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Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

Inn of the Two Witches
by Joseph Conrad

Guns in Action
by George Harmon Coxe

The Disagreeable Corpse
by Michael Innes

Midnight Train to Death
by Lawrence G. Blochman

The Owner's Handicap
by Leslie Charteris

ADVENTURE OF THE STOLEN HATS
A NEW STORY by AUGUST DERLETH

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

A KING-SIZE PUBLICATION

IF IMITATION is the sincerest form of flattery, as some proverb says, it is also the laziest way for any second-rate writer to shuffle by, as can be seen by a glance at the book racks of any newsstand, where a certain coterie of semi-literate garbage disposal units have proliferated imitations of each other to the point of caricature.

One imitator to whom none of these taints applies, however, is August Derleth, who has never attempted to disguise his direct indebtedness to Conan Doyle. In fact, he rubs it in with almost every paragraph. Having decided long ago that Conan Doyle's one failing was that he failed to write enough Sherlock Holmes stories to satisfy a real enthusiast, Mr. Derleth decided to do something about it himself. In deference to the Master's literary rights, he was obliged to make such nominal changes as calling his hero Solar Pons; but otherwise he made no pretense to be doing anything but respectfully and happily continuing the saga that Sir Arthur started. Our lead story this month, THE ADVENTURE OF THE STOLEN HATS, is the very latest of these delightful unofficial sequels, which we think reflects equal credit on Mr. Derleth and his model.

Another character who has sired a host (I almost said "herd") of more or less reasonable facsimiles is Johnston McCulley's *Zorro*. I was still a boy when Douglas Fairbanks, Senior, enraptured me in the first, silent, and best version of *The Mark of Zorro*; but other Zorros, often under other names, are still galloping across the TV tubes. Mr. McCulley also is still going strong, and has since created several different characters, of whom a likeable little pickpocket called Thubway Tham was one of the most successful. Now, after an absence of 15 years, we have the pleasure of bringing you the brand-new and thoroughly up-to-date THUBWAY THAM RETURNS.

Our surprise packet this month is INN OF THE TWO WITCHES, by the great seafaring writer Joseph Conrad—the latest addition to our growing list of Authors You Never Expected to See in This Magazine.

When you consider that we are also tossing in a new Appleby story by Michael Innes, plus contributions by such other notable character creators as Lawrence G. Blochman and George Harmon Coxe, you can see we are setting ourselves a standard to live up to for our sixth year of publication. I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

Cecil Charles

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adventure of the stolen hats

by . . . August Derleth

Who was responsible for the bedevilment of the dignified members of the Diogenes Club and the troubles of M. Dulac?

His eyes twinkling, Solar Pons lowered the morning paper as I came into our quarters at 7B Praed Street one morning, and said, "Ah, Parker, this little matter of the honorable members' hats will certainly offer a new topic of conversation to supersede the unfortunate scandal at the Diogenes Club."

"Scandal seldom touches the Club," I said, I fear, somewhat pompously, since the subject of the Diogenes Club was one close to me, the Diogenes having been my earliest affection.

"I refer to the violence done to Colonel Mowbray, who was so outrageously searched within its hallowed precincts," continued Pons, as if to needle me. "Now, I fancy, the honorable members will talk of nothing else but the bedevilment they are suffering in the matter of their hats. The morning papers say that no less than seventeen hats have been stolen from the Club."

"Or mislaid," I said.

Pons shook his head. "Not all seventeen. You require too much of chance."

Solar Pons was created, to quote Anthony Boucher, to fill "the abhorrent vacuum in the life of London" that followed Sherlock Holmes' decision to retire. First appearing in print in 1929, Derleth's pastiches built around the character of the unusual investigator have won wide acclaim. The author is of course internationally known as an authority on Lovecraft.

"Besides, as I recall it, they haven't all been taken from the Club."

"Quite true. But so far, only members of the Diogenes seem to have suffered the loss of their hats."

"A coincidence."

"Tush! It is nonsense to speak of coincidence of such magnitude."

"Someone's knavery, then, expressing itself in malice against our members," I said.

"It wears the face of desperation, Parker," replied Pons. "It intrigues me. It tickles my fancy. I am almost tempted to propose to the directors of the Diogenes that I be retained to look into it."

"Oh, come, Pons—it is too trivial a matter for your special talents," I protested.

"Nothing is too trivial which promises to alleviate for a time the monotony of existence," retorted Pons. "However, at the moment—through the good offices of my brother, Bancroft—we seem to have some sort of problem in the offing."

He reached under the newspaper on the table and tossed a sheet of notepaper over to me. It was expensive paper, of a high rag content—obviously the property of a man of taste and refinement, and perhaps of wealth. I opened it and read:

"Sir: Your esteemed brother has been kind enough to suggest that I call on you about a little matter which troubles me. Perhaps at one o'clock today?

Hercule Dulac."

Below, in Bancroft Pons' unmistakable scrawl, was written: "Solar, more in your line than mine. Bancroft."

"What do you make of it, Parker?" challenged Pons.

"'A little matter,' he writes," I said without hesitation. "It does not seem to be a capital crime, does it? He is a man of good connections, or else he would hardly have had your brother's ear. Since he has some access to the Foreign Office, and thus to Bancroft, perhaps it is not too much to guess that he is in the diplomatic service. Of France, perhaps?"

Pons smiled. "Splendid, Parker! I am delighted to observe how much of my methods rubs off on you. French, certainly. His name tells us that. The paper is unofficial. The French are punctilious in matters of this kind. Thus M. Dulac's problem is likely to be unofficial. Had it been otherwise, Bancroft would have taken it up. I do not recognize our client's name. He is likely to be a minor official, perhaps in the consular service.

"M. Dulac writes with a heavy hand, which suggests that he is not physically slight. And what troubles him would seem to be more in the nature of a puzzle to him than something serious, for

the casual air of his note suggests as much.

"But come, sit down and take a little lunch. He will call at a considerate hour, which is not far hence. I trust you found your patient improved and are in good appetite. Mrs. Johnson is even now on the way up the stairs with a delicious kidney pie."

We had hardly finished lunch —indeed, Mrs. Johnson had just left our rooms with the dishes— when the outer bell rang, and our landlady's voice could be heard on the stairs directing our visitor to our door.

"A big man," said Pons, cocking his head to mark the ascending steps.

"Heavy," I said. "Elementary."

"Ah, forgive me, Parker. These little deductions come as naturally to me as food and drink. I forget how they must on occasion tire you."

Our client's knock fell upon the door. I hastened to open it.

Hercule Dulac stood on the threshold. He was not so tall as he was broad-shouldered and well-muscled, offering the appearance of a man who was much given to athletics. His features, however, were finely cut and delicate, and he wore a mustache to cover a short upper lip. His lower lip was slightly outthrust. His pale blue eyes swept past me and fixed at once upon Pons. He bowed.

"Mr. Pons?"

"Come in, M. Dulac," Pons called out.

Our client crossed the threshold as Pons introduced me.

"Dr. Parker is my old and valued friend, sir," said Pons, waving M. Dulac to a chair. "Pray be seated," he added. "I am curious to learn of the matter that troubles you."

Once seated, M. Dulac put his walking stick across his knees and laid his hat upon it. Observing Pons' expectant air, he began to speak at once.

"I hope you won't think my problem too trivial for your good offices, Mr. Pons, but I assure you it has caused me no little annoyance. It concerns, sir, my three hats."

Pons flashed a glance toward me; his eyes danced.

"The cost of the hats is of no consequence," continued M. Dulac. "It is the infernal irritation I suffer and the not inconsiderable mystification. Two hats have been stolen from my house and one was knocked from my head and carried off by a ruffian in the street near my house. Mr. Pons, to the best of my knowledge, I have incurred no enemies since I came to London, and I am at a loss to explain this singular matter."

"When did these thefts take place?" asked Pons.

"My house in St. John's Wood was entered four nights ago. Two nights past, my hat was knocked off in the street."

"You caught sight of your assailant?"

"A big man, Mr. Pons, but very nimble. I took after him, but he outdistanced me without trouble. His face was covered with a silk handkerchief."

"You are in the consular service, M. Dulac?" Pons asked then.

"I am, sir. I am the secretary to M. Fliege, the French consul in London."

"Are you by any chance a member of the Diogenes Club?"

"No, sir. I have exchange cards, of course, which are honored at several London clubs, but the Diogenes is not one of them."

I coughed.

Pons sat with his eyes closed, undisturbed by my thrust. He pulled his earlobe between the thumb and index finger of his right hand, a familiar gesture which told me that some train of thought had begun behind those keen eyes.

"M. Dulac," he said presently, "I am no lover of coincidence, however much of it occurs in life. You are not a member of the Diogenes. You have been a guest there?"

"On one occasion."

"Ah!"

"It is not, however, a Club to which I would have any desire to belong," M. Dulac went on in a disapproving voice. "On the evening I dined there, I had the misfortune to witness a scandalous matter—the search of one of the members by the police. Moreover, on that same evening I found that someone had gone off with my hat, and I had to content myself with the somewhat more used hat left in its place."

"I assure you, sir," I could not refrain from breaking in, "such incidents as you describe are by no means everyday occurrences at the Diogenes, which is one of the oldest and most respected clubs in the city."

"Pray overlook Dr. Parker's outburst," said Pons, with a wry smile and mocking eyes. "He speaks as a member."

"Colonel Mowbray," I went on, "is even now consulting his barristers in regard to an action against the police for that disgraceful episode."

"I mean no disrespect to your institutions, Doctor," M. Dulac hastened to say.

Pons brushed this aside. "Actually, then, M. Dulac, you have lost four hats—not three."

"I haven't recovered the hat lost at the Diogenes Club, no, Mr. Pons—but that, I assume, was a simple mistake, for the hat I had to take was quite similar, only somewhat older. The other three, however, were unquestionably stolen."

"The hat you took from the Diogenes in place of your own," pressed Pons. "What has become of it?"

"I still have it, sir. I waited

for someone to return my hat, since it had my name and address sewn into the band, like all my hats. Thus far, no one has done so. I can only conclude that the error has not been noticed. The hat I took from the Diogenes Club is in a box at my home."

"None of your stolen hats has been recovered?"

"Two of them, quite badly torn, were found floating in the Thames, Mr. Pons. A clear case of vandalism, the reason for which completely escapes me. I had thought I had some familiarity with the British character, but the key to this puzzle eludes me."

"What kind of hat was it that you left at the Club?"

"A bowler."

"And the hats which were stolen?"

"Also bowlers."

"Dear me—someone has an affinity for our common bowler. Were not the honorable members' stolen hats also bowlers, Parker?" asked Pons.

"I believe they were."

"Perhaps, more than likely, he has a horror of bowlers, since he destroyed two of M. Dulac's," said Pons. So saying, he came to his feet. "M. Dulac, I will look into this matter for you. If you are at home, I will call on you within the hour."

"Sir, I will be there." M. Dulac, too, got to his feet. "The number is 71 St. John's Wood Road, Mr. Pons."

Our client bade us a ceremonious good-afternoon and took his departure.

Pons waited until he heard the outer door close. Then he asked, "Did not M. Dulac's little problem strike you as curious?"

"I confess that the most curious aspect of it is your evident willingness to take up a matter so slight."

"Nothing is slight, my dear Parker. Everything is relative. This matter is sufficiently important to M. Dulac to take him to my brother, and bring him from Bancroft to me."

"He could purchase a lifetime of wearing apparel for what it might cost him to catch the thief who has stolen his three hats," I said.

"Four," said Pons.

"I beg to differ," I insisted. "One was taken by mistake."

"Perhaps," agreed Pons with uncommon amiability. "But let us just examine our client's story for a moment. It suggests nothing to you?"

"Certainly the parallel with what has been happening to the members' hats at the Diogenes Club begs to be acknowledged," I said. "It would appear that the hat-thief is expanding his activities from club members to guests."

"The sequence of events certainly does suggest as much," agreed Pons. "The news accounts have it that all the hats removed

from the Diogenes Club were common black bowlers, not particularly costly. So were M. Dulac's hats. I submit that this is not common thievery, for a thief would already have acquired all the bowlers he could use. Doubtless the psychoanalytic gentry might conceive of the bowler as a symbol, but I daresay the problem is more elementary than that."

"Oh, come, Pons, there is surely no great mystery to be made of this affair," I cried. "You are always the first to chide me when I look away from the obvious."

"Ah, a distinct touch, Parker," said Pons. "You are right. There is no mystery on the surface of this puzzle. A gentleman at the Diogenes Club took someone else's hat and left his own. Before he could return it, his hat had been taken. For some reason which we must fathom, he cannot openly inquire for his hat—that would seem to be the crux of the matter. He therefore resorts to stealing hats, which he subsequently discards as soon as he finds they are not the missing hat he seeks. He then learns, perhaps after a more complete examination of the hat he took from the Club, that it is the property of M. Dulac, and, reasoning that our client might very well have taken his hat in place of the missing one, he turns his somewhat unwelcome attention to M. Dulac."

"Do you seriously believe that anyone would go to such lengths for a common bowler?" I cried.

"This gentleman evidently *wants* his hat very much," said Pons. "Come along, we'll take a look at it."

Since St. John's Wood Road was not far from our Praed Street quarters, we soon had the missing bowler in our possession. It seemed to me a very ordinary sort of hat, no longer new, but well kept. Our client viewed it with considerable distaste which he took no pains to conceal.

"It fits me, Mr. Pons, but poorly," he said.

"Lacking any distinguishing mark, it might be hard to distinguish in haste," observed Pons. "So that anyone, coming up behind you, might mistake one of your own for it—and knock it off."

"Yes, that is true, Mr. Pons."

"With your permission, I'll just take this bowler along," proposed Pons. "For the time being, you may not be able to hope for immunity from further thefts—though I daresay anyone invading your house will be interested only in bowlers."

"I am happy to be rid of it, Mr. Pons," our client assured us. "But surely a simple application made at the Diogenes Club might have avoided such a roundabout way and such a distinctly criminal manner."

"Quite true," murmured Pons,

peering into the hat, lifting its lining, and fingering it. "The average Englishman would have done so. Fortunately, we are as a nation given to the proper way in which to conduct ourselves—thus it is left to non-conformists like the owner of this bowler to keep up interest in the human animal."

We bade M. Dulac good-day.

On our way back to No. 7B, Pons put the missing bowler into my hands. "Examine it, Parker," he said.

I turned the hat about. It was of good quality, but there was nothing about it to indicate the identity of its owner. It manifestly belonged to a man whose head was a size or two larger than average, but who yet required that some padding be put inside the lining up from the brim.

"A man of middle age," said Pons.

"Ah, yes—I see an iron-gray hair or two," I conceded. "Some dandruff, too."

Pons clucked. "A man who uses cologne."

I sniffed the hat. "Common lilac."

"No, Parker. Expensive lilac. The hat is the costliest bowler of its kind on the British market. Its appearance may deceive you at first glance—costly products often look very ordinary at casual scrutiny. Its owner is obviously a man about town, much given to soft living, a man who appreciates what we tritely refer to as the finer things of life. And thus, in the eyes of such a man, the costliest."

"There is nothing about this hat to warrant its being the object of such an unethical search," I said. "That is surely out of keeping with your description of its owner."

"Ah, that is a *non sequitur*," Pons chided. "A man's morals and ethics are not determined by his tastes. It is sounder to believe that it is the other way 'round."

"There is one thing," I said. "I refuse to believe that a man of wealth would permit himself to wear a padded hat. He would obtain a perfect fit."

"Capital, Parker!" cried Pons. "I see plainly that when the time comes for me to retire, you ought to be able to step into my shoes. The hat is not of the slightest interest. Nor, I submit, is it the true object of the search which has annoyed so many more people than our client. It is the padding —not the hat."

As he spoke, he inserted thumb and forefinger into the lining of the hat and drew forth a long, folded and crumpled envelope. He unfolded it and held it up for me to see. Across its face had been typewritten: "Last Will and Testament of Herbert Comparr, Lord Darnavon." Below, in a corner of the envelope, in ink, was a date but two months before.

"Lord Darnavon died in a fall

down his beach steps three weeks ago or thereabouts," said Pons. "You may recall the incident, Parker."

"I do. It happened at his place near Highcliffe."

"The steps gave way; the old man went down. He broke his neck, as I remember the account."

"Yes, he was seventy-eight. He had no business on a beach ladder at that age. But was not his will offered?"

"I believe it was. He left his estate to his granddaughter, Mrs. Alan Upway, in Australia. She is presumably on her way here, though her husband was with Darnavon when the old man died."

"There was surely no reason to challenge the will?"

"None. It was with a highly reputable firm of barristers and had been executed only last year."

"Then this will is the more recent," I said. "Pons, we should lose no time returning it to the executors of Darnavon's estate."

"Gently, Parker," said Pons. "The appearance of this will gives rise to some interesting questions. I propose to examine them."

Back in our quarters, Pons proceeded without ceremony to put on a pot of hot water so that he could steam open the envelope found in the lost bowler. I took a dim view of his plan and said as much.

"What you are about, Pons, is precisely as illegal as making off with someone's hat," I said.

"Surely it is a matter of degree," said Pons. "We ought to determine whether the executors of the estate are in fact the proper owners of this document."

"Are they not the best judges of that?"

"Who am I to say so without knowing what is in the document?"

I said no more, but watched as he carefully steamed open the envelope and extracted the document within. He read it with obvious eagerness, his keen gray eyes flashing from line to line.

"Mrs. Upway has been reduced to half the estate in this will," he said presently, looking up, "and Darnavon's London nephew, Arthur Comparr, is to receive the other half."

"If those are his only two living heirs," I said, "that would seem a more equable distribution of the old man's assets. They were considerable, I believe."

"Ample. Darnavon was very wealthy. The Crown, of course, will receive a major share, in any case. The granddaughter, however, is in the direct line, and the nephew is not."

"Was there not some bitterness when she left to marry an Australian? I seem to recall something of that kind."

"Some furore in the newspapers, in any event."

I leaned forward. "Pons,

doesn't it strike you as more than a coincidence, then, that her husband should have been visiting Darnavon at the time of the old man's death?"

"It is odd that you should say so," replied Pons, his eyes narrowed.

"It would have been to his interest to spirit this will away," I went on, "for by it his wife loses half the estate."

"A logical speculation, Parker, but we have no present connection between young Mr. Alan Upway and the bowler found in the possession of our client."

"I believe such a connection can be disclosed."

"We shall see. In the meantime, what do you make of Darnavon's signature?" He held the final page of the will up to the light before me.

I examined it closely. "It is obviously the signature of an old and probably no longer well man," I said. "It is shaky, unsure—that would be typical of a man of Darnavon's age."

"The witnesses' signatures, in any case, are firm enough," observed Pons. He lowered the will, and sat for a moment with his eyes closed in that attitude of deep thought so usual for him, his face mask-like, with not a muscle moving. He sat thus for fully five minutes before he spoke again to say, "I rather think, on the strength of this little discovery, we ought to pay a visit to Highcliffe."

"Ah, you're planning after all to restore the will to its rightful owners," I cried.

"That, I fancy, is the art of deduction from a medical background," said Pons cryptically.

Next morning found us on a train from Waterloo to Southampton, where Pons engaged a cab to take us to Highcliffe, a small seaside resort, just out of which, along the coast, was the late Lord Darnavon's estate. Pons was annoyingly silent about the reason for his journey, preferring to speak, when he did speak, about the features of the region through which we made our way —the ancient oaks, beeches, and yews of the New Forest, rising among the heathland and farmlands—the Burne-Jones windows in the church at Lyndhurst—the grave of the original of Alice in Wonderland—the home of the Montagus at Beaulieu — and, above all, the singular sombreness of the Thomas Hardy country which lay on all sides, subjects in which, for all Pons' quiet enthusiasm, I was not at the moment primarily interested. Pons said nothing at all to satisfy my curiosity.

It was afternoon by the time we presented ourselves at the seaside home of the late Lord Darnavon and were shown into the presence of Alan Upway, a dark-eyed, reserved and somewhat suspicious young man, who plainly

regarded our visit as an intrusion. He still wore on his arm a mourning band, which I thought somewhat ostentatious and unusual for a grandson-in-law. Yet his attitude toward us could not be described as offensive.

"I am somewhat familiar with your name—and occupation, Mr. Pons," he said. "What can I do for you?"

"Mr. Upway, we have a fancy to walk upon the private beach belonging to the estate," replied Pons. "I thought it only proper that we obtain your permission before venturing to do so."

Upway was astonished—and, I thought, relieved. His face told us as much. He was also puzzled, but no more than I. "By all means, sir," he answered, when his surprise had worn off. "The readiest access is by means of the ladder to the beach house. My wife's grandfather always used it instead of having steps cut into the steep declivity to the beach. If you care to come with me . . . ?"

Following our host, we made our way down through the gracious gardens and lawns of the Darnavon estate to the hedge which grew thickly at the edge of the cliff upon which the house rose. The hedge was of yew and was interrupted only by a stout gate, opening upon a plain ladder of wood, which led down for some twenty steps to a beach house built snugly against the cliff on the sand below.

"Here it is, Mr. Pons," said Upway. "You'll forgive me for not coming along, but the place has an unpleasant memory for me. It was here that Lord Darnavon died."

"The ladder, I take it, has been repaired since then?"

"An entirely new ladder was put in. If my wife now elects to take up her residence here, we shall, of course, do away with it altogether, and have steps cut into the wall."

"That is eminently sensible," agreed Pons.

He thanked Upway and led the way down the ladder.

I followed.

I looked back once, and received a most disagreeable impression of Upway's touseled head, grim mouth, and narrowed, searching eyes looking down at us. But he whisked out of sight even as I gazed upward, and I found it necessary to watch my footing rather than look back again.

Pons waited impatiently at the foot of the ladder. "A pronounced risk for an old man," he said reflectively.

"A risk even for one younger," I added.

"You speak for yourself, Parker. I found it easy enough. But then, you've grown a little portly —evidence that your success in your practice has gone to your waist, which is always better than to your head."

"What are we doing here?" I

demanded. "This is madness. You never so much as mentioned Darnavon's will!"

"I had no intention of doing so. Now, Parker, do me the favor of walking out toward the sea a little and calling to me if you should see young Upway anywhere about above, peering at us."

I walked out past the beach house toward the sea, which was not far away, for the beach among the rocks was narrow. The Channel rolled gently, making a pleasant water music along the shore, and sea birds flew crying past. Looking back, I saw Pons on his knees at the foot of the ladder, scrabbling about in the sand like a child. He was, unless my eyes deceived me, actually sifting the sand through his fingers, carrying it up in his palm, studying it. But my task was to watch the hedge above for sight of Upway.

I sought our host in vain. Having drawn back before my eyes when I was on the ladder, he did not again show himself. The long line of thickly grown yew revealed no sign of a watcher.

I glanced once again at Pons. He had now taken some envelopes from his pocket and was putting into them sand from that in his palm. What could he have found? It seemed to me that we had come a long way from the matter of M. Dulac's hats.

Pons rose to his feet and beckoned to me. Waiting but to see that I was coming, he began to mount the ladder.

I came along at his heels. He offered not a word of explanation of his puzzling conduct.

We reached the top of the ladder and passed through the hedge. Standing with the gate once again closed behind us, Pons stood looking about. Our host was not to be seen. But across the garden, near to what I took to be a potting shed, an old man was at work cutting back rose bushes.

Pons' long strides carried him quickly to the gardener's side.

"You, sir," said Pons. "I'd like a word with you."

The old fellow looked up from under grizzled brows, keen dark eyes flashing from one to the other of us. Then, surprisingly, he smiled. "I be pleased to talk wi' Mr. Solar Pons any time of day," he said. "I reads the papers, I do. Ye've come to make inquiry, I'm bound!"

I was delighted to observe that Pons was too startled to speak.

The gardener's cackled laughter was subdued; his face darkened suddenly. He nodded toward the house and said, "*'E* told me to burn the ladder. I did burn some after the new one was put in—but not all. No, sir. You come along wi' old Fred Hoskins, Mr. Pons."

He turned toward the potting shed, continuing to talk. "Ever since *'e* come from down under, the old man had nothing but ac-

cidents. There was that potted plant almost fell on him below-stairs. And the upset of the book shelves in the library. Then the ladder—that took him. I saved a piece right 'ere, Mr. Pons."

We had entered the potting shed, where the old man went directly to a row of potted plants. He reached behind them and removed a rung and a small section of ladder frame. He handed these pieces to Pons.

"Broke clean off at the frame on the one side, Mr. Pons. Many time I told the old man it was bound to go some day, but 'e was tight wi' his money. Still, none thought it was that rotten. His Lordship wasn't a heavy man—only medium."

"Thank you, Mr. Hoskins," said Pons, having found his voice at last. I was by this time almost bursting with laughter I dared not release.

"All I wants, sir—all anybody wants, sir—is justice, plain justice," said the gardener fervently.

When we stepped out of the potting shed, Hoskins seemed to shrink together. He fell silent. I gazed past him. There, standing at the back of the house, was Upway, staring fixedly in our direction.

Fortunately, Pons had concealed the portion of the ladder the gardener had given him under his coat. He seemed not a whit abashed by our host's intent scrutiny, though we had, after all, strayed from the beach. Indeed, Pons passed Hoskins and went directly to Upway.

"I hope, Mr. Upway, you won't think it an imposition," he said, "but I wonder if you would be so good as to answer a question or two about Lord Darnavon's death."

Upway frowned fleetingly and hesitated a little before answering cautiously, "What I had to say about it is on record, Mr. Pons. But I have no objection to answering your questions, if I can."

"Thank you. You were the only member of the family present at the time of His Lordship's death?"

"Yes, Mr. Pons." Upway moistened his lips a little and added, "I had been here a week. I had come down from London. I was in London from down under on business, and I couldn't very well return home without paying a visit to my wife's grandfather. I had written him from Melbourne, of course; so he expected me."

"You were alone with him for a week, then? Apart from the servants?"

"Yes—though there was one afternoon when he sent me away. My wife's cousin was due to spend the afternoon with him. Lord Darnavon expected a bit of thickness because he planned to take Arthur to task for his gambling and sporting."

"I see. What precisely did Lord Darnavon say about him, if you can recall?"

"Well, let me think." Upway paused for a moment to cast his thoughts back. "It was something like this," he said calculatingly. " 'That fellow spends money like water. Not as if he had it. I talk to him and fume at him and he sulks and mutters and promises he'll reform. Pah! My brother's only child, too! I'll give it to him once and for all.' Something of that nature, Mr. Pons."

"And did he succeed?"

Upway permitted himself a fleeting smile. "I should think not! A day or so after he'd gone, Lord Darnavon missed something of value and had to take the trouble to lodge a complaint with the police, suspecting that his nephew had taken it."

"What was it, Mr. Upway?"

He shrugged. "Oh, something he could sell for ready money, I fancy."

"Thank you, sir."

"Is that all, Mr. Pons?" His voice was markedly cool.

I broke in. "I wonder, sir, whether you've ever been in the Diogenes Club in London?"

Upway studied me for a moment before he answered, "I was a dinner guest at the Club two days after I landed from Australia."

Pons took me firmly by the arm and bade Upway good-day.

For most of the journey to London, Pons sat in silence, wearing that annoyingly supercilious smile which suggested that he held some knowledge I did not share. I had resolved not to speak, but his attitude so irritated me that, as we neared London, I could contain myself no longer.

"Sometimes I fail to understand you, Pons," I burst forth. "This whole matter is as plain as a pikestaff; yet you've walked away from the culprit as if he would always be at your command."

"That the matter is plain as a pikestaff, I grant," replied Pons, his eyes twinkling. "But I'm not sure we have the same matter in mind."

"The crime!" I cried.

"So far," retorted Pons dryly, "we have evidence only of the theft of three hats belonging to M. Henri Dulac—and, if we can believe the papers, of others belonging to members of the Diogenes Club."

"What about the stolen will?"

"I submit, Parker, that we know nothing of a stolen will."

"Oh, come, Pons!" I cried. "You are playing upon words. Are you simply going to sit by and let Upway escape?"

Pons smiled dreamily. "I should think it highly unlikely that he would leave the prize within his grasp, even if he had reason to do so. But, no matter. I shall summon the culprit to our quarters when I am ready to receive him."

After this, he would say no more.

Back at 7B late that night, Pons pushed aside the supper Mrs. Johnson insisted upon bringing up to us—though I did justice to it—and went to work in his chemical laboratory in the alcove off the living room. He dumped the contents of the envelopes he had filled at Lord Darnavon's beach to the table before him. I saw plainly that his envelopes contained only sand, pebbles, and bits of wood. He added to all this, the fragment of the fatal ladder. Then he drew over his microscope, and I retreated to the evening papers. From time to time I heard him murmur, but he might not have known that I existed, and he was still deeply immersed in the problem he had set for himself when I went to bed.

Pons was at the breakfast table when I got up in the morning. He did not appear to have slept at all. He wore a quiet look of satisfaction and greeted me almost gaily.

"Well, Parker, I have turned up one or two little things which somewhat alter the aspect of the matter of M. Dulac's hats," he said.

"Indeed," I replied. "I venture to say your discoveries will come as no great surprise to me."

"Perhaps not. But guesses are never as good as solid facts. What do you make of this?"

He reached down beside his chair and brought up a sheet of cardboard upon which he had affixed several articles. They were, in order: the very end of one of the rungs of a ladder; several tiny shavings, which seemed to be fresh; very small grains of wood, likewise fresh. In his other hand Pons held the portion of the ladder frame he had obtained in Lord Darnavon's potting shed, that containing the broken end of the rung.

"If you examine these articles closely," said Pons, "you will observe that the ladder was deliberately weakened by very small, worm-like borings, made at the juncture of frame and rung in such a way as to cause the rung to give way under weight."

"But there is nothing about either the rung or the ladder to show that such borings were recent," I objected, after having examined both.

"Quite so. The shavings, however, are a different matter. They are manifestly fresh, and readily lost in the sand. Moreover, there is nothing on their surface to show that they did not come from the new ladder. However, a chemical analysis and a comparison of grain indicates beyond cavil that these fresh shavings came from this ladder and rung. I have subjected the borings to analysis, and I find that a stain simulating aged

wood was used to conceal their freshness."

"Very clever," I agreed. "Now let me carry on. Lord Darnavon was aided to his death by this simulated accident. His last will was then stolen so that his previous will would become valid. Why on earth have you hesitated to send word to Scotland Yard and have them make the arrest?"

"Ah, Parker, you continually amaze me," said Pons good-naturedly, as he rose and crossed to the mantel to fill his pipe with shag from the toe of his slipper stuck into the coal scuttle. "There is such a little thing as evidence sufficient to convict. The fact that the ladder was tampered with affords us no clue to the identity of the man who weakened it."

"But who stood to benefit by this dastardly murder of a defenseless old man?" I asked hotly.

"His granddaughter, plainly."

"And her husband, who was fortuitously at the scene," I cried. "Need you know more?"

"I think so. We shall see, however. I have sent for the culprit. I dispatched a note early this morning by hand of one of the Praed Street Irregulars. I fancy he will not be long in coming. And, by the way," he added, "I shall take it as a favor if you delayed making your rounds a bit and stood by." He crossed to his desk, from the drawer of which he took his revolver. "Just to be on the safe side, I think you had better keep this in your pocket on the ready."

I stared at him, I fear, mouth agape.

It was not yet ten o'clock when the outer bell rang.

"That may be our man," said Pons. He sat listening to Mrs. Johnson's familiar steps, and then the heavy tread which followed her up the stairs to our quarters.

"It is much too heavy a man for Upway," I said.

"I fear it is," agreed Pons.

Mrs. Johnson threw open the door, and stood aside.

