

A NEW EDGAR WALLACE NOVEL FOR TWOPENCE!

# The Thriller

THE NEW PAPER WITH A THOUSAND THRILLS 2d



## KENNEDY *the* CON. MAN

BRILLIANT NEW NOVEL

BY **EDGAR WALLACE**

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE





A FLAME SPLIT THE DARKNESS,  
AND JAKE'S COMPANION PITCHED  
HEAVILY TO THE PAVEMENT.



# KENNEDY THE CON. MAN

BY  
EDGAR  
WALLACE



Featuring the Famous Detective Character  
J. G. REEDER  
in a  
NEW LONG COMPLETE NOVEL.

## Chapter I. TRAGEDY.

THE man who stood with such an air of ease in the dock of the North-West London Police Court bore himself with a certain insolent dignity. There was a smile which was half-contemptuous, half-amused, on his bearded face.

If, from time to time, his long, white fingers thrust through the mass of goldy-brown hair that was brushed back from his high and narrow forehead, the gesture revealed neither nervousness nor embarrassment. Rather was this a trick of habit.

Though he wore no collar or tie, and his clothes and patent-leather shoes were daubed with last night's mud, the clothes

were new and well cut, the diamond ring which he wore, and which now sparkled offensively in the early morning light, hinted most certainly at an affluence which might be temporary or permanent.

He had in his possession when arrested (to quote the exact itemisation of the constable who had given evidence on the matter) the sum of eighty-seven pounds ten shillings in Treasury notes, fifteen shillings in silver coinage, a gold and platinum cigarette case, a small, but expensive bottle of perfume (unopened), and a few keys.

His name was Vladimir Litnoff; he was a Russian subject, and his profession was that of an actor. He had appeared in Russian plays, and spoke English with the faintest trace of an accent.

Apparently, when he was in wine, as he had been on the previous evening, he spoke little but Russian, so that the two policemen who supported the charge of being drunk and guilty of insulting and disorderly behaviour could adduce no other than the language of offensive gesture to support their accusation.

The magistrate took off his glasses and leaned back in his chair wearily.

"Whilst you are living in this country you must behave yourself," he said conventionally. "This is the second time you have been charged with disorderly conduct, and you will pay twenty shillings and seven-and-six costs."

Mr. Litnoff smiled, bowed gracefully, and stepped lightly from the dock.



Chief Inspector Gaylor, who was waiting in the corridor to give evidence on a much more serious charge, saw him pass, and returned his smile good-humouredly. The policeman who had "picked up" the Russian followed from the court.

"Who is that fellow?" asked Gaylor.

"A Russian, sir. He was properly soused—drunk, in the Brompton Road. He was quiet enough, but wouldn't go away. Him and his brooches!"

"His whatses?" asked the inspector.

"That's what he said when I took him—about the only English thing he did say: 'You shall have my beautiful brooch—worth ten thousand!' I don't know what he was talking about. Another thing he said was that he'd got property in Monro—he shouted this out to the crowd as me and P.C. Leigh were taking him away."

"Monro—that sounds Scottish, eh?"

Just then Gaylor was called into court.

Later in the evening, as he glanced through his evening newspaper, he read an account of the police court proceedings. It was headed:

#### "DRUNKEN MAN'S BRIBE OFFER TO POLICE.

#### "TEN THOUSAND-POUND BROOCH THAT WAS DECLINED.

"—P.C. Smith stated that the prisoner had offered him a ten thousand-pound brooch to let him go.

"The Magistrate: 'Did he have this brooch in his possession?'

"Witness: 'No, your worship. In his imagination.' (Laughter.)"

"Old Reeder would see something very peculiar about that," said Mr. Gaylor to his young wife, and she smiled.

She liked Mr. J. G. Reeder, and, quite mistakenly, was sorry for him. He seemed so pathetically inefficient and helpless compared with the strong, capable men of Scotland Yard. Many people were sorry for Mr. Reeder—but there were quite a number who weren't.

Jake Bradby, for example, was sorry for nobody but himself. He used to sit in his cell during the long winter evenings on Dartmoor and think of Mr. Reeder in any but a sympathetic mood. It was a nice, large, comfortable cell with a vaulted roof. It had a bed with gaily-coloured blankets, and was warm on the coldest day.

He had the portrait of his wife and family on a shelf. The family ranged from a hideous little boy of ten to an open-mouthed baby of six months. Jake had never seen the baby in the flesh. He did not mind whether he saw his lady wife or family again, but the picture served as a stimulant to his flagging animosities.

It reminded Jake that the barefaced perjury of Mr. J. G. Reeder had torn him from his family and cast him into a cold dungeon. A poetical fancy, but none the less pleasing to a man who had never met the truth face to face without bedecking the reality with ribbons of fiction.

It was true that Jake forged Bank of England notes, had been caught with the goods, and his factory traced; it was true that he had been previously convicted for the same offence, but it was not true (as Mr. Reeder had sworn) that he had been seen near Marble Arch on the Monday before his arrest. It was Tuesday. Therefore Mr. Reeder had committed perjury!

To Jake came a letter from one who had been recently discharged from the hos-

pitality of H.M. Prison at Princeton. It contained a few items of news, one of which was:

"—saw your old pal Reeder yesterday he was in that Machfield case him that done in the old boy at Born End reeder dont look a day older he asked me how you was and i said fine and he said what a pity he only got seven he oughter got ten and i said—"

What his literary friend said did not interest the enraged man. There and then he began to think up new torments for the man who had perjured an innocent man (it was Tuesday, not Monday) into what has been picturesquely described as a "living hell."

Three months after the arrival of this letter Jake Bradby was released, a portion of his sentence having been remitted for good conduct. That is to say, he had never once been detected in a breach of prison regulations. The day he was released, Jake went to London to find his family in the workhouse, his wife having fled to Canada with a better man. Almost any man was better than Jake.

"This is Reeder's little joke!" he said.

He fortified himself with hot spirits, and went forth to find his man.

He did not follow a direct path to Mr. Reeder's office because he had calls to make, certain acquaintances to renew. In one of these, a most reputable hostelry, he came upon a bearded man who spoke alternately in English and in a queerly elusive language. He wore no collar or tie—when Vladimir reached his fourth whisky he invariably discarded these—and he spoke loudly of a diamond clasp of fabulous value.

Jake lingered, fascinated. He drank with the man, whose language might be Russian but whose money was undoubtedly English. As was his language occasionally!

"You ask me, my frien', what profession am I? An actor, yes! But it pays nothing. This, that, the other impressario robs—all rob. But my best work? I make believe I am ill! That is good work! Delirium—what-you-call-it? Swoons? Yes, swoons—voice 'usky, eh?'"

"I know a graft like that," said Jake, nodding wisely. "You chews soap!"

"Ah—nasty—no—*ti dourak!*"

Jake did not know that he was being called a fool—and would not have been very upset if he had known. He was sure of one thing, that he was hooked up with a generous spender of money—a prince of fellows, seen in the golden haze of alcoholism. He had not yet reached the stage where he wanted to kick anybody. He was in that condition when he felt an inward urge to tell his most precious secrets.

"Ever 'eard feller call 'Reeder'?" he asked profoundly. "Reg'lar old 'ound—goin' get him!"

"Ach!" said his new-found friend.

"Gonna get 'im!" said Jake gravely.

The bearded man tilted up his glass until no dreg remained in the bottom. He seized Jake's arm in a fierce friendliness and led him from the bar. The cold night air made Jake sag at the knees.

"Le's go 'n bump 'im," he said thickly.

"My frien'—why kill, eh?" They were walking along unsteadily arm-in-arm. Once Jake was pushed into the gutter by an unanticipated lurch. "Live—drink! See my beautiful brooch—my farm—vineyards—mountains—I'll tell you, my frien'—somebody must know—"

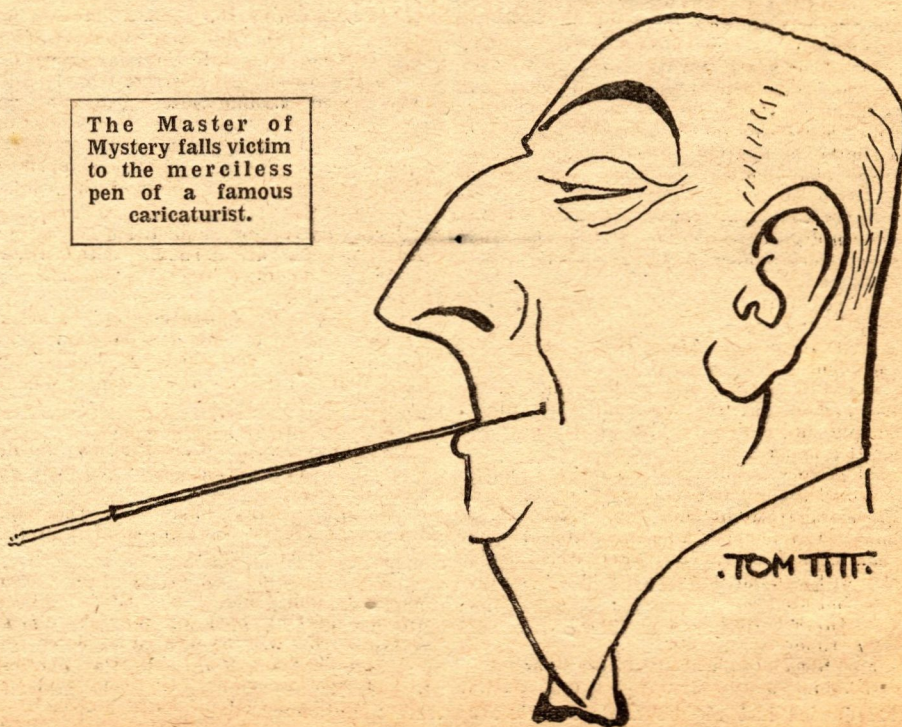
This street through which they were passing was very dark, and made up of little stores. Jake was conscious that he had passed a milk shop, when he became aware that a man was standing squarely in their path.

"Hallo! You want me—gotta brooch?"

It was Vladimir who spoke; he also was very drunk. The stranger did not speak.

## AS TOM TITT SEES HIM—

The Master of Mystery falls victim to the merciless pen of a famous caricaturist.





The crash of the explosion made Jake Bradby reel. He had never heard a pistol fired at close quarters. He saw the Russian swaying on his feet, his head bent as though he were listening—he was fumbling at his waistcoat with both hands.

"Here—what's the game?" Jake was sober now.

The man came nearer, brushed past him, thrusting his shoulder forward as he passed. Jake staggered under the impact. When he looked round the shooter had melted into the thick darkness—there was the narrow opening of a mews hereabouts.

"Hurt, mate?"

The Russian had gone down to his knees, still gripping at his waistcoat. Then he pitched forward and hit the pavement horribly.

Jake felt himself go white. He looked round, and, turning, fled. He wanted to be out of this—murder! That's what it was—murder!

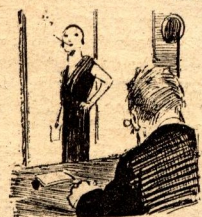
He raced round the corner of the street and into the arms of a policeman. Whistles were blowing. Even as he fought to escape he knew the impossibility of such a hope; policemen were running from everywhere.

"All right—I done nothin'. There's a guy shot round the corner—some feller did it."

Two officers took him to the station, and, as a precautionary measure, he was searched.

In the right-hand pocket of his overcoat was found an automatic pistol that had been recently fired.

#### MYSTERY!



MR. J. REEDER rang his bell and sighed. He sighed, because it was the fourth time he had rung the bell without anything happening.

There were moments when he saw himself walking into the next room and addressing Miss Gillette in firm, but fatherly tones.

He would point out to her the impossible situation which was created when a secretary ignored the summons of her employer; he would insist that she did not bring into the office, or, if she brought, should not in business hours read the tender or exciting fiction which she favoured; he would say, in the same firm and fatherly way, that perhaps it would be better for everybody concerned if she found a new occupation, or a similar occupation, in the service of somebody who had less exacting views on the question of duty. But always, when he rose from his chair after ringing four times, determined to settle the matter there and then, he sat down again and rang a fifth time.

"Dear, dear!" said Mr. Reeder. "This is very trying."

At that moment Miss Gillette came into the room.

She was pretty, and slight, and small. She had a tip-tilted nose and a faultless complexion, and her dully golden hair was a little untidy.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Did you ring?"

Between her fingers she held a long, jade-green cigarette-holder. Mr. Reeder had once asked her not to come into his office smoking; she invariably carried her cigarette in her hand nowadays, and he accepted the compromise.

"I think I did," he said gently.

"I thought you did."

Mr. Reeder winced as she put her cigarette-holder on the mantelpiece and, pulling a chair forward, sat down at his desk. She

carried a book under her arm, and this she opened and laid on the table.

"Shoot!" she said, and Mr. Reeder winced again.

The trouble about Miss Gillette was her competency. If she had made mistakes and put letters in the wrong envelopes or forgotten appointments, Mr. Reeder would have gone away to some foreign land, such as Eastbourne or Brighton, and would have written to her a sad letter of farewell enclosing a month's salary in lieu of notice.

But she was devastatingly competent; she had built up a structure of indispensability; she had, in the shortest space of time, developed herself into a habit and a fixture.

"You mean I am to proceed?" he asked gravely.

Another woman would have wilted under the reproof; there was something very will-less about Miss Gillette. She just closed her eyes wearily.

"Let go," she said, and it was Mr. Reeder who was reproved.

"This is a report on the Wimborg case," he said, and began his hesitant dictation.

As he grew into his subject he spoke with greater and greater rapidity. Never once did Miss Gillette interrupt with a question to gain time for her lagging pencil. There was a ceaseless snap as the pages of her notebook turned.

"That is all," he said breathlessly. "I trust that I did not go too fast for you?"

"I hardly noticed that you were moving," she said, wetted her finger, and flicked back the pages. "You used the word 'unsubstantial' three times; once you meant 'inadequate' and once 'unreal.' I would suggest that we alter those."

Mr. Reeder moved uncomfortably in his chair.

"Are you sure?" he asked feebly.

She was *always* sure, because she was *always* right.

It was not true to say that Mr. Reeder had ever engaged a secretary. It was Miss Gillette who engaged him. By one of those odd coincidences, which are unacceptable to the lovers of fiction but which occur in everyday life, she arrived at Mr. Reeder's office on the day and at the hour he was expecting a temporary typist from an agency.

For some reason the agency lady did not arrive, or, if she did, was interviewed by Miss Gillette, who, fulfilling the practice of the young queen bee, destroyed her rival—in the nicest possible sense. And when Mr. Reeder, having concluded the work for which he had engaged her, would have dismissed her with a ten-shilling note, shyly tendered (and brazenly accepted), he learned that she was a fixture.

He lay awake for an hour on the following Friday night, debating with himself whether he should deduct the ten shillings from her salary.

"Are there any appointments?" he asked.

There was none. Mr. Reeder knew there was none before he asked. It was at this point that his daily embarrassment was invariably overcome.

"Nothing in the papers, I suppose?"

"Nothing except the Pimlico murder case. The funny thing is that the man who was killed—"

"Nothing funny about—um—that, my dear young lady," murmured Mr. Reeder. "Funny? Dear, dear!"

