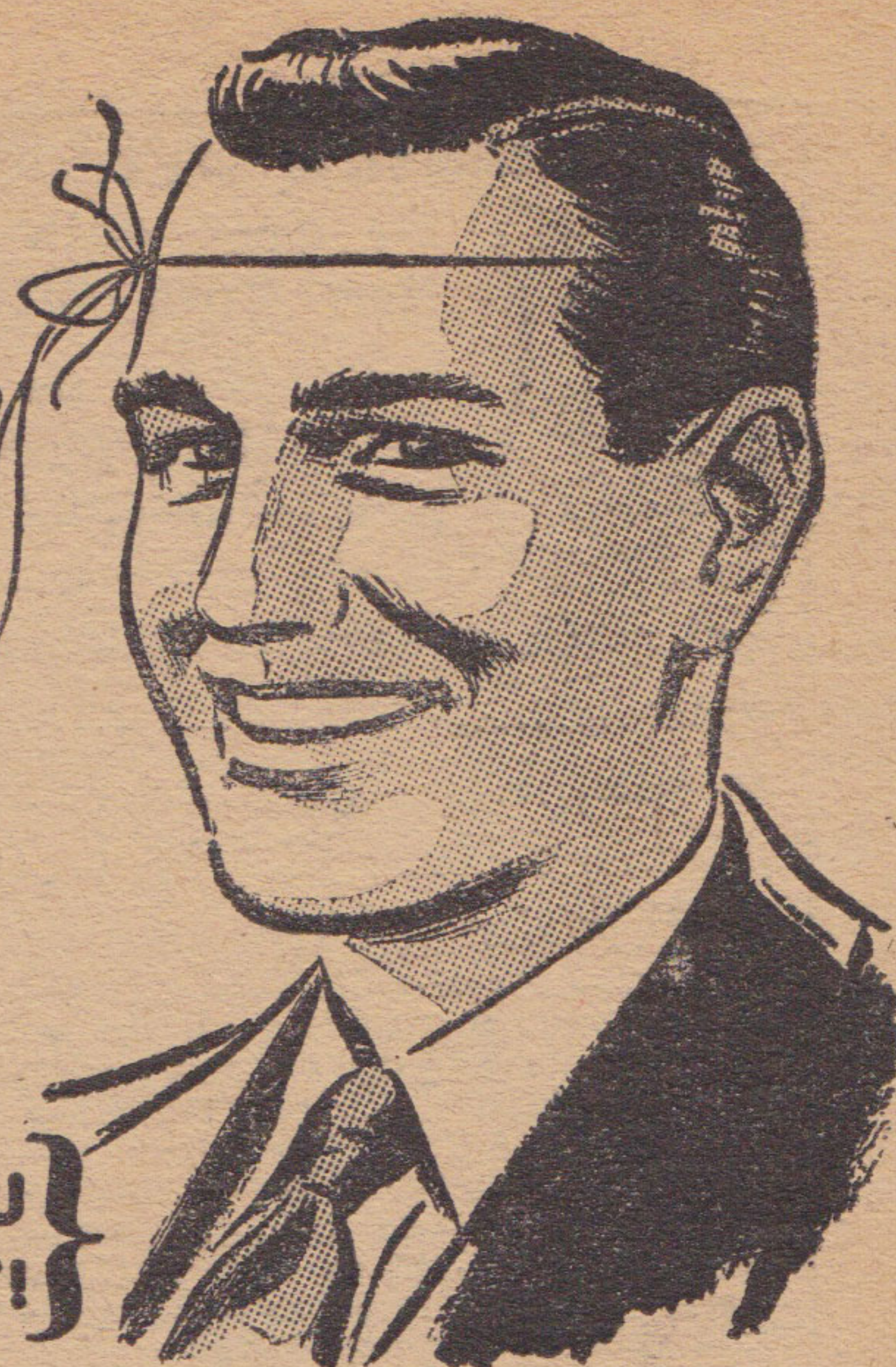
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