There on the threshold, his hat in his hand, and a broad smile on his ruddy, cheerful face, stood Colonel Arthur Mowbray, my fellow member of the Diogenes Club.

"Mowbray!" I exclaimed, coming to my feet. "You know Solar Pons?"

"I have not had the pleasure," said Mowbray, bowing.

"Ah, Colonel Mowbray—you had my note about your hat?" asked Pons.

"I did, sir. I came directly to recover it."

"Pray come in," urged Pons. "Sit down. Just over there, if you please."

I closed the door behind Mowbray as he went over to sit with his back to the windows.

The colonel waited expectantly, saying, "Just a common bowler, you might say, but a man grows

accustomed to a hat that has—well, as one might put it—grown accustomed to his head." He laughed heartily.

"Here it is, sir," said Pons, and handed him the bowler he had taken from M. Dulac's home.

"Thank you, Mr. Pons. But how you ever recovered it is beyond me, it is indeed." He stopped talking abruptly, and the expression on his face changed with the suddenness of a summer sky beset by storm.

"I observe you are searching the lining, Colonel," said Pons airily. "I removed the padding."

Mowbray jumped up, allowing the bowler to drop unheeded to the floor and roll to the wall. His fists were clenched; his face worked with rage. He took a step forward.

Pons was unperturbed. "I read it, Colonel," he added coolly.

For a moment I thought that Colonel Mowbray was about to attack Pons. Nervously, I grasped the weapon in my pocket.

"Pray restrain yourself, Colonel," said Pons. "Dr. Parker is armed. I thought that will a lamentably crude attempt at forgery. Not quite your line, is it, Colonel? Gambling, I think, is more to your taste. How much are you in for, Mowbray, to drive you to such desperation?" He gestured over his shoulder toward the alcove. "You may observe a portion of the ladder which collapsed under your late uncle. I have analyzed the borings, the shavings, even the stain you used to simulate age. A clever touch. A pity you resorted to murder. I need hardly say, sir, that Scotland Yard is alert, and these pieces of evidence, together with certain other facts I can impart, will be in the hands of officers at the Yard before the day is out."

"You infernal meddler, sir!" cried Mowbray, his great hands working convulsively. He restrained his rage with difficulty and only because I had drawn Pons' revolver and held it trained upon him.

Pons walked across the room and threw open the door. "Good-day, Colonel Mowbray."

Mowbray flung himself violently from the room.

Pons closed the door and turned to me. "I fear, Parker, it was a nasty jolt to learn that one of the honorable members of the Diogenes Club could be guilty of murder. But, alas! the distinction of membership hardly precludes the possibility. 'Mowbray,' as I thought you knew, was an assumed name—to go with the 'Colonel.' Your fellow-member is Arthur Comparr, Lord Darnavon's sporting nephew. It was he who was responsible for the accidents at Darnavon's place, including the one which terminated fatally, as Mowbray had hoped one of his traps—set on the day of his visit—might be. And it was Mowbray who was forced to

steal hats to find the bowler he deliberately abandoned at the Diogenes when confronted by the police who were acting on Lord Darnavon's earlier complaint. He could not afford to have the padding in that hat discovered in his possession."

"But the will, Pons!" I cried. "Surely . . ."

"Ah, yes, the will," Pons broke in. "You made a simple but understandable error, Parker. Had it been Upway who wanted that will out of sight, he would surely have burned it with dispatch upon Darnavon's death. You assumed the will had been stolen and was meant for destruction. On the contrary, it was meant to be discovered later, after Colonel Mowbray had had time to conceal it somewhere at Darnavon's place."

"What was it you told Scotland Yard, Pons?"

"Nothing yet. The evidence is thin—too thin to hope for conviction. Lacking further developments, I will call Inspector Jamison tomorrow. However, Mowbray is a gambler. He may rush forth headlong without pausing to assess the nature of such evidence as I may have—and he is not quite sure of what I can prove. I am taking a chance on Mowbray's gambling instincts."

Pons won his gamble. The morning papers carried the intelligence that Arthur Comparr, generally known as Colonel Mowbray, had shot himself in his quarters during the night.

"Justice," observed Pons, "was what Mr. Hoskins asked. This, I fancy, will do."

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the owner's handicap

by . . . Leslie Charteris

Messrs. Mackintyre and Lesbon were old hands at the sport of kings, but still new to the sport of Saints. . .

"THE ART of crime," said Simon Templar, carefully mayonnaising a section of *truite à la gelée,* "is to be versatile. Repetition breeds contempt—and promotion for flat-footed oafs from Scotland Yard. I assure you, Pat, I have never felt the slightest urge to be the means of helping any detective on his upward climb. Therefore we soak bucket-shops one week and bootleggers the next, the poor old Chief Inspector Teal never knows where he is."

Patricia Holm fingered the stem of her wineglass with a faraway smile. Perhaps the smile was a trifle wistful. Perhaps it wasn't. You never know. But she had been the Saint's partner in outlawry long enough to know what any such oratorical opening as that portended; and she smiled.

"It dawns upon me," said the Saint, "that our talents have not yet been applied to the crooked angles of the Sport of Kings."

"I don't know," said Patricia mildly. "After picking the winner of the Derby with a pin, and the winner of the Oaks with a pack of cards—"

SOME OF THE RITUALS OF ENGLISH HORSE-RACING DEPICTED HERE MAY BE STRANGE TO HABITUES OF AMERICAN TRACKS, BUT THE WAYS OF THE UNGODLY ARE INTERNATIONAL.

From: THE BRIGHTER BUCCANEER.

Simon waved away the argument.

"You may think," he remarked, "that we came here to celebrate. But we didn't. Not exactly. We came here to feast our eyes on the celebrations of a brace of lads of the village who always tap the champagne here when they've brought off a coup. Let me introduce you. They're sitting at the corner table behind me on your right."

The girl glanced casually across the restaurant in the direction indicated. She located the two men at once—there were three magnums on the table in front of them, and their appearance was definitely hilarious.

Simon finished his plate and ordered strawberries and cream.

"The fat one with the face like an egg and the diamond tie-pin is Mr. Joseph Mackintyre. He wasn't always Mackintyre, but what the hell? He's a very successful bookmaker; and, believe it or not, Pat, I've got an account with him."

"I suppose he doesn't know who you are?"

"That's where you're wrong. He does know—and the idea simply tickles him to death. It's the funniest thing he has to talk about. He lets me run an account, pays me when I win, and gets a check on the nail when I lose. And all the time he's splitting his sides, telling all his friends about it, and watching everything I do with an eagle eye—just waiting to catch me trying to put something across him."

"Who's the thin one?"

"That's Vincent Lesbon. Origin believed to be Levantine. He owns the horses, and the way those horses run is nobody's business. Lesbon wins with 'em when he feels like it, and Mackintyre fields against 'em so generously that the starting price usually goes out to the hundred-to-eight mark. It's an old racket, but they work it well."

Patricia nodded. She was still waiting for the sequel that was bound to come—the reckless light in the Saint's eyes presaged it like a red sky at sunset. But he annihilated his strawberries with innocent deliberation before he leaned back in his chair and grinned at her.

"Let's go racing tomorrow," he said, "I want to buy a horse."

They went down to Kempton Park, and arrived when the runners for the second race were going up. The race was a selling plate; with the aid of his faithful pin, Simon selected an outsider that finished third; but the favorite won easily by two lengths. They went to the ring after the numbers were posted, and the Saint had to bid up to four hundred guineas before he became the proud owner of Hill Billy.

As the circle of buyers and bystanders broke up, Simon felt a hand on his arm. He looked

around, and saw a small thick-set man in check breeches and a bowler hat who had the unmistakable air of an ex-jockey.

"Excuse me, sir—have you arranged with a trainer to take care of your horse? My name's Mart Farrell. If I could do anything for you—"

Simon gazed thoughtfully at his new acquisition, which was being held by an expectant groom.

"Why, yes," he murmured. "I suppose I can't put the thing in my pocket and take it home. Let's go and have a drink."

They strolled over to the bar. Simon knew Farrell's name as that of one of the straightest trainers on the turf, and he was glad that one of his problems had been solved so easily.

"Think we'll win some more races?" he murmured, as the drinks were set up.

"Hill Billy's a good horse," said the trainer judiciously. "I used to have him in my stable when he was a two-year-old. I think he'll beat most things in his class if the handicaps give him a run. By the way, sir, I don't know your name."

It occurred to the Saint that his baptismal title was perhaps too notorious for him to be able to hide the nucleus of his racing stud under a bushel, and for once he had no desire to attract undue publicity.

"Hill Billy belongs to the lady," he said. "Miss Patricia Holm. I'm just helping her watch it."

As far as Simon Templar was concerned, Hill Billy's career had only one object, and that was to run in a race in which one of the Mackintyre-Lesbon stud was also a competitor. The suitability of the fixture was rather more important and more difficult to be sure of, but his luck was in. Early the next week he learned that Hill Billy was favorably handicapped in the Owners' Plate at Gatwick on the following Saturday, and it so happened that his most serious opponent was a horse named Rickaway, owned by Mr. Vincent Lesbon.

Simon drove down to Epsom early the next morning and saw Hill Billy at exercise. Afterwards he had a talk with Farrell.

"Hill Billy could win the first race at Windsor next week if the going's good," said the trainer. "I'd like to save him for it—it'd be a nice win for you. He's got the beating of most of the other entries."

"Couldn't he win the Owners' Handicap on Saturday?" asked the Saint; and Farrell pursed his lips.

"It depends on what they decide to do with Rickaway, sir. I don't like betting on a race when Mr. Lesbon has a runner—if I may say so between ourselves. Lesbon had a filly in my stable last year, and I had to tell him I couldn't keep it. The jockey went up before the stewards after the

way it ran one day at Newmarket, and that sort of thing doesn't do a trainer's reputation any good. Rickaway's been running down the course on his last three outings, but the way I work out the Owners' Handicap is that he could win if he wanted to."

Simon nodded.

"Miss Holm rather wants to run at Gatwick, though," he said. "She's got an aunt or something from the North coming down for the week end, and naturally she's keen to show off her new toy."

Farrell shrugged cheerfully.

"Oh, well, sir, I suppose the ladies have got to have their way. I'll run Hill Billy at Gatwick, if Miss Holm tells me to, but I couldn't advise her to have much of a bet. I'm afraid Rickaway might do well if he's a trier."

Simon went back to London jubilantly.

"It's a match between Hill Billy and Rickaway," he said. "In other words, Pat, between Saintliness and sin. Don't you think the angels might do a job for us?"

One angel did a job for them, anyway. It was Mr. Vincent Lesbon's first experience of any such exquisite interference with his racing activities; and it may be mentioned that he was a very susceptible man.

This happened on the Gatwick Friday. The Mackintyre-Lesbon combination was putting in no smart work that day, and Mr. Lesbon whiled away the afternoon at a betting club in Long Acre, where he would sometimes beguile the time with innocuous half-crown punting between sessions at the snooker table. He stayed there until after the result of the last race was through on the tape, and then took a taxi to his flat in Maida Vale to dress for an evening's diversion.

Feminine visitors of the synthetic blonde variety were never rare at his apartment; but they usually came by invitation, and when they were not invited the call generally foreboded unpleasant news. The girl who stood on Mr. Lesbon's doorstep this evening, with the air of having waited there for a long time, was an exception. Mr. Lesbon's sensitive conscience cleared when he saw her face.

"May I—may I speak to you for a minute?"

Mr. Lesbon hesitated fractionally. Then he smiled—which did not make him more beautiful.

"Yes, of course. Come in."

He fitted his key in the lock, and led the way through to his sitting-room. Shedding his hat and gloves, he inspected the girl more closely. She was tall and straight as a sapling, with an easy grace of carriage that was not lost on him. Her face was one of the loveliest he had ever seen; and his practiced eye told him that the cornfield gold of her hair owed nothing to artifice.

"What is it, my dear?"

"It's . . . Oh, I don't know how to begin! I've got no right to come and see you, Mr. Lesbon, but —there wasn't any other way."

"Won't you sit down?"

One of Mr. Lesbon's few illusions was that women loved him for himself. He was a devotee of the more glutinous productions of the cinema, and he prided himself on his polished technique.

He offered her a cigarette, and sat on the arm of her chair.

"Tell me what's the trouble, and I'll see what we can do about it."

"Well — you see — it's my brother . . . I'm afraid he's rather young and—well, silly. He's been backing horses. He's lost a lot of money, ever so much more than he can pay. You must know how easy it is. Putting on more and more to try and make up for his losses, and still losing. . . . Well, he works in a bank; and his bookmaker's threatened to write to the manager if he doesn't pay up. Of course Derek would lose his job at once . . ."

Mr. Lesbon sighed.

"Dear me!" he said.

"Oh, I'm not trying to ask for money! Don't think that. I shouldn't be such a fool. But—well, Derek's made a friend of a man who's a trainer. His name's Farrell—I've met him, and I think he's quite straight. He's tried to make Derek give up betting, but it wasn't any good. However, he's got a horse in his stable called Hill Billy—I don't know anything about horses, but apparently Farrell said Hill Billy would be a certainty tomorrow if your horse didn't win. He advised Derek to do something about it—clear his losses and give it up for good." The girl twisted her handkerchief nervously. "He said—please don't think I'm being rude, Mr. Lesbon, but I'm just trying to be honest—he said you didn't always want to win—and—and—perhaps if I came and saw you—"

She looked up at Rickaway's owner with liquid eyes, her lower lip trembling a little. Mr. Lesbon's breath came a shade faster.

"I know Farrell," he said, as quietly as he could. "I had a horse in his stable last year, and he asked me to take it away—just because I didn't always want to win with it. He's changed his principles rather suddenly."

"I—I'm sure he'd never have done it if it wasn't for Derek, Mr. Lesbon. He's really fond of the boy. Derek's awfully nice. He's a bit wild, but . . . Well, you see, I'm four years older than he is, and I simply have to look after him. I'd do anything for him."

Lesbon cleared his throat.

"Yes, yes, my dear. Naturally." He patted her hand. "I see your predicament. So you want me to lose the race. Well, if Farrell's so fond of Derek, why doesn't he scratch Hill Billy and let the boy win on Rickaway?"

"Because—oh, I suppose I

can't help telling you. He said no one ever knew what your horses were going to do, and perhaps you mightn't be wanting to win with Rickaway tomorrow."

Lesbon rose and poured himself out a glass of whiskey.

"My dear, what a thing it is to have a reputation!" He gestured picturesquely. "But I suppose we can't all be paragons of virtue. . . . But still, that's quite a lot for you to ask me to do. Interfering with horses is a serious offense—a very serious offense. You can be warned off for it. You can be branded, metaphorically. Your whole career"—Mr. Lesbon repeated his gesture—"can be ruined!"

The girl bit her lip.

"Did you know that?" demanded Lesbon.

"I—I suppose I must have realized it. But when you're only thinking about someone you love—"

"Yes, I understand." Lesbon drained his glass. "You would do anything to save your brother. Isn't that what you said?"

He sat on the arm of the chair again, searching her face. There was no misreading the significance of his gaze.

The girl avoided his eyes.

"How much do you think you could do, my dear?"

"No!" Suddenly she looked at him again, her lovely face pale and tragic. "You couldn't want that—you couldn't be so—"

"Couldn't I?" The man laughed. "My dear, you're too innocent!" He went back to the decanter. "Well, I respect your innocence. I respect it enormously. We won't say any more about —unpleasant things like that. I will be philanthropical. Rickaway will lose. And there are no strings to it. I give way to a charming and courageous lady."

She sprang up.

"Mr. Lesbon! Do you mean that—will you really—"

"My dear, I will," pronounced Mr. Lesbon thickly. "I will present your courage with the reward that it deserves. Of course," he added, "if you feel very grateful —after Rickaway has lost—and if you would like to come to a little supper party—I should be delighted. I should feel honored. Now, if you weren't doing anything after the races on Saturday—"

The girl looked up into his face.

"I should love to come," she said huskily. "I think you're the kindest man I've ever known. I'll be on the course tomorrow, and if you still think you'd like to see me again—"

"My dear, nothing in the world could please me more!" Lesbon put a hand on her shoulder and pressed her towards the door. "Now you run along home and forget all about it. I'm only too happy to be able to help such a charming lady."

Patricia Holm walked round the block in which Mr. Lesbon's flat was situated, and found Simon Templar waiting patiently at the wheel of his car. She stepped in beside him, and they whirled down into the line of traffic that was crawling towards Marble Arch.

"How d'you like Vincent?" asked the Saint, and Patricia shivered.

"If I'd known what he was like at close quarters, I'd never have gone," she said. "He's got hot slimy hands, and the way he looks at you . . . But I think I did the job well."

Simon smiled a little, and flicked the car through a gap between two taxis that gave him half an inch to spare on either wing.

"So that for once we can give the pin a rest," he said.

Saturday morning dawned clear and fine, which was very nearly a record for the season. What was more, it stayed fine; and Mart Farrell was optimistic.

"The going's just right for Hill Billy," he said. "If he's ever going to beat Rickaway he'll have to do it today. Perhaps your aunt might have five shillings on him after all, Miss Holm."

Patricia's eyebrows lifted vaguely.

"My—er—"

"Miss Holm's aunt got up this morning with a bilious attack," said the Saint glibly. "It's all very annoying, after we've put on this race for her benefit, but since Hill Billy's here he'd better have the run."

The Owners' Handicap stood fourth on the card. They lunched on the course, and afterwards the Saint made an excuse to leave Patricia in the Silver Ring and went into Tattersall's with Farrell. Mr. Lesbon favored the more expensive enclosure, and the Saint was not inclined to give him the chance to acquire any premature doubts.

The runners for the three-thirty were being put in the frame, and Farrell went off to give his blessing to a charge of his that was booked to go to the post. Simon strolled down to the rails and faced the expansive smile of Mr. Mackintyre.

"You having anything on this one, Mr. Templar?" asked the bookie juicily.

"I don't think so," said the Saint. "But there's a fast one coming to you in the next race. Look out!"

As he wandered away, he heard Mr. Mackintyre chortling over the unparalleled humor of the situation in the ear of his next-door neighbor.

Simon watched the finish of the three-thirty, and went to find Farrell.

"I've got a first-class jockey to ride Hill Billy," the trainer told him. "He came to my place this morning and tried him out, and he thinks we've a good chance.

Lesbon is putting Penterham up —he's a funny rider. Does a lot of Lesbon's work, so it doesn't tell us anything."

"We'll soon see what happens," said the Saint calmly.

He stayed to see Hill Billy saddled, and then went back to where the opening odds were being shouted. With his hands in his pockets, he sauntered leisurely up and down the line of bawling bookmakers, listening to the fluctuation of the prices. Hill Billy opened favorite at two to one, with Rickaway a close second at threes —in spite of its owner's dubious reputation. Another horse named Tilbury, which had originally been quoted at eight to one, suddenly came in demanded at nine to two: Simon overheard snatches of the gossip that was flashing along the line, and smiled to himself. The Mackintyre-Lesbon combination was expert at drawing that particular brand of red herring across the trail, and the Saint could guess at the source of the rumor. Hill Billy weakened to five to two, while Tilbury pressed close behind it from fours to threes. Rickaway faded out to five to one.

"There are always mugs who'll go for a horse just because other people are backing it," Mr. Mackintyre muttered to his clerk; and then he saw the Saint coming up. "Well, Mr. Templar, what's this fast one you promised me?"

"Hill Billy's the name," said the Saint, "and I guess it's good for a hundred."

"Two hundred and fifty pounds to one hundred for Mr. Templar," said Mackintyre lusciously, and watched his clerk entering up the bet.

When he looked up the Saint had gone.

Tilbury dropped back to seven to two, and Hill Billy stayed solid at two and a half. Just before the "off" Mr. Mackintyre shouted, "Six to one, Rickaway," and had the satisfaction of seeing the odds go down before the recorder closed his notebook.

He mopped his brow, and found Mr. Lesbon beside him.

"I wired off five hundred pounds to ten different offices," said Lesbon. "A little more of this and I'll be moving into Park Lane. When the girl came to see me I nearly fainted. What does that man Templar take us for?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Mackintyre phlegmatically.

A general bellow from the crowd announced the "off," and Mr. Mackintyre mounted his stool and watched the race through his field-glasses.

"Tilbury's jumped off in front; Hill Billy's third, and Rickaway's going well on the outside. . . . Rickaway's moving up, and Hill Billy's on a tight rein . . . Hill Billy's gone up to second. The rest of the field's packed behind, but they don't look like springing any surprises . . . Til-

bury's finished. He's falling back. Hill Billy leads, Mandrake running second, Rickaway half a length behind with plenty in hand . . . Penterham's using the whip, and Rickaway's picking up. He's level with Mandrake—no, he's got it by a short head. Hill Billy's a length in front, and they're putting everything in for the finish."

The roar of the crowd grew louder as the field entered the last furlong. Mackintyre raised his voice.

"Mandrake's out of it, and Rickaway's coming up! Hill Billy's flat out with Rickaway's nose at his saddle . . . Hill Billy's making a race of it. It's neck-and-neck now. Penterham left it a bit late. Rickaway's gaining slowly—"

The yelling of the crowd rose to a final crescendo, and suddenly died away. Mr. Mackintyre dropped his glasses and stepped down from his perch.

"Well," he said comfortably, "that's three thousand pounds."

The two men shook hands gravely and turned to find Simon Templar drifting towards them with a thin cigar in his mouth.

"Too bad about Hill Billy, Mr. Templar," remarked Mackintyre succulently. "Rickaway only did it by a neck, though I won't say he mightn't have done better if he'd started his sprint a bit sooner."

Simon removed his cigar.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "As a matter of fact, I rather changed my mind about Hill Billy's chance just before the 'off.' I was over at the telegraph office, and I didn't think I'd be able to reach you in time, so I wired another bet to your London office. Only a small one—six hundred pounds, if you want to know. I hope Vincent's winnings will stand it." He beamed seraphically at Mr. Lesbon, whose face had suddenly gone a sickly gray. "Of course you recognized Miss Holm—she isn't easy to forget, and I saw you noticing her at the Savoy the other night."

There was an awful silence.

"By the way," said the Saint, patting Mr. Lesbon affably on the shoulder, "she tells me you've got hot slimy hands. Apart from that, your technique makes Clark Gable look like something the cat brought in. Just a friendly tip, old dear."

He waved to the two stupefied men and wandered away; they stood gaping dumbly at his back.

It was Mr. Lesbon who spoke first, after a long and pregnant interval.

"Of course you won't settle, Joe," he said half-heartedly.

"Won't I?" snarled Mr. Mackintyre. "And let him have me up before Tattersall's Committee for welshing? I've *got* to settle, you fool!"

Mr. Mackintyre choked.

Then he cleared his throat. He had a great deal more to say, and he wanted to say it distinctly.

inn of the two witches

by . . . Joseph Conrad

A candle burned at the end of a long table, and in its light he saw the girl he'd pushed, still staggering.

THIS tale, episode, experience —call it how you will—was related in the fifties of the last century by a man who, by his own confession, was sixty years old at the time. Sixty is not a bad age—unless in perspective, when no doubt it is contemplated by the majority of us with mixed feelings. It is a calm age; the game is practically over by then; and standing aside one begins to remember with a certain vividness what a fine fellow one used to be. I have observed that, by an amiable attention of Providence, most people at sixty begin to take a romantic view of themselves. Their very failures exhale a charm of peculiar potency. And indeed the hopes of the future are a fine company to live with, exquisite forms, fascinating if you like, but—so to speak—naked, stripped for a run. The robes of glamor are luckily the property of the immovable past which, without them, would sit, a shivery sort of thing, under the gathering shadows.

I suppose it was the romanticism of growing age which set our man to relate his experience for

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Joseph Conrad—Feodor Josef Konrad Korzeniowski—was a Pole. When he was five years old, his mother was banished to Siberia; his father, editor of a review in Warsaw, later died in prison. Conrad, who first shipped out from Constantinople on a French freighter, was at sea for many years, visiting most of the strange places he was eventually to write about.

From: WITHIN THE TIDES, (Doubleday, Page & Co., 1923)
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his own satisfaction or for the wonder of his posterity. It could not have been for his glory, because the experience was simply that of an abominable fright—terror he calls it. You would have guessed that the relation alluded to in the very first lines was in writing.

This writing constitutes the Find declared in the sub-title. The title itself is my own contrivance (can't call it invention), and has the merit of veracity. We will be concerned with an inn here. As to the witches that's merely a conventional expression, and we must take our man's word for it that it fits the case.

The Find was made in a box of books bought in London, in a street which no longer exists, from a second-hand bookseller in the last stage of decay. As to the books themselves they were at least twentieth-hand, and on inspection turned out not worth the very small sum of money I disbursed. It might have been some premonition of that fact which made me say: "But I must have the box too." The decayed bookseller assented by the careless, tragic gesture of a man already doomed to extinction.

A litter of loose pages at the bottom of the box excited my curiosity but faintly. The close, neat, regular handwriting was not attractive at first sight. But in one place the statement that in A. D. 1813 the writer was twenty-two years old caught my eye. Two and twenty is an interesting age in which one is easily reckless and easily frightened; the faculty of reflection being weak and the power of imagination strong.

In another place the phrase: "At night we stood in again," arrested my languid attention, because it was a sea phrase. "Let's see what it is all about," I thought, without excitement.

Oh, but it was a dull-faced MS., each line resembling every other line in their close-set and regular order. It was like the drone of a monotonous voice. A treatise on sugar-refining (the dreariest subject I can think of) could have been given a more lively appearance. "In A. D. 1813, I was twenty-two years old," he begins earnestly and goes on with every appearance of calm, horrible industry. Don't imagine, however, that there is anything archaic in my find. Diabolic ingenuity in invention though as old as the world is by no means a lost art. Lost art. Look at the telephones for shattering the little peace of mind given to us in this world, or at the machine guns for letting with dispatch life out of our bodies. Now-a-days any blear-eyed old witch if only strong enough to turn an insignificant little handle could lay low a hundred young men of twenty in the twinkling of an eye.

If this isn't progress! . . . Why immense! We have moved on, and

so you must expect to meet here a certain naïveness of contrivance and simplicity of aim appertaining to the remote epoch. And of course no motoring tourist can hope to find such an inn anywhere, now. This one, the one of the title, was situated in Spain. That much I discovered only from internal evidence, because a good many pages of that relation were missing—perhaps not a great misfortune after all. The writer seemed to have entered into a most elaborate detail of the why and wherefore of his presence on that coast—presumably the north coast of Spain. His experience has nothing to do with the sea, though. As far as I can make it out, he was an officer on board a sloop-of-war. There's nothing strange in that. At all stages of the long Peninsular campaign many of our men-of-war of the smaller kind were cruising off the north coast of Spain—as risky and disagreeable a station as can be well imagined.

It looks as though that ship of his had had some special service to perform. A careful explanation of all the circumstances was to be expected from our man, only, as I've said, some of his pages (good tough paper too) were missing: gone in covers for jampots or in wadding for the fowling-pieces of his irreverent posterity. But it is to be seen clearly that communication with the shore and even the sending of messengers inland was part of her service, either to obtain intelligence from or to transmit orders or advice to patriotic Spaniards, guerilleros or secret juntas of the province. Something of the sort. All this can be only inferred from the preserved scraps of his conscientious writing.

Next we come upon the panegyric of a very fine sailor, a member of the ship's company, having the rating of the captain's coxswain. He was known on board as Cuba Tom; not because he was Cuban, however; he was indeed the best type of a genuine British tar of that time, and a man-of-war's man for years. He came by the name on account of some wonderful adventures he had in that island in his young days, adventures which were the favorite subject of the yarns he was in the habit of spinning to his shipmates of an evening on the forecastle head. He was intelligent, very strong, and of proved courage. Incidentally, we are told, so exact is our narrator, that Tom had the finest pigtail for thickness and length of any man in the Navy. This appendage, much cared for and sheathed tightly in a porpoise skin, hung half way down his broad back to the great admiration of all beholders and to the great envy of some.

Our young officer dwells on the manly qualities of Cuba Tom with something like affection. This sort of relation between officer and

man was not then very rare. A youngster on joining the service was put under the charge of a trustworthy seaman, who slung his first hammock for him and often later on became a sort of humble friend to the junior officer. The narrator on joining the sloop had found this man on board after some years of separation. There is something touching in the warm pleasure he remembers and records at this meeting with the professional mentor of his boyhood.

We discover then that, no Spaniard being forthcoming for the service, this worthy seaman with the unique pigtail and a very high character for courage and steadiness had been selected as messenger for one of these missions inland which have been mentioned. His preparations were not elaborate. One gloomy autumn morning the sloop ran close to a shallow cove where a landing could be made on that iron-bound shore. A boat was lowered, and pulled in with Tom Corbin (Cuba Tom) perched in the bow, and our young man (Mr. Edgar Byrne was his name on this earth which knows him no more) sitting in the stern-sheets.

A few inhabitants of a hamlet, whose gray stone houses could be seen a hundred yards or so up a deep ravine, had come down to the shore and watched the approach of the boat. The two Englishmen leaped ashore. Either from dullness or astonishment the peasants gave no greeting, and only fell back in silence.

Mr. Byrne had made up his mind to see Tom Corbin started fairly on his way. He looked round at the heavy surprised faces.

"There isn't much to get out of them," he said. "Let us walk up to the village. There will be a wineshop for sure where we may find somebody more promising to talk to and get some information from."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Tom, falling into step behind his officer. "A bit of palaver as to courses and distances can do no harm; I crossed the broadest part of Cuba by the help of my tongue tho' knowing far less Spanish than I do now. As they say themselves it was 'four words and no more' with me, that time when I got left behind on shore by the *Blanche*, frigate."

He made light of what was before him, which was but a day's journey into the mountains. It is true that there was a full day's journey before striking the mountain path, but that was nothing for a man who had crossed the island of Cuba on his two legs, and with no more than four words of the language to begin with.

The officer and the man were walking now on a thick sodden bed of dead leaves, which the peasants thereabouts accumulate in the streets of their villages to rot

during the winter for field manure. Turning his head Mr. Byrne perceived that the whole male population of the hamlet was following them on the noiseless springy carpet. Women stared from the doors of the houses and the children had apparently gone into hiding. The village knew the ship by sight, afar off, but no stranger had landed on that spot perhaps for a hundred years or more. The cocked hat of Mr. Byrne, the bushy whiskers and the enormous pigtail of the sailor, filled them with mute wonder. They pressed behind the two Englishmen staring like those islanders discovered by Captain Cook in the South Seas.

It was then that Byrne had his first glimpse of the little cloaked man in a yellow hat. Faded and dingy as it was, this covering for his head made him noticeable.

The entrance to the wine-shop was like a rough hole in a wall of flints. The owner was the only person who was not in the street, for he came out from the darkness at the back where the inflated forms of wine skins hung on nails could be vaguely distinguished. He was a tall, one-eyed Asturian with scrubby, hollow cheeks; a grave expression of countenance contrasted enigmatically with the roaming restlessness of his solitary eye. On learning that the matter in hand was the sending on his way of that English mariner towards a certain Gonzales in the mountains, he closed his good eye for a moment as if in meditation. Then opened it, very lively again.

"Possibly, possibly. It could be done."