"When I said 'funny' I didn't mean 'amusing,' but 'odd,'" she said. "And if you are getting back on me for 'unsubstantial' you will be pleased to know that you have been successful. He was Vladimir Litnoff—you remember, the man who was drunk and said that he had a brooch."



Reeder noted that the house was still under observation.

Mr. Reeder nodded calmly. Apparently Litnoff's death was not startling news.

"It is my—um—mind, my dear young friend, I see evil things where other people see innocent things. And yet, in the question of human relationships, I take the kindest and most charitable views. H'm! The young man who was with you at the Regal Cinema, for example—"

"Was the young man I'm going to marry when we earn enough to support one another," she said promptly. "And how the devil did you see us?"

"S'h!" said Mr. Reeder, shocked. "Strong—um—language is—um—most—"

She was looking at him frowningly. "Sit down," she said, and Mr. Reeder, who knew little of the rights of secretaries, but was quite sure that ordering their employers to sit down in their own offices was outside the table of privileges, sat down.

"I like you, John or Jonas or whatever the 'J' stands for," she said, with outrageous coolness. "I didn't realise that you were a detective when I came to you. I've worked for successions of tired business men who bucked up sufficiently towards evening to ask me out to supper, but never a detective. And you're different from all the men I've ever met. You've never tried to hold my hand—"

"I should hope not!" said Mr. Reeder, going very red. "I'm old enough to be your father!"

"There isn't such an age," she said. And then, very seriously: "Would you speak to Tommy seriously if I brought him here?"

"Tommy—you mean your—um—"

"My 'um'—that describes him," she nodded. "He's a wonderful fellow—terribly awkward and shy, and he'll probably make a bad impression, as you do, but he's a really nice man."

Now Mr. Reeder had been many things, but he had never acted in *loco parentis*, and the prospect was a trifle terrifying.

"You wish me to ask him—er—what his intentions are?"

She smiled at this, and she had a dazzling and beautiful smile.

"My dear! I know what his intentions are all right. You don't meet a man day after day for over a year without finding out something about his private ideas. No—it is something else."

Mr. Reeder waited.

"If you were an ordinary employer," she went on, "you'd take me by the scruff of my neck and fire me." Mr. Reeder disclaimed such a ferocious possibility with a



feeble shake of his head. "But you're not."

She got up and walked to the window and looked out. What was she going to say? A most ghastly thought occurred to Mr. Reeder, one that made a cold shiver down his spine. But it was not that, for she turned suddenly

"Tommy has been robbed of a whole heap of money," she said.

He stared at her owlishly.

"Robbed?" She nodded. "When?"

"More than a year ago—before I met him. That is why he is selling motor-cars on commission. He tries to sell them, but he isn't very successful. His partner robbed him. They had a motor-car business. Tommy Anton and this man, Frank Seafeld, were at Oxford together, and when they came down they started a motor-car agency. Tommy went to Germany to negotiate for a branch. When he came back Seafeld had gone. He did not even leave a note—he just drew the money from the bank and went away."

She saw a new light in Mr. Reeder's eyes and could not but marvel, that what to him was so small a matter, should be of such immediate interest.

"And no message with his wife? Unmarried, eh? H'm! Seafeld lived—"

"At an hotel—he was a bachelor. No, he didn't tell anybody there—just said he was going away for a day or two."

"Left his clothes behind and did not even pay his bill," murmured Mr. Reeder.

Miss Gillette was surprised.

"You know all about it, then?"

"My queer mind," he said simply.

There was a tap at the outer door.

"You had better see who that is," said Mr. Reeder.

She went to the door and opened it. Standing on the mat outside was a clergyman wearing a long black overcoat, which reached low. He looked at her dubiously.

"Is this Mr. Reeder's office—the detective?" he asked.

She nodded, regarding the unexpected visitor with interest. He was a man of fifty with greying hair. A mild, rather pallid man, who seemed to be ill at ease, for the fingers that gripped his umbrella, which he held about its middle, as though he were all ready to signal a cab, clasped and unclasped in his agitation.

He looked at Mr. Reeder helplessly. Mr. Reeder, for his part, twiddled his thumbs and gazed at the visitor solemnly. It almost seemed that he was smitten dumb by the uniform of his visitor's rectitude.

"Won't you sit down, please?" There was something of the churchwarden in Mr. Reeder's benevolent gesture.

"The matter I wish to speak about—well, I hardly know how to begin," said the clergyman.

Here Mr. Reeder could not help him. It was on his tongue to offer the conventional suggestion that the best way to begin any story was to tell the unvarnished truth. Somehow this hardly seemed a delicate thing to say to a man of the cloth, so he said nothing.

"It concerns a man named Ralph—the merest acquaintance of mine—hardly that. I had corresponded with him on certain matters pertaining to the higher criticism. But I can hardly remember what points he raised or how I dealt with them. I never keep correspondence, not because I am unbusinesslike, but because letters have a trick of accumulating, and a filing system is a tyranny to which I will never submit."

Mr. Reeder's heart could have warmed to this frank man. He loathed old letters and filing was an abominable occupation.

"This morning I had a call from Mr. Ralph's daughter. She lives with her father at Bishop's Stortford, in Essex. Apparently she came upon my name written on an envelope, which she found in a wastepaper basket in her father's office—he had a small office in Lower Regent Street, where he attended to whatever business he had."

"What was his business?" asked Mr. Reeder.

"Actually he had none. He was a retired provision merchant, who had made a fortune in the City. He may have had, and probably has, one or two minor interests to occupy his spare time. He came up to town last Thursday—curiously enough, I had a telephone call from him at my hotel when I was out. Since that day he has not been seen."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Reeder. "What a coincidence!"

Dr. Ingham looked a painful inquiry.

"That you should have thought of me," said Mr. Reeder. "It is very odd that people who lose people always come to me. And the young lady—she told you all this?"

Dr. Ingham nodded.

"Yes. She is naturally worried. It appears that she had a friend, a young man, who did exactly the same thing. Just walked out of his hotel and disappeared. There may be explanations, but it is very difficult to tell a young lady—"

"Very," Mr. Reeder coughed discreetly, and said "very" again.

"She suggested that you should come to me?"

The clergyman nodded. He appeared to be embarrassed by the nature of his mission.

"To be exact, she wished to come herself—I thought it was a friendly thing to interview you on her behalf. I am not a poor man, Mr. Reeder; I am, in fact, rather a rich man, and I feel that I should render whatever assistance is possible to this poor young lady. My dear

wife would, I am sure, heartily endorse my action—I have been married twenty-three years, and I have never found myself in disagreement with the partner of my joys and sorrows. You, as a married man—"

"Single," said Mr. Reeder, not without a certain amount of satisfaction. "Alas! Yes, I am—um—single."

He looked at his new client glumly.

"The young lady is staying—"

"In town, yes," nodded the other. "At Haymarket Central Hotel. You will take this case?"

Mr. Reeder pulled at his nose and fingered his close-clipped sidewhiskers. He settled his glasses on his nose and took them off again.

"Which case?" he asked.

Dr. Ingham was pained.

"The case I have outlined." He groped beneath his clerical coat and produced a card. "I have written Mr. Lance Ralph's office address on the back of my card—"

J. G. took the card and read its written inscription; turned it over and read the printed inscription. This gentleman was a doctor of divinity, and lived at Grayne Hall, near St. Margaret's Bay, in the county of Kent.

"There isn't a case," said Mr. Reeder with the tenderness of one who is breaking bad news. "People are entitled to—um—disappear. Quite a number of people, my dear Dr. Ingham, refuse to exercise that right. I am sorry to say. They disappear to Brighton, to Paris, and reappear at later intervals. It is a common phenomenon."

The doctor looked at him anxiously, and passed his umbrella from one hand to the other.

"Perhaps I haven't told you everything that should have been told," he said. "Miss Ralph had a fiancé—a young man in a prosperous business, as she tells me, who also vanished, leaving his partner—"

"You are referring to Mr. Seafeld?" And to his surprise, and perhaps to his annoyance, the clergyman showed no sign of amazement.

"Jean has a great friend in your office. Am I right in surmising it is the young lady who opened the door to me? This is how your name came up. We were discussing whether she should go to the police, when she mentioned your name. I thought you were the least unpleasant alternative, if you don't mind that description."

Mr. Reeder bowed graciously. He did not mind.

There followed an uncomfortable lacuna of silence, which neither of the men seemed inclined to fill. Mr. Reeder ushered the visitor to the door and went back to his desk, and for five minutes scribbled aimlessly on his blotting-pad. He had a weakness for making grotesque drawings, and he was putting an extra long nose upon the elongated head of one of his fanciful sketches when Miss Gillette came in unannounced.

"Well, what do you think of that?" she asked.

Mr. Reeder stared at her.

"What do I think of what, Miss Gillette?" he demanded.

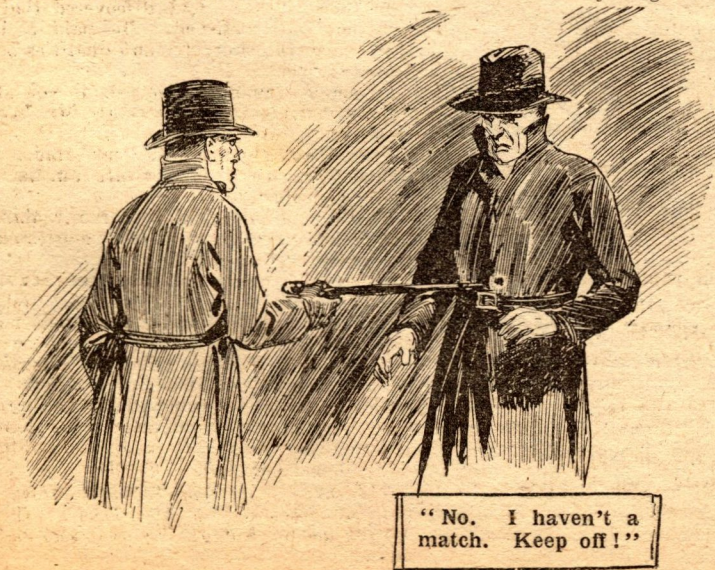
"Poor Joan Ralph, and she is such a darling. We have kept our friendship all through the Seafeld business—"

"But how did you know about it?"

Mr. Reeder was very seldom bewildered, but he was frankly bewildered now.

"I was listening at the door," said Miss Gillette shamelessly. "Well, not exactly listening, but I left my door open and he talks very loudly, parsons get that way, don't they?"

J. G. Reeder's face bore an expression





that was only comparable to that of a wounded fawn.

"It is very—um—wrong to listen," he began, but she dismissed all questions of propriety with an airy wave of her hand.

"It doesn't matter whether it's right or wrong. Where is Joan staying?"

This was a moment when Mr. J. G. Reeder should have risen with dignity, opened the door, pressed a fortnight's wages into her hand and dismissed her to the outer darkness, but he allowed the opportunity to pass.

"Can I bring Tommy Anton to see you?"

She leant upon the table, resting her palms on the edge. Her enthusiasm was almost infectious.

"Tommy doesn't look clever, but he really is, and he's always had a theory about Seafield's bolting. Tommy says that Frank Seafield would never have bought a letter of credit—"

"Did he have a letter of credit? I thought you told me that he drew the money out of the bank?"

Miss Gillette nodded.

"It was a letter of credit," she said emphatically, "for six thousand three hundred pounds. That's how we knew he had gone abroad. The letter was cashed in Berlin and Vienna."

For a long time Mr. J. G. Reeder looked out of the window.

"I should like to talk with Tommy Anton," he said gravely, and when he looked round Miss Gillette had gone.

For a quarter of an hour he sat with his hands folded on his lap, his pale eyes fixed vacantly on the chimney-pot of a house on the opposite side of the street, and then he heard a knock on the outer door. Rising slowly, he went out and opened it. The last person he expected to see was Inspector Gaylor.

"The Litnoff murder, are you interested?"

Mr. Reeder was interested in all murders, but not especially in the Litnoff case.

"Do you know that Jake Bradby was on his way to see you?"

Jake Bradby—Mr. Reeder frowned; he knew the name, and, going over the file of his mind, could place him.

"So far as my own opinion goes, Jake is a dead man," said Gaylor. "He had been drinking with the Russian, who had quite a lot of money in his possession. A few minutes after they left the bar Litnoff was shot, and Jake, bolting for his life, was found in possession of a loaded pistol. Men have been hanged on less evidence than that."

"I—um—doubt it. Not the fact that men have been—er—hanged on insufficient evidence, but that our poor friend was the guilty person. Jake is a 'regular,' and regulars do not carry guns—not in this country."

Gaylor smiled significantly.

"He was searching for you," he said. "He admits as much, and that makes his present attitude a little queer. For now he wants you to get him out of his trouble!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Reeder, faintly amused.

"He thinks if he could see you for a few minutes and told you what happened, you would walk out of Brixton Prison and lay your hand upon the man who committed the murder. There's a compliment for you!"

"Seriously?" J. G. Reeder was frowning again.

Gaylor nodded.

"It's rum, isn't it? The fellow was undoubtedly on his way to giving you hell, and yet the first thing he does when he gets into trouble is to squeak to you for help! Anyway, the Public Prosecutor says he would like you to see him. Brixton has

been notified. They know you there, and if you feel like listening to a few more or less fantastic lies, you ought to have an interesting evening."

He had in his pocket-book two Press cuttings which fairly covered the Litnoff shooting. Mr. Reeder accepted them with every evidence of gratitude, although he had very complete particulars of the case in the drawer of his writing-table.

Gaylor had one quality which Mr. Reeder admired—he was no "lingerer." There were many interesting people in the world who did not know where their interest ended; men who outstayed the excuse for their presence, and dawdled from subject to subject. Gaylor was blessed with a sense of drama and could make his abrupt exit upon an effective line. He made such an exit now.

"You needn't ask him to tell you about the diamond clasp," he said. "He'll tell you that! But don't forget that the last time Litnoff was charged that bizarre note came into the evidence."

Inspector Gaylor was a well-read man and used words like "bizarre" without self-conscious effort.

When he had gone, Mr. Reeder fixed his glasses and read the cuttings which the detective had left. He found nothing that he did not already know. Jake Bradby was, as he had said, a "regular," an habitual criminal with a working knowledge of the common law in so far as it affected himself. No old lag carries firearms, especially an old lag who was a convict on licence, and was liable to be arrested at sight. Judges are most unsympathetic in their attitude toward armed criminals, and Jake and his fellows knew too well the penalties of illicit armament to take the dreadful risk of being found in possession of an automatic pistol.

J. G. had a criminal mind. He knew exactly what he would have done had he been Jake Bradby and had shot his companion. He would have thrown away the pistol before he bolted. That Jake had not done so was proof to him that he was unaware that the pistol was in his pocket.

He was musing on this matter when he heard the door of the outer office open and the sound of low voices. A second later Miss Gillette came in a little out of breath. She closed the door behind her.

"I've brought them both," she said rapidly. "I 'phoned to Joan Ralph—she was just going out. Can I ask them to come in?"

To Bradby came a letter from another old lag.



He felt that it was almost an act of humility that she should ask his permission, and bowed his assent.

Tommy Anton was a tall young man; the sort that perhaps two women in the course of the years would regard as good looking, and the rest would scarcely notice. Joan Ralph, on the other hand, was distinctly pretty and unusual. She was dark and clear-skinned, and had one of those supple figures that gave Mr. Reeder the impression that its owner did not wear sufficient clothes for warmth or safety.

"This is Tommy, and this is Joan," Miss Gillette introduced them unnecessarily, for Mr. Reeder could hardly have mistaken one for the other.

The moment he saw them he knew they would have nothing new to tell him if they were left to tell their own stories. He listened with great patience to the repetition of all he knew.

Tommy Anton gave a graphic description of his own amazement, consternation and emotions when he had discovered that his partner had vanished. He paid a loyal tribute to the character and qualities of the missing man.

"Did Mr. Seafield ever talk to you about a diamond brooch?" interrupted Mr. Reeder.

Tommy stared at him.

"No—we were in the car trade. He seldom discussed his private affairs. Of course, I knew about Joan—"

"Did your father ever speak of a diamond brooch or clasp?" Mr. Reeder addressed the girl, and she shook her head.

"Never—he never spoke about jewellery except—that was years ago, when I first met Frank Seafield. Daddy put some money into the Pizarro expedition and so did Frank; they were awfully enthusiastic about it."

Mr. Reeder looked up at the ceiling and went rapidly over the folders of his memory. When she was on the point of explaining, he stopped her with a gesture.

"Pizarro expedition, 1923; to recover the buried treasures of the Incas. It was organised by Antonio Pizarro, who claimed

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to be a descendant of the conqueror of Peru. His real name was Bendini—a New York Italian with three convictions for high-class swindles. The company was registered in London, and all the people who put money into the scheme lost it—isn't that right?"

He beamed at her triumphantly, and she smiled.

"I don't know so much about it as you. Daddy put five hundred pounds into it and Frank Seafeld put a hundred—he was at Oxford then. I know they lost their money. Frank didn't mind very much, but daddy was annoyed, because he was sure that there were great treasure houses in Peru that had yet to be discovered."

"And was there a talk of diamond brooches?" asked Mr. Reeder.

She hesitated.

"Jewels. I don't remember that there was anything said about brooches."

J. G. wrote down three words, one of which, she saw, was "Pizarro." The second seemed to bear some resemblance to "Murphy." She thought the association of the two names was a little incongruous. He questioned her shortly about her own situation. She had a small private income, and there was no immediate urgency so far as money was concerned, although things would become awkward unless her father were located.

And then she asked if she could see him alone. Mr. Reeder had a happy feeling that Miss Gillette entirely disapproved of the request. She could do no less than withdraw, taking her Tommy with her. He found himself being sorry for that dumb and ordinary young man—so ordinary, indeed, that Mr. Reeder, for the first time, became conscious of his mental superiority to his secretary.

He had even the courage to open the door and look out. The murmur of voices from Miss Gillette's room assured him that

they were safe from the eavesdropping propensities of that curious young lady.

"Mr. Reeder"—he realised from her tone that Joan Ralph was finding some difficulty in fitting her thoughts into words—"I suppose it has occurred to you that my father may have gone off with—somebody? I am not stupid about these things, and I know that men of his age do have—well, affairs. But I am perfectly sure that daddy had none. Dr. Ingham hinted tactfully that this might be the situation; the doctor was awfully sweet about it, but I know that theory is wrong. Daddy had no friends. I used to open all his letters, and there was never one that he objected to my seeing."

"The letters that came to the office, too?" he asked.

She smiled at the question.

"Naturally I did not see those—there were very few, and daddy had nothing furtive in his composition. I did know that he was corresponding with Dr. Ingham. My father was what is known as a High Churchman and wrote letters to the Church papers. That is practically the only friend he had—outside our little circle at Bishop's Stortford."

Mr. Reeder looked at her thoughtfully.

"Did you think Frank Seafeld had—um—a lady friend—um—other than yourself?" he asked.

She was emphatic on this point. He would have been surprised if she had not been.

He guided her to Miss Gillette's room, and presently he heard the three go out. That Miss Gillette should have left the office without asking permission was not remarkable.

With great care he composed three telegrams, and, calling at the post office, handed them in. One was certainly addressed to Murphy.

A tramcar deposited him within walking distance of Brixton Prison, where men under remand are segregated.

Mr. Reeder was not unknown at Brixton, though his visits were rare, and within a few minutes of his arrival he was taken to a bare waiting-room, where he was joined by Jake Bradby.

The man was shaken. The rather defiant impertinent criminal Mr. Reeder had known had disappeared, and in his place was a man terror-stricken by the fate which had overcome him.

"You know me, Mr. Reeder." His manner was a little wild and the hand that emphasised almost every sentence was trembling. "I never had a gun in my life, and I would no more think of shooting a man than I would of cutting my own throat. I bashed a fellow or two—"

"And there are one or two that you intended bashing," said Mr. Reeder pleasantly.

"It was drink, Mr. Reeder," pleaded Jake. "I suppose Gaylor told you that I was coming to see you. That dirty dog would say anything to put me wrong. Besides, Mr. Reeder, I didn't know this Russian: why should I want to shoot him?"

Mr. Reeder shook his head.

"People sometimes shoot the merest acquaintances," he said brightly. "Now tell me all about it, Bradby, with fewer lies than usual. Maybe I can help you. I don't say that I can, but it may be possible."

Bradby told his story as coherently as he could. Occasionally Mr. Reeder had to bring him back from rambling side issues, but, on the whole, the tale he had to tell was convincing. He forgot, however, one important detail.

"When that man was charged with being drunk some days ago," said Mr. Reeder, "he talked to the police in his—um—intoxication, of a diamond clasp—"

"That's right, sir," interrupted the man eagerly. "He mentioned it to me, too. I'd forgotten all about that. He told me I could see it. I thought it was just being gassed that made him speak that way, and to tell you the truth, I'd forgotten all about it." And then a new note of anxiety came into his tone: "Has that been lost? I swear I never saw it."

J. G. Reeder looked at him long and fixedly. A gentle glow of satisfaction came to him. He had spoken of the clasp to Joan Ralph for no other reason than his recollection of the police court proceedings against Litnoff. That reference to the diamond brooch had intrigued him at the time he had read of it. Litnoff had no history as a receiver—that fact had been brought out in court.

"Try to remember, Bradby, what other things he said."

Bradby knitted his forehead in an agony of recollection.

"I can't remember anything, Mr. Reeder. I wasn't with him long after we left the boozer—the public-house. He was going home; he lived in Bloomsbury—Lammington Buildings. That was a funny thing; I had known of Lammington Buildings through a pal of mine, who got five years for slush printing. He had a friend who lived there."

Mr. Reeder was interested mainly because the only address which the police knew in connection with Litnoff was his lodging in Pimlico.

"How did all this come out that he is living in Lammington Buildings?" he asked.

"He wanted to take a taxi; I told him I was living in Holborn. He said: 'You can drop me at Lammington Buildings.' After that he sort of corrected himself, but I knew he had let his address slip out. You are going to do something for me, ain't you,



Mr. Reeder? You have always been fair to me."

"That is not my recollection of your expressed opinion," said Mr. Reeder acidly.

Going back to town he pondered on the possibility that Litnoff also might have had a "friend" in this block of flats.

It was raining heavily when his bus dropped him at the corner of Southampton Row, but it had been raining more or less all day, and since he wore his shabby yellow mackintosh, which, coming almost to his heels, gave him, despite his bent shoulders, a giant-like appearance he did not think it necessary to unfurl the umbrella which he carried on his arm summer and winter, although it was never known to be opened.

He found Lammington Buildings without much trouble. It was situate in a side turning off Gower Street.

Mr. Reeder opened his inquiries with the hall porter. The name of Litnoff was unknown; but the hall porter was a reader of newspapers and had seen a portrait of the murdered man. Almost before Mr. Reeder could put a question, the porter blurted out his suspicion.

"I bet that's Schmidt. If it isn't, it's his twin brother. In fact, I was just writing a letter to the 'Daily Megaphone.' I always thought that Schmidt was a queer customer. He only slept here once or twice a month. I was talking to Mrs. Kirbin this afternoon about him. As a matter of fact, she's in his flat now, though she's one of those kind of women who wouldn't talk. You can't get a word out of her. I says to her: 'Suppose the police come here and want to know?' 'Let 'em come,' she says. What can you do with a woman like that?"

Mr. Reeder could supply no reply to this pertinent question, and then, surprisingly, the hall porter said:

"I knew you, Mr. Reeder, the moment I put my eyes on you. You were in the Orderly Street affair. I was the porter at the hotel, if you will remember, who saw the man getting out of the window!"

He went, with surprising accuracy, into the particulars of a case in which the detective had figured many years before.

Mr. Reeder was a good listener. He discovered at the very early stages of his career that the art of listening was the art of detection, and he allowed the porter to continue his reminiscences before he asked:

"Is Mrs. Kirbin in the flat now?"

The porter pointed dramatically to a door that led to the front of the vestibule.

"Do you want to see her?"

"I should like," said Mr. Reeder.

The porter rang and knocked. After a considerable time the door was opened a little way, and the space was filled by a suspicious-looking and bare-armed lady who wore a soiled apron and had a face which was equally in need of hot water and soap.

"This is Mr. Reeder," said the porter with such satisfaction that it was evident he had no deep affection for the untidy charwoman. "The well-known detective," he added.

Mrs. Kirbin wilted at the word.

"Everything can be explained," she said a little incoherently, and as Mr. Reeder followed her into the hall, she slammed the door in the face of the outraged porter, who at least expected to participate in the portion of the confidences which hitherto she had withheld from him.

"Will you come in, sir?"

She led the way into a barely-furnished little room which obviously had served as a sitting-room. There was a table, a side-board, a small square carpet on the floor, and a couple of chairs. On one wall was a map printed, as Mr. Reeder discovered, in Switzerland. It showed a section of the Canton of Vaud, and there was an irregular patch outlined in red ink from the contours; it evidently stood at some considerable height upon the lake. Its significance Mr. Reeder did not grasp till much later.

"I don't know what to say or what to do next," said Mrs. Kirbin. She spoke very

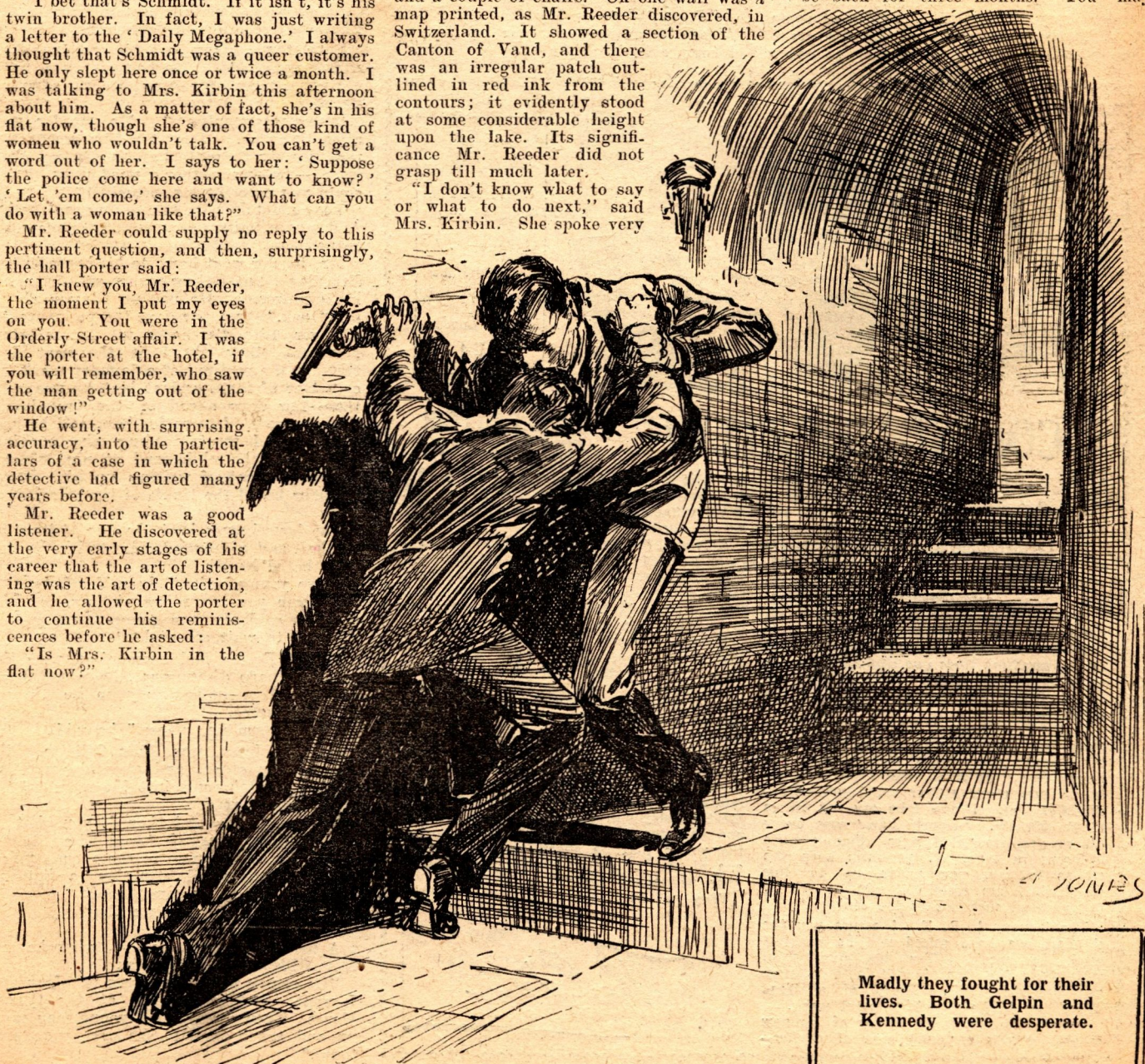
rapidly, without full-stops, commas, or any other form of punctuation. "The money was honestly come by, and is in the Post Office bank, except the rent, which I paid, and I have a receipt with the stamp on it; and I have done what Mr. Schmidt told me to do, as I can prove by his letter. I am a widow with five mouths to fill—"

She went on to explain that they were the property of her five legitimate offsprings, that she "did" for respectable families, and that she had never been in trouble, or accepted outdoor relief from the parish, even in her most difficult times.

"What money is this?" interrupted Mr. Reeder, when he thought she had gone on far enough.

The money that had come to her on Wednesday. She had found it on the table in the dining-room with a letter. Beneath her skirt she had a pocket. Mr. Reeder looked discreetly away while she explored this receptacle, and presently brought out an envelope from which she took a single sheet of notepaper.

"Please pay the rent with the enclosed. I am going away to France, and shall not be back for three months. You may



Madly they fought for their lives. Both Gelpin and Kennedy were desperate.



take double wages while I am gone, and I do not wish you to discuss my business."

The letter was written in a neat clerky hand.

"You found this on the table, you say?"

"On Wednesday morning; I put the money into the Post Office Savings Bank," she went on even more rapidly. "I paid the rent, and I have got a printed receipt with a stamp on it—"

"Nobody doubts that," said Mr. Reeder soothingly.