A friendly murmur arose in the group in the doorway at the name of Gonzales, the local leader against the French. Inquiring as to the safety of the road Byrne was glad to learn that no troops of that nation had been seen in the neighborhood for months. Not the smallest little detachment of these impious *polizones*. While giving these answers the owner of the wine-shop busied himself in drawing into an earthenware jug some wine which he set before the heretic English, pocketing with grave abstraction the small piece of money the officer threw upon the table in recognition of the unwritten law that none may enter a wine-shop without buying drink. His eye was in constant motion as if it were trying to do the work of the two; but when Byrne made inquiries as to the possibility of hiring a mule, it became immovably fixed in the direction of the door which was closely besieged by the curious. In front of them, just within the threshold, the little man in the large cloak and yellow hat had taken his stand. He was a diminutive person, a mere homunculus, Byrne describes him, in a ridiculously mysterious, yet assertive attitude, a corner of his cloak thrown cavalierly over his left shoulder, muffling his chin

and mouth; while the broad-brimmed yellow hat hung on a corner of his square little head. He stood there taking snuff, repeatedly.

"A mule," repeated the wine-seller, his eyes fixed on that quaint and snuffy figure. . . . "No, señor officer! Decidedly no mule is to be got in this poor place."

The coxswain, who stood by with the true sailor's air of unconcern in strange surroundings, struck in quietly—

"If your honor will believe me Shank's pony's the best for this job. I would have to leave the beast somewhere, anyhow, since the captain has told me that half my way will be along paths fit only for goats."

The diminutive man made a step forward, and speaking through the folds of the cloak which seemed to muffle a sarcastic intention—

"Si, señor. They are too honest in this village to have a single mule amongst them for your worship's service. To that I can bear testimony. In these times it's only rogues or very clever men who can manage to have mules or any other four-footed beasts and the wherewithal to keep them. But what this valiant mariner wants is a guide; and here, señor, behold my brother-in-law, Bernardino, wine-seller, and alcade of this most Christian and hospitable village, who will find you one."

This, Mr. Byrne says in his relation, was the only thing to do. A youth in a ragged coat and goat-skin breeches was produced after some more talk. The English officer stood treat to the whole village, and while the peasants drank he and Cuba Tom took their departure accompanied by the guide. The diminutive man in the cloak had disappeared.

Byrne went along with the coxswain out of the village. He wanted to see him fairly on his way; and he would have gone a greater distance if the seaman had not suggested respectfully the advisability of return so as not to keep the ship a moment longer than necessary so close in with the shore on such an unpromising looking morning. A wild gloomy sky hung over their heads when they took leave of each other, and their surroundings of rank bushes and stony fields were dreary.

"In four days' time," were Byrne's last words, "the ship will stand in and send a boat on shore if the weather permits. If not you'll have to make it out on shore the best you can till we come along to take you off."

"Right you are, sir," answered Tom, and strode on. Byrne watched him step out of a narrow path. In a thick pea-jacket with a pair of pistols in his belt, a cutlass by his side, and a stout cudgel in his hand, he looked a sturdy figure and well able to take care of him-

self. He turned round for a moment to wave his hand, giving to Byrne one more view of his honest bronzed face with bushy whiskers. The lad in goat-skin breeches looking, Byrne says, like a faun or a young satyr leaping ahead, stopped to wait for him, and then went off at a bound. Both disappeared.

Byrne turned back. The hamlet was hidden in a fold of the ground, and the spot seemed the most lonely corner of the earth and as if accursed in its uninhabited desolate barrenness. Before he had walked many yards there appeared very suddenly from behind a bush the muffled up diminutive Spaniard. Naturally Byrne stopped short.

The other made a mysterious gesture with a tiny hand peeping from under his cloak. His hat hung very much at the side of his head. "Señor," he said without any preliminaries. "Caution! It is a positive fact that one-eyed Bernardino, my brother-in-law, has at this moment a mule in his stable. And why he who is not clever has a mule there? Because he is a rogue; a man without conscience. Because I had to give up the *macho* to him to secure for myself a roof to sleep under and a mouthful of *olla* to keep my soul in this insignificant body of mine. Yet, señor, it contains a heart many times bigger than the mean thing which beats in the breast of that brute connection of mine of which I am ashamed, though I opposed that marriage with all my power. Well, the misguided woman suffered enough. She had her purgatory on this earth—God rest her soul."

Byrne says he was so astonished by the sudden appearance of that sprite-like being, and by the sardonic bitterness of the speech, that he was unable to disentangle the significant fact from what seemed but a piece of family history fired out at him without rhyme or reason. Not at first. He was confounded and at the same time he was impressed by the rapid forcible delivery, quite different from the frothy excited loquacity of an Italian. So he stared while the homunculus, letting his cloak fall about him, aspired an immense quantity of snuff out of the hollow of his palm.

"A mule," exclaimed Byrne seizing at last the real aspect of the discourse. "You say he has got a mule? That's queer! Why did he refuse to let me have it?"

The diminutive Spaniard muffled himself up again with great dignity.

"*Quien sabe,*" he said coldly, with a shrug of his draped shoulders. "He is a great *politico* in everything he does. But one thing your worship may be certain of—that his intentions are always rascally. This husband of my *defunta* sister ought to have been married

a long time ago to the widow with the wooden legs.[1]"

"I see. But remember that, whatever your motives, your worship countenanced him in this lie."

The bright unhappy eyes on each side of a predatory nose confronted Byrne without wincing, while with the testiness which lurks so often at the bottom of Spanish dignity—

"No doubt the señor officer would not lose an ounce of blood if I were stuck under the fifth rib," he retorted. "But what of this poor sinner here?" Then changing his tone. "Señor, by the necessities of the times I live here in exile, a Castilian and an old Christian, existing miserably in the midst of these brute Asturians, and dependent on the worst of them all, who has less conscience and scruples than a wolf. And being a man of intelligence I govern myself accordingly. Yet I can hardly contain my scorn. You have heard the way I spoke. A caballero of parts like your worship might have guessed that there was a cat in there."

"What cat?" said Byrne uneasily. "Oh, I see. Something suspicious. No, señor. I guessed nothing. My nation are not good guessers at that sort of thing; and, therefore, I ask you plainly whether that wine-seller has spoken the truth in other particulars?"

[1]The gallows, supposed to be widowed of the last executed criminal and waiting for another

"There are certainly no Frenchmen anywhere about," said the little man with a return to his indifferent manner.

"Or robbers—*ladrones?*"

"*Ladrones en grande*—no! Assuredly not," was the answer in a cold philosophical tone. "What is there left for them to do after the French? And nobody travels in these times. But who can say! Opportunity makes the robber. Still that mariner of yours has a fierce aspect, and with the son of a cat rats will have no play. But there is a saying, too, that where honey is there will soon be flies."

This oracular discourse exasperated Byrne. "In the name of God," he cried, "tell me plainly if you think my man is reasonably safe on his journey."

The homunculus, undergoing one of his rapid changes, seized the officer's arm. The grip of his little hand was astonishing.

"Señor! Bernardino had taken notice of him. What more do you want? And listen—men have disappeared on this road—on a certain portion of this road, when Bernardino kept a *meson,* an inn, and I, his brother-in-law, had coaches and mules for hire. Now there are no travellers, no coaches. The French have ruined me. Bernardino has retired here for reasons of his own after my sister died. They were three to torment the life out of her, he and Erminia and Lucilla, two aunts of his—all affiliated to the

devil. And now he has robbed me of my last mule. You are an armed man. Demand the *macho* from him, with a pistol to his head, señor—it is not his, I tell you—and ride after your man who is so precious to you. And then you shall both be safe, for no two travellers have been ever known to disappear together in those days. As to the beast, I, its owner, I confide it to your honor."

They were staring hard at each other, and Byrne nearly burst into a laugh at the ingenuity and transparency of the little man's plot to regain possession of his mule. But he had no difficulty to keep a straight face because he felt deep within himself a strange inclination to do that very extraordinary thing. He did not laugh, but his lip quivered; at which the diminutive Spaniard, detaching his black glittering eyes from Byrne's face, turned his back on him brusquely with a gesture and a fling of the cloak which somehow expressed contempt, bitterness, and discouragement all at once. He turned away and stood still, his hat aslant, muffled up to the ears. But he was not offended to the point of refusing the silver *duro* which Byrne offered him with a non-committal speech as if nothing extraordinary had passed between them.

"I must make haste on board now," said Byrne, then.

"Vaya usted con Dios," muttered the gnome. And this interview ended with a sarcastic low sweep of the hat which was replaced at the same perilous angle as before.

Directly the boat had been hoisted the ship's sails were filled on the off-shore tack, and Byrne imparted the whole story to his captain, who was but a very few years older than himself. There was some amused indignation at it—but while they laughed they looked gravely at each other. A Spanish dwarf trying to beguile an officer of His Majesty's navy into stealing a mule for him—that was too funny, too ridiculous, too incredible. Those were the exclamations of the captain. He couldn't get over the grotesqueness of it.

"Incredible. That's just it," murmured Byrne at last in a significant tone.

They exchanged a long stare. "It's as clear as daylight," affirmed the captain impatiently, because in his heart he was not certain. And Tom, the best seaman in the ship for one, the good humoredly deferential friend of his boyhood for the other, was becoming endowed with a compelling fascination, like a symbolic figure of loyalty appealing to their feelings and their conscience, so that they could not detach their thoughts from his safety. Several times they went up on deck, only to look at the coast, as if it could tell them something of his fate. It stretched away, length-

ening in the distance, mute, naked, and savage, veiled now and then by the slanting cold shafts of rain. The westerly swell rolled its interminable angry lines of foam and big dark clouds flew over the ship in a sinister procession.

"I wish to goodness you had done what your little friend in the yellow hat wanted you to do," said the commander of the sloop late in the afternoon with visible exasperation.

"Do you, sir?" answered Byrne, bitter with positive anguish. "I wonder what you would have said afterwards? Why! I might have been kicked out of the service for looting a mule from a nation in alliance with His Majesty. Or I might have been battered to a pulp with flails and pitch-forks—a pretty tale to get abroad about one of your officers —while trying to steal a mule. Or chased ignominiously to the boat —for you would not have expected me to shoot down unoffending people for the sake of a mangy mule. . . . And yet," he added in a low voice, "I almost wish myself I had done it."

Before dark those two young men had worked themselves up into a highly complex psychological state of scornful skepticism and alarmed credulity. It tormented them exceedingly; and the thought that it would have to last for six days at least, and possibly be prolonged further for an indefinite time, was not to be borne. The ship was therefore put on the inshore tack at dark. All through the gusty dark night she went towards the land to look for her man, at times lying over in the heavy puffs, at others rolling idle in the swell, nearly stationary, as if she too had a mind of her own to swing perplexed between cool reason and warm impulse.

Then just at daybreak a boat put off from her and went on tossed by the seas towards the shallow cove where, with considerable difficulty, an officer in a thick coat and a round hat managed to land on a strip of shingle.

"It was my wish," writes Mr. Byrne, "a wish of which my captain approved, to land secretly if possible. I did not want to be seen either by my aggrieved friend in the yellow hat, whose motives were not clear, or by the one-eyed wine-seller, who may or may not have been affiliated to the devil, or indeed by any other dweller in that primitive village. But unfortunately the cove was the only possible landing place for miles; and from the steepness of the ravine I couldn't make a circuit to avoid the houses."

"Fortunately," he goes on, "all the people were yet in their beds. It was barely daylight when I found myself walking on the thick layer of sodden leaves filling the only street. No soul was stirring abroad, no dog barked. The silence was profound, and I had concluded with some wonder that

apparently no dogs were kept in the hamlet, when I heard a low snarl, and from a noisome alley between two hovels emerged a vile cur with its tail between its legs. He slunk off silently showing me his teeth as he ran before me, and he disappeared so suddenly that he might have been the unclean incarnation of the Evil One. There was, too, something so weird in the manner of its coming and vanishing, that my spirits, already by no means very high, became further depressed by the revolting sight of this creature as if by an unlucky presage."

He got away from the coast unobserved, as far as he knew, then struggled manfully to the west against wind and rain, on a barren dark upland, under a sky of ashes. Far away the harsh and desolate mountains raising their scarped and denuded ridges seemed to wait for him menacingly. The evening found him fairly near to them, but, in sailor language, uncertain of his position, hungry, wet, and tired out by a day of steady tramping over broken ground during which he had seen very few people, and had been unable to obtain the slightest intelligence of Tom Corbin's passage. "On! on! I must push on," he had been saying to himself through the hours of solitary effort, spurred more by incertitude than by any definite fear or definite hope.

The lowering daylight died out quickly, leaving him faced by a broken bridge. He descended into the ravine, forded a narrow stream by the last gleam of rapid water, and clambering out on the other side was met by the night which fell like a bandage over his eyes. The wind sweeping in the darkness the broadside of the sierra worried his ears by a continuous roaring noise as of a maddened sea. He suspected that he had lost the road. Even in daylight, with its ruts and mudholes and ledges of outcropping stone, it was difficult to distinguish from the dreary waste of the moor interpersed with boulders and clumps of naked bushes. But, as he says, "he steered his course by the feel of the wind," his hat rammed low on his brow, his head down, stopping now and again from mere weariness of mind rather than of body—as if not his strength but his resolution were being overtaxed by the strain of endeavor half suspected to be vain, and by the unrest of his feelings.

In one of these pauses, borne in the wind faintly as if from very far away he heard a sound of knocking, just knocking on wood. He noticed that the wind had lulled suddenly.

His heart started beating tumultuously because in himself he carried the impression of the desert solitudes he had been traversing for the last six hours—the oppressive sense of an uninhabit-

ed world. When he raised his head a gleam of light, illusory as it often happens in dense darkness, swam before his eyes. While he peered, the sound of feeble knocking was repeated—and suddenly he felt rather than saw the existence of a massive obstacle in his path. What was it? The spur of a hill? Or was it a house! Yes. It was a house, as though it had risen from the ground or had come gliding to meet him, dumb and pallid, from some dark recess of the night. It towered loftily. He had come up under its lee; another three steps and he could have touched the wall with his hand. It was no doubt a *posada* and some other traveller was trying for admittance. He heard again the sound of cautious knocking.

Next moment a broad band of light fell into the night through the opened door. Byrne stepped eagerly into it, whereupon the person outside leaped with a stifled cry away into the night. An exclamation of surprise was heard too, from within. Byrne, flinging himself against the half-closed door, forced his way in against some considerable resistance.

A miserable candle, a mere rushlight, burned at the end of a long deal table. And in its light Byrne saw, staggering yet, the girl he had driven from the door. She had a short black skirt, an orange shawl, a dark complexion—and the escaped single hairs from the mass, sombre and thick like a forest and held up by a comb, made a black mist about her low forehead. A shrill lamentable howl of: "Misericordia!" came in two voices from the further end of the long room, where the fire-light of an open hearth played between heavy shadows. The girl recovering herself drew a hissing breath through her set teeth.

It is unnecessary to report the long process of questions and answers by which he soothed the fears of two old women who sat on each side of the fire, on which stood a large earthenware pot. Byrne thought at once of two witches watching the brewing of some deadly potion. But all the same, when one of them raising forward painfully her broken form lifted the cover of the pot, the escaping steam had an appetizing smell. The other did not budge, but sat hunched up, her head trembling all the time.

They were horrible. There was something grotesque in their decrepitude. Their toothless mouths, their hooked noses, the meagreness of the active one, and the hanging yellow cheeks of the other (the still one, whose head trembled) would have been laughable if the sight of their dreadful physical degradation had not been appalling to one's eyes, had not gripped one's heart with poignant amazement at the unspeakable misery of age, at the awful persistency of life becoming

at last an object of disgust and dread.

To get over it Byrne began to talk, saying that he was an Englishman and that he was in search of a countryman who ought to have passed this way. Directly he had spoken the recollection of his parting with Tom came up in his mind with amazing vividness: the silent villagers, the angry gnome, the one-eyed wine-seller, Bernardino. Why! These two unspeakable frights must be that man's aunts —affiliated to the devil.

Whatever they had been once it was impossible to imagine what use such feeble creatures could be to the devil, now, in the world of the living. Which was Lucilla and which was Erminia? They were now things without a name. A moment of suspended animation followed Byrne's words. The sorceress with the spoon ceased stirring the mess in the iron pot, the very trembling of the other's head stopped for the space of a breath. In this infinitesimal fraction of a second Byrne had the sense of being really on his quest, of having reached the turn of the path, almost within hail of Tom.

"They have seen him," he thought with conviction. Here was at last somebody who had seen him. He made sure they would deny all knowledge of the Ingles; but on the contrary they were eager to tell him that he had eaten and slept the night in the house. They both started talking together, describing his appearance and behavior. An excitement quite fierce in its feebleness possessed them. The doubled-up sorceress flourished aloft her wooden spoon, the puffy monster got off her stool and screeched, stepping from one foot to the other, while the trembling of her head was accelerated to positive vibration. Byrne was quite disconcerted by their excited behavior. . . . Yes! The big, fierce Ingles went away in the morning, after eating a piece of bread and drinking some wine. And if the caballero wished to follow the same path nothing could be easier—in the morning.

"You will give me somebody to show me the way?" said Byrne.

"Si, señor. A proper youth. The man the caballero saw going out."

"But he was knocking at the door," protested Byrne. "He only bolted when he saw me. He was coming in."

"No! No!" the two horrid witches screamed out together. "Going out. Going out!"

After all it may have been true. The sound of knocking had been faint, elusive, reflected Byrne. Perhaps only the effect of his fancy. He asked—

"Who is the man?"

"Her *novio.*" They screamed pointing to the girl. "He is gone home to a village far away from here. But he will return in the morning. Her *novio!* And she is

an orphan—the child of poor Christian people. She lives with us for the love of God, for the love of God."

The orphan crouching on the corner of the hearth had been looking at Byrne. He thought that she was more like a child of Satan kept there by these two weird harridans for the love of the Devil. Her eyes were a little oblique, her mouth rather thick, but admirably formed; her dark face had a wild beauty, voluptuous and untamed. As to the character of her steadfast gaze attached upon him with a sensuously savage attention, "to know what it was like," says Mr. Byrne, "you have only to observe a hungry cat watching a bird in a cage or a mouse inside a trap."

It was she who served him the food, of which he was glad; though with those big slanting black eyes examining him at close range, as if he had something curious written on his face, she gave him an uncomfortable sensation. But anything was better than being approached by these blear-eyed nightmarish witches. His apprehensions somehow had been soothed; perhaps by the sensation of warmth after severe exposure and the ease of resting after the exertion of fighting the gale inch by inch all the way. He had no doubt of Tom's safety. He was now sleeping in the mountain camp having been met by Gonzales' men.

Byrne rose, filled a tin goblet with wine out of a skin hanging on the wall, and sat down again. The witch with the mummy face began to talk to him, ramblingly of old times; she boasted of the inn's fame in those better days. Great people in their own coaches stopped there. An archbishop slept once in the *casa,* a long, long time ago.

The witch with the puffy face seemed to be listening from her stool, motionless, except for the trembling of her head. The girl (Byrne was certain she was a casual gypsy admitted there for some reason or other) sat on the hearth stone in the glow of the embers. She hummed a tune to herself, rattling a pair of castanets slightly now and then. At the mention of the archbishop she chuckled impiously and turned her head to look at Byrne, so that the red glow of the fire flashed in her black eyes and on her white teeth under the dark cowl of the enormous overmantel. And he smiled at her.

He rested now in the ease of security. His advent not having been expected there could be no plot against him in existence. Drowsiness stole upon his senses. He enjoyed it, but keeping a hold, so he thought at least, on his wits; but he must have been gone further than he thought because he was startled beyond measure by a fiendish uproar. He had never heard anything so pitilessly stri-

dent in his life. The witches had started a fierce quarrel about something or other. Whatever its origin they were now only abusing each other violently, without arguments; their senile screams expressed nothing but wicked anger and ferocious dismay. The gypsy girl's black eyes flew from one to the other. Never before had Byrne felt himself so removed from fellowship with human beings. Before he had really time to understand the subject of the quarrel, the girl jumped up rattling her castanets loudly. A silence fell. She came up to the table and bending over, her eyes in his—

"Señor," she said with decision, "you shall sleep in the archbishop's room."

Neither of the witches objected. The dried-up one bent double was propped on a stick. The puffy-faced one had now a crutch.

Byrne got up, walked to the door, and turning the key in the enormous lock put it coolly in his pocket. This was clearly the only entrance, and he did not mean to be taken unawares by whatever danger there might have been lurking outside. When he turned from the door he saw the two witches "affiliated to the Devil" and the Satanic girl looking at him in silence. He wondered if Tom Corbin took the same precaution last night. And thinking of him he had again that queer impression of his nearness. The world was perfectly dumb. And in this stillness he heard the blood beating in his ears with a confused rushing noise, in which there seemed to be a voice uttering the words: "Mr. Byrne, look out, sir." Tom's voice. He shuddered; for the delusions of the senses of hearing are the most vivid of all, and from their nature have a compelling character.

It seemed impossible that Tom should not be there. Again a slight chill as of stealthy draught penetrated through his very clothes and passed over all his body. He shook off the impression with an effort.

It was the girl who preceded him upstairs carrying an iron lamp from the naked flame of which ascended a thin thread of smoke. Her soiled white stockings were full of holes.

With the same quiet resolution with which he had locked the door below, Byrne threw open one after another the doors in the corridor. All the rooms were empty except for some nondescript lumber in one or two. And the girl seeing what he would be at stopped every time, raising the smoky light in each doorway patiently. Meantime she observed him with sustained attention. The last door of all she threw open herself.

"You sleep here, señor," she murmured in a voice light like a child's breath, offering him the lamp.

"*Buenos noches, señorita,*" he

said politely, taking it from her.

She didn't return the wish audibly, though her lips did move a little, while her gaze black like a starless night never for a moment wavered before him. He stepped in, and as he turned to close the door she was still there motionless and disturbing, with her voluptuous mouth and slanting eyes, with the expression of expectant sensual ferocity of a baffled cat. He hesitated for a moment, and in the dumb house he heard again the blood pulsating ponderously in his ears, while once more the illusion of Tom's voice speaking earnestly somewhere near by was specially terrifying, because this time he could not make out the words.

He slammed the door in the girl's face at last, leaving her in the dark; and he opened it again almost on the instant. Nobody. She had vanished without the slightest sound. He closed the door quickly and bolted it with two heavy bolts.

A profound mistrust possessed him suddenly. Why did the witches quarrel about letting him sleep here? And what meant that stare of the girl as if she wanted to impress his features for ever in her mind? His own nervousness alarmed him. He seemed to himself to be removed very far from mankind.

He examined his room. It was not very high, just high enough to take the bed which stood under an enormous baldaquin-like canopy from which fell heavy curtains at foot and head; a bed certainly worthy of an archbishop. There was a heavy table carved all round the edges, some armchairs of enormous weight like the spoils of a grandee's palace; a tall shallow wardrobe placed against the wall and with double doors. He tried them. Locked. A suspicion came into his mind, and he snatched the lamp to make a closer examination. No, it was not a disguised entrance. That heavy, tall piece of furniture stood clear of the wall by quite an inch. He glanced at the bolts of his room door. No! No one could get at him treacherously while he slept. But would he be able to sleep? he asked himself anxiously. If only he had Tom there—the trusty seaman who had fought at his right hand in a cutting out affair or two, and had always preached to him the necessity to take care of himself. "For it's no great trick," he used to say, "to get yourself killed in a hot fight. Any fool can do that. The proper pastime is to fight the Frenchies and then live to fight another day."

Byrne found it a hard matter not to fall into listening to the silence. Somehow he had the conviction that nothing would break it unless he heard again the haunting sound of Tom's voice. He had heard it twice before. Odd! And yet no wonder, he argued with himself reasonably

since he had been thinking of the man for over thirty hours continuously and, what's more, inconclusively. For his anxiety for Tom had never taken a definite shape. "Disappear," was the only word connected with the idea of Tom's danger. It was very vague and awful. "Disappear!" What did that mean?

Byrne shuddered, and then said to himself that he must be a little feverish. But Tom had not disappeared. Byrne had just heard of him. And again the young man felt the blood beating in his ears. He sat still expecting every moment to hear through the pulsating strokes the sound of Tom's voice. He waited straining his ears, but nothing came. Suddenly the thought occurred to him: "He has not disappeared, but he cannot make himself heard."

He jumped up from the armchair. How absurd! Laying his pistol and his hanger on the table he took off his boots and, feeling suddenly too tired to stand, flung himself on the bed which he found soft and comfortable beyond his hopes.

He had felt very wakeful, but he must have dozed off after all, because the next thing he knew he was sitting up in bed and trying to recollect what it was that Tom's voice had said. Oh! He remembered it now. It had said: "Mr. Byrne! Look out, sir!" A warning this. But against what?

He landed with one leap in the middle of the floor, gasped once, then looked all round the room. The window was shuttered and barred with an iron bar. Again he ran his eyes slowly all round the bare walls, and even looked up at the ceiling, which was rather high. Afterwards he went to the door to examine the fastenings. They consisted of two enormous iron bolts sliding into holes made in the wall; and as the corridor outside was too narrow to admit of any battering arrangement or even to permit an axe to be swung, nothing could burst the door open—unless gunpowder. But while he was still making sure that the lower bolt was pushed well home, he received the impression of somebody's presence in the room. It was so strong that he spun round quicker than lightning. There was no one. Who could there be? And yet . . .

It was then that he lost the decorum and restraint a man keeps up for his own sake. He got down on his hands and knees, with the lamp on the floor, to look under the bed, like a silly girl. He saw a lot of dust and nothing else. He got up, his cheeks burning, and walked about discontented with his own behavior and unreasonably angry with Tom for not leaving him alone. The words: "Mr. Byrne! Look out, sir," kept on repeating themselves in his head in a tone of warning.

"Hadn't I better just throw myself on the bed and try to go to

sleep?" he asked himself. But his eyes fell on the tall wardrobe, and he went towards it feeling irritated with himself and yet unable to desist. How he could explain tomorrow the burglarious misdeed to the two odious witches he had no idea. Nevertheless he inserted the point of his hanger between the two halves of the door and tried to prize them open. They resisted. He swore, sticking now hotly to his purpose. His mutter: "I hope you will be satisfied, confound you," was addressed to the absent Tom. Just then the doors gave way and flew open.

He was there.

He—the trusty, sagacious, and courageous Tom was there, drawn up shadowy and stiff, in a prudent silence, which his wide-open eyes by their fixed gleam seemed to command Byrne to respect. But Byrne was too startled to make a sound. Amazed, he stepped back a little—and on the instant the seaman flung himself forward headlong as if to clasp his officer round the neck. Instinctively Byrne put out his faltering arms; he felt the horrible rigidity of the body and then the coldness of death as their heads knocked together and their faces came into contact. They reeled, Byrne hugging Tom close to his breast in order not to let him fall with a crash. He had just strength enough to lower the awful burden gently to the floor—then his head swam, his legs gave way, and he sank on his knees, leaning over the body with his hands resting on the breast of that man once full of generous life, and now as insensible as a stone.

"Dead! my poor Tom, dead," he repeated mentally. The light of the lamp standing near the edge of the table fell from above straight on the stony empty stare of these eyes which naturally had a mobile and merry expression.

Byrne turned his own away from them. Tom's black silk neckerchief was not knotted on his breast. It was gone. The murderers had also taken off his shoes and stockings. And noticing this spoliation, the exposed throat, the bare upturned feet, Byrne felt his eyes run full of tears. In other respects the seaman was fully dressed; neither was his clothing disarranged as it must have been in a violent struggle. Only his checked shirt had been pulled a little out of the waistband in one place, just enough to ascertain whether he had a money belt fastened round his body. Byrne began to sob into his handkerchief.

It was a nervous outburst which passed off quickly. Remaining on his knees he contemplated sadly the athletic body of as fine a seaman as ever had drawn a cutlass, laid a gun, or passed the weather earring in a gale, lying stiff and cold, his cheery, fearless spirit departed—perhaps turning to him, his boy chum, to his ship out there rolling on the gray seas off an iron-

bound coast, at the very moment of its flight.

He perceived that the six brass buttons of Tom's jacket had been cut off. He shuddered at the notion of the two miserable and repulsive witches busying themselves ghoulishly about the defenseless body of his friend. Cut off. Perhaps with the same knife which . . . The head of one trembled; the other was bent double, and their eyes were red and bleared, their infamous claws unsteady . . . It must have been in this very room too, for Tom could not have been killed in the open and brought in here afterwards. Of that Byrne was certain. Yet those devilish crones could not have killed him themselves even by taking him unawares—and Tom would be always on his guard of course. Tom was a very wide-awake wary man when engaged on any service. . . . And in fact how did they murder him? Who did? In what way?

Byrne jumped up, snatched the lamp off the table, and stooped swiftly over the body. The light revealed on the clothing no stain, no trace, no spot of blood anywhere. Byrne's hands began to shake so that he had to set the lamp on the floor and turn away his head in order to recover from this agitation.

Then he began to explore that cold, still, and rigid body for a stab, a gunshot wound, for the trace of some killing blow. He felt all over the skull anxiously. It was whole. He slipped his hand under the neck. It was unbroken. With terrified eyes he peered close under the chin and saw no marks of strangulation on the throat.

There were no signs anywhere. He was just dead.

Impulsively Byrne got away from the body as if the mystery of an incomprehensible death had changed his pity into suspicion and dread. The lamp on the floor near the set, still face of the seaman showed it staring at the ceiling as if despairingly. In the circle of light Byrne saw by the undisturbed patches of thick dust on the floor that there had been no struggle in that room. "He has died outside," he thought. Yes, outside in that narrow corridor, where there was hardly room to turn, the mysterious death had come to his poor dear Tom. The impulse of snatching up his pistols and rushing out of the room abandoned Byrne suddenly. For Tom, too, had been armed—with just such powerless weapons as he himself possessed—pistols, a cutlass! And Tom had died a nameless death, by incomprehensible means.

A new thought came to Byrne. That stranger knocking at the door and fleeing so swiftly at his appearance had come there to remove the body. Aha! That was the guide the withered witch had promised would show the English officer the shortest way of rejoin-

ing his man. A promise, he saw it now, of dreadful import. He who had knocked would have two bodies to deal with. Man and officer would go forth from the house together. For Byrne was certain now that he would have to die before the morning—and in the same mysterious manner, leaving behind him an unmarked body.

The sight of a smashed head, of a throat cut, of a gaping gunshot wound, would have been an inexpressible relief. It would have soothed all his fears. His soul cried within him to that dead man whom he had never found wanting in danger. "Why don't you tell me what I am to look for, Tom? Why don't you?" But in rigid immobility, extended on his back, he seemed to preserve an austere silence, as if disdaining in the finality of his awful knowledge to hold converse with the living.

Suddenly Byrne flung himself on his knees by the side of the body, and dry-eyed, fierce, opened the shirt wide on the breast, as if to tear the secret forcibly from that cold heart which had been so loyal to him in life! Nothing! Nothing! He raised the lamp, and all the sign vouchsafed to him by that face which used to be so kindly in expression was a small bruise on the forehead—the least thing, a mere mark. The skin even was not broken. He stared at it a long time as if lost in a dreadful dream. Then he observed that Tom's hands were clenched as though he had fallen facing somebody in a fight with fists. His knuckles, on closer view, appeared somewhat abraded. Both hands.

The discovery of these slight signs was more appalling to Byrne than the absolute absence of every mark would have been. So Tom had died striking against something which could be hit, and yet could kill one without leaving a wound—by a breath.

Terror, hot terror, began to play about Byrne's heart like a tongue of flame that touches and withdraws before it turns a thing to ashes. He backed away from the body as far as he could, then came forward stealthily casting fearful glances to steal another look at the bruised forehead. There would perhaps be such a faint bruise on his own forehead —before the morning.

"I can't bear it," he whispered to himself. Tom was for him now an object of horror, a sight at once tempting and revolting to his fear. He couldn't bear to look at him.