"If you are in the police—"

"I am not," said Mr. Reeder. "I really am not a policeman at all, I am—um—an investigator."

She knew very little about her employer. Three days a week she used to come to tidy the flat. For this purpose she was entrusted with a key. She had very strict orders that if the door did not yield when she turned the key, and was obviously bolted on the inside, she was to go away. This had happened three times in the course of the past year.

Mr. Schmidt, though a very healthy-looking gentleman, was an invalid. Sometimes he had very bad spells, and she had come to find the atmosphere of his bed-room sickly with the smell of drugs. He never

spoke about his business, and when he spoke at all it was with a very strong foreign accent. She had an idea he was an actor because she had once seen a box containing wigs and moustaches and theatrical make-up, and she had seen a photograph of him in some theatrical rôle.

Although it was a ground floor flat, it only consisted of three rooms and a kitchenette. One was entirely bare except that in a cupboard he found three unceased pillows. Mrs. Kirbin explained that occasionally Mr. Schmidt had a weakness for pillows, though the only time he ever slept there one sufficed him.

The bed-room contained an iron bedstead with a mattress, comparatively new, a small dressing-chest, a mirror, a little table, and two chairs. The bed was not made, the blankets were neatly folded at the foot of the bare mattress and covered with a sheet. On the wall was a lithographed portrait of a man in a foreign uniform. Mr. Reeder guessed it was Russian.

Over the bed was hung a shelf which contained four or five Russian books, and here he made a discovery; for on the fly-leaf of one was a long inscription in French:

"Presented to me by the Grand Duke Alexander on the occasion of my performance in 'Revisor.'"

Beneath this was a single letter "L."

The main interest for Mr. Reeder lay in the fact that the handwriting was not the same as that in the letter.

In the small cupboard he found two medicine bottles half filled. He sniffed one and discovered the unmistakable scent of spirits of chloroform. He was hardly as much impressed by the contents as by the labels, which were those of a Bloomsbury chemist. He left Mrs. Kirbin and went in search of the disgruntled hall porter.

"Mr. Schmidt" had had visitors, but apparently they came after eleven o'clock at night, at which hour the porter went off duty; the lift being an automatic one, was operated by the tenants themselves. He would not have known of this, but for the fact that one of the other tenants in the building had seen people going into or coming from the flat in the middle of the night. They were invariably men.

A chemist's shop on the corner of the block was Mr. Reeder's next objective. The chemist was a suspicious man, not inclined to answer readily to the detective's questions. Mr. Reeder, however, carried authority in the shape of a small warrant card, for he had definite association with the Public Prosecutor's department.

Both the chemist and his assistant had seen Mr. Schmidt. He had called to have medicines made up and to purchase surgical supplies.

"Surgical supplies?" Mr. Reeder was almost excited. "Dear me, how excellently that fits my theory! Pardon me, my dear sir. I—um—was rather carried away. Now, could you describe Mr. Schmidt?"

They could describe him quite graphically. And Mr. Schmidt was undoubtedly the dead Litnoff.

Mr. Reeder went home to his house in the Brockley Road feeling rather satisfied with his discoveries. He had no illusion about his "luck." In a few days the police would discover Litnoff's home in Lammington Mansions (they found it the next day through the medium of a laundry mark, as a matter of fact), and at best he was only those few days ahead of the "regulars." There were no letters for him, and he had his tea and toast, reading the evening newspapers the while, and at nine o'clock was in the act of writing up his diary, when he heard the tinkle of the street door bell.

The housekeeper kept the two visitors in the hall and announced them to Mr. Reeder with bated breath.

"Two young ladies," she said primly. "I told them you never saw visitors, but one of them said she was going to see you if she had to wait all night."

If Mr. Reeder had harmonised with the tone of sharp disapproval, he would have ordered them immediately to be thrown into the street.

"Show them up, please," he said.

One, at least, was Miss Gillette. He guessed the other, and guessed correctly, for Joan Ralph came into the room behind his typing secretary.

"I would have telephoned you, but I didn't think it was safe," said Miss Gillette, almost before she was in the room. "You remember you asked Joan about a diamond clasp, or brooch, or something?"

Mr. Reeder offered her a chair.

"Have you seen it?"

A foolish question, he felt, when he saw Miss Gillette's visible scorn.

"Of course we haven't seen it. Joan and I went to dine to-night at the Corner House. Then a red-haired young man came up and asked Joan if she ever wore plus fours."



Letters to the Editor should be addressed to "The Thriller" Office, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

## "COMING SHORTLY!" THE EDITOR GREET'S YOU

MY expectations are more than realised. As I sit at my desk writing these lines I am faced by figures which tell their own story of the enthusiasm with which "The Thriller" has been received by lovers of "strong meat" fiction all over the land.

Your comments have been most heartening; your compliments overwhelming. "How do you do it for twopence?" inquired H. W. (Surbiton). "I am a 'thriller' enthusiast, but hitherto have had to pay anything from two shillings upwards in indulging my taste. Now I have my fill of thrills for twopence weekly. It's wonderful!"

J. B. T. (Glasgow) tells me that he is more than satisfied with his money's worth. "I thought your Edgar Wallace yarn was magnificent," he says, "and I was wondering if any other author could get within miles of him. I now take my hat off to Hugh Clevely. 'Lynch Law' was every bit as good as 'Red Aces,' though quite different in type. If you can keep the stories in your new paper up to this standard, I am certain it will be one of the greatest successes of the century."

Thank you, J. B. T. I assure you the standard we have raised will be matched week by week. Try the quality of "Kennedy the Con. Man" in this issue, and watch for "The Story of a Dead Man," by Leslie Charteris, next week.

Leslie Charteris is an author of the new school. He is a young man of genius—

one who is going to be talked about during the coming years. His skill with the pen is remarkable. He is a past-master of the art of thriller writing.

Amongst the multitude of manuscripts I have perused in making my selection for the issues of our new journal I have enjoyed none better than "The Story of a Dead Man." It thrills. It entertains. It is in every way excellent.

More good news now available to you is that I have persuaded Edgar Wallace to write us another adventure of Mr. J. G. Reeder. I am not yet able to give you a definite date for this return of the master of mystery, but it will not be long delayed.

I have no space in which to quote further from my correspondence, but I do thank you one and all for your congratulations and good wishes. I trust we shall meet regularly in the pages of this journal and that the quality of our stories during the weeks that lie ahead may lead every one of you to place a standing order with your newsagent for "The Thriller."

Why not do it now?

Yours sincerely,

*The Editor*





Mr. Reeder leant back on his chair.

"If she wore plus fours?" he repeated a little scandalised.

Miss Gillette nodded energetically.

"He was terribly nervous," said Miss Gillette. "I have never known a red-haired man to be nervous before, they are usually rather—well, you know, the other way about, but he started talking a lot of stuff about his father being a jeweller and being ill, and then he mentioned a diamond brooch. He said he had under-valued it. I thought he was drunk. Joan didn't."

"What was his name?"

Joan Ralph shook her head.

"It was extraordinary, because I was once photographed in plus fours. Daddy took the picture on a day when we had a lot of old Rhodene girls down at Bishop's Stortford and we played a sort of pastoral, and I borrowed my cousin's plus fours because I was supposed to represent a man. Daddy was rather amused, and took a picture, and said it was the best photograph that he had ever had of me."

Mr. Reeder ran his fingers through his scanty hair.

"What did he say about the brooch?"

Miss Gillette was not sure that he said anything that was intelligent. It was not until after she had threatened to call for the manager and the red-haired young man had retired abashed. "It was only then," said Miss Gillette, "that we felt that we oughtn't to have been so stupid, and we should have asked him his name and address."

Mr. Reeder nodded his agreement.

"He was a jeweller, his father was ill, he had under-valued a brooch, and he had seen a portrait of our young friend in plus fours. That's very remarkable. It is a great pity, you will very likely never see him again!"

"But we have," interrupted Miss Gillette. "He was on the tram, and he followed us right down here—in fact, he is outside the house at this minute."

Mr. Reeder stared at her.

"Did you speak to him?"

"Of course, we did not speak to him," said Miss Gillette scornfully. "How could you speak to a red-haired young man in the street! He didn't speak to us, either, and he just sat in the corner of the tramcar and kept looking at us from behind his newspaper."

Mr. Reeder walked to the window, pulled aside the curtain gently, and peered out. Standing under a lamp-post, and barely visible, was a figure of a man, and even as Mr. Reeder looked, as though aware of the scrutiny, he turned rapidly in the direction of Lewisham High Road.

In a second Mr. Reeder was out of the room, flying downstairs, but when he came to the street it was absolutely empty of pedestrians. A tram was moving towards London. He saw a slim figure of a young man leap upon the footboard. By the time he reached the corner of the road, the car was beyond pursuit. Mr. Reeder looked round for a taxicab, but there was none in sight, and with great reluctance, and conscious that he was bareheaded, and that a drizzling rain was falling, and, in consequence, he must look a little ridiculous, he made his way back to the house.

And yet, for all his failure, there was a curious sense of elation in J. G. Reeder's heart; for the mystery of certain strange disappearances was almost solved.

To Miss Gillette he was a great disappointment, for he seemed no longer interested in red-haired young men, or brooches, or even young ladies in plus fours,

**NEXT WEEK!**

**"THE STORY OF A DEAD MAN"**

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and she went back to London with her friend, her faith shaken in her employer.

With great care, Mr. Reeder composed an agony column, which he telephoned to four newspapers:

"Red-haired young man, please communicate with plus four girl."

The address that followed was that of his own office.

**DANGER!**

MISS GILLETTE arrived an hour late, which was not very remarkable. She had not seen the advertisements, so Mr. Reeder had nothing to explain. Her interest in his affairs had, apparently, waned completely.

At twelve o'clock she came into his room and announced that she had a luncheon engagement, and might not be back till three. He was not very sorry. He rather wished she would not come back till three o'clock on some date to be named by himself, and he wished that he had the courage to tell her so.

There was no response to his advertisement, and he regretted that his telephone number had not been included in his address.

Miss Gillette had hardly left before the first of Mr. Reeder's visitors came. Inspector Gaylor was curious to know what had been the result of the visit to Brixton Prison.

"I am inclined to agree with you," he said, when Reeder had sketched the conversation he had had with the prisoner. "At any rate, there is no evidence on which we could get a conviction. The pistol was of foreign make, and we have been able to trace one important fact—that when it was sold in Belgium, Brodby was still in prison. It might, of course, have been resold to him, but that's unlikely."

"Have you ever heard of the Pizarro Syndicate?" asked Mr. Reeder unexpectedly.

Gaylor had an excellent memory, possibly the better because he had been on that particular case.

"The Treasure Hunters," he smiled. "It's strange you should mention Pizarro. I was trying to trace a man named Gelpin who was one of the biggest shareholders and one of the biggest dupes. I wanted him to get particulars of a former clerk of his, but I just couldn't find him, which is queer, since he was a fairly rich man."

"Dead," suggested Mr. Reeder.

Gaylor shook his head.

"No, he is abroad somewhere, I think; anyway, he left the Midlands two years ago."

Mr. Reeder pursed his lips and looked at the detective tragically.

"Left the Midlands two years ago," he repeated mechanically. "Dear me! Went abroad with a letter of credit, I am sure. How many people were there in the Pizarro Syndicate?"

Gaylor was looking at him suspiciously.

"What's the idea? Has any other member of the syndicate gone to live abroad?"

"Two, to my knowledge," and there was a dead silence which Mr. Reeder broke. "One was a young man called Seafield."

Gaylor nodded.

"I remember that name—yes?"

"The other's name was Ralph," said Mr. Reeder slowly.

He took from his drawer a written précis that he had prepared that morning and passed it silently to the inspector. Gaylor read very slowly, and naturally so, since J. G.'s writing was not the most legible.

When he finished he reached for the telephone.

"I happen to know that Gelpin's bank was



the Scottish and Midland in Birmingham. Do you mind if I put a trunk call through?"

He gave the urgent signal to the long-distance operator, and within five minutes he was talking to the bank. Mr. Reeder only heard the questions and the monosyllabic rejoinders.

Presently Gaylor hung up the receiver.

"£17,500 letter of credit," he said shortly, "cashed in Paris, Budapest, and Madrid. Since then the bank has had three cheques for considerable amounts. They had been cashed in foreign cities, and had been accompanied by letters from Mr. Gelpin. The bank manager says that Gelpin is a man who loves travel, so that he is not at all alarmed about it, and he has got a pretty good balance. He said one thing which may, or may not, have some bearing—that when Gelpin left he announced his intention of going to Montreux."

Mr. Reeder remembered instantly the little map on the wall of Litnof's room with the red irregular triangle.

Mr. Reeder rose at that moment to go to the door of the outer office to take in a cablegram from a Western Union messenger. He walked to the window, opened it, and read the page of typescript. It was signed "Murphy," and was from the head of the New York Detective Department.

"Pizarro gang has not operated for past ten years. Pizarro in Sing-Sing serving life sentence. His right-hand man, Kennedy, was last heard of in California twelve years ago, believed to be reformed character. Nothing known here of new Pizarro enterprise."

Gaylor read the telegram and handed it back to Reeder.

"Do you think this is a Pizarro stunt?"

"My unpleasant mind leads me to that conclusion," said Mr. Reeder.

The Rev. Dr. Ingham came at two o'clock, at the moment when Mr. Reeder was eating one of the two large buns which he invariably purchased on his way to the office, and which as invariably served him for lunch.

He could almost sense the excited condition in which the doctor came by the rapidity and nervousness of his knock.

"My dear fellow—the most amazing thing has happened—Mr. Ralph has been found!"

J. G. Reeder should have been overjoyed by the intelligence; instead he looked a little grieved.

"This is very pleasant news," he said, "very pleasant, indeed—h'm!"

The clergyman fished inside his clerical coat and produced a telegram.

"I happened to call on Miss Ralph this morning, and whilst I was in the hotel this telegram came. Naturally the young lady is beside herself with relief. I confess that I also am feeling happier."

Mr. Reeder took the telegram. It was handed in at Berlin West, and was addressed to Joan Ralph, Haymarket Hotel.

"Shall be in Germany for a month. Write to me Hotel Marienbad, Munich. Mark letter 'Await arrival.' Love."

"DADDY."

"Remarkable," said Mr. Reeder.

"I thought so. I asked the young lady to let me have the wire to show you."

"Remarkable," said Mr. Reeder again.

"It is remarkable," agreed Dr. Ingham. "And yet it isn't. He may have been called away to Germany and had no time to communicate with his daughter—"

"I wasn't referring to that," said Mr. Reeder. "When I said it was remarkable,

I was thinking that it was both odd and remarkable that he should have wired to her at an hotel where she has never stayed before."

Dr. Ingham's jaw dropped.

"Good heavens!" he gasped.

His face had gone pale; it was as though there had come to him a sudden realisation of just what this telegram might signify.

"That did not occur to me. She had never stayed there before—are you sure?"

Mr. Reeder nodded.

"Miss Ralph mentioned it casually last night just before she was leaving—I presume she told you she called on me? No, usually she stays at the hotel her father patronises. She stayed at the Haymarket because it was close to Mr. Ralph's office. At any rate, he would have telegraphed to Bishop's Stortford."

"It is strange," said the clergyman, after a pause.