At last, desperation getting the better of his increasing horror, he stepped forward from the wall against which he had been leaning, seized the corpse under the armpits, and began to lug it over to the bed. The bare heels of the seaman trailed on the floor noiselessly. He was heavy with the dead weight of inanimate objects. With

a last effort Byrne landed him face downwards on the edge of the bed, rolled him over, snatched from under this stiff passive thing a sheet with which he covered it over. Then he spread the curtains at head and foot so that joining together as he shook their folds they hid the bed altogether from his sight.

He stumbled towards a chair, and fell on it. The perspiration poured from his face for a moment, and then his veins seemed to carry for a while a thin stream of half-frozen blood. Complete terror had possession of him now, a nameless terror which had turned his heart to ashes.

He sat upright in the straight-backed chair, the lamp burning at his feet, his pistols and his hanger at his left elbow on the end of the table, his eyes turning incessantly in their sockets round the walls, over the ceiling, over the floor, in the expectation of a mysterious and appalling vision. The thing which could deal death in a breath was outside that bolted door. But Byrne believed neither in walls nor bolts now. Unreasoning terror turning everything to account, his old-time boyish admiration of the athletic Tom, the undaunted Tom (he had seemed to him invincible), helped to paralyze his faculties, added to his despair.

He was no longer Edgar Byrne. He was a tortured soul suffering more anguish than any sinner's body had ever suffered from rack or boot. The depth of his torment may be measured when I say that this young man, as brave at least as the average of his kind, contemplated seizing a pistol and firing into his own head. But a deadly, chilly languor was spreading over his limbs. It was as if his flesh had been wet plaster stiffening slowly about his ribs. Presently, he thought, the two witches will be coming in, with crutch and stick—horrible, grotesque, monstrous—affiliated to the devil —to put a mark on his forehead, the tiny little bruise of death. And he wouldn't be able to do anything. Tom had struck out at something, but he was not like Tom. His limbs were dead already. He sat still, dying the death over and over again; and the only part of him which moved were his eyes, turning round and round in their sockets, running over the walls, the floor, the ceiling, again and again, till suddenly they became motionless and stony —starting out of his head fixed in the direction of the bed.

He had seen the heavy curtains stir and shake as if the dead body they concealed had turned over and sat up. Byrne, who thought the world could hold no more terrors in store, felt his hair stir at the roots. He gripped the arms of the chair, his jaw fell, and the sweat broke out on his brow while his dry tongue clove suddenly to the roof of his mouth. Again the

curtains stirred, but did not open. "Don't, Tom!" Byrne made effort to shout, but all he heard was a slight moan such as an uneasy sleeper may make. He felt that his brain was going, for, now, it seemed to him that the ceiling over the bed had moved, had slanted, and came level again—and once more the closed curtains swayed gently as if about to part.

Byrne closed his eyes not to see the awful apparition of the seaman's corpse coming out animated by an evil spirit. In the profound silence of the room he endured a moment of frightful agony, then opened his eyes again. And he saw at once that the curtains remained closed still, but that the ceiling over the bed had risen quite a foot. With the last gleam of reason left to him he understood that it was the enormous baldaquin over the bed which was coming down, while the curtains attached to it swayed softly, sinking gradually to the floor. His drooping jaw snapped to—and half rising in his chair he watched mutely the noiseless descent of the monstrous canopy. It came down in short smooth rushes till lowered half way or more, when it took a turn and settled swiftly its turtle-back shape with the deep border piece fitting exactly the edge of the bedstead. A slight crack or two of wood were heard, and the overpowering stillness of the room resumed its sway.

Byrne stood up, gasped for breath, and let out a cry of rage and dismay, the first sound which he is perfectly certain did make its way past his lips on this night of terrors. This then was the death he had escaped! This was the devilish artifice of murder poor Tom's soul had perhaps tried from beyond the border to warn him of. For this was how he had died. Byrne was certain he had heard the voice of the seaman, faintly distinct in his familiar phrase, "Mr. Byrne! Look out, sir!" and again uttering words he could not make out. But then the distance separating the living from the dead is so great! Poor Tom had tried. Byrne ran to the bed and attempted to lift up, to push off the horrible lid smothering the body. It resisted his efforts, heavy as lead, immovable like a tombstone. The rage of vengeance made him desist; his head buzzed with chaotic thoughts of extermination, he turned round the room as if he could find neither his weapons nor the way out; and all the time he stammered awful menaces. . . .

A violent battering at the door of the inn recalled him to his soberer senses. He flew to the window, pulled the shutters open, and looked out. In the faint dawn he saw below him a mob of men. Ha! He would go and face at once this murderous lot collected no doubt for his undoing. After his struggle with nameless terrors he yearned for an open fray with

armed enemies. But he must have remained yet bereft of his reason, because forgetting his weapons he rushed downstairs with a wild cry, unbarred the door while blows were raining on it outside, and flinging it open flew with his bare hands at the throat of the first man he saw before him. They rolled over together. Byrne's hazy intention was to break through, to fly up the mountain path, and come back presently with Gonzales' men to exact an exemplary vengeance. He fought furiously till a tree, a house, a mountain, seemed to crash down upon his head—and he knew no more.

Here Mr. Byrne describes in detail the skilfull manner in which he found his broken head bandaged, informs us that he had lost a great deal of blood, and ascribes the preservation of his sanity to that circumstance. He sets down Gonzales' profuse apologies in full too. For it was Gonzales who, tired of waiting for news from the English, had come down to the inn with half his band, on his way to the sea. "His excellency," he explained, "rushed out with fierce impetuosity, and, moreover, was not known to us for a friend, and so we . . . etc., etc." When asked what had become of the witches, he only pointed his finger silently to the ground, then voiced calmly a moral reflection: "The passion for gold is pitiless in the very old, señor," he said. "No doubt in former days they have put many a solitary traveller to sleep in the archbishop's bed."

"There was also a gypsy girl there," said Byrne feebly from the improvised litter on which he was being carried to the coast by a squad of guerilleros.

"It was she who winched up that infernal machine, and it was she too who lowered it that night," was the answer.

"But why? Why?" exclaimed Byrne. "Why should she wish for my death?"

"No doubt for the sake of your excellency's coat buttons," said politely the saturnine Gonzales. "We found those of the dead mariner concealed on her person. But your excellency may rest assured that everything that is fitting has been done on this occasion."

Byrne asked no more questions. There was still another death which was considered by Gonzales as "fitting to the occasion." The one-eyed Bernardino stuck against the wall of his wine-shop received the charge of six escopettas into his breast. As the shots rang out the rough bier with Tom's body on it went past carried by a bandit-like gang of Spanish patriots down the ravine to the shore, where two boats from the ship were waiting for what was left on earth of her best seaman.

Mr. Byrne, very pale and weak, stepped into the boat which carried the body of his humble

friend. For it was decided that Tom Corbin should rest far out in the bay of Biscay. The officer took the tiller and, turning his head for the last look at the shore, saw on the gray hillside something moving, which he made out to be a little man in a yellow hat mounted on a mule—that mule without which the fate of Tom Corbin would have remained mysterious forever.

WHAT'S THE TRUTH ABOUT MATT DILLON?

WERE MATT DILLON, Wyatt Earp and Wild Bill Hickok ever U. S. marshals? E. J. Matchett, boss of the 804 marshals and deputies in the United States and its territories, would like to know. Matchett, who has his office in the Justice Department in Washington (the Attorney General has supervision over marshals), says they've turned the place upside down in their search for records and can't find them. There's a gap in the records between 1789 and 1870. What happened to the records, assuming there were any? Nobody knows. . . .

Congress created the job of U. S. marshal, back in 1789, to work with the thirteen Federal District Courts created at the time, one for each state. Matchett says he has the name of those first thirteen marshals appointed by President Washington, but no more names until 1870 when the government first began to print its register of marshals.

And even this register has gaps, it seems, which is why Matchett has asked marshals all over the country to search their local records. As for Wyatt Earp, Wild Bill Hickok, and Matt Dillon, they may have been town marshals; there's nothing to show they were ever U. S. marshals.

Today's U. S. marshals, unlike sheriffs or city police or the F. B. I. who have wider arrest powers, can only arrest people on orders from a federal judge for a specific offence against a specific court decree. They take convicted federal prisoners to federal jails, preserve order in federal jails, preserve order in federal court rooms, serve court orders and, if so ordered by the court, guard or seize property.

There are 94 U. S. marshals, one for each judicial district. Their salary is from $8,330 to $12,770, a year, depending on the size of the job. Political appointees, they are appointed by the President for a period of four years—but can be fired any time before then. They appoint their own deputies, when and if there's an opening (deputies do not change with the administration), pay for the 710 deputies ranging from $4,490, to $5,880. They are eligible for a pension, on retirement, and turnover is apparently small. They must pass a physical test and take a marksmanship test once a year.

the disagreeable corpse

by. . . Michael Innes

He'd been an unpleasant man when alive. He was even less pleasant in death, Venus at his side, a macabre touch.

THE other day I asked Appleby about the Millicarp affair. He was quite forthcoming.

"Millicarp," Appleby said, "was well-known as a sculptor. Looking at his work, you would have imagined him to be an uncommonly husky type, sending the splinters flying all over the studio. His carvings in stone had a rough-hewn quality. The whole idea of it, I suppose, was to suggest titanic strength.

"Actually, Millicarp was a puny little fellow—the next thing to a dwarf, and a bit of a cripple as well. This made certain other facts about him all the more surprising. And it made rather more disagreeable, somehow, the business of inspecting his body. Particularly considering the bust. And particularly on a holiday.

"He lived in Cornwall, in the top flat of a young skyscraper of a building in one of those small fishing-towns built round a steep cove. What lay below was rock, and his death was certainly instantaneous."

I stared at Appleby. "He fell out of a window?"

"Either that, or he was pitched

Appleby of Scotland Yard, art connoisseur and detective, returns in another pastiche reflecting much of the urbane competence characteristic of Innes' more than twenty novels and collections of short stories, including the recent THE LONG FAREWELL *and the earlier* DEATH ON A QUIET DAY *(Dodd, Mead).*

out. That was something we had to decide. The bust of Venus didn't really help. It might have been pitched out after him. Or he might have taken it with him, clasped in his arms, with some notion of adding to the momentum of his fall."

"How very unpleasant!"

Appleby smiled grimly. "Well—yes. But it's my trade. Incidentally, there were plenty of other busts and so forth about the place, and we had to ask ourselves if there had been any significance in picking the Venus. There was one plausible answer—and again I think you'll call it unpleasant. Millicarp, despite his disabilities, was a pertinacious and successful amorist, who had caused no end of trouble in the Bohemian society in which he moved. It looked as if the Venus might have been chucked out after him as a sort of macabre comment on that."

Appleby was silent for a moment, and I shook my head. "It's not," I said, "an edifying story."

"No, it's not." Appleby looked at me severely. "But didn't you ask for it?"

"I was, I say, simply on holiday down there. But the local people called me in at once. I was making my inspection of this displeasing creature's remains within a couple of hours of the thing having happened. The evidence for that is unimportant; it was a matter of fishing-boats going past, and so on. At eight o'clock in the morning the rocks had been clear. By ten I was examining the body of either a suicide or a murdered man.

"It told me very little. If Millicarp had been bruised in any feeble sort of struggle he could have put up against an attacker, the effects were not distinguished from those of his fall. And his studio didn't tell me much more. It was an untidy place, so that signs of a brief scrap would have been hard to spot. One large window was wide open.

"Of the people in the house, the one who fixed my attention was a sort of caretaker, called Hill. He seemed a very promising mixture of panic and venom. He just couldn't disguise the fact that he had hated the dead man. And his panic came, so to speak, in patches, whenever the local inspector got on the topic of Millicarp's unflagging interest in women. Naturally this made me inquire whether there was a Mrs. Hill. That's the way, you know, that a policeman's mind has to work. And, sure enough, a Mrs. Hill was produced. She was an uncommonly good-looking young woman.

"I soon didn't have much doubt that she had something to hide—and that her husband had too. It was just a question of whether it was much or little. Anyway, my local colleague's questions drove

her pretty desperate. And it seemed to be as a result of this desperation that she presently produced a suspect for us.

"She was sure, she said, that Mr. Dale had been down; she was sure she had caught a glimpse of him that morning. And at this her husband promptly said he believed he'd seen Dale too.

"Dale was a painter, it seemed, who lived in London, and who used to come down quite often to visit Millicarp. For instance, he'd been down a week before that again, when there had been a spell of blazing hot weather; Mrs. Hill had run into him in a chemist's shop, buying aspirin and olive oil—presumably for sun-bathing. Mrs. Hill had been rather surprised to see him at all on that occasion, for he and Millicarp had lately had an awful row. Mrs. Hill was by way of being too respectable to mention the supposed cause of this. But clearly it was a woman. It might even have been herself.

"Well, that was about all we got. And presently I left the local fellows to it and drove straight back to London. But I'd rung through to the Yard before setting out, and arranged for some enquiries to be made. And the painter Dale proved only moderately hard to run to earth. A squad of men worked on the problem all afternoon as I drove east. And the upshot was that I found myself in Dale's studio—a thoroughly unwelcome visitor—early that summer evening.

"Dale was a pale, unhealthy-looking creature, but at the same time just what you might have imagined Millicarp to be—a great giant of a man who could certainly have tossed anybody out of a window in a twinkling. He was painting furiously, in the last of the full light, at a large, complex composition, full of small geometrical forms, that seemed to be coming entirely out of his head.

"I told him straight away about Millicarp, and he said, 'Ah!' in an excited sort of way. But this seemed to be only because he had satisfied himself where some tiny fresh flake of paint should go. Then he did for a moment turn to me. 'It would be that caretaking chap Hill,' he said. 'Dangerous type. He'd have been upset by Millicarp's making passes at his wife. Disgusting. Glad I washed my hands of that crowd.' And at this Dale went on painting like mad.

"I wasn't at all sure he hadn't got hold of the right end of the stick. But of course I wasn't leaving it at that. 'They say they saw you,' I said.

" 'Saw me?' Dale turned round on me again, really startled. 'Saw me where? And when?'

" 'Down in Cornwall, Mr. Dale. And early this morning.'

" 'What utter rot!' He gestured at his big canvas. 'Even a fool of a policeman can see I've been

slaving at this thing all day.' And at that Dale grew quite violent. 'Get out!' he yelled at me. 'Get out, before I throw you downstairs.'

"Of course this display of temperament interested me, and I said something to Dale that really sent him off the deep end. He made a sudden grab at me, slipped, fell backwards, and in doing so brought the easel with its big canvas down with him on the floor. When he distangled himself, it was to point at his painting in speechless wrath. This was understandable. His arm must have swept right across the canvas, and a large part of the intricate composition was now no more than a nasty smear. I examined it. There wasn't a square inch of it on which the oil paint had even begun to dry out. 'Unfortunate,' I said. 'Still, you'll agree Mr. Dale, that it does settle the matter.' "

"No," Appleby added. "*Not* the caretaker Hill. It was Dale who pitched Millicarp through the window—driven by some crazy jealousy. Of course it certainly did look as if Dale must have been in his London studio all day, to have achieved that pretty complicated painting over a large canvas. But, you see, he'd really done it in the previous week. The pigments hadn't been mixed with any of what painters call the drying oils, which contain metallic salts and begin to harden quickly. They'd been mixed with one of the non-drying mediums. In fact, he'd used that olive oil. It hadn't been for sun-bathing he'd bought it; you could have told from his complexion that that sort of thing wasn't in his line. Well, there's why Dale was so clumsy. He just *had* to stumble and smear the canvas—to call my attention to how split fresh it all was. Unfortunately for him, policemen aren't, like some painters, impressionists. They check up. And I did."

MARK TWAIN AND FINGERPRINTING

WHILE Sir William Hershel, Chief Administrative Officer of the Hoogly District in Bengal, used fingerprinting in the 1860's, it was to take years before British and American law-enforcement agencies accepted the method. Mark Twain did much for the idea in this country with his book, PUDD'NHEAD WILSON, the story of a man looked upon as a nitwit who uses a fingerprint to establish proof of a questioned identity. Earlier, Gilbert Thompson, of the United States Geological Survey, had used fingerprints to prevent the forgery of commissary orders during a survey in New Mexico in 1882; shortly afterwards, a San Francisco photographer recommended the method as a practical means for registering Chinese, and Sing Sing did adopt the system in 1903, after experiments at other prisons, but it was to take almost twenty more years before the method won national recognition.

midnight train to death

by...Lawrence G. Blochman

There was a haunted, haggard look on the young Maharajah's face — a strange pallor under that olive-tinted skin. . . .

O'REILLY'S ceremonial farewell to India was a magnificent affair. All the Maharajah's twenty elephants were lined up in the square opposite the palace, their restless trunks painted white and vermilion like sinuous barber poles, their howdahs glittering in the burning glare of the tropical sun.

Perched aboard the largest bull of the twenty, the one with the gold-and-diamond studded tusks, was Terrence O'Reilly himself, his massive frame hunched to fit in among the plush and spangles of a howdah designed for lesser men than an ex-New York cop. The resplendent uniform which O'Reilly was wearing for the last time, dazzling with more gold braid than a circus band master, was wet with perspiration. His bright red hair, too, was dewy beneath his gold-spiked sun helmet.

Yet despite the heat he had a funny cold feeling inside him and a strange lump in his throat. He wondered why he should feel like this about going home to become Patrolman O'Reilly of the Ninth Precinct again, instead of O'Reilly Sahib, Marshal of Personal

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As we have previously suggested, some enterprising publisher could do worse than gather together, in a single volume, the many detectives Lawrence G. Blochman has created over the years. Here is another story of O'Reilly, New York cop, in a war-time India where the man beside you could be a Nazi agent.

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Safety to His Highness Vinayak Rao Bahadur, Maharajah of Zarapore. Then he looked off across the square to where the green-coated, green-turbaned palace guards were drawn up at attention, and his angular, bull-dog jaw worked sidewise.

The guards were firing off a loud and ragged *feu de joie* with muskets that had seen service in the Sepoy Rebellion. The palace musicians were beating on ancient drums, blowing into squealing wind instruments, raising awful sounds from copper trumpets so long that it took three small boys to hold them off the ground.

The sabers of the Maharajah's aides flashed in salute, and the brilliant mosaic made by the turbans of the watching crowd bent forward to salaam like poppies before a breeze. The Maharajah emerged to mount the throne beneath the five golden umbrellas on the palace steps.

The horns blared again, and the Maharajah began his public good-byes to O'Reilly Sahib. He spoke in Urdu and O'Reilly did not understand a fifth of what he was saying, but he knew the content. His Highness had said the same thing in English the week before when he broke the news over a bottle of champagne.

"I can't help myself, Terry," the Maharajah had said. "The British are clamping down all the war-time regulations, and they've told me to dismiss *all* aliens in my service. I haven't forgotten you've saved my life. I never shall. And I promised you that your job was permanent. I know you wouldn't want to give up your American citizenship, though, so I'm sending you back to New York. My bankers in the States will continue to pay your salary, so you can live like a pensioner, if you like."

"Pensioner, my eye." O'Reilly had said. "I'm going back on the force. I'll be a sergeant in another year, and that brings all the dough a man like me needs."

"I'll miss you, Terry," the Maharajah had said.

"Sure. And I'll miss you, too, Vinnie," O'Reilly had replied glibly. He had said it to be polite, but now as he looked out on all this pomp and display of a feudal, Oriental state, he knew it was true.

For all the heat and homesickness of the gasping nights before the monsoons broke, when he would have given anything for the smell of snow or the wind from the East River, the whiff of bacon from an all-night Coffee Pot, or the scraping sound of a snow-shovel on a frozen sidewalk —for all that, he was at this moment sorry to leave.

He knew that when he got back to the roar of the subway, the routine of the station house, the flash of traffic lights and the scream of sirens, he would be thinking of this carnival of pomp and poverty, of strange brown

and black faces, of whiskers and turbans among the turnip-like domes and heat and dust of Zarapore.

He would be thinking of the young Maharajah whom he had saved from the conspiracy of an ambitious brother; of the chubby subadar of civil police whom he had taught to play poker, and who had helped him put down a Hindu-Moslem riot almost single-handed; of the Mad Yogi with a Tenth Avenue accent, who had taken a hand in the game after the affair of the opium factory in Ganeshi Mohan's private temple.

Well, Fate had whisked him to India as bodyguard for a Hindu prince, and he could not quarrel with Fate now that the magic carpet was making a return trip . . .

The horns squealed and howled again, and O'Reilly climbed down from his elephant. His six-feet-four towered above the flanking A.D.C.'s as he marched forward to the throne for the ceremonial award of a *pugree*. A *pugree* is like a turban except that it is narrower, and is one hundred sixty-six feet long to a turban's thirty, and is consequently more complicated to wind.

But when it is awarded by a Maharajah, it is like a medal for bravery and carries a rise in pay or a pension with it. So O'Reilly understood that the matter of his pension had to be arranged according to the customs of Zarapore and dutifully bent down while two expert turban-winders removed his helmet and went to work weaving an intricate structure of brilliant cloth strips upon his head.

When he looked up at the Maharajah, however, he was startled. The young man in all his regalia of satin and jewels was not the breezy, confident young ruler he had expected to see. There was a haunted, haggard look on his handsome face, a strange pallor under his olive-tinted skin.

"What's wrong, Vinnie?" O'Reilly muttered under his breath while the turban-winders were putting the finishing touches on the *pugree*.

"I want to talk to you after the ceremony," the Maharajah murmured in tense English. "Come and see me in an hour. I'll be in my private diggings."

"I'll be there, Your Highness," said O'Reilly. He beamed as he straightened up and saluted. The thought that there was still trouble for him to get into before he left Zarapore made him so elated that he forgot to feel foolish in his new *pugree*. . . . Returning to the palace after divesting himself of his uniform, his *pugree*, and the smell of elephant, O'Reilly found the Maharajah nervously pacing the thick rugs of his private apartments. There was never any formality about him when he received his American friend, but there was even less of the poten-

tate than usual in his manner today. He was merely a very worried young man who had stripped off his turban and his court clothes and was wearing only a pair of shorts and a deep frown.

"Terry, I'm going to ask you to do me one more favor before you leave India," said the Maharajah, running his nervous fingers through his sleek black hair. "Don't answer until you've heard the story, because you may not want to do it. It may be dangerous."

"That's swell," said O'Reilly, grinning. "When do I start?"

"I suppose you know about the fire in my government laboratories last night."

"Yeah. Too bad."

"And that Dr. Khopri was burned to death?"

"Was he? They didn't tell me that." O'Reilly shook his head. "Khopri was a nice fella. Tough luck."

"It wasn't luck, Terry." The Maharajah came over and stared hard at O'Reilly with a strange fire burning deep in his dark eyes. "It could have been an accident that all of Dr. Khopri's notes and records were destroyed, but that he himself should die, that he should be there at such an odd hour of the night—"

"Murder, eh?" O'Reilly arose and picked up his Malacca stick, as though ready for instant duty. "Who—"

"Sit down, Terry. It's quite a story. Did I tell you about the manganese deposits in the Nila Hills, ten miles from here?"

"Not that I remember."

The Maharajah passed a silver box of cigarettes. O'Reilly waved them away and took a Burma cheroot from his pocket.

"There's no need to tell you, Terry," said the Maharajah, holding a match for O'Reilly, "that I'm devoted to the British cause in this war. Even if I hadn't been educated at Oxford, I'd be a rabid partisan. Any intelligent man would.

"Well, when Dr. Khopri told me several months ago that he had discovered manganese in my state, I immediately communicated with Delhi. Manganese is a strategic material, you know. Steel and armaments. And there's never enough of it.

"Well, Delhi sent down a government mineralogist by the name of Henry Fayne. I disliked him instantly, but that has nothing to do with the man's ability. I even believed him when he reported that the supposed manganese deposits were really a freak—that the Nila Hills had been 'salted' by nature. Thousands of years ago a shower of meteorites pelted down on this part of India, and since the fragments are rich in manganese, the soil still shows traces of it, he said, but not nearly enough to warrant it.

"Since Fayne sent his report after he'd left Zarapore, I could

not take issue with him. When I showed it to Dr. Khopri, however, he disagreed violently. He pointed out that the manganese in meteorites is in its native form; that while some oxidation was certain to occur over a period of centuries, his own prospecting had revealed a uniformity of deposits which indicated a deep-seated mass of both manganite and braunite.

"I had great confidence in Dr. Khopri and supposed that Henry Fayne was merely mistaken. I asked Dr. Khopri to prepare his own report, with ore specimens and was seeking some way I might tactfully reopen the matter. Then Dr. Khopri's death in the fire which destroyed his records made me change my mind. I no longer consider Henry Fayne incompetent. What do you think, Terry?"

O'Reilly whistled. "Fifth Column?"

"Possibly," the Maharajah agreed. "The Germans would certainly try to prevent the development of new manganese fields and as much as I detest the Nazis, I must admit that they are thorough and farreaching in their underground organization.

"There is another possibility, however. I always suspect my brother in matters of this kind. The intriguing fingers of Prince Mahmed are very long and very active, even from his exile in Goa. It is more likely that the Germans have got to him in Portuguese India, and that he is merely seeking to exploit the fields for commercial gains—after he steals my throne. I would rather think that Mr. Fayne is merely greedy, not a traitor."

"Where do I come in?" O'Reilly asked.

"In this way," said the Maharajah, "I can't very well go to the Political Officer here because Mr. Henderson is a guileless scholar who would resent my suggestion that an official from Delhi might be betraying the interests of his country. I no longer have Dr. Khopri and his records to bear out my suspicions. I am forbidden by treaty from going over the Political Officer's head and dealing directly with Delhi. Therefore, I am asking you to go to Delhi for me. Will you, Terry?"

"I won't be much good at explaining about the magna—about the rocks," O'Reilly said.

"I'm sending someone with you for that," the Maharajah said. "I'm sending Professor Gurda, a science teacher in my high school here, who had heard Dr. Khopri's theories, and who will be able to explain the ore samples I'm sending with you. I want you to see that the professor and the samples arrive safely at the mining office. And I want you to pretend that you and he are doing this independently—a pair of private prospectors, if you know what I mean. I want you to protect my official non-interference,

so to speak, and still guarantee the Zarapore manganese deposits for Britain's war. That makes you more or less of a diplomat. Do you think you can manage it, Terry?"

"Sure. Why not? I thought you said this was dangerous."

"It is. The man who killed Dr. Khopri may be on your train tonight."

"I see." O'Reilly studied the glowing stub of his cheroot. "Who is he?"

"I wish I knew, Terry. Does that mean you say no?"

"Hell, no, I don't say no. On the contrary. Gives me something to think about on the train."

"If only Henry Fayne were still in Zarapore I should say the matter would be greatly simplified. But he left ten days ago. You know what he looks like, by the way?"

"Sure, I met him while he was here." O'Reilly nodded. "He's a skinny, red-faced sourpuss that looks like he's tried everything and don't like any of it."

"Good." The Maharajah smiled. "I'm glad you remember, in case he should turn up along the way. You'll do it, then, Terry?"

"Sure," said O'Reilly, extending his hand.

At that moment an aide-de-camp entered and made a peculiar grimace at the spectacle of the Maharajah, bare-waisted, shaking hands with the red-headed colossus.

O'Reilly immediately looked grim, straightened up, and saluted gravely. He said, "I'll do your bidding, Your Highness."

The Maharajah looked as dignified as a man in shorts can. He replied, "Good. Then pleasant trip, O'Reilly Sahib."

When he left the palace, O'Reilly hadn't gone a dozen yards before somebody took a shot at him.

The bullet spattered against the wall just above his head and showered plaster down upon his broad shoulders. At the same instant he recognized the grimly familiar report of a pistol shot.

He knew it was a shot because the only vehicles in the street at the time were bicycles, a horse-drawn *garhi,* and a bullock cart loaded with ripe jute—none of which were apt to backfire. The pedestrians in the crowded street looked innocent enough too—fat Marwaris going home from the cotton bazaar, bearded Moslems, thin black Tamils, red-turbaned Sikhs.

None of them seemed to have heard the shot, unless it was the only European in sight—a plump, perspiring Anglican missionary whose clerical collar seemed to dissolve as he hurried down the street in pursuit of a carriage. No, the shot had probably been fired from one of the shuttered second-story windows above the shops across the road.

And there was no sense in looking for the marksman now; since he had missed, he would no doubt show up again later. The Maharajah was right in his guess that the murderer of Dr. Khopri would be aboard O'Reilly's train.

O'Reilly reached the station fifteen minutes before train time, without becoming a further target. His friends who came to see him off had been there at least an hour, inasmuch as the Indian mind seems incapable of judging time in units as small as ten minutes.

The Maharajah, of course, was not there, but he sent an A.D.C. with a heavy package which O'Reilly immediately clamped under his arm. It attracted no particular attention since all his friends had brought farewell gifts. The minister of education brought a set of poker chips carved from buffalo horn. The subadar of civil police contributed a *pan* box of hammered brass which had been beaten from the brass knuckles that killed Ganeshi Mohan. The Mad Yogi offered a stone jug of trance-provoking palm toddy.

Just as the train puffed into the station from the south, headlight boring into the hot darkness, whistle shrieking, O'Reilly's travelling companion came puffing into the station from the north.

Professor Gurda was a rotund little Hindu with buck teeth protruding from beneath a dejected black mustache and enough white turban piled above his bulging forehead to fill a good-sized laundry basket. He was so completely encumbered with cloth-tied baggage, brass pots, books, an umbrella, and what appeared to be a week's supply of food, that O'Reilly was afraid that if the professor put down his impediments to shake hands, he would never be able to collect it all again before the train pulled out.

"Howdy, Prof," O'Reilly said. "Looks like we're travelling in the same— Whoa, hold it."

Professor Gurda tried to join the palms of his hands in front of his face, to make the customary salutation, and four books and a brass pot cascaded into O'Reilly's arms. Assuring himself by a side glance that his own bearers were loading his luggage and bedding roll into what appeared to be the only vacant first-class compartment, O'Reilly piled the books back on the professor and took his arm to guide him to the train.

"Good-bye, Johnny," he called to the subadar. "Good luck, Diwana." He shook outstretched hands. "Good-bye, mugs. I'll send you all picture postcards of Brooklyn Bridge."

The station master blew his whistle. The engineer answered shrilly. The train jerked, and the guard ran along the side of the cars, closing doors. O'Reilly boosted the professor aboard just

as the train began to move. He slammed the door, turned to yell final good-byes to the crowd on the platform. When he turned away again, he saw that two other European passengers were settling down in the compartment.

One of them at least was a European, and an Anglican missionary at that. He looked very much like the plump gentleman with the wilted clerical collar O'Reilly had seen hurrying away from the palace just after someone had taken a potshot at him.

He was for the moment busy with his luggage, so O'Reilly turned to eye the other passenger who might not be entirely European. He was a tall, sallow-faced black-haired gentleman, and the cut of his elegant, well-pressed pongee suit was flawlessly English. Something about the cast of his narrow eyes, however, and the purple crescents at the base of his polished fingernails told O'Reilly that there was a touch of something else somewhere in his lineage.

The Eurasian favored O'Reilly with a smile. "Good evening, Mr. O'Reilly," he said.

O'Reilly puckered his bushy red eyebrows. "What jail did we meet in?" he demanded.

The Eurasian chuckled. There was a cold, mirthless quality in the sound. "O'Reilly Sahib is famous from the Deccan to Kashmir," he said. "You can't hope to travel incognito unless you change the color of your hair, and your incredible stature. I'm happy we meet by chance, after all I've heard of you. My name is Frank Janeiro."

Janeiro . . . Portuguese India . . . Goa . . . Prince Mahmed . . . Chance meeting, my eye, O'Reilly thought.

"Traveling far, Mr. O'Reilly?" purred Janeiro.

"Pretty far. New York."

"New York?" Again that mirthless chuckle. "I fancy you'll have to change trains."