"It is strange," said Mr. Reeder. "It has assumed the appearance of—um—a case. Distinctly a case."

For a long time he seemed totally absorbed in the rivulets of rain which trickled down the panes of his window.

"It is certainly bewildering," said Dr. Ingham at last. "I confess I am becoming alarmed. This red-haired young man, for example—"

"Miss Ralph told you that?"

"Miss Gillette—your charming secretary. She arrived at the hotel with her brother—"

"Her young man," corrected Mr. Reeder, and coughed.

"Really? She did not introduce him."

"She never does anything that she should do," said Mr. Reeder bitterly.

He swung round in his swivel chair as though forcing himself from the hypnotic attractions of wriggling rain-drops.

"The red-haired young man is also remarkable. I am rather worried about him. He stands, as it were, on the threshold of—um—life. In a few years' time he may be in the happy enjoyment of a red-haired wife and—um—red-haired children. To be cut off in his prime, and just because his father was ill and he under-valued a diamond brooch or clasp, would be grossly unfair."

The doctor stared at him blankly.

"I don't quite know what you mean. To be cut off? You don't mean that this young man is in danger?"

"I wonder!" said Mr. Reeder.

For a long while they sat gloomily surveying each other.

"I am bewildered," sighed Dr. Ingham at last. "I feel as if I had strayed into some terrible land of unreality. Mr. Reeder," he leant forward, "are you ever in Kent?"

"I live there," said Mr. Reeder, as, indeed, he did, for Brockley Road is situated on the London fringe of that county.

"I mean in the country. I have been discussing this matter with my wife—a woman of remarkable acumen. She has a theory which, I must confess, I regard as entirely fantastic. I should not have mentioned it to you but for the doubts you have concerning this Berlin telegram, which I imagined cleared up the mystery. I said to her only last night: 'My dear, if you told Mr. Reeder your theory he would think you had been reading detective literature!' She is an invalid—very seldom leaves the house. I feel that it would be asking you a great deal if I suggested you should spend a week-end with us."

Mr. Reeder hesitated.

"I seldom go out," he said; "but what is your good lady's theory?"

The doctor smiled.

"I feel I ought to apologise for even advancing such a suggestion. Years ago, when I was in America, I was swindled.

The sum was insignificant, but it was a lesson to me. Here was I, an independent man, thanks to my dear father's beneficence, and yet the cupidity which is latent in all of us overcame my scruples, and I invested in a ridiculous get-rich-quick scheme—a sort of treasure hunt organised by a rascal called Pizarro!"

Mr. Reeder nodded, but offered no comment.

"My dear wife has an idea that behind Mr. Ralph's disappearance is some diabolical plot—exactly what it is I am at a loss to explain. The theory, fantastical as it is, has to do with Pizarro. Now, I happen to know that Pizarro is in prison—at least, that is my belief—"

Mr. Reeder raised his long forefinger; it might have been a gesture of warning. It was in truth an indication that he wished to speak.

"On Saturday afternoon I have nothing particular to do," he said. "May I trespass on your hospitality? May I say with respect that your wife is a very intelligent lady, and I should like to meet her."

Dr. Ingham would send his car to meet the Dover express. The plan was agreeable to Mr. Reeder, but—

"I must return at night. I—um—never sleep in any bed but my own."

Dr. Ingham understood this prejudice against strange beds. He had an alternative suggestion, namely, that Mr. Reeder should make the whole journey by car.

"It will take a little longer, but it's a very good road, and I could have you picked up at your place in Brockley, which is on the way."

Here again he found J. G. Reeder agreeable.

For the remainder of the day Mr. Reeder waited in vain for some communication from the red-haired youth, but none had come when Miss Gillette returned to the office, which was somewhere in the region of five o'clock.

He was not exactly idle; an assistant whom he sometimes employed came to see him at his urgent request, and spent a profitable afternoon searching certain records at Somerset House.

By the time Miss Gillette returned he had a complete list of English subscribers of the Pizarro Syndicate, and, with three exceptions, had sent telegrams to their known addresses. He did not wire either to Mr. Ralph, or the missing Seafeld, or yet Mr. Gelpin.

Miss Gillette brought one item of news. She had spent the afternoon in committee with her fiancé and Joan Ralph, and they had come to the conclusion that something was wrong. It hardly seemed worth a committee-meeting, thought Mr. Reeder, but he avoided trouble by refraining from making such provocative comment.

He left the office at six o'clock and wandered off to Scotland Yard, and went immediately to Gaylor's room.

"I could have saved you the trouble," said Gaylor, when Reeder told him about the telegrams he had sent. "We have already been in touch with the local police, and they are making inquiries. We have found two subscribers, but they are very poor people, and not likely to be affected. I also had a look at that map in Schmidt's flat, and have been on the telephone to the Montreux police. They say that the area marked out in red ink is a derelict farm, the property of a Russian. The police chief was very decent; he sent a couple of men climbing about Gyon to investigate, and they report there is nobody there; the place is in a state of ruin, and it has not been occupied for a number of years. There used to be a caretaker, but he has been withdrawn. The Russian was, of course, Litnof. Apparently he was there only once



or twice in his life, and never lived at the farm. It's a puzzling business."

"To me it is as clear as the running water in the mountain stream," said Mr. Reeder poetically; "but that's, of course, because I have a criminal mind."

He returned to his office at nine that evening, after a frugal dinner. No telegrams had arrived. The only letter awaiting him was one from a former client, enclosing a cheque.

#### A NIGHT OF ACTION.



THE drizzle had turned to rain. It pelted down on Mr. Reeder's mackintosh and flowed in spasmodic splashes from the brim of his high-crowned hat as he trudged towards the

nearest tramcar that would take him home. It was not that sort of night that people would be abroad. Again he found the lounge in a yellow oilskin coat standing at the corner of Brockley Road, and another idler pacing leisurely up and down. This man turned at the sound of his steps and came towards him.

"Have you got a match, guv'nor?" His voice was harsh and common, and did not somehow go with his respectable attire, for he had a blue trench-coat buttoned up to his chin and belted about his waist. The point of Mr. Reeder's umbrella came up until it pointed just above that belt.

"I haven't a match. If I had, I would not be so foolish as to put my hands in my pockets so as to give it to you," he said harangingly. "Now, if you will kindly stand out of my way, you will save yourself a lot of trouble."

"I asked you civilly, didn't I?" growled the man.

"Your civility doesn't amuse me," said Mr. Reeder, and then suddenly his hand shot out and he got the man by the shoulder, exhibiting a strength which none would have suspected in him, and sent him flying toward the road.

He passed through the little iron gate, slammed it behind him.

"And you can tell Kennedy from me he is wasting his time."

"I don't know what you are talking about," snarled the man.

Mr. Reeder did not parley with him. He mounted the steps, fitted the key in the lock, and entered. He stopped long enough to hang his wet mackintosh in the hall, remove his goloshes, and then went up to his room. He was in darkness. He did not switch on the light, and, crossing the room, he pulled aside the heavy curtains and looked out.

The man in the blue trench-coat was still standing in front of the house, but now he had been joined by the loiterer in the yellow oilskin coat, and they were talking together.

Mr. Reeder was cursed with a sense of humour which was peculiar to himself. He went into his bed-room, and from a shelf in the cupboard he took a small air pistol and,

"breaking" it, inserted a pellet. At a distance which separated him from his two watchers an air pistol would not be dangerous, but it should be very painful. Gently lifting the sash, he took aim and pressed the trigger. He heard the man in the yellow oilskin yell, and saw him leap into the air.

"What's biting you?" demanded blue trench-coat.

"Some'n bit me."

He was clasp his neck and rolling his head backwards and forwards in his pain.

Mr. Reeder broke the pistol again, put another pellet in the breech, and took even more accurate aim.

"Say, listen," said the man in the trench-coat.

He said no more. His hat went flying, and, looking up in his bewilderment, he saw Mr. Reeder leaning out of the window.

"Go away," said Mr. Reeder gently.

He did not hear the reply, because he closed the window quickly. He objected to profanity on principle. But when, a few minutes later, he looked out again, the two men had disappeared.

It was eleven o'clock when he went to bed. He was by no means a light sleeper, or he would have heard the first pebble that struck his window. The second woke him, and for a good reason—the stone was heavier and the pane smashed.

He got out of bed quickly, and very cautiously went to the edge of the window and looked out. There was nobody in sight. Pushing open the casement, he made a more careful survey; the street was empty. He could see no living soul; and then, as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he saw a figure moving in the shadow of the one laurel-bush which decorated the front garden of his house.

This time Mr. Reeder did not take an air pistol, but a very business-like Browning, in the pocket of his dressing-gown. He went noiselessly down the

stairs, unbolted the door, opened it, and flashed a concentrated beam of a powerful spotlight into the garden. It was neither trench-coat nor oilskin, but a bedraggled youth, hatless, whose wet clothes seemed skin-tight.

From the darkness came a beseeching voice:

"Is that Mr. Reeder? For God's sake take the light off me!"

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said J. G. gently, and a little incongruously it sounded, even to himself. "Did you see my advertisement?"

The young man made a dart through the door into the hall. Mr. Reeder followed him, closed and bolted the door. He could almost hear his visitor trembling.

"Which way do I go, sir?" he whimpered. J. G. led the way up the stairs into the study, and switched on the light.

The red-haired youth was a pitiable sight, his face streaked with blood, the knuckles of his hands were bleeding. He had neither collar nor tie, and, as he stood, his soaked clothes formed an ever-growing pool upon Mr. Reeder's shabby carpet.

"I didn't intend coming here, but after they tried to kill me—"

"I think you had better have a hot bath," interrupted Mr. Reeder.

Fortunately, the bath-room was on the first floor, and by some miracle the water was really hot. He left the trembling youth to divest himself of his sodden clothes, and, going upstairs, collected a few articles of wearing apparel.

In his study he had a coffee-making machine, and in the cupboard a large seed cake. He was partial to seed cake.

The coffee was ready when the young man came into the room. He was not an attractive young man; he was very pale, he had a very large nose and a long and bony chin. He was very thin, and Mr. Reeder's clothes did not so much fit as covered him.

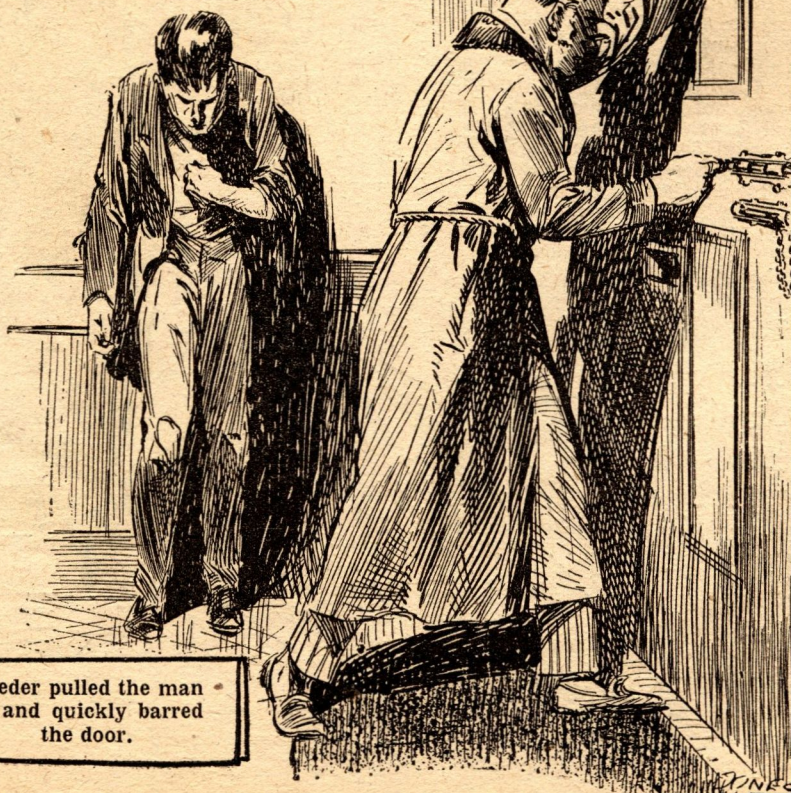
He drank the coffee eagerly, looked at the seed cake, shuddered, but betook of it whilst Mr. Reeder built up the dying fire.

"Now, Mr.—"

"Edelshaim — Benny Edelsheim," said the young man. "I live in Pepys Road, New Cross. Did your young ladies tell you about me? She's a stunning-looking girl, isn't she? I don't mean the blonde—the other one."

"Have you wakened me up in the middle of the night to discuss the attractions of brunettes?" demanded Mr. Reeder gently. "Who hit you?"

The young man felt his head



Reeder pulled the man in and quickly barred the door.



gingerly. He had tied about it a large handkerchief, which Mr. Reeder had supplied.

"I don't know, I think it was the fellow in the yellow coat. There were two of them. I was just going into my house—my father's house, when a man asked me if I had a match. I didn't like the look of him, but I was feeling for the match when he hit me. There was a car half-way down the hill—Pepps Road is built on a hill—it used to be called Red Hill once."

"The topography is familiar to me," said Mr. Reeder. "What did you do when he hit you?"

"I ran," said the other simply. "I tried to shout, but I couldn't, and then the other fellow, who was standing by the car, tripped me up." He looked at his knuckles. "That's where I got that. I think there was three of them. The chauffeur was standing by the car and he made a dive at me, but I dodged, and doubled up the hill—with the fellow in the yellow coat behind me."

"What time was this?" asked Mr. Reeder.

"About nine. I was coming to see you. In fact, I had made up my mind to. I knew where you lived, but I thought I would go home first and talk to the old man—my father. We have got a jeweller's shop in the Clerkenwell Road, but he has been ill for nearly a year, and I have been running the business."

"And you got away?" said Mr. Reeder, hastening the narrative.

"In a sense, I did," said Edelsheim. "I got over the top of the hill. I couldn't see a policeman anywhere. It is disgraceful the rates we pay and no policemen! My god, it was awful. I didn't see them for a bit, and thought I had slipped them, and then I saw the lights of the car coming. If I had any sense I would have knocked at the nearest house and gone in—and no policeman, Mr. Reeder!" His voice was thin and hysterical. "That's what we pay rates and taxes for and no so-and-so policeman in sight!"

He did not say "so-and-so," but Mr. Reeder thought his profanity was excusable.

"As I saw the car I got over the rails of a recreation ground or something. They must have seen me, because the car stopped right opposite the place where I had jumped. I didn't see the man following, but I sort of felt him. Then I found I was in a cemetery. My god, it was awful dodging in and out, the crosses and things! I climbed the wall and got out, and then I did meet a policeman. He thought I was drunk and wanted to take me to the hospital, so I bolted again."

"Did you see the man in the yellow coat?"

"Not till I got here. It was nearer twelve than eleven. I was just thinking of calling you and of what you would say to me, when I saw them both. They were coming up from the Lewisham High Road, walking together. I dived into your front garden and hid behind the bush. One of them walked up the steps and tried the door. He had a lamp. I nearly died from fright. They were messing about here for an hour."

"And you were afraid to ring, for fear that they saw you?"

"That's right. I waited until they had gone and I started chucking stones. I have broken two or three windows in this room, too."

Mr. Reeder poured out another cup of coffee and from the warming effect of the fire and the hot drink, Mr. Benny Edelsheim grew a little more confident.

"Is she here?" he asked. "The dark-haired one?"

"She is not here," said Mr. Reeder severely.

Then suddenly the young man became plaintive again.

"What's it all about?" he demanded. "I saw your advertisement when I was reading to-night. I did not see how it could be anything to do with that, and yet when I was dodging in and out of the cemetery, the idea came to me that these fellows were after me, because of that advertisement and the clasp and everything, and what I said to the young lady. Have I done anything wrong? I am sorry. I do not, as a rule, talk to young ladies without an introduction. I have been brought up as well as any man. If I have offended her relations—you are not her father, are you?"

"I am not a father," said Mr. Reeder emphatically.

"I didn't think you were," said Edelsheim, "because I knew about you. You are a detective. My old man—my father—says you are the most wonderful detective of the age. I wanted to come and explain to you that I didn't mean any harm."

Mr. Reeder pushed forward the plate of seed cake.

"You, my dear young friend," he said, "are no more, as it were, than a cog in a wheel of a very complicated machine. I can quite understand how you had embarrassed the employers of those two ferocious men. Now, let us get to the really important point: just tell me what you said, why you addressed those young ladies in the restaurant."

Benny munched the seed cake with an agonised expression; it was obvious he did not like seed cake, but his hunger had compelled him to overcome his scruples.

"I recognised her the moment I saw her. She is in my thoughts night and day, Mr. Reeder. There are some faces that hit you right in the eye, so to speak; that sort of make an impression upon you—she is not married, is she?" he asked anxiously.

"Practically," said Mr. Reeder.

The young man's face assumed an expression of acute pain.

"She is engaged," explained Mr. Reeder, in haste to remove any wrong impression he might have created.

"I will never see another face like that," said Benny dismally. "I am romantic, Mr. Reeder; I don't mind admitting it. I fell in love with her the moment I saw her photograph. She was wearing plus-fours. Cute! You have no idea what I felt like when I saw that picture. I thought: Here is the woman for me, and I only saw it for half a tick. He opened his pocket-book on the counter, the gentleman who called at the shop, and he took out the photograph, because the clasp was in the same compartment wrapped up in tissue paper, and I had a good look at the picture, and I said to myself—"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Reeder, with a certain terseness, "please don't bother about your emotions at the moment, Mr. Edelsheim. Tell me something about the clasp."

"The clasp, oh, yes. You want to know about that? It was a very pretty thing, half a buckle of diamonds and emeralds. I know a lot about stones. I was in Hatton Garden for eighteen months. My old man—my father—believed in starting me at the bottom of the ladder—"

"Did he want to sell the clasp?"

Benny shook his head.

"No, he wanted it valued. We do a lot of valuation work, and I am supposed to be pretty good at it. We have got a very





big business; half a dozen assistants, and we have a branch at Bristol."

"You valued it?" said Mr. Reeder.

"I valued it at one thousand two hundred and fifty pounds, but I made a mistake. Even the best of us make mistakes. I remember once——"

"You have undervalued it by one hundred pounds?"

"That's right. I told the young lady so when I met her. I thought she would tell her friend——"

"Her father," corrected Mr. Reeder.

"Oh, was that her father?" Benny was more interested in the parentage of his ideal than in the sordid question of a diamond and emerald clasp.

"Yes, I undervalued it one hundred pounds. What he really wanted to know was whether the stones were genuine, and, of course, I could tell him that. I don't think he would have worried about the wrong valuation and I should not have spoken about it, but I wanted a sort of



Under the threat of Reeder's automatic he raised the carpet, exposing an iron ring set in a stone flag. "They are all down below," he growled.



introduction to the young lady—you are a man of the world, Mr. Reeder."

"What time did he come into the shop?"

Benny, his mouth full of seed cake, looked thoughtfully.

"About five o'clock in the evening."

"And when you valued the clasp, what happened?"

"He wrapped it up and took it away with him. I asked him if he wanted to sell it, and he said no."

"You never saw him again?"

Benny shook his head.

"That was last Wednesday week?"

"Tuesday," said Benny promptly. "I happen to know that, because I had a date—an engagement—to take a certain party to the pictures, and I was anxious to shut up the shop and get away."

Mr. Reeder jotted down a few notes on his blotting-pad.

"Have you ever valued that clasp before?"

Benny Edelsheim looked at him with an open mouth.

"That's a curious thing that you should ask that, Mr. Reeder. I haven't, but my father has. I was describing the piece to him and he said he was certain he had valued the same piece six months ago. Of course, he may have made a mistake, but he has got a marvellous memory." He enlarged upon the memory of his parent, but Mr. Reeder was not listening.

"Why Clerkenwell?" murmured Mr. Reeder. "Do you advertise?"

"We are the best advertised valuers in London," said Benny proudly. "That's our speciality. I can't tell you how upset the governor was when I made a mistake. It sort of reflected on the firm. Oh, yes, we carry big ads. in all papers. Valuation of jewellery. You must have seen our name."

Mr. Reeder nodded.

"That accounts for it," he said.

He looked at the clock. The minute hand pointed to half-past two. Picking up the telephone he called the nearest cab rank and gave his address.

"I am going to take you home," he said. "You had better make a bundle of your wet clothes while I dress."

By the time the cab arrived Mr. Reeder, feeling very much awake, was ready. He went out first, but there was no need of his caution; less need for the Colt automatic that he held in his pocket.

The journey to Pepys Road was uneventful. He waited until the young man had entered his house and he drove to the nearest police station, and had a consultation with the night officer.

When Benny Edelsheim looked out of his window the next morning he found a uniformed policeman standing stolidly before the house, and felt that, for the first time, his rates and his taxes were justified.

#### THE REVOLVER CLUE.



THE morning brought a surprise to Mr. Reeder. When he arrived at his office he found Miss Gillette already on duty. That in itself was a notable event. She was entertaining in her room a very early caller in Dr. Ingham and from the solicitude in her tone it almost seemed that she was mothering him. Miss Gillette was one of those uncomfortable people, whose maternal instinct was highly developed.

As Mr. Reeder paused at the half-opened door, he heard her speaking.

"I shouldn't worry about it, Dr. Ingham. Reeder will put a stop to any of that sort of nonsense. He is much cleverer than he looks."

Her maligned employer passed softly into his room and rang the bell.

"I didn't hear you come in—you scare the life out of me sometimes," she complained, and added "Mr. Ingham is here."

"Dr. Ingham," said Mr. Reeder reproachfully. "You are—um—a little careless about—um—prefixes."

"He's been attacked—somebody tried to break into his house last night," said Miss Gillette. "Poor soul, he has a terrible face!"

"Let me see it, please," said J. G.

The doctor had evidently passed a strenuous night. The bridge of his handsome nose bore a strip of sticking plaster. One eye, at the moment concealed behind a shade, was blue and swollen, and his lower lip was badly cut.

"I'm afraid I look rather ghastly," he said, as he shook hands with the detective.

The undamaged portion of his face was white and drawn, and when he said that he had had no sleep that night, Mr. Reeder was not surprised.

He had gone back to St. Margaret's on the previous night and had driven himself from Dover, arriving at his house at ten o'clock.

"Grayne Hall is built on the site of an old castle," he said. "There was not enough of the original structure to restore, and I had the walls pulled down and erected a modern residence. Naturally, it is very isolated, but there is some very excellent timber and I have made a good garden. I returned before midnight, but I had hardly got to bed before my wife said that she heard a noise below. I went down, unarmed, of course, for I do not own so much as a shot-gun."

"I had reached the hall and was feeling for the light-switch when somebody struck at me. I had a fearful blow on the face, but I managed to find an old battleaxe, which hung on the wall—luckily for me. With this I defended myself."

"My wife, who had heard the fracas in the hall, screamed, and I heard one of my assailants say: 'Run for it, Kennedy!' Immediately after the hall door was thrown open and I saw two, or it may have been three, people run into the garden and vanish."

"Dear me," said Mr. Reeder. "One of them said: 'Run for it, Kennedy!' You are sure it was that?"

"I could swear that was the name. Afterwards I remembered, or rather, my dear wife remembered, that a man named Kennedy had been a member of the Pizarro gang."

Mr. Reeder was examining the clergyman's injuries thoughtfully.

"No weapon was used?"

Dr. Ingham smiled painfully.

"That's a poor consolation," he said, with some acerbity. "No, I rather think that I was struck by a fist that was holding a weapon. In the darkness this rascal must have struck wildly."

He had not sent for the police. Apparently he had no exalted opinion about the Kentish constabulary, and he admitted a horror of figuring in newspapers. Mr. Reeder could understand this; he also had a horror of publicity.

"Whether these people were plain bur-

glars who were disturbed at their work, or whether revenge for some fancied injury was at the bottom of their dastardly action, I cannot make up my mind. With Mrs. Ingham the Pizarro case is an obsession. She is, by the way, looking forward with great eagerness to meeting you."

"Now tell me, Mr. Reeder, what am I to do? I will be guided entirely by your advice. To go to the police now seems to be a fairly useless proceeding. I cannot describe the men—except for a second when they were silhouetted in the open doorway, I never saw them. My butler and my gardener made inquiries this morning, but nobody else seems to have seen them. Not even the coastguard, who has a cottage quite close."

Mr. Reeder sat with half-closed eyes, his large hands folded on his lap.

"It is very odd," he murmured at last. "Kennedy. Casius Kennedy. A bad—um—egg. He inherited it from his mother, a lady with a very—um—unpleasant history."

He pursed his under-lip; his eyes had drooped a little lower.

"It is odd—extremely odd."

Dr. Ingham drew a long breath.

"What am I to do?" he demanded.

"Ask for police protection," said Mr. Reeder. "Have an officer sleeping in the house and another stationed in the grounds. I hope to see you on Saturday."

He rose with startling abruptness and jerked out his hand.

"Till Saturday," he said, and Dr. Ingham went out a very dissatisfied man.

Mr. Reeder was no angel that morning. He was in a mood the like of which Miss Gillette could not remember. She discovered this very soon.

"What did you tell the doctor?" she asked.

"When I want you I will ring for you, young lady!" he snapped.

She went out a little dazed by his mutiny. She heard the key turn in his lock, and when she got through to him by telephone he was most unpleasant.

"I think I will go home, Mr. Reeder," she said.

"I will send you your wages by post," said he.

She went out of the office, slamming the door behind her, which (apart from the slam) was exactly what he intended she should do.

The door to the corridor he locked in the same fashion before he rang up Inspector Gaylor.

"I want a couple of men," he said. "I'm nervous, or, shall I say, apprehensive."

"I wondered when you'd start getting that way," said Gaylor. "I'm having young Edelsheim shadowed. Thanks for your letter. Is there any other development?"

Mr. Reeder told him of the doctor's unpleasant adventure.

"Oh!" said Gaylor, and then, after a silence, "That will keep."

"So I thought," said Mr. Reeder. "Do you mind if I use your name rather freely to-day?"

"So long as you don't try to borrow money on it!" said Gaylor, who had a painful sense of humour.

He spent a long time after that searching a trade telephone directory and ringing up various yachting agencies. He had become suddenly interested in pleasure cruisers. He drew blank for the first nine inquiries, but the tenth rewarded him. It was not difficult to secure the answers he wanted, but when he called on a sticky and uncommunicative agent he used the name of





Gaylor with great freedom, and invariably secured the information he required.

The tenth call needed this incentive, but the result was beyond expectations. Mr. Reeder spent a happy hour with his notes and a nautical almanac. By this time the two Scotland Yard men had arrived, and when, soon after lunch, a district messenger brought a square and heavy parcel having the label of a West End bookseller they were very useful, for one of them had been for a year in the explosives department at Scotland Yard, and had a sensitive ear for the faint ticking that came from within the parcel.

"It's a time bomb, but it may also have a make-and-break attachment."

They watched it sink heavily into a pail of water, and when, after half an hour, the Yard man took it out again, the ticking had ceased.

"They've been getting ready for this racket for a long time," said the detective. "That bomb wasn't made in a hurry—"

The telephone-bell rang at that moment, and Mr. Reeder answered it.

"Is that you, Reeder?" It was Gaylor's voice, and he was speaking very quickly. "I'm coming round to pick you up. We've found Gelpin."

"Eh?" said Mr. Reeder.

"Dead—shot through the heart. A ranger found his body in Epping Forest. Be ready."

The telephone clicked, but Mr. Reeder still stood with the receiver in his hand, a terrifying frown on his face.

"Anything wrong, sir?" asked the detective.

J. G. nodded.

"I'm wrong. If I had the brain of a—um—great man, I should have expected this."

What "this" was he did not elucidate.

Five minutes after he was one of a party of five packed in a police tender and was heading for Epping.

It was nearly dark when the car pulled up by the side of a forest by-road. A ranger led them to the spot where the body lay.

It was that of a man above medium height, and more than ordinarily broad of shoulder.

Though George Gelpin was between fifty and sixty, he had been in life a model of a man. He had been rider to hounds, a keen cricketer, something of an athlete.

"Nothing in his pockets—no identification marks of any kind. If we hadn't got his photograph and his description—they arrived this morning from Birmingham—we should have had the devil's job in tracing him."

One of the group they had found standing about the body was a doctor. He supplied certain data which confirmed Mr. Reeder in his opinion. But the chief confirmation came when he examined the outspread hands of the silent figure.

There was no mark of car wheels, and the bushes behind which the man was found showed no evidence of crushing. It might have been an ordinary case of suicide, and the doctor ventured this opinion.

A revolver had been found near the body. He must have been shot with the muzzle almost touching his coat, for it was burnt.

"We have the number of the revolver, and we are making inquiries about it. I don't think they will help much. It will be a day or two before we can trace it. Who has that gun?"

One of the waiting detectives took it out of his pocket. It was a small, six-chambered Colt.

One of the detectives who had been on guard over the body when they arrived offered a piece of information.

"There are initials scratched on the back plate of the butt," he said. "F. S."

He took the weapon from his pocket and passed it across to Gaylor.

"F. S.," frowned the inspector. "That's a pretty common initial."

"Frank Seafield, for example," said Mr. Reeder, and Gaylor gaped at him.

"Why should it be Seafield? That's wildly improbable, Reeder."

And yet, when they returned to town and Mr. Reeder got into communication with Seafield's late partner, Gaylor found that the surmise was not so wild. Tommy Anton called at Scotland Yard and saw and identified the weapon.

"That's Frank's," he said immediately. "He always carried a revolver. I used to chaff him about it. He had no reason to, so far as I know, and I rather think that carrying the gun was a bit of swank. He was a little on the theatrical side."

Joan Ralph, Seafield's fiancée, had gone back to Bishop's Stortford. They reached her by telephone. She, too, had seen the revolver, and described it accurately.

"I know Frank carried it, and daddy used to be very sarcastic about it. Frank used to carry big sums of money about the country, buying second-hand cars, and he said he had to deal with some very tough people. Why do you want to know?"

Mr. Reeder, who had no desire to alarm the young lady, lied gracefully.

"That beats me," said Gaylor.

Mr. Reeder put down the phone. They were sitting in the inspector's room at Scotland Yard, where a meal had been brought to them from a neighbouring restaurant.