"Go ahead and fancy," thought O'Reilly. He looked at Professor Gurda who was making a nest for himself among his strange luggage on one of the leather-covered berths. The professor had slipped off his shoes and had tucked his feet under him.

The Anglican clergyman was settled in another corner of the compartment, smoking a crooked pipe and reading the Bible.

"Your friend appears to be starting out on an expedition to explore the Sindh Desert," said Janeiro, indicating Gurda.

"I am Professor Gurda, B.A., of His Highness Maharajah Vinayak's High School," said the professor, grinning with all his teeth. "Am unfamiliar with train journeys, having remained static in Zarapore since return from Allahabad University twenty-nine years past. Am therefore prepared for all exigencies."

"I see," Janeiro nodded pleas-

antly. "And are you going to Delhi, too, Professor?"

"Professor Gurda tells me he's visiting the old folks in Agra," O'Reilly put in quickly.

"Yes, of course," Janeiro's thin, dark lips curled in a curious smile.

O'Reilly dropped the wooden shutter to look out the window. The train was speeding through rice fields aglitter with the cold green light of a million fireflies. He watched the shadows of stiff *tal* palms and the pyramidal domes of a Hindu temple slide by in the hot night.

The corner of his glance, however, was still very much occupied inside the compartment. He could not forget that either the Eurasian or the man with the clerical collar might very possibly have taken a shot at him outside the Maharajah's palace. When he saw the clergyman staring at him strangely over the edge of his Bible, therefore, O'Reilly turned suddenly.

"See anything outa the ordinary about my rear view, padre?" he asked.

The clergyman closed his Bible and smiled. "There is nothing ordinary about you from any view, my friend," he said gently.

"Didn't I see you this afternoon in Zarapore outside the Maharajah's palace?" O'Reilly pursued.

"Quite possibly. If you did, you saw the Reverend Eustace Potts in a somewhat flustered, harried and not at all dignified condition. I was hurrying to keep a last minute appointment. There was so much to do and so little time to do it in before leaving for Delhi."

"I hope you finished your business okay," said O'Reilly pointedly.

"Our work is never done." The Reverend Eustace Potts sighed and puffed several times on his dead pipe. "No doubt you know our mission school in Zarapore. We have been making changes. We—could I trouble you for a light?"

"Sure thing, Reverend." O'Reilly struck a match. He was careful to hold the flame at some distance from the clergyman and well to his left so that the Reverend Potts would have to lean forward with his left elbow raised in order to light his pipe. O'Reilly wanted a closer look at an intriguing bulge beneath the clerical left armpit.

The locomotive whistled for an approaching station, and the clacking rhythm of the rails began to slow down. O'Reilly suddenly decided to get off and send a wire to his friend the subadar of civil police at Zarapore, inquiring as to the background which might cause a Man of God to wear a shoulder holster.

"Thank you . . . very . . . much . . ." said the Reverend Eustace Potts between contented puffs.

"That's O.K. You're very wel-

come, padre," said O'Reilly. "Any time."

The train was screeching to a stop. It would be a short stop and the only one before Mogul Junction, where he would have to change trains for Delhi. But he could still get an answer to his wire at Mogul Junction, with the help of various gods responsible for the balance between lethargy and industry in Indian telegraph operators.

O'Reilly opened the door, mumbled something about a breath of air, and waded through the station crowds of water-vendors with their glistening black goatskin bags, luggage coolies, the melee of arriving and departing passengers.

At the far end of the train twelve men were holding up long pink curtains so that a purdah lady could get into her compartment without being subjected to the gaze of vulgar masculine eyes.

When he found the dimly lit telegraph office, O'Reilly addressed the following telegram to the subadar:

DEAR JOHNNY PLEASE FIND OUT EK DUM WHAT REVEREND EUSTACE POTTS WAS DOING AT ZARAPORE MISSION SCHOOL THAT RATES PACKING A GUN. REPLY MOGUL JUNCTION.
O'REILLY

While he was licking the stamps to affix to the telegraph blank, O'Reilly realized with a cold, sinking feeling that he had neglected to bring the package of ore samples with him—the heavy, compact oblong packet wrapped in green paper and sealed with two great blobs of green wax.

Of course Professor Gurda was in the compartment with it, but the professor, making his first train journey in twenty-nine years, was not apt to prove much of a watchdog against a couple of wolves such as Janeiro and the padre might be.

While the halfcaste telegraph operator was fumbling to make change, the station master's whistle sounded. The operator lost count of his paper rupees, square nickel two anna bits and copper pice; he started counting all over. O'Reilly left him counting and elbowed his way across the platform just as the red cars began to move.

He caught the latch of his compartment as it slid by, jerked the door open, bounded in. He was relieved to see Janeiro and the Reverend Eustace Potts still in their places. Then he noted that the rotund, hen-like Professor Gurda was no longer squatting in his nest of luggage.

Quickly he crossed the compartment to the far corner, opened the lavatory door. Professor Gurda was not there either.

The locomotive whistle scream-

ed. The clicking song of the rails rose to a high-pitched, even purr.

The Reverend Potts seemed lost in reverie as he smoked his pipe. He was no longer reading his Bible. Frank Janeiro had a smug half-smile on his lips as he looked out the window.

"Which of you gents is the magician?" O'Reilly asked. "It's a good trick."

"Trick?" The Reverend Potts appeared puzzled.

"Sure, trick," O'Reilly repeated. "The vanishing professor."

"Ah, yes," droned Janeiro. "Professor Gurda has gone, hasn't he? I hadn't noticed."

"I suppose he just climbed up a rope and disappeared, pulling up the rope after him," O'Reilly said. "I hear Hindus are like that."

"I couldn't say, really," Janeiro said. "I was out stretching my legs on the platform. I don't know where he went."

"You didn't see him go up in a cloud of bright green smoke, did you, padre?"

"As a matter of fact, the professor got down in quite a prosaic and mundane manner," said the Reverend Potts. "I assumed that he had gone after you, Mr. O'Reilly."

"He'll be back shortly, no doubt. He's left his household accoutrements behind." Janeiro chuckled.

"He's got pretty short legs to be running after the train for long," O'Reilly said. "He'll be outa breath by the time we get to the next stop."

Silently cursing himself for having left the professor alone, O'Reilly sat down in his own corner. With all the casualness he could muster, he began to rearrange his baggage. As he restacked his bags and his farewell gifts, the cold feeling at the pit of his stomach turned to a hard lump of ice. The Maharajah's ore samples —the green packet with the big green seals—was gone!

The roar and flashing lights of a passing train occupied the next twenty seconds, giving O'Reilly a welcome respite to light a Burma cheroot and try to organize his thoughts. The disappearance of Professor Gurda and of the ore samples were certainly not disconnected phenomena.

Had the professor carried them off to a safer place, after having his suspicions aroused by Janeiro and the Reverend Potts? Not likely, in view of the apparent naivete of the Hindu. Was he perhaps himself an agent of the Fifth Column, who had merely departed for greener fields?

Possibly; after all, the professor was supporting his family on some sixty rupees a month—about twenty dollars—and he might conceivably be attracted by the musical crackling of a few thousand-rupee notes. Or had both

the professor and the ore samples been deftly removed from the picture by Janeiro or the Reverend Potts—or both—who were now merely awaiting a convenient moment to dispose of O'Reilly?

Whatever the answer, there was little O'Reilly could do about it now, except keep awake. These damned Indian trains, with their separate compartments, prevented him from making any search for Professor Gurda in other cars. If only they had civilized trains, with connecting corridors, the way American railways did, he wouldn't be quite so helpless.

As it was he was locked in with Janeiro and the Reverend Potts and his fumbled mission for the Maharajah—until the train stopped again at Mogul Junction. They were due there at midnight. Still an hour to go.

The train wheels clack-clacked over switch frogs, the steel flanges screamed against a curve. In the black distance, the smoky lights of a village wheeled past. O'Reilly puffed furiously on his cheroot, and let the perspiration trickle down his cheeks unnoticed. He would wait until the next station before taking further steps.

When the train finally stopped at Mogul Junction with a great, steamy sigh, O'Reilly noticed with some surprise that both Janeiro and the Reverend Eustace Potts were preparing to get off. With the ore samples and Professor Gurda out of the way, it would seem more natural for the saboteur of the Zarapore manganese fields to continue to Bombay by the same train, instead of changing here for the Punjab Express.

That both men were getting off with O'Reilly could only mean that the job was not yet finished, that O'Reilly was still considered a military objective. So much the better. There was still a chance for O'Reilly to redeem himself.

The door of the compartment opened. Out of the hubbub and confusion of the station crowd, O'Reilly's bearers materialized to reclaim his luggage.

"Better pack this stuff out too, Ali." The redhead pointed out Professor Gurda's abandoned bundles to his white-bearded servant.

"Quite a new role for you, isn't it, O'Reilly Sahib," said Janeiro with a crooked smile, "being nursemaid to an absent-minded Hindu school teacher?"

"I just thought I'd turn his stuff over to the station master, in case he shows up on the next train," O'Reilly answered.

He jumped to the platform—and almost demolished Professor Gurda who at that moment emerged panting from behind a stack of luggage.

The rotund professor bounced back against a large, bejeweled Parsi lady, caromed off two scowling Pathans, and was just

about to collapse seat-foremost on the charcoal stove of an itinerant curry vendor when O'Reilly grabbed his arm and restored his balance.

"Where the hell did you come from?" bellowed O'Reilly. He didn't know whether to hug the professor or kick his pants—if he wore pants instead of a *dhoti*.

"So . . . sorry . . ." panted Professor Gurda.

"Don't ever do that to me again," O'Reilly admonished. "Unless you got reasons. Have you?"

"Was unavoidably detained in intermediate-class compartment," said the professor. "Encountered former student en route to Bombay and was engaged in friendly chit-chat with same when train resumed operation."

"Okay, we'll skip it as long as you've got the whoosis safe."

"Got what safe, please?"

O'Reilly glanced back at the train and saw Janeiro and the Reverend Potts busy with their luggage. "The ore samples," he said.

Professor Gurda's expression was a complete blank.

"The rocks," O'Reilly amplified. "The package of manganese, wrapped in green paper."

The professor shook his head until his high-piled turban trembled violently.

"Please pardon puzzlement, O'Reilly Sahib," he said, "but understood green package was confided to you."

"You mean you haven't got it?"

"Not single iota."

O'Reilly's comments were completely unintelligible to Professor Gurda, whose English curriculum at Allahabad University had quite overlooked the rich and picturesque vocabularies of Brooklyn dock hands, Manhattan taxi drivers and army mule-skinners.

"Look, Prof," said O'Reilly when he had run out of cuss words, "you and me have played the Maharajah a dirty trick and I'm ashamed of us. How loud can you yell?"

"Am not noted for loudness, although voice is quite distinct and somewhat shrill. You are wishing demonstration?"

"Not yet, Prof. But listen. There goes Janeiro and the Reverend Potts into the waiting room with their baggage coolies. I want you to follow 'em in and stay with 'em. If they try to leave the station or start any monkey-business with you, I want you to yell."

"What words shall I yell please?"

"Anything. Police. Murder. Fire. Just yell your head off so I can hear you at the other end of the platform. I got to look in at the telegraph office for a minute."

O'Reilly found a miracle at the telegraph office: The reply to his Zarapore wire had already arrived. It read:

SORRY REVEREND EUSTACE POTTS QUITE UN-

KNOWN TO LOCAL ECCLESIASTICS OR MISSION SCHOOL. PLEASANT TRIP O'REILLY SAHIB.

GOPALSINGH, SUBADAR

The Punjab Mail did not come through Mogul Junction until 3:50 A.M., so the passengers from the south had their choice between a long, dreary vigil or a short restless nap.

Most of them were evidently going to try to sleep. Coming back from the telegraph office—the professor had not yelled—O'Reilly found he had to step over rows of third-class passengers, stretched out on the dusty cement of the platform. And in the first-class waiting room bedding rolls were being opened on hard benches and Europeans in shirtsleeves were assuming uncomfortable positions in chairs.

A smoky lamp burned dimly on a wall bracket and the hot gloom smelled of kerosene. A *punkha* made of tattered strips of cloth swung lazily back and forth across the ceiling, stirring up warm odors.

Janeiro had installed himself on a couch (rented from the station master for six annas) and was apparently asleep already, his head reposing upon a dubious looking pillow. O'Reilly noted that he had unfastened his collar and tie, but that he had not taken off his shoes.

The Reverend Potts was sitting on a bench with his back against the wall. His eyes were closed and his hands were clasped across his plump stomach, but O'Reilly was sure he was not asleep. He had made no effort to loosen his clothing and the bulge under his left armpit was quite distinct.

Professor Gurda had unwound his turban and was squatting in a corner, rubbing his shaven pate, when O'Reilly saw him.

"You are still requiring yells, O'Reilly Sahib?" he asked.

"I'll take a raincheck on the yells," O'Reilly replied. "You may as well try and get a little shuteye before the Mail comes along."

Professor Gurda adopted the suggestion with amazing promptness. O'Reilly had himself known fatigue so intense that he could doze sitting up. But he had never seen anyone fall asleep in that position as quickly or as loudly as Professor Gurda.

No doubt the professor's vocal cords were all primed for the yelling that O'Reilly had ordered and were releasing their pent-up sound. At any rate, the succession of guttural gasps, whistles, inhaled gurgles and exhaled moans which emerged from between the professor's buck teeth was a marvel of cacophony.

O'Reilly took off his coat, loosened his collar and belt. He tipped up the stone jug for a swig of the Yogi's palm toddy, and almost immediately opened his

mouth to let the smoke escape. When he had caught his breath, he sprawled on the vacant end of a bench from where he could watch the door. He had no intention of sleeping, and was glad to discover that the toddy was an aid to wakefulness. A few drops would probably give insomnia to a week old baby.

The assistant stationmaster came in to turn down the smelly lamp. When he left the waiting room, the wick sputtered, the flame popped and expired. Little by little the sounds on the platform died away, until the dark silence was marred only by the creaking of the *punkah* and the snoring of Professor Gurda.

O'Reilly fought off drowsiness. The third time he found himself nodding, he was just about to reach for the jug when he felt his nerves go suddenly tense. Someone was moving in the room. He sat up very straight, straining his eyes, but could make out nothing in the darkness. Then he heard a sharp metallic sound, like a catch of a valise springing open. His gaze turned in the direction of the sound. He saw a shadow straighten up, glide silently toward the gray oblong that was the door.

For an instant a plump silhouette was stamped against the dim light from outside. O'Reilly recognized the Reverend Eustace Potts.

At once O'Reilly was on his feet. He waited a few seconds, then stealthily crossed the room. He paused at the couch where Janeiro slept. He listened. The Eurasian was breathing evenly. As he went out the door, O'Reilly could still hear Professor Gurda's discordant organ notes.

The Reverend Potts was already at the far end of the platform, hurrying into the gloom. O'Reilly stepped over a knot of sleeping Hindus and set off in long-legged pursuit.

From beyond the station, O'Reilly caught sight of the self-styled missionary walking rapidly behind the row of little square bungalows where the railway employees lived. The houses were very white under the blazing stars. Behind each one, on raised cement floors, people were sleeping beneath tents of mosquito netting. Here and there a *punkah* swung from a gallows-like frame over the outdoor sleepers.

The Reverend Potts was a good hundred yards ahead, a dark phantom gliding past the railway bungalows moving toward the native village. The native part of Mogul Junction consisted of only a few straggling streets of lopsided mud-and-bamboo huts with roofs of thatch or tile, so O'Reilly was not worried when he lost sight of his quarry at the first turn.

He continued down the dusty lane until he came to an open space on the other side, where cakes of cowdung had been stack-

ed to dry. He stopped to listen. There was no sound but the mournful laughter of jackals somewhere on the baked plain far beyond the dark cluster of palms.

O'Reilly turned into the next street without catching sight of Eustace Potts. He did see, however, a crack of light shining between the solid wooden shutters of a hut just a few steps ahead. He approached carefully, brought one eye close to the narrow opening. Then he smiled to himself.

Inside the bare mud-plastered room sat two men. One was the man who called himself Reverend Eustace Potts. The other was a thin, red-faced, fisheyed individual whom O'Reilly recognized as Henry Fayne, the mineralogist from Delhi.

On a table between them burned a native lamp—a wick floating in an earthenware bowl of cocoanut oil. Also on the table—and O'Reilly breathed a deep sigh of relief—was an oblong green package bearing two large blobs of green sealing wax. The Reverend's hand rested lightly on the package as he spoke to Fayne. His voice was low pitched and came to O'Reilly only as an unintelligible rumble. Fayne said little although he nodded occasionally.

O'Reilly congratulated himself. He had not only recovered, practically, the missing ore samples, but he had established the criminal complicity of Henry Fayne of Delhi, unearthed his Zarapore lieutenant, and in all likelihood put his finger on the murderer of Dr. Khopri. What's more, he had caught them with the goods. He—

Fayne's lips moved. He and the Reverend Potts turned their heads abruptly towards the window. O'Reilly knew they could not see him, but it was uncomfortable to feel them staring in his direction. The Reverend Potts quickly unbuttoned his clerical jacket, slipped his right hand toward his left armpit. Fayne reached over to pinch out the floating wick. The room went dark.

O'Reilly dropped to his haunches. His hand moved to his hip, seeking the comfortable touch of steel. It was not cold steel—nothing was cold in India at this time of year—but it was comforting, nevertheless. His fingers curled tightly about the butt of his .45.

Keeping his head below the level of the sill, he backed slowly away from the window. He wanted to reach the corner of the hut where he could still command an exit from a window and yet watch the door if the two men tried to escape that way. Then, with brutal abruptness, the universe came roaring down about his ears.

O'Reilly did not know what hit him. His fleeting impression was that the sky had fallen on him from the rear, striking the back

of his skull with a great, crunching smash. There was a blaze of pain, a brief, whirling flash of giddy light. He felt himself drawn into a vortex of dizzy darkness, a void in which nothing existed.

He was out for only a few seconds, he thought, because as he fought his way back to dazed consciousness, he was aware of things going on around him. He was sure he heard running footsteps, but when he tried to follow, his muscles disobeyed.

He thought, too, that he heard the roar of a passing train, the shriek of a locomotive whistle, the bark of a pistol, the slamming of a door—but he couldn't be sure. Perhaps they were just part of the confused noises drumming in his ears. Time and space seemed completely scrambled, and he couldn't quite find his own place in the chaos.

With great effort, he finally raised himself to one knee. He groped along the ground and touched his gun; that was a relief. He stood up. A sick wave of dizziness swept over him, and he leaned against the wall of the hut. He was aware of a throbbing welt growing on the back of his head. He breathed deeply and found the world settling down to its old solidity beneath his feet. He began to walk.

He made the circuit of the hut without meeting anyone. He came back to the door. It was locked. There would be nobody inside, of course. Fayne and the padre had been frightened away. And yet it seemed impossible that either of them should have had time to sneak around behind him and lay him out cold. Perhaps it was someone who had followed him from the station, Janeiro, perhaps, or Professor Gurda. Maybe he'd better have a look inside, anyhow.

He struck a match to examine the door lock. He was so startled by what the flame revealed that he dropped the match. It sizzled out in a puddle of crimson. There was blood seeping out from under the door.

O'Reilly stepped back, then flung his shoulder against the wooden panel. Painful fireworks went off inside his head. He stepped back again. The panel was flimsy and the lock primitive. He tried again. There was a splintering crash. The door shuddered inward.

O'Reilly stepped aside, poked his gun past the jamb.

"Come outa there!" he ordered.

There was no answer. Across the street a shutter opened and a woman called something in Hindustani. A few houses further on, a light appeared. An old man came out carrying a lantern.

"Get away with that light!" O'Reilly commanded. *"Chalo!* Scram!"

The old man stopped in his tracks.

O'Reilly cautiously ventured inside the hut. At the third step his foot brushed something heavy but yielding. He changed his course, hugged the wall, feeling his way along until he was opposite the door. Satisfied that his adversaries, at least able-bodied ones, had gone, he shouted:

"You can bring that lantern now. *Chiragh lao.*"

The old man came as far as the door, then grunted, set down the lantern in a hurry, and backed away in awe.

The glow illuminated a man lying on the floor in a pool of blood. His face was turned toward O'Reilly and the eyes were closed.

It was the Reverend Eustace Potts.

O'Reilly walked quickly to the motionless figure. Near the padre's outstretched hand was his Bible. Between him and the table was the torn green paper which had wrapped the Maharajah's manganese samples.

O'Reilly bent over to peer into the pale face. He felt the shoulder holster; it was empty. He explored the man's sticky shirt for a heartbeat.

Then Reverend Eustace Potts' eyelids fluttered open. He stared dully at O'Reilly. His lips moved faintly, but no words came. Then his fingers moved. He was trying to point to something, something on his person.

"Sure, I know you're hurt, Reverend," O'Reilly said. "It's probably your own damned fault, but I'll see what I can do for you. Which one of those mugs shot you?"

The fingers still moved. To O'Reilly they seemed to be pointing to the pocket of the clerical tunic.

The redhead plunged his big fist into the pocket, brought out half a dozen polished gray discs. He stared at them, a puzzled frown wrinkling his forehead. They looked like the buffalo-horn poker chips that the minister of education had given him. What the devil?

He stared at the Reverend Potts, whose pain-wracked eyes were full of questions as they held his gaze. O'Reilly looked at the horn discs again. Then he looked at the Bible on the floor, and the torn green paper. An expansive grin bloomed suddenly on his rugged face. He nodded violently that he understood.

"I get it, Reverend," he said. "Nice work."

A shadow of a smile flickered in the clergyman's eyes. He sighed. His lids closed.

O'Reilly gathered up the wounded man in his arms, strode to the door. A crowd of Indians had gathered in the narrow street watching in silence.

"Is there a railway doctor in

this dump?" O'Reilly demanded. "Can one of you lead me to a doctor? *Hakim hai?"*

A naked brown boy stepped forward. *"Hakim-ka-ghar idhar hai,* Sahib," he said, starting off for the colony of railway bungalows. O'Reilly followed. The Reverend Eustace Potts was no feather weight and the lump on the back of O'Reilly's head gave off sparks and steam at every jolting step, but he managed to keep up with the boy, until they reached the doctor's bungalow.

The railway doctor was a white-haired old man, blinded by sleep, naked except for a pair of shorts and a flannel cummerbund. He came shuffling out to his veranda in response to O'Reilly's bellowing.

"What in the name of Brahma is going on?" he grumbled sleepily. "Another derailment? Or is Mrs. Sousa having premature pains? Or—Good Lord, Harrison! Bring him inside, quickly."

The doctor had finally got his eyes open wide enough to see the limp and bloody figure in O'Reilly's arms, and instantly he was thoroughly awake. He led the way into the house, calling for lights, hot water and instruments.

As he bent over the wounded man, cutting away his clothing, he asked: "What the ruddy dickens is Harrison doing in Mogul Junction?"

"The man's name is the Reverend Eustace Potts," said O'Reilly.

"Yes, yes, I know." The doctor smiled tolerantly as he worked. "You C.I.D. men like to be ruddy mysterious, don't you? But don't forget I've been in India fifty years, and I know every secret agent between Bengal and the Western Ghats. I've known Harrison for twenty years. He can't fool me by dressing up like a ruddy vicar."

"Is he hurt bad, Doc?"

"He'll have a belly ache for a few weeks," the doctor said. "Lucky he's got plenty of paunch to spare, so he won't miss the few inches of blubber that got carried away. Of course I've got to be careful about digging out these bits of undershirt the bullet has planted here and there . . . Hello, Harrison. Does that hurt?"

The sting of antiseptic and the bite of the doctor's probe had penetrated the pseudo-clergyman's coma. He opened his eyes.

"I don't suppose there's any use of my asking you to introduce me to your friend here, Harrison," the doctor went on, "because you'll only tell me he's the viceroy himself travelling incognito. He's a C.I.D. agent, of course."

The man who called himself Eustace Potts smiled wanly. "He is—for tonight," he whispered.

"That's a hint for me to get on with the job," said O'Reilly. "I'll be seeing you."

Long before he reached the waiting room again, O'Reilly

knew that Professor Gurda was still there and enjoying undisturbed slumber. No other human could produce the hair-raising dissonances that resounded on the hot night.

He hurried to the bench under which he had left his baggage and held his breath as he looked through his parcels for the box of Jaipur enamel which had contained the minister of education's poker chips.

There it was, heaven be praised. It was much heavier than it had been originally; strange he hadn't noticed that before. He moved toward the door and opened the box. Yes, there was the collection of rocks that meant so much to the Maharajah and perhaps to Britain's war. Smart guys, these boys of the Criminal Investigation Department.

O'Reilly wondered if Mr. Harrison, alias Eustace Potts, expected him to do anything further about Janeiro and Fayne. Janeiro, of course, was gone from the waiting room; it was undoubtedly he who had smacked O'Reilly from the rear just as it was Fayne who had shot Harrison-Potts on discovering a Bible in place of the ore samples.

O'Reilly had no authority to act, but he felt the least he could do would be to give justice a gentle nudge. He went to look up the stationmaster.

He was surprised to find the stationmaster's office locked and the light out. He could have sworn that when he passed a moment before the office had been open. He was still rattling the door when the tail of his glance picked up three spectral figures moving across the tracks toward the freight yards, perhaps a hundred yards away. Something about the way the specters moved told him that they were wearing white European trousers, not *dhotis*. Immediately he started in cautious pursuit.

He remained within the protecting shadow of the station walls until he saw the three figures disappear behind a line of freight cars on a siding. Then he drew his gun and sprinted.

When he reached the line of cars, he again slowed to a stealthy pace. He climbed silently over the couplings between two cars and looked in both directions.

Again he saw the three specters. They were only fifty yards from him now—close enough for him to recognize them. Janeiro and Fayne were marching the stationmaster before them at the point of Fayne's gun, marching him toward the next track where a handcar stood.

"That's all, Fayne. Up with your hands, Janeiro!" O'Reilly bellowed suddenly.

Fayne whirled and fired twice. The stationmaster started to run, stumbled and fell flat on his face. O'Reilly ducked back between the cars, his .45 thundering. Fayne

and Janeiro started pushing the handcar down the track. O'Reilly fired again. He could hear the bullets clang against steel and ricochet whining into the night.

The motor on the handcar wheezed, coughed, and popped into action. Janeiro and Fayne jumped aboard as the car began to gain momentum.

O'Reilly leaped from between the freight cars, took aim, squeezed the trigger, then started running. Both Janeiro and Fayne were shooting at him now. The orange flashes of their guns made a flickering pattern with the intermittent blue flame of the motor exhaust.

O'Reilly raised his arm, drew careful bead to make the last shots count. Then his finger froze on the trigger. His arm fell, and his mouth opened. He could not have explained why he wanted to yell, and he didn't have to explain, because no sounds came from his parted lips.

The men on the handcar probably wouldn't have heard him anyhow. The motor was making too much noise—so much noise that they didn't hear the switch engine come charging around the corner of the freight shed on the same track. Facing the rear to exchange shots with O'Reilly, they had their backs to the onrushing locomotive when it struck the handcar.

The crash and clatter of rending metal dinned on O'Reilly's ears. The handcar seemed to explode, flinging pieces in all directions, pieces of wood and steel, of Eurasian and mineralogist, of cowcatcher and gasoline motor.

When the switch engine came to a stop and O'Reilly and the stationmaster ran to where the handcar had been, there wasn't quite enough of Fayne and Janeiro left for the railway doctor to work on.

The Punjab Mail, luckily, was a few minutes late, so O'Reilly had time to get Professor Gurda awake and ready for loading. They had a compartment to themselves, so O'Reilly could continue his detailed history of the lump on the back of his head.

"So you can see that the guys in Delhi weren't quite as dumb as His Highness thought, since they had a C.I.D. dick in Zarapore, watching the whole show," he said.

He ran a hand through his red hair.

"And when this dick in padre's rig gets left alone at the last station where you and me and Janeiro get off, he figures we're too careless with the ore samples and he'll help out by making 'em harder to steal. So he dumps the rocks into that box where the poker chips were, and he wraps the green paper around his Bible which was about the same size as the other package.

"He knows where this bird

Fayne is hiding in Mogul Junction, so he goes around with the package, probably expecting Fayne to make some crack which would show whether there was a Nazi in the rock pile, or just the Maharajah's half-brother Mahmed. All Fayne did, though, was to say something to get the padre to turn his head while he puts out the light and plugs him in the stomach.

"Of course, the padre must have spotted me for a cop right away and a New York cop at that, so he knew he wouldn't have to draw diagrams. He knew a New York cop would be following him like a bird dog, and if anything happened, why it'd be a cinch I'd get the signals on the poker chips right away. And the chips wouldn't mean a thing to anybody else but me. It's funny how cops sort of feel a thing, from one cop to the other, without saying a word. Sixth Avenue sense, we call it in Manhattan. The padre'll probably be tickled to death when he comes to tomorrow and finds out that those two yeggs accidentally committed suicide trying to make a getaway. And did they commit it. You couldn't have done a better job with a meat ax."

The roar of the Punjab Mail crossing a bridge covered O'Reilly's voice. The first gleam of dawn lay upon the river, making the girders of the bridge seem very black as they leaped past the car window. On the far bank the minarets of a mosque raised thin dark fingers against the paling sky, like an admonition for silence. O'Reilly stopped talking.

But Professor Gurda snored.

FRANCIS BACON'S PLEA

CORRUPTION among those administering the law is not precisely unknown. During the reign of Edward the Third, this reached such a height that Sir William de Thorpe, the Chief Justice of England, was himself charged—in 1350—with malversation. On his confessing that he had received bribes from a number of accused persons, he was sentenced to be imprisoned and to forfeit his property, but once things had blown over he was restored to office.... In 1621, when Francis Bacon was Lord Chancellor, twenty-eight specific charges were brought against him. "I do plainly and ingenuously confess," he said in his appeal for mercy, "that I am guilty of corruption, and do renounce all defence... for which I am heartily and penitently sorry, and submit myself to the judgment, grace and mercy of the court." Even though friends at Court protested that he had only followed the example of his predecessors, Bacon was fined £40,000, removed from his post, and imprisoned in the Tower.

thubway tham returns

by . . . Johnston McCulley

New York seemed like a ghost town. Everyone he had known was gone — except Craddock. And maybe he was a ghost too.

AFTER an absence of almost fifteen years, Thubway Tham was going home. The wiry little pickpocket noted for working in the New York subways had been out West, and now was traveling back to his old habitat. Years before, he had been nicknamed Subway Sam by frustrated officers of the law. But he lisped when he spoke, and to him Subway Sam became Thubway Tham and soon everyone began calling him that.

Tham was drawing near to his destination now. Through the window of the bus in which he was traveling, he began identifying landmarks he knew. And he was seized with a serious case of nostalgia. He realized that there had been many improvements during his absence. But much of the old remained also.

He decided that, as soon as he got off the bus, he would descend into his beloved subway. Not to ply his nefarious profession as he had years before. Just to ride in it again as he had in the old days, hear the rattle and bang of it, sniff the odors of it, watch human beings hustling on and off the

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Johnston McCulley is perhaps best known as the author of THE MARK OF ZORRO, *first published in* Argosy *in 1919 and by now (according to* Life*) read by 500 million people. Author of more than 60 novels and stories about Zorro, McCulley, who now lives in Twin Peaks, California, is also the creator of the almost equally famous Thubway Tham, the bane of Detective Craddock's life.*

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cars, elbowing one another without apology, running along the platforms, scowling when a door was closed in their faces.

He would travel down to the old lodging house where he had resided for a long time years before. He would see Nosey Moore again—the retired burglar who operated the place and always protected his tenants as long as they paid their rent on time. Nosey—so called because of his rather prominent probiscis. A great guy, Nosey Moore! Tham would talk over old times with him, and they would have many a hearty laugh together.

And he decided he would go to the small restaurant up near Madison Square, where it had been his habit to eat breakfast about noon. He wondered if the fat woman who always smiled at everyone was still handling the cash register; and whether the cute little brunette waitress still worked there—the sympathetic one who often had slipped him an extra cup of coffee or a second platter of hotcakes without noting it on his check.

And then he would wander over into Madison Square as he had so often before, and go to a certain bench where he had often rested and waited for a propitious hour for descent into the subway and his day's work.

In his moment of nostalgia, Tham neglected to realize he had been absent so long. To him at that moment the past was as yesterday. Through the window of the bus he could see billboards carrying the names of old theatres he knew, the advertisements of the same famous stores, and political posters. His eyes grew misty with the dew of remembrance.

In front of the bus depot he stood at the curb for a short time, listening to the city's roar and watching the dashing, darting taxicabs. When he had left New York, he had been a little over twenty, living dangerously from hand to mouth, dodging policemen in general, but especially a certain Detective Craddock, who had sworn to catch Tham with the goods some day and send him up the river to the Big House for a long stretch. Craddock had never accomplished his purpose.

Now, Tham was a little past thirty-five. He was still small and wiry in body, but his face was rounded like that of a healthy man who eats well and often; and there were a few threads of silver in the hair over his ears. And, whereas in the old days there had been plenty of times when Tham could have used a dollar he didn't have, his financial condition had improved. He had ample funds now. The clothes on his body and in his two suitcases were good. And he had regained his health, which had been in a dismal state when he had left New York.

But here he was now, back home! He hurried to the nearest

subway entrance and went underground, and caught a local train for downtown. He lugged his heavy suitcases to the old lodging house. He saw the same old buildings except for a few changes, inhaled the same old odors, saw the same litter in the gutters, the same dirty kids chasing one another or pilfering apples at the little corner fruit stand, heard the rattle of trucks and the raucous voices of their drivers, and saw the gang in front of the pool hall. . . .

By noon the following day, Thubway Tham had learned several vital facts—that Time always marches on, that there is always Change in the world, that some things remain and others disappear, and that the Old clings to life and the New thrusts itself forward with the driving power of youth.

He had learned that his old friend, Nosey Moore, had gone the way of all flesh a few years before. The lodging house now was being operated by a man who had refitted and refurbished it and raised the rental accordingly. Tham explained to him about his residence there in the old days, and the new landlord made him welcome.

He was assigned to an excellent room newly decorated, with a modern bath, and pictures on the walls, and a built-in radio and television set. The rental per day was more than Tham had paid Nosey Moore for a week. But that did not bother Tham, and he announced he would make the place his residence for a time. The tenants now were mostly young executives and clerks who labored in huge office buildings on downtown Broadway.

In the morning, when Tham wandered up the street to the little old restaurant of bygone days, he found sad changes there. A new owner operated the place, which had been modernized, the friendly little fat woman was no longer at the cash register, and the brunette waitress was gone. The old flavor of the establishment was gone also.

But, Madison Square was still there! A few new buildings reared proud heads toward the sky, but it was the same park where Tham had liked to watch the young secretaries and file girls eating luncheon on pleasant days and feeding crumbs to the pigeons and sparrows. Tham strolled along one of the walks, and sat on the same bench he had used years before—or a replacement of it. And he began dreaming of the past again. . . .

Detective Lieutenant Craddock had been a member of New York's Metropolitan Police since his early twenties. He had fought his way up the ladder by means of both ability and politics. He was nearing fifty now, and was a giant of a man, tall, with thick

shoulders and biceps. He always kept himself in good physical condition. Craddock was an experienced law man to be reckoned with in almost any situation.

In the old days, Thubway Tham had always baffled him, though there had been some harrowing narrow escapes for the little pickpocket. Craddock's failure to outwit Tham and send him to prison had always rankled in his mind. As Craddock strolled along the street now, he was remembering how often in the old days he had contacted Tham purposely in Madison Square, and had followed and shadowed him and kept Tham nervous, but always had been vanquished in his effort to catch Tham at his work with evidence enough to convict.

This morning, Craddock was roaming around with no particular pursuit in view, and approached the vicinity of Madison Square. That made him recall Thubway Tham and their old battles of wit and repartee. What had become of Tham, he did not know. Tham had disappeared during a trip Craddock had made to London as a delegate to a convention of law enforcement officers. . . .

At that moment, Thubway Tham, sitting on a bench in the Square, was making some unusual movements. He slipped his right hand to the left and thrust it beneath his coat. He fumbled around and extracted something from a hidden pocket in the lining, a very small pocket. Glancing around to assure himself he was not being watched by passersby, he brought forth a very thin and very small wallet.

Opening the wallet, Tham drew out of it a piece of thin paper and inspected it. On one side was a picture of a certain individual; on the other side a short history of the man's misdeeds and the fact that the Law wanted him for something. Having inspected this slip of paper to refresh his memory, Tham returned it to the wallet and the wallet to the hidden pocket, yawned and stretched a bit, and lit a cigarette. . . .

Craddock came to the Square and turned into one of the walks. He stopped for an instant to relight his cigar, glancing from force of habit at pedestrians who passed him. The big clock in the tower on the opposite side of the Square tolled the hour of noon.

With his cigar ignited again, Craddock looked ahead as he paced on. Suddenly he did what cinema directors and actors call a "double-take." He saw a man sitting on a bench, looked away, jerked his head back and up and squinted and blinked his eyes rapidly as if to focus his gaze from disbelief to reality.

No, it couldn't be! It must be a ghost! Thubway Tham in the flesh, sitting on the bench as he had done years before? Craddock

blinked and squinted again, and decided that what he saw was reality. He walked on slowly toward the bench.

At that instant, Thubway Tham happened to turn his head in Craddock's direction, and blinked and squinted also. Old Craddock! The cop he had tormented and outwitted years before! The cop who had given him some hard hours! It couldn't be—but it was!

Tham remembered the old game of repartee in which he and Craddock had indulged themselves in the old days. He turned his head aside, puffed at his cigarette, and pretended to be watching something in the far distance.

Craddock stopped at the end of the bench. "Well, well! My old little light-fingered friend!" he said.

Tham turned to face him. He spoke as of yore: "Tho I thee your ugly fathe again!"

Craddock chuckled a bit and sat on the bench beside Tham. "I'm glad to see you, boy. I believe we have some unfinished business to handle. I am going to—"

"Yeah, I know," Tham interrupted. "You are goin' to catch me with the goodth and thend me up the river to the Big Houth for a long thtrech."

"So I am, Tham—a long stretch. But, at the moment, answer me this—when did they let you out, and how long did you have to serve? Did you steal a parole blank from right under the warden's nose?"

"Thir! I have not been incartherated," Tham informed him, indignantly.

"Would you mind telling me why you left New York and where you have been all these years?"

"Thertainly. My couthin came to New York from Techthuh. He workth for a big oil man. He ith older than me, the only relative I have in the world. We have been writin' to each other about onth a year."

"Interesting," Craddock commented. "Do please continue."

"There ith a thneer in your voith," Tham complained.

He continued: "My couthin, whoth name ith Amoth, looked me up when he came here with hith employer on buthineth. I wath pretty thick at that time, from a cold I'd caught."

"I remember that," Craddock told him. "I was afraid you'd die before I could send you up the river."

"You talk like a thcoundrel," Tham informed him. "Anyhow, my couthin thaid he would take me back with him and get me a good eathy job with hith own employer. He bought me thome clotheth and I went back with him to Hoothton."

"How's that?"

"Hoothton, Techthuh. I went out into the oil field with my Couthin Amoth. He wath thome thort of thupervithor, and my job

wath to keep the time book. Out in the thun, freth air, good eatth, a thmall thalary—" Tham gestured as if to say who could ask for more.

"What did you do for fun out in an oil field?" Craddock asked.

"Mothtly we played thtud poker."

"Man! When it came your deal I'll bet you always cracked the pot. Those nimble fingers of yours—"

"Craddock, pleath do not talk like that. You have accuthed me of bein' a leather-lifter. But never onth wath I found guilty and thent to jail. Ath I was thayin', we played poker, and not for chipth."

"Penny ante, I presume."

In his face, Tham revealed horror. "Penny ante—in Techthuh? We do not play for peanuth or pennieth there. We bet oil wellth, gutherth and land leatheth."

"Oh, I see. So you bet with oil wells, gushers and land leases?"

"Yeth. Out in Techthuh everything ith on a big thcale."

"Including lies," Craddock commented. "Tham, you've been out of my sight for about fifteen years, and you've changed a lot—in appearance, I mean. You've prospered to an extent, my boy, as your clothes and well-filled face inform me. Man! A leather-lifter like you working where everyone has a bundle of folding money in his wallet and sticks his wallet in his hip pocket like a handkerchief! No wonder you prospered."

"I didn't thtay in Hoothton and vithinity all the time," Tham told him. "I got tired of oil wellth, and went to Lath Vegath, in Nevada."

"Las Vegas? I've heard of the place," Craddock admitted. "Where gambling is legal and the liquor flows freely. What did you do in Las Vegas—as if I didn't know!"

"You thertainly do not know," Tham snapped at him in sudden revolt. "A man can change a lot in fifteen yearth. In Lath Vegath, I was a dealer in the gambling room of one of the big hotelth."

"Wow!" Craddock exploded. "The opportunities you've had! Luck has perched upon your shoulder. A dealer in a gambling casino where plenty of real money is handed around!"

"I want you to underthtand I wath an honetht dealer. I handled a roulette table wonth, and I dealed blackjack."

"Wow! Slipping a card off the bottom—you'd scorn that. Your nimble fingers could slip one out of the middle of the deck. The house should have given you a percentage on the take."

"It wath an honetht houth."

"To hear you tell it, everything's honest out that way. When every cop knows all the big and little crooks congregate in such places—swindlers, con men, jewel thieves, dips."

"I thaw plenty of them at work there," Tham confessed. "It wath part of my job to thpot any I knew and tip off the management."

"What are you going to do now, Tham?"

"Oh, maybe thtay around New York for a few weekth, even if it ith a ghotht town."

"How's this? New York a ghost town with a few million people rushing around?"

"It ith a ghotht town to me. Theemth like everybody I knew onth is gone. Ecthept you. Maybe you're a ghotht, too, thtill prowlin' around."

"Make a wrong move, boy, and you'll learn I'm not a ghost. Playing poker with oil wells and dealing in a swank Las Vegas hotel! You, my lad, have a crooked tongue."

Tham said, modestly: "I altho work for the United Thtateth Government."

"Come, come, enough of this nonsense!" Craddock warned. "You can't talk me off the track, Tham. Let's get down to business. Is it your intention to travel a little in the subway this afternoon?"

"Oh, I thuppoth tho. Juth to remind me of old timeth. I'll thtroll up Broadway to Timeth Thquare, ath I alwayth did before."

"I'll stroll right behind you, boy."

"The thidewalkth are free to all, even to you copths, I believe."

Tham got up from the bench. He lit a fresh cigarette, braced his shoulders, adjusted his hat at a jaunty angle, and started off. Craddock followed only a short distance behind him.

"Jutht like old timeth," Tham called back at him. "Why not walk bethide me and try to figure what I'm thinkin' about? Maybe you could read my mind—but if you did, it might make you mad. What I'm thinkin' about you couldn't be thent through the mail —there ith a law againtht it."

"Ramble on," Craddock barked at him. "I'm right behind you."

Tham was really doing some heavy thinking as he strolled along, glancing at the windows of old establishments he knew, and tormenting Craddock by his dilly-dallying. Tham was looking for a man he knew by sight and reputation.

Tham had learned the man lived in a hotel in the Times Square section, and that he often traveled by subway to a certain office building some distance downtown. Tham hoped to contact him, and decided to do so at the earliest opportunity, regardless of the fact that Craddock was on his heels.

Before he descended to the subway platform, Tham stopped on a corner, smoking his cigarette and recalling the old days. The roar of the city, the swift move-

ments of humans and vehicles entranced him as it had years before.

He chuckled when he saw Craddock was leaning against a building within a few feet of him and watching him carefully. No doubt, Tham thought, Craddock wanted to make sure he did not lose close contact with Tham by having him dart swiftly and suddenly down the stairway, lose himself in the crowd and board a train.

Tham glanced across the street again at the stream of pedestrians, and his eyes narrowed slightly. This was his lucky day! He had seen the man he had hoped to pick up and follow for certain reasons of his own. Craddock was still keeping his eyes on Tham. The latter tossed his cigarette into the gutter and went slowly toward the stairway leading down into the subway station.

Craddock bristled to attention. Tham was watching the other man, and saw him turn aside to come to the same stairway. That was what Tham had hoped would happen. He would rush downstairs ahead of his man instead of following him.

Suddenly, Tham whirled around and dashed down the stairs like a man late for an important engagement. With his small wiry body, and his experience in this sort of thing, he wormed his way through the crowd with speed. Craddock gave a bellow of rage and charged after him, his huge bulk knocking others out of his path.

Down on the station platform, Tham made for a secluded spot from which he could watch the stairway and the trains. Craddock thundered past him, looking around wildly. Then the man Tham hoped to contact came prancing into view and went along the platform and stopped as if waiting for a downtown express.

He was a small dapper man who looked something like a junior executive irritated because he was being delayed. His manner was rather lofty as he regarded the others around him. Tham watched his man and Craddock both carefully. Craddock was looking up and down the platform, peering through the hustling crowd, watching as each train came into the station and stopped.

A downtown express roared in. The car doors opened, and a throng fought to get in and out of the cars. Tham waited a moment, then made his wild dash. Craddock caught sight of him as Tham jammed his way into a car after the man he had been watching. Craddock missed that car, but got into the car behind it as the doors closed.

The car Tham and the man he was following had entered was jammed like a can of human sardines. The seats were filled, the aisle was full, and men and women swayed from the straps. Tham

was used to a situation like this. How many times in the past he had taken advantage of just such a situation! He had always done his work during the old days when the rush hours were on.

So, gradually, he edged forward where it seemed impossible for a person to move at all. He twisted sideways, swayed with the train action, and finally got just behind his man. It was his old professional move. When his prospective victim had given signs of leaving at the next station, Tham had always got close to him, jammed through a door with him, and did his nimble finger work during the jam; and many times the victim did not even know his wallet had been lifted until some time later.

Tham had been alert about Craddock now. He knew Craddock had managed to get into the car behind, and that he was working his way forward to get as near Tham as possible. He saw Craddock reflected in a window as he got into the same car with them. And the man ahead of Tham had allowed two express stops to pass without showing any inclination of leaving the train.

But now, as they neared another stop, the man ahead gave signs of getting off. Tham elbowed a path behind him as they went toward the door. Reflected in the window to Tham's vision, Craddock was trying to get through the aisle mob.

The train stopped, the doors opened. Tham quickly edged past the man ahead, lurched against him as if he had been shoved by someone behind him, clutched at the other man's arm as if to keep from falling. He swayed again and half turned as if to rebuke someone who had shoved him. At that instant, Tham's left hand clutched at the other man's lapel as if to keep from falling; his right hand went inside the other's coat, and came out quickly—and Tham had a wallet in his inside pocket.

"Beg pardon," he told the man he had relieved of the wallet.

"Thome people do not know how to act. Thhovin' other folkth around."

" 'Sall right, little man," the other said. "No harm done."

Now they were through the door and out upon the platform. And suddenly Craddock was upon them. He grabbed Tham's arm and held him securely. He barked at the other man, "Just a moment, you! I'm an officer! Maybe you don't know it, but this fellow is an expert pickpocket. I've been trying to nab him for a long time. Always works in the subway—"

"What's that got to do with me, officer?"

"Feel in your pockets and see if there's a wallet missing."

The other man did that quickly, and looked up aghast.

"Out of the way—I'm an officer!" Craddock barked at the

curious ones who had stopped to see what the brawl was about.

Craddock forced Tham to get around a post behind the crowd and pressed him against it. The victim of Tham's genius kept at their side. Craddock's hand came out of Tham's pocket holding the victim's wallet.

"Here, that's mine!" the victim said.

"I know it. Saw him take it when he jostled you. Old trick." Craddock retained the wallet. "Now, Tham, I've got you at last. You'll make a trip up the river to the Big House. I'm taking you in."

"Wait a moment," the victim said. "Take him in, but give me my wallet so I can get out of here."

"The wallet is evidence," Craddock informed him. "You'll have to come to Headquarters with me."

"I can't do that," Tham's victim implored. "I'm on my way to an important engagement. Just give me my wallet and take this thief in and let it go at that."

"You can have your wallet after this is settled. If this dip signs a confession, I presume you'll get your wallet back immediately, after you sign a statement about the theft."

"Take uth to Headquarterth," Tham said, in a sort of whining voice. "I'll make a confethion."

Craddock snapped handcuffs on Tham, and turned to the victim. "Come along. Since he says he'll confess, it won't take long for you to get your wallet back."

They went up to the street, and Craddock beckoned a taxi toward him. In a few minutes they were in an interrogation room, with a police secretary waiting and ready to take down statements.

"Who are you, and what's your business?" Craddock asked the wallet's owner.

"I'm Richard Marbell. I work for an import company." He named the company and gave its address, and told where he lived.

"Do you identify this wallet as one belonging to you?"

"I do, yes."

"What does it contain?"

"Some money, identification cards, and a couple of business documents. May I have it back now, please, so I won't be late for my business engagement?"

Craddock put the wallet unopened on the end of the desk. "As soon as we have this little dip's confession taken," he replied. He nodded to the secretary, who was ready with a stenotype machine. "It won't take long to have the confession transcribed and typed for the dip's signature. I realize this is holding you up, Mr. Marbell, but you're doing a public service. When this pickpocket goes to jail, others of his kind will learn of it and go slow."

"I understand, officer," Marbell said, and relaxed in his chair.

Tham was slumped in another chair at the end of the desk. He looked woful.

"Start talking, Tham," Craddock ordered.

Thubway Tham got to his feet. "Firtht, I have thomethin' to thay. You have thaid thith man hath done a public thervithe. Maybe I have, too."

"You do a public service?" Craddock barked at him. "This is no time for comedy. Quit your stalling, and give the secretary your confession."

Tham pointed to Marbell. "Thith man ith wanted by the FBI. He ith one of the loweth thcondrelth in the human rathe."

Marbell snapped erect in his chair. "What's all this nonsense?" he demanded.

Tham continued his recital: "He thays he ith in the import buthineth. And tho he ith. Athk him what hith company importth. I can thave time by tellin' you that mythelf. Hith company importth dope, narcoticth, even heroin, and dithtributeth the thtuff. I thaw thith man out Wetht, when I wath workin' in Lath Vegath. He ith wanted by the FBI."

Marbell was on his feet now. "What's this all about, officer? Why, this little rat, this cheap dip—"

Craddock silenced him with a wave of a hand. "Even so, Tham, you stole his wallet, and you're going to jail for it. Wanted by the FBI, is he? It just happens that an FBI man is here at Headquarters right now. He just got in from somewhere out West."

Craddock grabbed the phone and made rapid speech. He snapped the phone back into its cradle, and motioned for both Tham and Marbell to reseat themselves.

"We'll know the truth of this in a few minutes, so just relax and rest," he told the two at the desk.

Marbell complained: "You're wasting my time by listening to this wild talk by a little crook who's bluffing to keep from dictating a confession. I shall report this affair to my firm, which retains first-class attorneys. You're going to find yourself in trouble, officer, and possibly suspended. My firm will file a damage suit against the city—"

Craddock waved him into silence. The door opened, and an office sergeant entered with a man in civilian clothes following him.

"Lieutenant Craddock, this is Inspector Barlow of the FBI," the sergeant introduced. "He came into town yesterday, and dropped in to pay his respects to the Commissioner."

Inspector Barlow, a well-dressed, middle-sized man with piercing eyes, went forward and grasped Craddock's hand as the detective got to his feet.

"Glad to meet you, Lieutenant Craddock," Barlow said. He

turned toward Thubway Tham. "Hello there, Tham!"

Craddock's eyes bulged. "You know him, Inspector?"

"Oh, yes, I know him."

"You mean this little dip is important enough to attract the attention of the FBI?"

"Oh, we've been keeping an eye on him lately. Now, Craddock, what's your problem here?"

At that instant, Marbell sprang to his feet and made a wild dive toward the door. He ran into the arms of the burly office sergeant, who slapped him back against the wall and kept him there.

"Hold him!" Inspector Barlow ordered the sergeant. He turned to Tham again.

"Have any luck, Tham?" he asked.

"Yeth, thir." Tham pointed to Marbell's wallet on the end of the desk. Inspector Barlow picked up the wallet, opened it, and spilled the entire contents on the desk while Craddock's eyes bulged again.

Money came out of the wallet, plenty of identification cards, also a couple of sheets of thin paper covered with scattered letters and numbers. Barlow inspected the sheets of paper.

"This is exactly what we wanted," he told Craddock. "It's in a code, but we've already broken down the code and can read this stuff like a book. It's a list of important contact men, and we'll have all of them in jail within a week. Excellent work, Tham!"

"What's Tham got to do with this?" Craddock asked.

"Tham came back to New York under orders to get that wallet for us. He's helped us crack a big dope ring by getting it."

"You mean all the stuff he was telling me about that fellow Marbell was the truth? I thought he was making it up to kill time and keep from giving me a confession of theft from the person. He said Marbell was wanted by the FBI. I knew you were in Headquarters, so I sent for you because I thought I'd nail Tham in a pack of lies."

Inspector Barlow laughed a bit, and began returning the contents of the wallet. "I'll have this filed for evidence," he told Craddock.

"But the fact remains," Craddock said, "that I caught Tham in the act of picking a pocket. So—"

Inspector Barlow interrupted: "I'll admit that's an offense that should land the malefactor in jail. But he has a special exemption from punishment for this job. What he may have done in the pocket-picking line before, and what he may or may not do hereafter, is something for you city police. Understand?"

"I'm trying to," Craddock said. He turned to Tham. "You certainly had a rich time of it, if you worked around the Texas oil fields and in Las Vegas," he said. "Coming back here with good clothes and money in your pocket!

And you told me you were going to stay in the city awhile."

"Thertainly," Tham replied. "After all, New York Thity ith my home."

"Yeah? You play around the subway, or anywhere else, and get your hands in any pockets except your own, and I'll—"

"And I'll do it!"

"Thpare me, Craddock!" Tham implored. "I know what you are goin' to thay. It ith the thame old thong. You're goin' to get me with the goodth and thend me to the Big Houth up the river for a big thtretch."

"And I'll do it!" Craddock roared.

"Ith it all right if I go now, Craddock? It ith away patht my lunch time."

"Yes, you can go now, under the circumstances. And don't think I won't be hot on your trail!"

"Then I'll be theein' you thoon," Thubway Tham said.

STATEMENT REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233) SHOWING THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION OF The Saint Mystery Magazine, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1958.

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5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: (This information is required from daily, weekly, semiweekly, and triweekly newspapers only.)

GEORGE SHAPIRO,
Business Manager.

[SEAL]

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 9th day of September, 1958.
WALTER S. COOPER,
Notary Public.

State of New York. Qualified in New York County, No. 31-5811250. Cert. filed in N. Y. Co. Clks. & Term expires March 30, 1960.

THE saint's RATINGS

I didn't raise my boy

to be a mobster. One of the perpetual charges leveled against crime fiction is that it glorifies the criminal. Plants seeds of violence and all that. Can't see that seed stuff at all. Seems that the seeds are there in all of us—all the time —all they need is a little encouragement to grow. As to the glorified criminal...! He was shot down with the same bullets that rubbed out Little Caesar. If the new books below are any indication, real crook-type crooks always end up with the gory end they richly deserve. The cops get a better shake. Most of them seem happy and well adjusted citizens. Of course in every story they are consistently underpaid—but that is probably truth, not fiction. Maybe detection tales do still teach how to pull a crime. Yet at the same time they leave no doubt that few live to spend their ill-gotten gold.

OUR RATING SYSTEM:

ooo Three haloes: Outstanding

oo Two haloes: Above average

o One halo: Passable reading

⋔ A pitchfork: For the ash can

CASE OF THE COP'S WIFE, by Milton K. Ozaki (Gold medal, 25¢)

Fast. Story of a well-planned crime that contains one enormous, impossible howler. But since this oversight on the crook's part makes the story—we'll have to overlook it. After this the yarn bangs right along and keeps you right in there reading. oo

SELF-MADE WIDOW, by Philip Race (Gold Medal, 35¢)

Would you be a Skid Row wino if you had $100,000? Johnny is. If you want to know why you'll read this inside-out yarn of The Perfect Crime and how it's done. oo

ASSIGNMENT—MADELEINE, by Edward S. Aarons (Gold Medal, 25¢)

Here's good ol' Sam Durell again, still the dead shot with fist or gun. There is still the downhill-pace of the other "assignment" books, but Sam seems to be coasting with his motor off. o

GANG RUMBLE, by Edward Ronns (Avon, 35¢)

Relax Ed, you're trying too hard. A rumble we can take, but not with psycho teen-agers, Cop's Revenge, cop drunks, hijackers, dope and savage sex. A little of this goes a long way, you know. All these ingredients make for a tortuous tale, not realistic in the slightest—but still readable. o

SOFT TOUCH, by John D. MacDonald (Dell, 35¢)

A rather unconvincing case of "passion on a lazy afternoon" and an uncomplicated-and-oppressed husband who turns killer. o

LADY KILLER, by Ed McBain (Perma, 25¢)

The latest in McBain's series of 87th Precinct stories—the hunt for what is first thought to be a compulsive murderer. Police routine credible. Murderer less credible. o

guns in action

by . . . George Harmon Coxe

The message was simple. The dead man had shot one before they'd gotten away. Tom was much too close to a killer. . . .

WHEN Tom Wade appeared in the doorway of the photographic department, Eddy, the freckled errand boy and factotum extraordinary to the *Express,* jumped up from his chair and went into his speech with the smoothness of delivery that spoke of long practice.

"Hey," he flung out. "Blaine's looking for you. Called up three times and he sounds madder'n hell."

Wade grimaced.

"Sure he's mad," he said, and there was no alarm or surprise in his voice; merely resignation. "He always is when he's looking for me."

He spun about in the doorway, moved hurriedly down the corridor and ran up the iron-treaded stairs to the floor above. Slowing to a more dignified pace as he entered the brilliantly lighted city room, he saw that Blaine, the city editor, was watching his approach with a steady, ominous stare.

Blaine would have been a big disappointment to a novelist or a movie director. He was not the green-eyeshade-shirt-sleeve type.

This, we hasten to add, is not a story about Casey, but about a younger "camera," on the same paper. George Harmon Coxe, author of the recent THE IMPETUOUS MISTRESS *(Knopf, $2.95), the earlier* ONE MINUTE PAST EIGHT *(Knopf), etc., etc., is a former President of the Mystery Writers of America.*

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His dark suit was neatly pressed, his linen immaculate, his cravat correct. Slender, prematurely gray with a lean, angular face and cold gray eyes, he was a sardonic driver and the best desk man in the city. His glance was stony, narrowed, as Wade stopped in front of him.

"I hope I'm not interfering with any of your plans," he said. Wade remained silent and Blaine's voice thinned out. "Where were you?"

"I was out—getting some cigarettes." Which was a fifty-fifty truth. Wade had been out—getting a beer.

"You were out, eh?" Blaine's lips curved in a mirthless smile and his voice got caustic. "O'Hearn's out. Bailey's out. Landsdown's out. Casey's on his vacation. I get stuck with you and you're out."

He shook his head and began to simulate interest in a sheave of copy on his desk. "Huse has been yelling for a camera for ten minutes. A robbery and shooting on Maybury Street. 439. If you don't mind"—the voice sharpened and Blaine looked up again—"get the hell out of here and see if you can get one shot I can print."

Like Casey, Wade was keen on his job. But where Casey made a pretense of grouching and crabbing about the difficulties the work entailed, Wade, with his resiliency of youth, made no pretenses whatever. Cocky, good-natured and endowed with a supply of enthusiasm and luck, he was an irresponsible youngster with a round, smooth face, guileless blue eyes and an ever-ready grin. By the time he had picked up a taxi outside the *Express* entrance, he had forgotten all about Blaine; and when the cab wheeled into the darkened narrowness of Maybury Street twelve minutes later, he was eagerly intent on the job at hand.

Two police cars and a gleaming white ambulance were parked in the middle of the block, on the wrong side of the street. Properly waiting opposite these were three taxis. A group of men had collected in front of a narrow archaic doorway and when Wade paid his driver he identified two of them as photographers from the *News* and *Globe*. He knew he was late when he saw they were dispersing rather than attempting an entrance.

Huse, the *Express* reporter, was waiting outside an open doorway halfway down the third floor hall. A trim-figured fellow with horn-rimmed glasses, he had a patronizing attitude towards cameramen that he made no attempt to disguise; an attitude that seemed to say: "The best of you are roughnecks, but I suppose we'll have to put up with you."

He grunted disgustedly when Wade stopped in front of him,

said: "I ask for a good camera in a hurry, and I get *you,* fifteen minutes late."

Wade growled: "And it's nuts to you," and pushed past a frosted glass panel that said: *The Schuman Jewelry Co.*

The musty smell of the long, narrow room was tinged with tobacco smoke that hung heavily around two high-watt bulbs suspended from the ceiling in glass globes. There were four ancient showcases extending down the middle of the room, behind them glass-fronted wall shelves. At the far end was a caged-off enclosure that apparently served for a cashier and bookkeeper; the door of this was open, so was the door of the ponderous wall safe that stood beyond. At one side of the safe was an abandoned acetylene torch and a fuel container that looked like an elongated ten-inch shell.

After the first glance, Wade sidled along the near wall and made himself as inconspicuous as possible as he knelt to unstrap his plate-case. There was a good reason for the precaution: Sergeant Haley from Headquarters.

The other plain-clothesmen, the Lieutenant from the precinct house, did not matter. It was Haley. The one man on the city's police force that had it in for Flash Casey. And Wade had played Man Friday to Casey often enough to know that the sergeant included him in his grudge.

At the moment, Haley had his back to the door and was watching a well-built fellow who was stripped to the waist and sat on a straight-backed chair while an ambulance interne prepared to strap an emergency dressing to a shoulder which had a tiny blue hole in the front.

"You'll be okey," the interne was saying. "It won't be much of a job to get the slug out."

Huse nudged Wade. "Come on, show something."

Wade screwed a bulb into the reflector and held a spare bulb in contact with the first so that they would explode together and give him a more concentrated light. As he adjusted the shutter he said:

"Who's the guy?"

"George Oliver," Huse said. "Some thugs busted in here and put a torch on the safe. Oliver's got an office below. He heard them and came up and they cracked down on him."

Wade's thoughts revolved briefly around the name, Oliver. He had only been in newspaper work a couple of years, but that was sufficient to know this man by repute. At present, he dabbled in politics and conducted a small fleet of trucks and a sand and gravel business. But some years back he had worked for the government as a prohibition enforcement agent, prospering mightily until he had been dropped under a cloud of bribery scandal.

Huse nudged Wade again,

muttering impatiently. Wade raised the camera, opened the shutter and exploded the bulbs. The instant the shutter clicked, Haley spun about. He was a stringy, spindly-legged fellow with green eyes and thin lips that had twisted downward at the corners to fashion a permanently sour expression.

"Who let you in?" he rasped, taking a threatening step forward.

Huse smirked and said nothing.

Wade reversed his filmholder, said: "Nobody," flatly.

"Then beat it."