"It doesn't beat me—possibly because I am over-sanguinary," said Mr. Reeder; "possibly because my peculiar mentality leads me astray."

"But suppose it is suicide—" began Gaylor, and stopped.

"You were thinking that it is quite usual that a suicide tries to remove all marks of his identification?" said Mr. Reeder. "That is perfectly true. Will you tell me this—why is the suit he was wearing so old and stained and shabby, and why was he wearing slippers?"

"Boots," Gaylor broke in. "Elastic-sided boots."

"Slippers," insisted Mr. Reeder. "And why was there no mud on them? And why was the front of him wet, and the back, on which he lay, almost dry? It rained all last night, and he could not have walked through the forest without getting soaked to the skin."

Gaylor pinched his long upper lip—looked moodily at the remains of his dinner.

"Tennant tells me that they tried to bomb you this afternoon. It's the Pizarro gang, of course. Kennedy."

"His very self," said Mr. Reeder flippantly and ungrammatically. "And I should not be surprised if almost anything happened. I told my housekeeper to go home to her mother. Most housekeepers have mothers to go home to. I shall stay in town to-night."

"Where?" asked Gaylor curiously.

"That's my secret," said Mr. Reeder gravely.

They went out of the Yard together, when Gaylor had an idea:

"If you want to get out of the way, I should go down to St. Margaret's Bay. I think you will be safe there."

"An excellent idea," said Mr. Reeder. "A very excellent idea, but unfortunately Dr. Ingham is still in town."



## UNMASKED:

HE went to his office accompanied by one of the two detectives who had been appointed to watch over him. The other was still in Miss Gillette's room; Mr. Reeder suspected that he was asleep, for it was some time before he opened the door to him.

"There is a wire for you," he said, and handed it to Mr. Reeder. It was from Dr. Ingham. Would he (Mr. Reeder) come down as soon as he could? There had been remarkable developments at Grayne.

The telegram had been despatched from Dover. Mr. Reeder sent his reply over the telephone. He would arrive on the following afternoon, at three o'clock. Then, strangely enough, contrary to all his expressed intentions, he went home to his housekeeperless establishment in the Brockley Road and slept alone in his silent home. And, more strangely still, he slept most peacefully.

If he had not gone home he would have missed the letter which came by the morning post. It was from Miss Gillette. She was leaving him. Mr. Reeder sighed happily.

"I think I ought to help Mr. Anton," she wrote. "The Rev. Dr. Ingham has promised to help him start a new business. Dr. Ingham has been most kind, and I shall never be sufficiently grateful to you for having been unconsciously instrumental in bringing Mr. Anton into touch with him. He wrote to Tommy before he left London yesterday, suggesting that I might help in creating the new business, and I think you would like to see his postscript, so I have torn it off."

She remained ever his sincerely.

Gaylor came to the station to see him off.

"Have a good time. If the Pizarro crowd chase you to Dover, send me a postcard."

Inspector Gaylor, as has already been stated, had a perverted sense of humour.

Throughout the journey Mr. Reeder read a book which was entitled, "The Thousand Funniest After-Dinner Stories." He read them all—the whole thousand—and never smiled once.

He had a trick of moving his lips as he read. The military-looking man who sat opposite him had never seen Mr. Reeder at close quarters before, and was silently amused. Once he tried to start a conversation, but Mr. Reeder was not a great conversationalist on a railway journey, and the attempted affability faded to silence.

At Dover Station, Mr. Reeder got out, and his companion followed. Three men lounged up to Mr. Reeder's fellow-passenger, and, with a nod, he indicated the detective who was passing through the barrier.

"That's your man," he said. "Keep close to him."

The car which was waiting for Mr. Reeder had scarcely left the station yard, when the four entered a closed limousine and followed.

The drive from Dover to St. Margaret's Bay was not a comfortable one. Heavy gusts of wind-borne rain drove across the downs. Below, as the car mounted the cliff road, he could see breakers creaming the yellow-green waters of the Straits, and out at sea a little coasting tramp was taking water over her bows in alarming quantities.

Grayne Hall was not in the residential

knowledgeable woman. As she showed him round the lovely grounds (the spring flowers were a joy to the eye) she gave him every opportunity to study her. He himself said little—she gave him no chance, for she never stopped talking. Her voice was low, but monotonous.

She had definite views on almost every subject. She told him that she was a graduate of a famous New England university. She was obviously proud of this, and repeated the information twice. She was pretty—probably nearer forty than thirty. She had deep dark brown eyes, the most delicate of features and jet black eyebrows, which contrasted attractively with the colour of her hair.

"I remember the Pizarro case. I had just left college, and naturally I was thrilled, because he came from our home town. And, Mr. Reeder, I'm sure that all these disappearances have something to do with the Pizarro outfit. I have been racking my brains all day trying to think how the doctor has offended them. Maybe he preached against them. I've a kind of recollection that he had a threatening letter when we were in Boston soon after we married. Now that the doctor would worry about threatening letters—"

There was much to see in the grounds—here and there a crumbling ruin of a wall to remind the observer of the dead glories of Grayne Castle. One interesting feature Mr. Reeder discovered was a flight of steps leading down the face of the cliff. It was guarded by an iron hand-rail, and gave the occupants of Grayne Hall a private way to the beach.

## YOU WILL FIND

### "THE STORY of a DEAD MAN"

#### A VERY LIVELY ONE!

The slip of paper which accompanied the letter was in the doctor's handwriting:

"P.S.—I shall never forgive myself if I have robbed Mr. Reeder of his secretary. He is a man for whom I have the very highest regard."

"H'm," said Mr. Reeder. "How very nice—how extraordinarily kind!" He spoke aloud to his coffee machine and his electric toaster, but he was never so loquacious as when he was addressing an inanimate audience.

His housekeeper returned during the morning with the "daily" servants who constituted his household, and she packed his battered suit-case under his personal supervision. Mr. Reeder had one surprising weakness—dress clothes. However antiquated his daily attire might be, his evening suits were cut by the most fashionable of tailors, and he wanted to look his best at Grayne Hall.

He went to town before lunch, met Gaylor by appointment at the office, and handed to him the batch of telegrams which had arrived during the morning. Gaylor examined them casually.

"I know all about these," he said. "Nine of the seventeen English subscribers to Pizarro's scheme are missing. I can tell you more—with 'em went the best part of eighty thousand pounds. By the way, I am offering no further evidence against Jake Bradby. I've got him inside for his own safety, but he will be discharged next week."

area of St. Margaret's Bay. It stood aloof in the fold of the downs and within a very short distance of the cliff's edge. A red-brick building with squat chimneys, that were not at all in harmony with the Elizabethan architecture of the house. ("We used to have high, twisted chimneys, but the wind blew them down. You've no idea what the wind is like here," explained Dr. Ingham before dinner.)

The car passed through a pair of ornamental iron gates and up a broad drive to the portico before the door. The doctor was waiting, and with him a tall, slight woman, who looked very young until she was seen closer at hand. Even then she might deceive any but the most critical, for her brown hair had a glint of gold in it, and the beauty of her face had not entirely faded.

"Welcome!" Dr. Ingham had a bandage over one eye, and his injured nose was still covered with plaster. But he was in a pleasantly jovial mood. Perhaps he was relieved at the sight of his visitor, for he subsequently admitted that he had been expecting a wire from Mr. Reeder regretting his inability to put in an appearance.

"I want you to persuade Mrs. Ingham that this is not the most forsaken spot on the face of the earth, my dear Reeder. And if you can allay her fears about a repetition of the attack upon me I shall be completely grateful."

Mrs. Ingham's red lips curled in a smile. She was, Mr. Reeder discovered, a well-read,

"If anybody wants to bathe on pebbles," said Mrs. Ingham.

The room allotted to Mr. Reeder's use gave him a beautiful view of the sea and the flower garden before the house. It was furnished with rare taste—he saw in the decorations Mrs. Ingham's hand. A pleasant retreat, but in many ways a dangerous one. He went up to his room after tea and found his dress clothes laid out for him by the doctor's valet. Later came the individual to assist Mr. Reeder. A bath-room opened from the bed-room, and Mr. Reeder was under the shower when the valet knocked.

He came out to find the man folding the discarded day clothes and hanging them neatly in the wardrobe.

The contents of his pockets were placed neatly on the dressing-table.

"Thank you," murmured Mr. Reeder. "I—um—shall not require you any more. I will ring if I do."

He closed the door on the retiring valet, turned the key, and began to dress at his leisure. Mr. Reeder liked the routine of well-run country houses, and Grayne Hall was extraordinarily well run. He came down to find himself alone in the drawing-room. A fine aromatic cedar log burnt on the open grate, above which was a picture, which might have been a Rembrandt.

The soft hangings of the room, the austere furnishings, the pastel-coloured walls were very soothing. Dr. Ingham,



wearing the evening dress of the laity, came in to rub his hands before the fire.

"I suppose Elsa gave you the full benefit of her theories? There may be something in them. I've been trying to think how I might have offended these birds. A sermon, maybe. I used to be a powerful preacher—took current events as my text. Come into my study and have a drink. Elsa won't be down for hours."

He conducted Mr. Reeder across the panelled hall through a deeply-recessed door into as comfortable a room as the heart of man could desire.

Deep armchairs, a low divan before the fire, walls covered with bookshelves, and a big Empire desk were the main features of the room.

"Comfort, comfort, comfort!" said the doctor, as he opened a walnut cabinet and took out a silver tray laden with glasses. To these he added a square decanter and a syphon.

"Say when."

He splashed the soda into the brown whisky, and Mr. Reeder sipped daintily.

"Elsa wants me to keep firearms in the house. Now you, as a detective, I suppose, would think nothing of that. To me it is an abhorrent practice. I may not be a great preacher, but I am, I hope, a good Christian, and the idea of taking life—ugh!"

Mr. Reeder tried to raise a complimentary shudder, but failed. For his part he believed in taking life. He was old-fashioned enough to regard the gallows as an instrument of the highest social value.

"I presume you carry a gun?"

Mr. Reeder shook his head.

"On occasions that dreadful necessity has been forced upon me," he said. "I dislike the practice. I have—er—two such weapons, but I have never had to use them. One is at my office and one at my private residence."

The doctor made a little face.

"You disappoint me, Mr. Reeder. I am not a nervous man, but in view of what happened the other night—he touched his injured face. I should have felt a little safer. Hallo, sweetness!"

Sweetness wore a perfectly-cut gown of deep crimson velvet. Mr. Reeder thought that she looked twenty-four, and not a day over, and had he the courage of a lady's man—a quality he much envied—he would have said as much.

"What were you talking about?" she asked.

"We were talking of guns," said Mr. Reeder loudly. "Um—revolvers."

She smiled at this.

"And the doctor was giving his well-known views on the sanctity of human life," she said scornfully.

Mr. Reeder smiled.

"Rather I was giving a bit of my mind, my dear madam," he said.

"My dear," broke in the doctor, "all this arose from a question I asked Mr. Reeder—whether he carried lethal weapons. He doesn't."

"I expect poor Thomas was terribly disappointed," said Mrs. Ingham. "When he unpacked your bag he had expected to find it full of pistols and handcuffs."

She took them back to the drawing-room, but either she thought it was a painful subject, or she wanted to postpone the discussion till after dinner,

she made no reference to her husband's experience.

It was Mr. Reeder who brought up that matter. They were passing through the hall on their way to the dining-room.

"Which axe was it you used?" he asked.

The panelled walls were entirely innocent of armour or battle-axes.

"We have had them moved," said Mrs. Ingham. "It occurred to me afterwards that these dreadful people might have used the battle-axe instead of the doctor."

They had passed the broad stairs on which the battle between the doctor and his midnight intruders had been fought, and Mr. Reeder tried to visualise the scene. But there were occasions when his imagination failed, and this was one.

The dining-room had been fashioned like an Elizabethan banqueting-hall in miniature. There was a big Tudor fireplace, a minstrel gallery, and he noticed with surprise that the floor was of flag-stones.

"That is the original floor of the old castle," said Mrs. Ingham proudly. "The builders unearthed it whilst they prepared the foundation, and the doctor insisted that it should remain. Of course, we had it levelled, and in some cases the flags had to be replaced. But it was in a marvellous state of preservation. It used to belong to the De Boisy family—"

Mr. Reeder nodded.

"De Tonson," he said gently. "The De Boisy were only related by marriage, and only one De Boisy occupied the castle in 1453."

She was a little taken aback by his knowledge.

"Yes. I have made a study of this place," Mr. Reeder went on. "I am something of a student of archæology."

He beamed up and down the room approvingly.

"Dirty work."

Mrs. Ingham lifted her eyebrows.

"I don't quite get you?"

"On this floor,"

said Mr. Reeder almost jovially, "wicked old barons were slicing off their enemies' heads and were dropping them into the deepest dungeon beneath the—um." No, he had never heard of a moat. "It could not well be that, could it?"

As the footman placed a cup of soup before him, and the tall butler poured him out a glass of wine, Mr. Reeder looked at the glass, held it up to the light.

"That's good stuff. I can quite imagine," he said reminiscently, "that dramatic scene when Geoffrey De Boisy induced his old rival to come to dinner. How he must have smiled as his valets ended—um—the unfortunate gentleman with wine from a poisoned flagon."

He finished the scrutiny of the wine and put it down untasted.

Mrs. Ingham was amused.

"You have a mediæval mind, Mr. Reeder."

"A criminal mind," said Mr. Reeder.

He did not drink throughout the meal, and Dr. Ingham remembered that he had merely sipped his whisky in the study.

"Yes, I am a teetotaler, in a sense," said Mr. Reeder, "but I find life so completely exciting that I require no other stimulant."

He had observed that the man who had valeted him was also the footman.