"Sure." Wade ejected the flashbulb, discarding the second one. "I was late, that's all. And you always say you don't play favorites, so I was just getting my shot and—"

"You got it," Haley cut in grimly. "But don't try another one or I'll bounce the plate off your jaw."

Haley had no chance to enlarge on the theme because as he finished, Abe Schuman rushed into the room and stood fluttering on the threshold. A red-faced, round-bodied man with three chins and two gold teeth, he had quite a struggle becoming articulate, and it was not until he took off a new-looking Leghorn and mopped a baldish head that he finally gasped: "Oy," and waddled hurriedly towards the safe.

Haley waited until Schuman came back out of the cage.

"Well, what's the damage?" he asked dryly.

"Damage?" Schuman wrung his pudgy hands. "How can I tell? I gotta check. Most eight thousand in cash there was. And my diamonds! Oy, such a headache! Thirty thousand—fifty thousand. I gotta check."

"I'll bet you're insured," Haley snorted.

"The stones, yes. But—"

"I knew it." Haley's lips dipped still more. "Where were you, anyway—for the last hour?"

"With Max Geloyfen."

"The money-lender, huh? And you got robbed before. About three years ago, wasn't it?"

"What about it?" bristled Schuman. "Maybe you're tryin' to tell me I—"

"I want to know things, about what you did tonight."

"You want to know?" exploded Schuman. "Questions. Instead of catching these thugs, and gettin' my eight thousand back, it's questions you ask. And me, I don't even know what happened."

Haley muttered an oath and turned to George Oliver. "Tell him."

The interne had helped Oliver on with his coat and had fashioned a sling for the arm. In spite of his disheveled appearance and the blood-stained coat, it was appar-

ent that his gray flannel suit was expensive, and as he turned to Schuman, Wade had a good look at his face, saw that it was squarish, rugged, but pallid now from pain or shock. Yet the voice, when he spoke, had the assurance of one who had been around, an undertone of cynical fatalism.

"I was downstairs figuring out my payroll for tomorrow," Oliver said. "I heard somebody moving around up here—it's right over my office—but I didn't think much about it because you do a little night work yourself once in a while, Abe.

"So I didn't pay much attention until I finished my work. Then I could tell there was more than one guy up here and while I was wondering about it, something crashed down on the floor and shook the ceiling." Oliver jabbed a thumb towards the acetylene tank. "I think they must've knocked that thing over. And I guess they rolled it around a couple of times before they picked it up. Anyway, I got sort of suspicious and I had a gun in my desk, and I was just mugg enough to start up and take a look."

Oliver's dark eyes narrowed in a sheepish grin and he shook his head.

"Was that a mistake! I knocked once at the door and stepped inside. They must've heard me, because they were laying for me. The first step and somebody opened up. I never got a chance to use the gun. The lights went out and I felt something slam me in the shoulder and spin me around. I went down. And I must've hit my head on something because when I got up again the place was still dark and there was nobody around but me and—"

"You didn't see a damn' one of 'em?" Haley interrupted brusquely.

Oliver shook his head. "They must've been all ready to clear out and I think they were standing by the wall just inside the door."

Haley grunted and glanced down at the .32 automatic he held in his hand.

"Sure," he said. "That's what happens when a guy has a gun. He thinks he's a sharpshooter and sticks his nose into something like this and never gets a chance to use it. You shoulda had sense enough to call in if you thought there was anything screwy going on."

"And don't I know it—now."

Wade felt an elbow dig his ribs as Oliver continued; then he heard Huse whisper:

"Take another."

Wade turned, frowning, and Huse added: "Come on. That first one might not come out. Don't be afraid of Haley. Hell, if Casey was here he'd have three or four by now."

Wade hesitated, the frown

fixed. Then, sighing, he surreptitiously opened his plate-case. What Huse said was true enough. Casey was rarely content with one picture. But there was a difference between him and Casey, and Wade was well aware of it. To smash a plate on Casey the attempt was usually made in threes. Casey weighed two-twenty in a bathing suit. And Wade, one-fifty the last time he stepped on scales—in an overcoat. And now he did not even have the coat. Still—

A subdued grin flooded his round face as his inherent youthful cockiness asserted itself.

"Okey," he told Huse, "but keep out of my way."

He strapped up the plate-case, stood beside it and lifted the camera. He did not have time to be choosy about his view because Haley happened to turn at the moment. Wade pressed the button; the flashlight bulbs exploded their brilliance. He dropped the extra bulb and reached for the plate-case.

Haley's yell was pure rage. His long legs threw him forward and Wade spun about, took one step, then collided with Huse. A tangle of plain-clothesmen's arms reached for him as he dropped the plate-case and went to one knee. Haley caught up with him, jerked at the camera. Wade clung to the leather handle, but Haley snatched the filmholder from the back. Hurling it to the floor, he stamped a heel into it, smashing both plates.

"Outside!" he bellowed. "Outside with him!"

Hands yanked Wade to his feet, propelled him towards the doorway. Unable to struggle, he clung to the camera like a drowning man to a lifebelt. He flattened out his feet, stiffened his legs, braced himself. His free hand grabbed for the door sill, missed it. He slid flat-footed into the hall, his momentum unchecked until he brought up against the opposite wall; then before he could turn, the bulky plate-case hit him in the middle of the back and knocked him down again.

This time he got up slowly. Not until he saw that the camera was unharmed did he give in to the wave of anger that pressed in upon him.

Huse, the crummy—! He might have made the door if it hadn't been for him. He shouldered the plate-case, saw that the two plain-clothesmen who had acted as bouncers had moved into the room. He could hear them chuckling, hear Haley saying: "I told him. A wise guy. And you, Huse—"

"Me?" Huse protested. "I didn't have anything to do with it."

Wade stuck his head in the doorway, his attitude that of a small boy sticking out his tongue. "He's a liar," he yelled. "He said you were only a mugg, Haley,

and you wouldn't know the difference. And you are a mugg. A flat-footed, square-headed—"

The plain-clothesmen spun about. Haley flushed and started forward. Wade said: "Yah—" and ran for the stairs, the plate-case bumping at his hips. When he reached the second floor Haley's voice thundered down to the uniformed cop below:

"Get that guy! Get him, y'hear?"

Wade wheeled and ran back along the second floor hall. The angular ladderlike rear stairs led steeply down. He clung to the iron rail and stumbled to the first floor, turned towards a door at his left. It was unlocked and as he threw it open he saw that it led to an alley.

The tepid half-light of the hall threw a vague yellow rectangle across a cobblestone floor, reached up along a grimy brick wall opposite. His body made the rectangle into a brief, gigantic shadow. He did not bother to close the door, and as he moved aside and the yellow slab of light reclaimed its place, he stopped short and stiffened there, his muscles rigid, his breath caught somewhere in his throat.

On the cobblestones at his feet, barely visible by some trick of reflected light, a huddled figure lay motionless against the wall of the building.

Wade did not move; he could not move. He just stood there staring until his eyes became accustomed to the darkness and he could trace an outline which fitted the body. Then, when he knew, his breath came out in a sharp, audible blast. A vague white oval which was a face topped the blue uniformed figure; the limp, boneless set of the limbs completed the impression, stamped it with an indelible mark of Death.

Wade stood dumb and immobile for another few seconds while uncertainty gripped him; then the newspaper training came to his rescue. When he stooped to open his plate-case his fingers were steady, his thoughts vortexing in a cold, machine-like way.

He had photographed Death before. But never like this—alone. Always there had been Casey, to help, to advise, to follow. But this—this was his job. He doublechecked the focus, the aperture. Two flashbulbs. Then he was ready.

The fractional second of exploding light from the bulbs showed him a plump, middle-aged face, a service revolver near an outstretched arm, a uniformed cap which had rolled a couple feet from a partly bald head. And—something else. Like a piece of paper under a bent arm and wrist.

"My gawd!"

Wade jumped as his nerves

jerked taut. His eyes whipped in the direction of the hoarse voice. The uniformed cop who had been stationed at the main entrance stood in the rear doorway, fumbling under his uniform. Then there was a flashlight in his hand and he jumped into the alley and sprayed its conical beam upon the lifeless figure.

Wade saw that slip of paper—it was a slip of paper. Then the light went out and the cop said: "Holy —! Tom Leary!" He sprang towards the doorway, his voice suddenly grim and chillingly bitter. "Stay here, you! Stay right here till I get back!"

Wade shot one more quick picture to make sure he would have something to show Blaine; then he put the exposed films in the plate-case, a fresh one in the camera. This done, he struck a match and knelt close to that slip of paper. The night air was still, humid. The match flame had an almost permanent quality that was bright and steady and sufficient for him to examine the scrawled message on the back of an envelope.

The penciled inscription said: G-t 1x3926. The figures, the G and t were quite clear; the letter separating them looked like a small e or an o.

Wade reached for the envelope, stopped the impulse in time. "Take pictures!" That's what Casey always said. "Take pictures and leave the police work for the cops." So Wade took an old envelope of his own from an inside pocket and scribbled down the cryptic message a few seconds before Haley led his cohorts through the doorway.

One look at the dead officer was enough for Haley to send one of his men in search of a telephone. After that the sergeant borrowed a flashlight and inspected the body.

He did not say anything for a long time. He just knelt there silently, unbuttoned a coat that was red-stained all along the left side, closed it, felt for a pulse. He pulled the envelope from under the bent wrist, studied it; then he picked up the service revolver, sniffed of it and flipped out the cylinder.

"Twice," he said finally. "Threw a couple at 'em anyway."

One of the plain-clothesmen began to talk in a low, bitter monotone.

"Why do they have to pick on guys like Tom? Give you the shirt off his back he would; always kicked in with a little something when somebody needed help. Not so very bright maybe, but it didn't bother him. He had enough, he used to say. Married too. I guess it's a break he never had any kids."

Wade shifted his weight awkwardly and began to feel a different sort of reaction to this policeman's death. Now that he had some pictures to make up for the

two which had been broken, he had time for a more human understanding of what it meant to be a policeman. He found himself hoping that he could help, in some little way at least, in finding those who had killed this man.

He was in no particular hurry to get back to the office now. Huse was not around. Probably had ducked out before Haley chased him. And this undoubtedly was a continuation of the same story. Haley put his own thoughts into words.

"After they popped Oliver they must've come out this way. Looks like they had a car parked in the alley and Leary must've been watching it or something. He probably wanted to know what it was all about." Haley spat out a curse. "And a dollar to a dime they opened up on him first.

"They had those diamonds on 'em, and they wouldn't take a chance. They let him have it. Right over the heart." Haley stopped to curse. "If that guy Schuman framed this job for the insurance—and I always had a hunch he framed the other—we'll burn him for it if it's the last thing we do.

"And by—we've got a start. Leary stuck with it even after he dropped. He took a couple shots—and when he knew he was going he wrote this down to give us a lead. 'Get 1x3926.' "

Wade said, eagerly, wanting to help: "It could be, 'got 1x3926,' " and then realized his error in speaking. Haley, preoccupied with the job at hand, had completely ignored him. It is doubtful if he was aware of the young photographer at all.

He said: "Sure. It could be got, or gat, or git or—" He turned, squinted through the darkness. "So—it's the button-pusher, huh? Still hanging around. Well, it's git for you. Beat it!"

"What the hell?" Wade protested doggedly. "I'm not botherin' anybody, am I? If it hadn't been for me you wouldn't've found—"

"We'd have found him all right," Haley said. "And anyway, beat it. I don't feel like clownin' around about it, either. Even if I liked you—and I don't—you couldn't stay. We don't want outsiders."

Wade was still in a protesting mood when he felt a heavy hand on his arm. It was the burly cop who had first appeared in the back doorway.

"You heard what he said, kid," he warned levelly, and began to lead Wade towards the end of the alley which opened on Raleigh Street. "Leary was one of us. His locker was next to mine. We're gonna keep this a kind of a private business."

Tom Wade stood there on the sidewalk for a minute or so, peer-

ing back into the thick blackness of the alley. He saw the flashlight go on and begin to sweep around the body; somebody lit a cigarette.

He realized then that perspiration was creeping down under the sweatband of his battered felt, that his shirt was clammy against his back. Even here, in the comparative openness of the street, there was no breeze, hardly a breath of air stirring.

He set down the plate-case, mopped his forehead and unbuttoned his coat. His mood was suddenly morose, as sultry as the weather. What kind of a break was this? Out on his own; stumble on to something good, and then get chased away. He had two good pictures, yes. But what of it? There should be more—even better. And he could do nothing about it.

Stay here and in ten minutes the place would be alive with reporters and cameras. And with Haley on the job, they would all be treated alike. No percentage in that. The wail of a siren disturbed his thoughts and seconds later a police sedan careened around the corner and stopped in front of the alley.

Wade's spirits rose when he saw the tall, stiffly erect figure of Lieutenant Stevens step from the car. Here was a chance. It was not Haley's job any more. It was homicide now. And Stevens was homicide.

Wade said: "Can I come in, Lieutenant?"

Stevens hesitated on the sidewalk. He was a neatly dressed, gray-haired veteran with a manner that was businesslike and hardened by routine and experience.

"Hello, son," he said. "Why—I guess so. Why not—if you behave yourself."

"Well," Wade grumbled, "Haley chased me out and—"

For the second time he suddenly realized he had talked too much. Stevens was not the type to put up with much fooling and his reply was flat and curt.

"Clownin' were you? Well, if he chased you, you stay chased."

Wade said: "Nerts," and shouldered his plate-case. He was washed up at this end and he knew it. So he could go back to the office, hand in his films and quit; or he could— He said: "All right, to hell with 'em."

He flagged a cab at the corner and on the way back to the office he elaborated on the only thought he had left. It was all right for Casey to say: "No police work." But Casey was Casey. With the exception of Haley, every cop in town would give him a break. But with him—Wade—he was just another button-pusher to be shoved around.

He did not kid himself that he could outsmart the police, but they would certainly check the number Leary had written down.

Well, maybe he could check it. If he did, there was at least a chance of a grandstand seat on the pay-off—if any.

As soon as he entered the photographic studio. Wade gave his films to Eddy to develop and got busy on the telephone. He had a few friends at Headquarters and one of them worked in the traffic bureau. After a slight delay, Wade got him on the wire and said:

"Any chance of checking license number 1x3926, Bert?"

"Not right away," Bert said. "We ain't got any 1x's in this state. New York might have a 1x, I guess, but not us. X's are hacks here. You oughta know that."

"Oh," Wade said dully. "Sure. Well"—he hesitated, battling his disappointment; then, because there was only one thing more he could think of asking—"Who's got 3926? Maybe I made a mistake."

Bert told him to wait and Wade clung to the receiver with an increasing dampness in the palms of his hand until Bert said:

"x3926 is Lou Almeda."

"Who does he work for?"

"Independent. Owns his own hack."

"That's swell," Wade growled. "An independent and I'll have a hell of a time finding him and—"

"Quit crabbin'," Bert said, "We got him down as living on Columbus Avenue." He named the address and Wade said:

"You might be right. Much obliged."

"Such gratitude," Bert said before Wade hung up.

When Eddy brought the dripping films into the anteroom three minutes later, Wade was puffing on a cigarette and walking around in tight little circles, a tousle-headed figure staring sightlessly at the floor.

"Jeeze," cheered Eddy, "these are the works."

Wade glanced at them and saw that Eddy was right. They were the works, both of them. But he was still smack up against a delicate problem. To wait for prints meant wasting time. Then, when he showed them to Blaine, he'd get a bawling out for not getting the shots for Huse; he'd get no thanks for these because this job was not an assignment. But the *Express* Headquarter's man must have learned of the cop shooting by now. Blaine would know about it, and these pictures would be self-explanatory until Wade could do a little checking of his own.

"Make a couple eight by tens," he told Eddy, "and take 'em up to Blaine. Tell him I'll explain later."

Eddy disappeared through the doorway of the printing room and Wade packed fresh filmholders and flashbulbs into his platecase. He caught a cab in front of

the building, but when he got to the Columbus Avenue address Bert had given him, he found that Lou Almeda no longer lived there.

With the perseverance and optimism of youth, he concentrated on some other approach to Almeda's whereabouts with the result that when he again reached the downtown section he had corralled another idea. He left the cab at the corner of Washington and Boylston and walked past the taxi stands until he found a squat, square-faced husky in a taxi driver's cap leaning against the side of a Gray and Black cab, reading the sport page of an *Express* bulldog edition.

Wade's blue eyes brightened and he gave a little inward sigh of relief, said: "Hello, Biff."

"Hyuh, keed." Biff Forgeron, a one-time hustler for the *Express* who could generally be depended upon to dispense information as well as transportation, snapped the paper aside and boomed his welcome in a rasping bass voice. "How's things?"

Wade said they were so-so and put the question uppermost in his mind.

"Lou Almeda?" Biff said. "Sure. Least I know where he generally hangs out. At the *Tavern* down in the South End. You want to see him?"

Wade said: "Yeah," and pushed his plate-case on the floor of the driver's compartment. He took the camera in back with him and when Biff pulled out from the curb, he leaned forward.

"What kind of a guy is he?" he asked.

"Almeda?" Biff said. "Just a mugg. But bad news. Got a record as straight as a corkscrew."

The *Tavern* was discouraging. An out-and-out dump, hemmed-in by grimy-windowed, wooden buildings and ground-floor shops that made up the rest of a decadent, darkened block. There was no parking space in front of the narrow doorway and Wade told Biff to pull ahead and park where he could.

They eased past a taxi, a light delivery truck, a small sedan. Then Wade saw the license plate he sought tacked on a heavy-looking, five-year-old sedan painted a haphazard red and black. Biff passed one other car before he found a place to park. Wade got out and told him to wait.

Still clinging to his camera he moved back to the red-and-black sedan. The driver was missing. He had seen that much as he passed, and now he made a very thorough inspection of the body until he found a small round hole in the back within the circle of the spare tire. The discovery quickened his pulse and he drew back in the shadow of a darkened shop while he mentally sought the next step.

If what Biff said was true,

Almeda was small fry. The police would probably pick him up shortly. They would take him down to Headquarters and sweat him a bit. But if he already had a record he would have sense enough to keep his mouth shut until he had a lawyer. On the other hand, Almeda could not know about the message the dying policeman had scribbled on that envelope; those who hired him could not know of it. And a bluff might hurry him into getting in touch with the real killers —if he knew them.

Wade pieced his plan together, went over it again and found it satisfactory. It might not be what Casey would do. Casey would probably call Logan, get him down here and then stick with him to the finish, knowing that if there were pictures to be had, he would get them. But if Wade did it— He mouthed a soft curse and remembered previous treatment. Sure. They'd take his tip and then throw him out on his ear if anything happened. Well, to hell with that.

He pushed out of the shadows and walked into the broad streak of light that splashed across the sidewalk from the *Tavern's* open door. Green curtains camouflaged the fly-specked windows flanking the recessed doorway and the interior, mostly bar with drinks at one end and a lunch counter at the other, had the perpetually stale, sour smell of beer and cooking fat. Just inside the door a thin, pimply-faced fellow was mopping the bar with a dirty rag and Wade said:

"Which one is Lou Almeda?"

The barman watched him from under drooping lids for a moment, then jerked a thumb towards the end of the room where three men, one in overalls and two others wearing cab driver's caps, were parked on three-legged counter stools. "That last guy," the barman said.

Wade moved down behind two beer drinkers, continued on to the man on the last stool. Touching the fellow's shoulder he said: "I want to see you a minute."

Lou Almeda jerked around a thin, wedge-shaped face that was waxen and lifeless-looking, and screwed pale, lusterless eyes on Wade. "About what?" he asked surlily.

"About the bullet hole in the back of your cab."

Almeda's eyes narrowed, and the pale skin seemed to tighten across the cheekbones. He let go of a half-eaten sandwich and stood up. A shapeless alpaca coat encased his skinny torso in wrinkles, and he remained motionless a moment, the eyes suspicious and searching. Finally he sucked some food from between his teeth and stepped to the far corner of the room.

"What's the rest of it?" he clipped.

"I'm on the *Express,*" Wade began. "A cop got knocked off about an hour ago and before he went out he jotted down the number of your hack. If you haven't got an alibi you're in a spot."

"Yeah?" Almeda said. "And where do you fit?"

Wade launched into his carefully planned lie. "I'm tippin' you off in advance because they'll pick you up anyway, and if you go down to Headquarters with me I'll get a picture, and you will be wise before they start on you and the load you carried."

Almeda remained silent for a long moment, as though weighing Wade's information. It was a kid play. Wade knew it, and Almeda didn't leave his opinion of it long in doubt. His lip curled and his short, brittle laugh was like a snort.

"Don't be screwy. I don't know what you're talkin' about, and I don't want to know. If the cops want me they know where to get me."

Wade made an effort to suppress the elation he felt. "Okay," he said wearily and turned away. Almeda went back to his stool and picked up his sandwich.

Biff Forgeron was trying to continue his perusal of the sports page by dashlight, and when Wade opened the cab door he said: "Find him, kid?"

Wade climbed into the back seat, snapped: "Listen, Biff, I got a hunch he's comin' out. Can we follow him?"

"Why not?" Biff wanted to know. "And what the hell's up?"

Wade explained briefly, adding: "I don't know if Almeda is mixed up in it or not. There's a hole in the cab, but I don't know if it's a new one, or whether it's from a slug. If he don't come out I'll know there's nothing to it. I'm not sure it's the right number. But if he does I want to tail him and—"

"Sure," Biff said. "I've done it for the Flashgun, I can do it for you. Maybe a little excitement, huh?"

Wade had turned and was looking out the rear window. "Don't count on it," he muttered. "Maybe there is a 1x. Maybe—hold it! Here he comes."

Biff snapped off his dashlight and slumped into a dozing position in his seat. Wade slid to the tonneau floor. From somewhere behind came the grind of a starter and roaring crescendo of a powerful motor. Gears clashed and in another few seconds a car roared past.

Wade scrambled back to the seat. Biff jerked erect and started the motor. The sedan was a block and a half ahead when he pulled out from the curb, and he drove the first block with lights out, finally settled down to a steady thirty-five, two blocks behind Almeda.

Rolling crosstown until they

hit Shawmut Avenue, they continued along its deserted darkness for a mile or more, Biff finding little difficulty with the intermittent traffic that moved in and out of the side streets. Shortly after they passed Massachusetts Avenue, Almeda turned right. When Biff followed, the red-and-black sedan was just turning into what looked like a driveway two blocks ahead. Wade told Biff to turn right at the intersection and park just around the corner.

"I'll go with you, huh, kid?" Biff said when he turned off the motor. "We'll take that guy."

"No." Wade got out and pushed his camera alongside of Forgeron. "I don't want him. I want to know where he goes, what he does with the car, who he gets in touch with. You stay here so we can tail him again if we have to."

He left Biff arguing with himself and, moving back to the corner, started down the darkened, tree-lined street. He had marked that driveway in the middle of the block and as he approached he saw that it skirted a vacant lot and ran alongside a three-story frame tenement whose porch was built flush with the sidewalk.

The driveway was gravel and he avoided this surface, keeping to a narrow, grassy strip flanking it. His progress was silent enough, but by the time he had covered fifty feet the effect of the corner arc-light was lost and he was in complete blackness. To orient himself, he stopped at the far edge of the building, waited there tense, listening.

There was no sound but the pounding of blood at his eardrums. Somewhere in front of him he caught the vague outline of a long low roof suggesting a stall of private garages, and when the silence continued, he moved towards the end doors, deciding that if Almeda had given him the slip he could at least locate the car and tip off the police to watch it.

This thought was still uppermost in his mind when he lifted the latch and stepped across a slight concrete ramp into the interior. Again he listened, heard the faint slow drip of liquid on metal that often comes from a radiator or leaky carburetor when a hot motor is in the process of cooling off.

The explosion of sound fell about him when he took his next step forward. There was a sudden movement at his side, the scratch of a shoe on concrete. A voice hissed: "All right, smarty," then something hard grazed the side of his head and slammed down on his shoulder, the force of the blow staggering him.

He fought to keep his feet, tried to turn towards the movement, to throw up his hands. The voice said: "Tail me, huh?" And then the blow fell again. Squarely this time. Wade heard the last

word before he sank into complete blackness.

Because of the unrelieved darkness of the garage Wade was not sure when he opened his eyes. The first thing he was conscious of was a tremendous throbbing in the back of his head and a griping nausea at the pit of his stomach. When he found strength to move he realized his hands and feet were securely tied.

His first thought was strangely comforting: Almeda had been on that murder party. He had been right in his hunch to try and follow the man. That he had muffed his chance and lost the trail was a bitter dose to swallow, but there was still a chance. He had been tied. Almeda would not leave him here with the car indefinitely. And if the police could be tipped off before Almeda returned . . .

Following up his thoughts, Wade tried to roll across the floor and find out just where he was. The second time he turned over he brought up against the front tires. After that he did not waste much time. He twisted his body around, brought up both feet and smashed the heels into one headlight. In less than five minutes he had wedged a jagged triangle of glass into a vertical crack in one wall and was kneeling, awkwardly sawing the ropes on his bound wrists across the keen top edge.

He was not sure how long he worked there. He nicked his wrists, dislodged the glass three times and had to grope for it, wedge it back in place. Ignoring the sweat that rolled down from his forehead and blinded him, he stuck at his task until his wrists were free. Then, as he dropped back on his haunches and picked at the cords on his ankles with numb fingers, he heard footsteps scratch hurriedly across the driveway outside.

For an interminable moment he sat there disconsolate, trying to accept his defeat. Then he pulled himself to his feet and groped blindly along the wall, hoping that a wrench, a jack, some sort of weapon, might be hung there.

"Hey!" The rasping whisper stopped his search. He thought he recognized it, but he could not believe it until the voice went on. "Hey, kid! You okay?"

A match scratched and the accompanying flame cast an orange glow upon a squarish face. The squinting eyes beneath the jutting brows were Biff Forgeron's.

Wade had a hard time walking when Biff released his ankles. There seemed to be no feeling in his feet and he hobbled to the street before he said:

"Where the hell've you been, Biff?"

"Trailin' that guy Almeda," Biff grunted. "That's what you wanted, wasn't it?"

"What I wanted?" cheered Wade. "What I—you mean, you know where he went?"

"Sure."

Biff helped Wade into the taxi which was parked in front of the house. "I got out of the hack when you left and kept my eye on this joint. When I saw Almeda come out alone I knew there was something wrong. I figured he might've surprised you, put the sap to you; but I knew if I jumped him we'd be right back where we started—and remember, you said you didn't want him.

"If you were already out, it wouldn't make any difference; and it looked like our only chance. I couldn't look after you without losing him—so I beat it back to the cab, drove around the block and cruised up towards him like I was looking for a fare. It fooled him, too. I said, 'Taxi?' and he said, 'Yeah,' and piled in. Was that a break?"

"A break?" Wade blew out his breath and gingerly felt of his head. "Break hell! You think of things. Where did you take him?"

"To an apartment house on Audabon."

Wade stopped at the first corner drug-store and stepped into a telephone booth. He knew enough now to realize that it was time for help. And the fact that Almeda's cab, x3926, was the right one, made clear the entirety of Leary's penciled message. He had not meant: Get 1x 3926. What he meant was: *Got* 1. *He had shot one of the gunmen.* And the car which they used was x3926.

Wade telephoned the morgue first and followed up with all the hospitals, a routine which cost him ten minutes and several dimes. Then he called Police Headquarters and asked for Lieutenant Stevens.

"This is Tom Wade," he began when Stevens answered. "I found the hack."

"What hack?"

"The hack that pulled that Schuman job; the one Leary got the number of." He described the location of the garage and added crisply: "Lou Almeda is the guy that drove it. It's his, and I got a hunch he'll be coming back for it. You better have the garage watched. Nab him. And stick around the office for about ten minutes; maybe I'll have some more dope."

"Dope?" yelled Stevens. "What kind of dope?"

"Dope on who else was in on the job. I gotta check an address. And if I'm right, you guys better come clean and let me get some pictures."

He hung up before Stevens could answer, and in less than ten minutes Biff was parking his cab in front of a gray brick apartment house that lacked modern embellishments but looked reasonably respectable.

Biff said: "Now what?"

Wade got out, ordered: "Wait'll I have a look inside," and crossed the sidewalk, stepped

through open glass doors to a roomy, tiled vestibule. There were a couple dozen mailboxes along the right wall and he began an inspection of the name cards attached.

Halfway along the row his eyes checked on a name and apartment number. He did not look any further. He was not particularly surprised now; in fact he had counted on it. From the moment he knew that Leary meant "Got 1," the idea had been uppermost in his mind. When he had finished checking on the morgue and hospitals, he was reasonably sure. And now—with Almeda coming to this house—well, it had to be that way.

Yet, in spite of his own certainty, Wade knew that there was only one sure way of proving his theory. Even now it might be too late; and once that proof was gone, the police would have a hard time convicting anybody unless Almeda squawked. It was no open and shut case then. But anyway, it was a police job now. He wanted pictures; he thought he might get them. But there was something more to it than that. He was not so used to Death that he could forget Leary, the cop who would give a friend the shirt off his back.

He went back to the cab, said: "George Oliver's the guy."

"George Oliver?" wheezed Biff. "You said he was the one that got pinked tryin' to break up the—"

"He got pinked all right. And outside of Leary, he's the only one I know of. That don't prove anything in itself. Somebody else might've got it and is hiding out. But with Almeda coming here and all—well, hell, I'm going up and see."

Biff said: "Okay," grabbed a tire iron from the floorboards and got out of the cab. "I'll go with you."

"No." Wade shook his head. "You find a telephone, call Lieutenant Stevens and tell him to bring a couple men here. If I don't come out before they get here, send them up to Apartment 3-D."

"But if you're right," Biff argued, "and you go up alone—"

"I'll be okey," Wade said, and started to pull his camera and plate-case from the car. "I'll take these for a front. I can stall around. I don't even know if Oliver's there; I thought he went to the hospital, and I forgot to ask if he'd left when I called. And if there's nothing up I can come back out and head off the cops, tell 'em what I've got. Only there's one thing I've gotta find out about. You get on the phone and give me some cooperation."

"Aw—all right," Biff growled. "Only I thought I was gonna have some fun."

The man who opened the door

of 3-D was a stranger to Wade. He was rather short and well-dressed; he wore a close-cropped mustache and the eyes behind the thick-rimmed glasses were very small and suspicious.

Wade said: "Hello. Oliver in?" and barged past the man behind the buffer of his plate-case.

An answer to the question was unnecessary. Oliver was in, sitting forward on the edge of a red plush divan which was very much in keeping with the rest of the garish-looking furniture. And he was just as Wade remembered him: stripped to the waist. At his side was a small table holding a towel, a basin of steaming water, an opened black bag, a carton of cotton.

Wade's dominant action was one of relief. The bullet was still in Oliver's shoulder. And if it was *the* bullet he was right. How long would it take to remove it? Suppose he had waited for the police? Ten minutes would probably be time enough to get the bullet, dispose of that buried evidence. For once—and judging by the trouble he got into, the bawlings out he got from Blaine, it was not often—he had done the right thing.

"What's the idea?" Oliver rapped.

Wade, cocky over the result of his immediate entry, met the dark-eyed scowl with a grin. "Pictures. I lost out in Schuman's place. When I found out you'd left the hospital I thought I could get one here."

"You got a hell of a nerve."

Oliver stood up and made noises in his throat. The eyes, narrowed now, were sharp, hostile, and after the first moment Wade avoided the man's gaze lest he forget to grin and be nonchalant. He set down his plate-case, bent over and leisurely unstrapped it.

"I hope so," he answered, "you've got to have nerve in this racket."

The man with the mustache said: "Well—" uncertainly.

"Okey, Doc," Oliver said. "I guess you're right." Then, as though explaining to Wade, although Wade did not look at him: "The slug started to bother me after I got home. I thought I might get it cut out tonight, but after looking at it the doc says I'd better wait till morning."

Wade looked up. The doctor blinked as though puzzled, finally shrugged and began to pack his bag. Oliver struggled into his shirt and Wade got out his camera and dallied with the adjustments.

"Just one now," Oliver growled. "I got to get some sleep and it's one o'clock now."

"Sure," Wade said. "And I'll be much obliged to you."

The doctor hesitated at the door and Oliver said: "You can run along now. I'll give you a ring."

Wade, bending over his plate-case, began to screw a flash bulb

in the reflector. He heard the door close, but he did not look up until Oliver said:

"Okey, boys."

Oliver did not raise his voice, but the sudden metallic inflection was a warning in itself. Wade felt his nerves jump before he had time to look up. When he did lift his eyes three men stood in the doorway to the apartment's other rooms. One was Almeda. He did not know the other two, but he knew the type; and if he had had any doubt the sight of the heavy automatic which was leveled at his head was explanation enough.

Then, and not until then, did he realize his dumbness in remaining here after the doctor had left. Intolerably young, he had been so wrapped up in the initial success of his gamble, so intent on his preconceived idea of stalling, that he had lost his perspective. He did not regret his solo act in coming, but if, after he had learned that the bullet was safe, he had tried to duck out, or leave with the doctor—

He stood up slowly, still holding to the reflector, and after a moment managed to jerk his gaze from the gun. Oliver, watching him with a narrow-eyed grin, said:

"You wouldn't be trying to kid anybody with that camera gag, would you?"

Almeda and his companions fanned out as they entered the room and Wade took a moment to study the two strangers. One was a bull-necked fellow with a crooked nose and shoe-button eyes. The other was lean, swart and well-dressed; a floppy panama shadowing a face that was expressionless except for the intensity of the eyes.

Oliver cursed softly, then spoke to Almeda. "You did a swell job, huh? Tied him up, did you? Well, how'd he find this place?"

"What difference does it make?" Almeda growled. "He's here, ain't he? We were gonna take care of him anyway."

"Yeah. But suppose he's spilled what he knows?" He glared at Wade, then turned to the swart man. "Help me on with the coat, Eckley."

Wade began to wonder how long it was going to take Biff Forgeron to get the police. He thought he could stall a little while, but Oliver acted as if he intended to leave and—

"Listen," Oliver broke in on his thoughts. "There's only two things we got to worry about. The slug and—"

"So it checks, huh?" Wade asked, seizing the opportunity.

"Checks?" Oliver clipped.

"With the cop's gun. I had an idea it might. I called the morgue and the hospitals. No other shooting cases. Only you—and the cop. And you know what Leary wrote before he died, don't you?"

"I do now," Oliver said.

"Got one," Wade charged. "Got you, Oliver."

"We'd been okey if it wasn't for that," Eckley said.

"We're okey now," Oliver countered. "If I can hide out till I get rid of this slug, there won't be any proof. And if we lose the sedan the cops'll be out of luck."

"How about him?" the bull-necked fellow said, nodding towards Wade.

"Him?" Oliver's lips dipped at the corners. "That's your job, Drew; yours and Eckley's."

He turned to Almeda. "Get busy. Call the cops and tell 'em your cab was stolen. Tell 'em you went to the movies and fell asleep, that when you came out the cab was gone and—"

"Hell," Almeda grumbled, "they won't believe that."

"Certainly they won't," Oliver said. "Who cares? You tell 'em that. Get the sedan first, drive it down to—you know where. We'll leave it there for a couple weeks and take it down the south shore and run it over into one of those abandoned quarries that's full of water. We've done it before, haven't we?"

"And how about me?" Almeda wanted to know.

"You're in for a shellackin', that's all. The cops'll work you over. It's better than the chair, ain't it? They can't prove anything and we'll have you out in twenty-four hours. Now get started and do what I tell you. Hide that bus and then go down to Headquarters and stick to your story till I spring you."

Almeda went out grumbling and Oliver told Eckley and Drew to watch Wade while he went into one of the bedrooms. When he came out, he had a hat and a brief case in his hand. His bad arm was no longer in a sling and there was no outward sign that he had been wounded.

Wade could guess what was in the brief case and his bitterness was all the more galling because he had been right. There was some consolation that the one preparatory step he had taken was a winner. If Stevens acted on his tip—and he would—the police would get both Almeda and the murder car. That would be something, but probably not enough. If Almeda kept his mouth shut and Oliver got rid of the bullet in his shoulder, there would never be enough evidence for a jury unless the stolen diamonds were recovered—or the gun that killed Leary found.

He eyed the .45 automatic in Eckley's swarthy hand. Was that the gun that had snuffed out Leary's life? Wade cursed under his breath and wished Casey were with him. Never had he been in a spot like this alone. And as he went back over his activity, he tried to find out where he had done the wrong thing.

If he had waited for Stevens,

Oliver would have had time to get rid of the slug. That much was sure. And if the police had rushed the place they would have been met with four men and probably as many guns. There would be others beside Leary before the thing was finished but—Well, now that he had all the facts; now that he knew the loot was here, that the gunmen might have been surrounded; yes, he had probably picked the wrong approach. Still, he had had his choice. He could not cry about it now and—

"We'd better get started," Oliver said. And then, Wade, knowing that it could do no ultimate good, seized one other chance to stall.

"You can count Almeda out," he said levelly, and explained that he had tipped off the police about the garage. "So they'll get him and the car too," he finished.

The announcement brought a curse to Oliver's lips, but it did not deter him from carrying on.

"Almeda'll have to take his chances till I can spring him," he clipped. "We ain't got much to lose. And you"—he leered at Wade and his lips drew back against his teeth—"if you think that trick is gonna make it any easier for you, you're screwy. Just pack that case of yours and bring it with you."

When Wade finished, Oliver opened the door and glanced into the hall. "All right," he said. "I'll go first. You two"—he nodded to Drew and Eckley—"stay right behind the kid and if he makes a screwy move let him have it. Let's go."

The entire house seemed strangely quiet now, and the stale, humid air hung motionless and heavy in the hall. Oliver chose the stairs instead of the elevator and when they reached the dimly lighted foyer he turned and stopped the procession for final orders.

"The car's about halfway to the corner. Take it easy if you can. Keep the kid right behind me, and you keep right behind him."

Wade felt the sweat on his forehead, at the palms of his hands, but his mouth, his lips, were so dry he had to wet them before he could speak.

"So you really think you can get away with it?" he said and was conscious of the waver in his voice.

"We have to get away with it," Eckley said and jabbed a gun into Wade's back as Oliver spun about and started through the tile-floored vestibule. "Get going."

A rap of heels across the tiling reverberated gently from the walls in a rhythmic beat, as though everyone was in step. Oliver reached the sidewalk entrance, stepped out and turned left. Wade was perhaps two paces behind him, and although he had not turned, he knew that Eckley

and Drew were about one step to the rear.

For a fraction of a second Wade strained his ears for the sound of a siren; but he forgot about the police when he saw Biff's cab parked just beyond the entrance. The headlights were on dim; the dashlight was on. But there was no sign of Biff.

Wade did not understand his absence until he found a possible answer. Biff might be watching from across the street. He might lay low until Oliver's car started up. He might be able to follow them, to warn the police. Wade was even with the rear door now; Oliver had passed the back of the cab. Wade continued steadily, not wanting to look across the street.

His eyes were on Oliver's back and he was not more than a step past the end of the cab when it happened. Across the corner of his right eye there flashed a blur of movement; a vague and bulky form leaping upwards and behind him from a kneeling position on the pavement behind the car. Wade had that much warning and then he heard Drew's curse of surprise. What really galvanized him to action was that rasping bass voice of Biff Forgeron's saying: "Come on, kid!"

Wade spun quickly then, ignoring Oliver. Biff was close to Drew and Eckley. His right hand, holding his tire iron, was already up and it came down as Wade stopped and skidded his camera across the sidewalk out of the way.

There was a muted crunching sound as the tire iron whipped down on Drew's bullet head. His hat flew off and he sagged, fell over against Biff before he could get out of the way.

Wade had leaped forward as he watched. Eckley had jumped back a step to get out of Biff's way and when he swung his gun towards the driver who was still trying to get out of the way of Drew's limp figure, Wade took off from his toes and stretched out at full length, his left hand slapping at the gun wrist. He felt the blow connect, heard the click as the gun hit the sidewalk; then he lost his balance and pitched headlong into Eckley, carrying the fellow down under him as though he had made a flying tackle.

For the next second or two he was busy trying to keep his advantage. But Eckley surprised him with a lithe, springy strength that he could not combat. He felt himself being thrown to one side. He hit the walk on one hip, bounced against the plate-case which had slipped from his shoulder as he leaped forward.

When he rolled to his knees and got his feet under him he pivoted towards Biff, grabbing for the plate-case straps as he completed the turn. A quick flash of flame blinded him. A gun roared so close to his ear the report deafened him, shocked him so that he did not know whether he was hit

or not. Then he saw that Biff held the gun, had aimed behind him.

Drew was curled up on the sidewalk. From Eckley came a choking sob. Wade glanced over his shoulder, saw the gunman start to crumple. Then another shot rang out. This one had a different timbre entirely. It was sharper, not quite so close. Something metallic hit the sidewalk—and Biff was cursing.

Wade's scalp stretched taut as he turned. Biff, his right arm hanging limp, useless, was stooping to snatch up the fallen gun with his left hand. And—ten feet away, George Oliver faced them squarely, was bringing down his automatic for a second shot.

Wade's act was instinctive, quicker than planned action although he still had time for thought, for many thoughts. Oliver could not miss, he knew that. Yet he was too far away to be reached by a charge and the only thing left was the plate-case. To a layman it would have been valueless, its bulky weight a handicap. But to Wade its balance was as familiar as a camera. He he had lugged it in subways, through crowds, up fire ladders; he had carried it with one hand, both hands, on his head and shoulder.

So when he found it ready and waiting in his hands and held chest high, he used it; heaved it out and away from his body like a man tossing a medicine ball.

Oliver's gun cracked an instant after the case left his hands, and this time luck was with Wade—and Biff. The slug crashed into the case, seemed to spin it sidewise and check its lazy flight, so that it fell short.

Two more shots exploded as the case hit the sidewalk. There was a brief interval between them and the first one was close to Wade and came from Biff's gun. The second sped harmlessly into the night, apparently coming as the result of a spasmodic tug as Oliver's body jerked around.

Drew groaned and turned over and Biff reached down and tapped him with the gun barrel. Eckley had not moved. Oliver dropped his automatic, bent over like a man with his wind knocked out and fell forward in a heap. Wade, temporarily incapable of movement, stood there staring until Biff said:

"Boy, you sure know how to handle that box of yours and am I glad!"

That did it—broke the tension for Wade. He could not keep his hands from shaking, but he could keep them busy; and he did. He found the camera was unharmed, and he had taken his first picture when a police sedan screeched to a stop in front of Biff's car, and Stevens and three plain-clothesmen spilled across the sidewalk.

Biff, apparently oblivious of his bullet-torn right arm, did most of

the explaining until Wade got his fourth picture. As he closed his camera two plainclothesmen yanked the now groggy Drew to his feet; the third detective, looking down at Eckley, said:

"I guess you killed this guy."

"It sure as hell looks like it," Biff said. And then the plainclothesman bent down beside Oliver, added: "This one is still breathing."

"I had to take him left-handed," Biff argued. "What do you guys expect?"

Stevens took Wade by the arm, pulled him close. "Just what I always said," he growled. "You camera guys are bughouse, all of you. And you, you've got less sense than Casey."

"It was Haley's fault," Wade protested. "At first all I wanted was my pictures. If he hadn't busted two and chased me—"

Stevens' hand tightened on his arm; his voice got gruff, throaty.

"I don't care about that. I'm not kicking—much. It was a damn' fool thing to do, son. But it worked out and I guess it's okey. Some of the boys liked Leary pretty well; I think they'd rather've handled this themselves. But they won't crab at what you did for 'em—you and Biff. It's results that count and if I can even it up for you one way or another on pictures or—"

A series of groans and the beat of thudding fists checked Stevens and he dropped Wade's arm, spun about. By this time half the front windows of the apartment house were open; men and women in various degrees of dishabille hung over the sills, gaping and arguing among themselves; one shrill female voice was putting on a hysterical monologue. Right below them the two plainclothesmen were systematically smacking the staggering Drew.

Stevens cursed softly, rapped: "Lay off, dammit! Use some sense. So help me, right here on the sidewalk in front of a gallery. It's muggs like you that give the department a black eye."

Wade went back to the office as soon as he could and developed his four films before he went upstairs. Blaine, who should have been home and in bed hours ago—although there were some members of the staff who insisted he had no home—was pacing back and forth behind the slot. Wade held two wet negatives, Landsdown held the other two and when Blaine saw them and held them up to the light he said:

"What the hell are these? Where did you—where've you been?"

"These are that Oliver shooting," Wade said. "Oliver and the two hoods who pulled that Schuman job and shot the cop."

Blaine opened his mouth but it was a moment before he could speak, which was a monument to the occasion because he had a

large and ever-ready vocabulary. "But—but I only got the flash about ten minutes ago," he argued finally. "It just happened."

"Sure," said Wade, his round face cracking in a grin that could no longer be subdued. "I was there."

"You were—" Blaine sat down on the edge of a desk. "Then why the hell didn't you get on a phone and—"

"I was busy taking pictures. That's what you're always harpin' on, isn't it?" Then, when Blaine did not answer, Wade explained briefly what he had been doing, what had happened in the garage and in Oliver's apartment.

"Eckley was dead," he continued. "But Drew talked and so did Oliver before he kicked off. What happened is this: They pulled the job in Schuman's place all right, but on the way out—in the alley—they ran into Leary. They had the stuff on them and were taking no chances with any cop. Oliver shot him, and Leary put a slug in Oliver's shoulder, another in the taxi—but it was low down and they didn't know it.

"Oliver didn't know how bad he was hurt and he knew he couldn't go to a hospital or a doctor without it being reported as a gunshot wound. And he knew damn' well he couldn't explain it. But he was cagey enough to see he'd have a story if he pretended he ran into the robbery in Schuman's place. He switched guns with Eckley or Drew so the bullet in Leary couldn't be traced to him." Wade stopped for breath, wet his lips.

"So as not to make the cops suspicious he went along to the hospital like anybody would. But then he put up a story about wanting the advice of his own doctor, said he was scared of hospitals. The gag worked and he went home. And he thought as soon as he got the bullet out of his shoulder and lost it he'd be okey. He would have been, too, if it hadn't been for that message Leary scribbled out."

Wade sucked his lower lips and spread his hands. "The cops believed his story. Why shouldn't they? It was neat. Only Leary was a damn' good cop and—"

"And I'm beginning to think you might turn into a good camera some day," Blaine finished. He stared at Wade a moment, shook his head and there seemed to be a sort of sardonic admiration in his keen gray eyes. Then the moment passed and he began whipping out commands to the room at large.

"Hold one and three! Have we got all the art on George Oliver? Come on, Landsdown, are you anchored? Get some prints of these negatives. Marsden — Harrigan!" Two rewrite men bustled up and Blaine added: "Get the kid's story. Harrigan, make it first person, eye-witness stuff. Marsden,

here's your chance to get your name in the papers. Make it good and you can sign it."

Wade blinked and said: "What do I do?"

"Do?" rapped Blaine. "Just tell them what happened. Sit down over here in the corner. Begin at the beginning. If you need it I'll have some rye sent up and—"

"I need it," Wade cracked, expanding under this new and unfamiliar treatment as Blaine led him to a chair. The reaction was natural because he was young, and this was a new experience. The biggest job he had ever handled. He had been lucky, he knew that. But even if he had come back without pictures he could have found sufficient satisfaction in one thought. Because there was Leary; and what Stevens had said made him feel as if the job had been worthwhile. Anyway—

The grin came, broadened; an eyebrow lifted and he said: "So for once I stick my nose in here without getting bawled out, huh?"

"Get busy," ordered Blaine. "Not even Casey could have done better."

Wade's eyes brightened.

"You mean you think maybe I'll be as good as Casey some day?"

"No," said Blaine flatly, "I don't." He grunted softly and a trace of a smile relieved the tense set of his mouth. "At the rate you're going you won't live long enough to be that good."

ELECTRONIC DETECTIVE

CALVIN HOFFMAN, who believes that Marlowe wrote Shakespeare, was in London recently to enlist support for what he admitted were "methods the most revolutionary in literary detection annals." He wanted to feed into an electronic computer some fifty million punched cards which would bring out exactly how each of a number of writers—among them all the Elizabethan writers—used words. Every word of a man's work would be punched in such a way as to show its relation to other words in the sentence. On digesting this information (*we can hear the sighs of long-dead scholars at this point*) the computer would establish for each writer a distinct identity, penetrating, according to Mr. Hoffman, "to the absolute core of a writer's soul."

Hoffman admitted, it seems, that there was a possibility that the machine might decide that Marlowe did not, after all, write Shakespeare. Perhaps the machine might even decide that Shakespeare did write Shakespeare.... "If so," he declared, "I for one, as father of the Marlovian thesis, will liquidate my work and call it a false scent!"

Ouch!

dial anywhere for murder

by . . . Ria Niccoli

What do they use for blood —on TV? Is there such a thing as a secret formula? Do they try for accuracy?

NBC'S MURDER IS LIVE!: Avid aficionados of the fine art of murder—fictional, that is—had a high old time all this past summer, thanks to the pioneering methods of the National Broadcasting Company. This intrepid network brought to its viewers not one or two—but three—hour-long live television mysteries every week. SUSPICION, a regular Monday night feature usually filmed, did at least four of its shows live from New York, while Tuesday nights introduced a new one called THE INVESTIGATOR. To further delight the mystery-lover's heart, Wednesday night's Kraft Theatre—the oldest and most consistently excellent live show on TV—switched to a policy of mystery dramas for the last few months of its long and fruitful life.

Slated to go off the air for good in October, Kraft decided to go out with a bang instead of a whimper; the result has been a most gratifying weekly series of live whodunits. Since Kraft's mystery fare has been so unvaryingly great, we thought it might

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Ria Niccoli, who has a syndicated column for teenagers, admits she prefers to write about animals—and murder. Author of WANTED—ANGEL (*Oct.* Saint) *she has fed ice-cream to a 200-pound young lion, taught romance languages "in the weirdest music school ever," played nursemaid to a shy elephant, etc.*

be a good idea to go backstage at their Brooklyn studios to see how they go about creating live thrillers. Considering what a beehive of apparently unrelated activity the studios are, it's hard to realize that on the final night a tightly integrated product will go smoothly over the airwaves. According to unit-manager Dick Swicker—a young man who appears singularly calm and unruffled in the midst of seeming chaos—plans for one show begin a full two weeks before it's to go on. In other words, there are always two shows being worked on simultaneously, though in different stages of production.

Occasionally, the producers will schedule an original script, such as the two written by 21-year-old Larry Cohen, but more often the dramas are based on books or stories by well-known mystery writers like Charlotte Armstrong or George Harmon Coxe. Once the story is decided upon, a production meeting is called. This is usually attended by the director, producer and art director. Directors, incidentally, vary from show to show due to two shows rehearsing at once, but the art director is always Duane McKinney. Preliminary work is carried out in special rehearsal halls in downtown New York, with no props at all and on bare floors. At this first meeting the attending directors rough out settings, action and where doors and windows ought to be, and floors are marked for various actors' movements and the corpse's final resting place. X — literally — marks the spot!

A few days later, a more productive—and more generally attended—meeting is held. This one includes the associate director, unit manager, costume designer, and prop and stage managers. Prop lists are worked out, basic technical equipment decided upon and camera needs figured. By now it's time to call in the actors, who go through their lines in the empty rehearsal hall. Meanwhile, back at the studio, an entirely different play —the current week's—is about ready to go before the cameras. By Sunday of the next week, the entire cast moves over to the huge studios in Brooklyn, where they are joined by the stage manager, cameramen and audio crew, and final bits of business are worked out. Tuesday is the first day of working with sets and real entrances and exits, and Wednesday sees the run-through after blocking the shots, the dress rehearsal and, finally, the live show. After it's over, the actors involved in the production can breathe a sigh of relief, but the directors and technicians are still tearing their hair . . . because they're still only halfway through with next week's show!

As if this isn't enough to whiten the average director's

hair, we asked Dick Swicker if there were any special problems peculiar to putting on the mystery show as such. "Well, yes," he admitted, "there are a few. For instance, in the matter of timing . . . while timing is always important in any live show, it's doubly so in a mystery, where a slip in a camera shot could give the whole plot away. So far," he chuckled, "we've been pretty lucky—no missed shots!"

Another oddity that crops up particularly in mystery shows, according to Dick, is the extra work made for the graphic arts department. In most TV plays, all they have to attend to are the titles before and the credits after. In a whodunit, they are called upon to print special editions of newspapers (headlines screaming of murder), special menus (no, no arsenic listed!), and piles of special photographs among other things. This pyramids expenses alarmingly and invariably drives the budget department to drink.

"What about corpses?" we asked hopefully. A few years ago we read an article which intriguingly hinted that getting a job as a corpse was a good way to break into TV acting. Was this true? "It makes a good story," smiled Dick, "but I don't think it's true. A job is a job, and an actor gets paid for it according to whether he has a few lines before his demise or whether he just plays dead from the beginning . . . different scale, you know."

Slightly disappointed, we tried again. "What do you use for blood?"

"In black-and-white shows they generally use chocolate syrup," he explained. "It's the right consistency and the color doesn't matter. Here on Kraft we do color shows, so we use a special formula by Max Factor. It's the right color and consistency and even has the same drying properties. For unusual problems, though, our own makeup man has a secret formula of his own. Closely guarded," he added, as our eyes lit up.

The production staff always checks with experts on every phase of each show. They like to believe that the author is in full possession of his facts, but it's a matter of policy for them to get the final word from the people who know most about each subject. The police department, lawyers, ballistics experts, criminologists, toxicologists and pathologists are all called upon. Most police and court equipment is bought, begged or borrowed by the prop department, who sometimes show an ingenuity that's incredible. Even they sometimes come up against an unusually difficult assignment, like the time a script called for a ballistics comparison microscope. There weren't any around to borrow, and the list price runs somewhere

between $1800 and $2000 . . . obviously way beyond what the budget allowed. In this case, the prop department had to compromise, so they created one themselves . . . out of a similar low-priced model cleverly contrived to look like the expensive one. It must have worked; no sharp-eyed viewer wrote in to complain!

"Just one more thing," we asked the long-suffering but highly-cooperative Mr. Swicker, "Did you ever have anything funny happen during one of your Kraft mysteries?"

"One or two come to mind," he admitted with a reminiscent chuckle. "Once we did a show in which an actor had to jump constantly from flashback to present and back again. Believe it or not, we had to have an extra stage manager just to lead that poor man from set to set and from scene to scene! No reflection on the actor," he hastened to add, "it's simply that it was a virtual impossibility for him to concentrate on all his changes, lines and business and still find his way back and forth around that complicated set.

"Another time we had a script that was supposed to be set on the hottest day of the year. Somehow, the cast didn't seem to be able to get into the spirit of that wilting heat, so we finally turned off the air conditioning in the studio and stepped up the heat. It was a dirty trick, and the crew didn't appreciate it much, but it did wonders for the authenticity of the action!"

So, in case you saw that Kraft drama in which policemen and pedestrians went about their business actually sweating, you'll know you were witnessing one of the few instances in TV history where the producers literally made things hot for the actors!

TRICKS OF THE TRADE: According to New York police regulations, guns can fire nothing higher than .32 calibre blanks on TV. Since the calibre has to fit the crime, this should pose a pretty problem for producers when TV criminals choose a .44. The dilemma has been solved permanently by two gentlemen at Centre Firearms in Manhattan. Known familiarly as Gil and Seymour, the owners are ballistics experts and can gimmick up any calibre firearm to fire only .32 blanks! . . . Crime may not pay much, and that goes for the real-life detective as well as the detectee, but make-believe detectives seem to do rather well. Lonnie Chapman, who played the title role in NBC's late unlamented INVESTIGATOR, pulled down $855 for each and every week of video sleuthing! . . . If you ever see—and who hasn't—a TV detective pick up a suspected gun, wrap it in a handkerchief and stow it in his pocket, you can be sure he's effectively destroyed any

useful print that might have been on it. So say the experts, and the technical advisor (a real detective) on Desilu's syndicated series OFFICIAL DETECTIVE tells how it should be done: the detective takes out a length of cord and carefully, without touching the gun, lifts the weapon by the cord and places it gently in a cardboard box partially filled with cotton. The gun can also be picked up by inserting a pencil in the barrel or—in a pinch—with fingertips on the trigger guard. Still on the subject of OFFICIAL DETECTIVE'S realism, an actress playing a policewoman had to flip a "mugger" over her shoulder till he was battered and bruised before the policewoman advisor was satisfied. It's a good thing *somebody* was satisfied!

THE LINEUP: The westerns may still be overwhelmingly with us, but the mystery-lover isn't being left too far behind this season, either. The hour-long PERRY MASON series continues; Warner's has 77 SUNSET STRIP, its new hour-long Hollywood detective series starring Efrem Zimbalist Jr. for ABC; NBC has Craig Stevens as the private eye in GUNN FOR HIRE (Pete Gunn, y'know); and Howard Duff's new series GREEN PEACOCK should be hitting the channels any day now . . . There are two new live mystery series airing too. Albert McCleery, formerly of MATINEE THEATRE, is turning out the hour-long FURTHER ADVENTURES OF ELLERY QUEEN for NBC every Friday night . . . in color, too! ABC gets PRECINCT 87 (half-hour), produced by David Susskind's Talent Associates and originally auditioned on Kraft Theatre . . . In the realm of the "real" we have DIAL 999, a syndicated show about British cops and robbers (999 is the phone number for emergency calls in England); a series of Hollywood-produced half-hour films based on New York's "finest"; NBC's syndicated series POLICE HALL OF FAME with Pat O'Brien as host-narrator; and Jack Webb's D.A.'s MAN . . . The Agatha Christie mystery stories now are being made available to TV as a potential series . . . MGM-TV is releasing to television its CRIME DOES NOT PAY two-reelers made over 20 years ago. They probably won't present much in the way of crime detection, but they will give us a chance to see many top film stars—like Robert Taylor and Laraine Day—in their very first movie roles!

what's new in crime

by . . . Hans Stefan Santesson

Recent essays in the somewhat deadly arts — novels that you will wish to relax with, and novels that will disturb you.

IT IS surprising how seldom you come across a novel that you have a feeling the author *enjoyed* writing. Dorothy Gardiner's thoroughly delightful THE SEVENTH MOURNER (Doubleday, $2.95) is one of those rare novels.

Sheriff Moss Magill, of Notlaw, Colorado (a town which does not live up to its name), finds himself in the Scottish Highlands, his blood thrilling to the sound of the bagpipes as he chaperones a group of mourners —one of whom is undoubtedly a murderer. The sheriff is thoroughly likable, set against a background alien—to him—and still so extremely familiar. Here's hoping he will be back soon! Don't miss this!

Michael Underwood's LAWFUL PURSUIT (Doubleday, $2.95) reports on what really happened to the men who'd each jumped the bail they had posted in a London court, dropped from sight, and then sent family or friends a letter from Algeria. Detective Constable Cordari volunteers to be bait—with startling effect on the lives of a number of people both

Again comments on current mystery and suspense novels, including two that our friend on the Saint's Ratings desk would normally have discussed, novels which, in their variety, illustrate this column's frequent preachment that there is no such thing as one *definition of the mystery novel.*

in England and abroad. Recommended.

The idiot heroine is allegedly loved by thousands of readers. The idiot hero, of the bull-in-a-china shop variety, undoubtedly also has his place in fiction, though there are moments when one wonders why. . . .

We have the phenomenon, in John Eugene Hasty's MAN WITHOUT A FACE (Dodd Mead, $2.95) of a man who has worked his way up to be manager of the Bahia office of a shipping company—presumably learning how to work with people during these years—scrapping everything he has ever known as soon as he comes to this small town where he has bought a radio station, and where he, incidentally, also witnesses a murder. I have no quarrel with his attempts to identify a murderer, but I can't "buy" the possibility that a man with this working background can be *so* stupid in his relations with the people he has to work with—and live with—and *so* ready to step on every corn, the moment he senses one. . . .

There is a temptation to dismiss the stream of novels about juvenile delinquents as a phase of these times when violence, mob violence, seems no longer to be an isolated phenomenon. While statistical surveys and sociological reports do pinpoint the reasons for this unrest, these reports are read, after all, by only a fraction of a public that is both outraged and confused in the face of this seemingly senseless urge to hit out and to kill. . . . And so it is left for these novels, generally paperbacks, to translate these statistics and these sociological facts into terms understandable by this public.

Obviously a certain amount of distortion results. Some of these books are slightly less than dedicated and are written more with an eye on our hidden frustrations than on the urgent necessity for explaining why something is happening. Wenzell Brown's PRISON GIRL (Pyramid, 35¢), however, is an honest *and* thoroughly researched story of what can and does happen to some young girls growing up in our slums—areas which we deplore, areas which we also ignore. The thing to remember, if you do read Wenzell Brown's often shocking PRISON GIRL, is that these things that happen to Linda Malcolm *do* happen in real life. . . .

Ursula Curtiss has succeeded in writing into THE FACE OF THE TIGER (Dodd Mead, $2.95), some extremely credible—even if mildly exaggerated — characters. Lou Fabian, who had been innocently involved, under another name, in another kidnapping, is as sympathetic a central character as one could wish.

Ruth Fenisong's DEATH OF THE PARTY (Doubleday, $2.95) also has to do with the misadventures of an idiot hero—no, rather a very young hero—as he finds himself number one suspect in the murder of a man he'd never known, and discovers things about the girl he loves that he'd never suspected. Pleasant.

Cyril Hare (His Honor Judge Alfred Alexander Gordon Clark of Surrey, England) has a new book out, UNTIMELY DEATH (Macmillan, $3.25), which proves that a murder can be committed without a killer, and how there can be a corpse which isn't there. Literate, intelligent, and thoroughly readable, the novel ends with a piece of legitimate deception disclosed only in the last pages.

Like Wenzell Brown's PRISON GIRL, Harlan Ellison's RUMBLE (Pyramid, 35¢) explores an aspect of life in these times that is generally mentioned in soft and rather apologetic tones.

A lot of reasons are cited for the rise of this cancer of senseless "pack" violence which is no longer an isolated phenomenon, something whispered about in the backrooms.

The newsstands are crowded these days with paperbacks on the subject, some contributing not a little to the myths about our own minorities and still others exploiting those same frustrations that have made some writers sell two-three thousand copies in the trade editions and two-three million copies when reprinted. There is a refusal to understand that this spreading cancer, this spreading disease in our society, blamed on the late James Dean, blamed on rock-and-roll, blamed (and here with considerable justification) on the frightening increase in teen-age dope addiction, cuts *across* class and race lines. The accents may vary, the urges may be different, but this *is* as much an aspect of life in suburbia as it is of life in the slums.

Harlan Ellison's RUMBLE is an honest novel. You are going to find it a very disturbing novel. Rusty Santoro's efforts to break with the Cougars, whom he had led, and his hunt for his sister's murderer, does not make pretty reading. But, as the writer points out, while the characters are fiction "their flesh-images live on the streets of the real-life city." Here are the bored and the restless and the illiterate, the youngsters who have no Yesterday, who have no Today, and who will have no Tomorrow. It is important that we understand this world of the teen-age gangs, that is a part of our times. RUMBLE may help you to do so.

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