He waited till the two servants were at the other end of the room, and then:

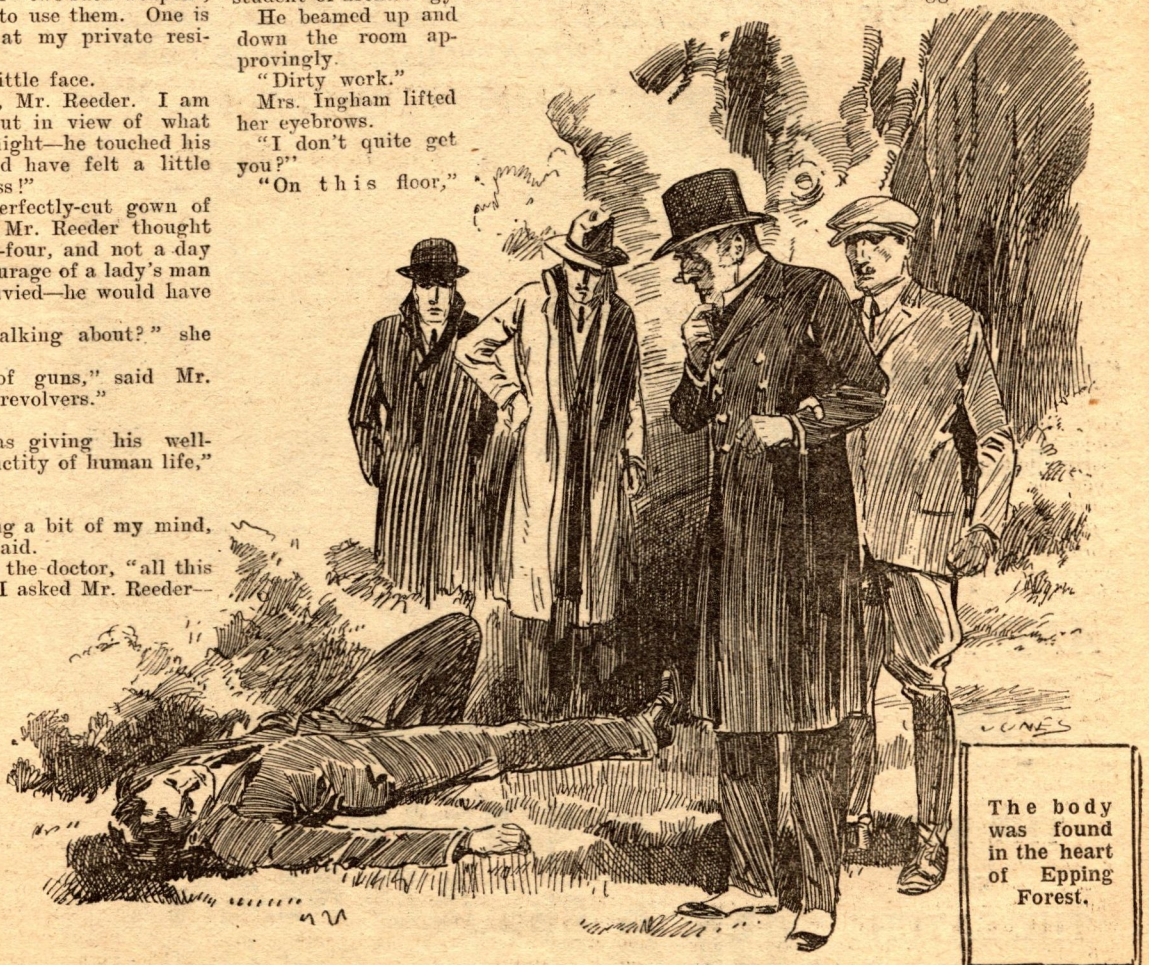
"Your man is looking rather ill. Had he also been injured in the fight?"

"Thomas? No; he did not appear on the scene until it was all over," said the doctor in surprise. "Why?"

"I thought I saw a bandage round his throat."

"I haven't noticed it," said the doctor.

The conversation flagged. The coffee was



The body was found in the heart of Epping Forest.



served on the table. Mr. Reeder helped himself liberally to sugar. He refused a cigar, and, apologising for his bad manners, took one of his own cigarettes.

"Matches, Thomas," said the doctor; but, before the footman could obey, Mr. Reeder had taken a box from his pocket and struck a match.

It was no ordinary match—the light of it blazed blindingly white, so that he had to screw up his eyes to avoid the glare. Only for a second, then it died down, leaving the party blinking.

"What was that?" asked Ingham.

Mr. Reeder stared hopelessly at the box.

"Somebody has been playing a joke on me," he said. "I am terribly sorry."

They were very ordinary-looking matches. He passed the box across to the doctor, who struck one, but produced nothing more startling than a mild yellow flame.

"I have never seen anything so extraordinary," said the beautiful lady who sat on his left. "It was almost like a magnesium flare. We see them sometimes when the ships are in distress."

The incident of the match passed. It was the doctor who led the conversation to the Pizarros, and Mrs. Ingham who elaborated her theory. J. G. Reeder sat listening, apparently absorbed.

"I don't think he was a really bad man," Mrs. Ingham was saying, when he interrupted.

"Pizarro was a blackguard," said Mr. Reeder. "But he had a kind of nature one would have expected in a half-bred Dago."

If he saw Mrs. Ingham stiffen, he gave no sign.

"Kennedy, his confederate," he went on, "was, as I said this afternoon, a man to be pitied. His mother was a moral leper—a woman of no worth, the merest chattel."

Dr. Ingham's face had gone white and tense, the eyes glowed like red coals, but J. G. Reeder, sitting there with his hands thrust into his trouser pockets, his cigarette hanging limply from his lower lip, continued as though he had the fullest approval of the company.

"Kennedy was really the brain of the gang, if you can call it a brain, the confi-

dence man with some sort of college education. He married Pizarro's daughter, who was not a nice young lady. He was, I think, her fourth lover before he married her—if they were married at all!"

"Take that back, you liar!"

The woman was on her feet, glowering down at him, her shrill voice was almost a scream.

"You liar! You beast!"

"Shut up!"

It was Dr. Ingham's voice—harsh, commanding. But the injunction came too late. One of Mr. Reeder's hands had come out from his pocket, and it held an automatic of heavy calibre. He came to his feet so quickly that they were unprepared.

Mr. Reeder pushed the chair behind, and leant back against the wall. Thomas, the footman, had come in running, but stopped now at the sight of the pistol. Him Mr. Reeder addressed:

"I am afraid I hurt you last night," he said pleasantly. "A pellet from an air pistol can be very painful. I owe you an

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apology—I intended it to be for your friend."

He nodded towards the butler.

"It was very stupid of you, Dr. Ingham, to allow your two men to come to London, and it led to very unpleasant consequences. I saw the dead man to-day. Rather a powerful-looking fellow, named Gelpin. The knuckles of his hand were bruised. I presume that in an unguarded moment you went too near to him without your body-guard."

He reached one of the long windows, and, with a quick movement of his hand, he drew the curtain aside. The window was open. The military-looking man who had accompanied him from London climbed through. There followed the three who had followed Mr. Reeder to the house. Dr. Ingham stood paralysed to inaction.

Suddenly he turned and darted towards the small door in a corner of the room. Mr. Reeder's pistol exploded, and the panel of the door split noisily. Ingham stood stock still—a pitiable, panic-stricken thing—and he came staggering back.

"It wasn't my idea, Reeder," he said. "I will tell you everything. I can prove I had nothing to do with it. They are all safe, all of them."

Stooping almost beneath his feet, he turned back the heavy carpet, and Reeder saw a large stone flag in which was inserted a heavy metal ring.

"They are all alive—every one of them. I shot Gelpin in self-defence. He would have killed me if I hadn't killed him!"

"And Litnoff?" asked Mr. Reeder almost good-humouredly.

Dr. Ingham was moodily silent.

This is what Mr. J. G. Reeder wrote in his case-book:

Dr. Ingham's real name was Casius Kennedy. He was born in

He was very useful to Pizarro, gaining, as he did, the confidence of victims by his appeals in various pulpits. He either acquired or assumed the title of doctor of divinity.

After the biggest of the Pizarro swindles he escaped to California, and in some way which is not known, acquired a very considerable fortune, most of which he lost in speculation, subsequent to his arrival in England.

In his statement to me he was emphatic on this one point—that after he had built Grayne Hall on the foundations of the old castle, and he discovered the commodious dungeons which, I can testify, were in a remarkable state of preservation beneath the house, he had no intention of making illicit use of them until his heavy losses compelled him to look around for a method of replenishing his exchequer.

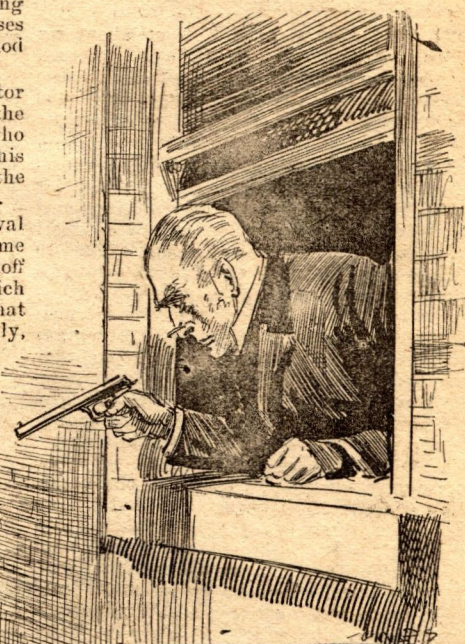
Five years ago he met a Russian actor named Litnoff, a drunkard who was on the point of being arrested for debt, and who was afraid that he might be deported to his own country, where he was wanted by the Che-Ka for a number of political offences.

Kennedy and his wife, with the approval and assistance of Litnoff, evolved a scheme whereby big money could be made. Litnoff took a small flat in London Mansions, which was cheaply furnished, and it was here that the swindle was worked. Very carefully, and with all his old cleverness, Kennedy got into touch with the likely victims, and, naturally, he chose the credulous people who would subscribe money to the Pizarro Syndicate. One by one the "doctor" made their acquaintance. He studied

mission work, in the course of which he had attended a dying Russian, and put up a most extraordinary proposition, namely, that I should buy a small farm in Switzerland, the property of Litnoff, on which he had buried half a million pounds worth of jewellery. The story, though seemingly far-fetched, could be confirmed. His brother was living on the farm. Both men had been chased and watched until life had become unendurable.

"There is something in this story," said the doctor. "This fellow, Litnoff, has in his possession a piece of jewellery which must be worth at least a thousand pounds. He keeps it under his pillow."

"I was intrigued by the story. It



The shot lifted the stranger's hat. "Go away!" commanded Mr. Reeder.

appealed to my romantic fancy, and when the doctor asked me if I would like to see the man, I agreed to meet him one night, promising not to mention to a soul the Russian's secret.

"The doctor called for me at midnight. We drove to a place in Bloomsbury, and I was admitted to a very poorly-furnished flat. In one of the rooms was a very sick-looking man who spoke with difficulty in broken English. He told me of all the espionage to which he and his brother were subjected. He was in fear of his life, he said. He dared not offer the jewels for fear that the agents of the Russian Government traced him. The scheme he outlined had seemed, from my point of view, to be beyond risk to myself. It was that I should go out to Montreux, see the brother, inspect the jewels, and buy the farm, the purchase-money to include the contents of the chest. If I was not satisfied, or if I thought there was any trick, I needn't pay my money until I was sure the deal was genuine.

"He showed me a diamond clasp, bid me to take it away with me and have it valued.

"This conversation took a very long time; he spoke with great difficulty, sometimes we had to wait for ten minutes whilst he

their habits, their methods of life, found out at what hotels they stayed when they were in London, their hobbies, and their weaknesses. In some cases it took three months to establish confidence, and when this was done Kennedy mentioned casually the story of the dying Russian who had escaped from Petrograd with a chest full of

jewellery looted from the palaces of the nobility.

Mr. Ralph's statement may be taken as typical of them all:

"I met Dr. Ingham, or Kennedy, after some correspondence. He was very charming, and obviously well-to-do. He was staying at the best hotel in London, and I dined with him twice; on one occasion with his wife.

"He told me he was engaged in voluntary

England, convicted at the age of seventeen for obtaining money under false pretences. He afterwards became a reformed character and addressed many revival meetings, and he was known as a boy preacher. He was again convicted on a charge of obtaining money by a trick, sentenced to nine months' imprisonment, and on his discharge, emigrated to America, where he fell in with Pizarro and assisted him in most of his swindles.





recovered his breath. I took the clasp with me and had it valued, and returned it to the doctor the same night.

"It was he who suggested that my safest plan was to carry no money at all, but buy a letter of credit. He was most anxious, he said, that I should take no risk.

"I was much impressed by the seeming genuineness of the scheme, and by the fact that the risk was apparently negligible. He asked me to respect the Russian's urgent plea that I should not speak a word to a soul either about my intentions or my plans. I bought the letter of credit, and it was arranged that I should travel to Dr. Ingham's house by car, spend the night there, and go on by the mid-day boat to Calais and Switzerland.

"I arrived at Grayne Hall at about six o'clock in the evening, and I was impressed by the luxury of the place. I hadn't the slightest suspicion that anything was wrong.

"At half-past seven I joined Dr. Ingham and his wife at dinner. I didn't drink anything until the port came round, and after that I have no recollection of what happened until I woke and found myself in a small stone chamber. There was a candle fixed to a stone niche and half a dozen other candles and a box of matches to supply the light—the only light I saw until I was rescued. There was an iron bed, a patch of carpet on the floor, and a washing set, but no other furniture. Twice in the twenty-four hours the two men, who were known as Thomas and Leonard, and whom I remember having seen wearing the livery of servants, took me out for exercise up and down a long stone corridor which ran the length of the house. I did not see any other prisoner, but I knew they were there because I had heard one shouting. My letter of credit had been taken from me. I only saw the man Kennedy once, when he came down and asked me to write a letter on the notepaper of a foreign hotel addressed to my daughter and telling her I was well, and that she was not to worry about me."

It was clear that the success of the scheme depended upon the discretion of Litnoff. The man was a drunkard, but so long as he gave no hint as to where his money came from there was no danger to the gang. It was when he began to talk about the diamond clasp that the Kennedys decided that for their own safety they must silence him. They knew the game was up, and made preparations for a get-away, but to the end they hoped they might avoid this. I discovered by inquiry that a small yacht had been chartered provisionally a week before their arrest. It was at the time in Dover Harbour, and, if their plan was carried out, they were leaving a few days after my arrival at Grayne Hall.

A new complication arose when Kennedy went down to carry food to the prisoners on the night of Gelpin's death. The two servants were away in London. They had been commissioned to stop Edelsheim from seeing me. It is possible that Kennedy overrated his strength or placed too much reliance upon the revolver which he carried—one which he had taken from another prisoner—Frank Seafeld.

Kennedy states that Gelpin, who was a very strong man, attacked him without provocation, but as to this we shall never know the truth, but he was killed in the corridor, because the other prisoners heard the shot.

In the early hours of the morning the two servants returned, and the body was driven straight away to London and deposited in Epping Forest.



I cannot exactly state when my own suspicions concerning the doctor were aroused. I rather think it was on the occasion of his first visit to me. His obvious anxiety to anticipate the arrival of Joan Ralph. Jake's statement, my talk with the chemist, and Edelsheim's narrative all pointed to one conclusion—obviously here was a confidence trick on a large scale—and after I had seen the survey map of the district in which Grayne Hall is situated, and made a few inquiries about the old castle, the possibility that this was a case of wholesale kidnapping became a certainty.

I had to be sure that "Dr. Ingham" was Kennedy, and on the last occasion we met in my office I was compelled, I regret to say, to slander his mother. Though he was livid with rage, he kept control of himself, but he showed me enough to satisfy me that my suspicions were correct.

I tried the same trick at Grayne Hall, but I only did it after lighting a magnesium match, which was a signal agreed upon between myself and the police, who, I knew, were outside the house, that it was time for them to make a move.

I was sorry about Frank Seafeld. He had no business to decamp with his partner's money in order to try a get-rich-quick scheme such as "Dr. Ingham's." But the boy was young, and the young are sometimes foolish. I have been young. It is dangerous to be young.

Cassius Kennedy, convicted of murder at the C.C.C.; executed at Pentonville Prison. (Elford—executioner.)

Elsa Kennedy, convicted C.C.C. Life.

Thomas J. Pentafoord, convicted at C.C.C. Criminal conspiracy and accessory to murder. Life.

Leonard Polenski, convicted C.C.C. Conspiracy and accessory to murder. Life.

THE END.

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## A NOTE FROM EDGAR WALLACE!

My dear Editor,

I do like writing for "The THRILLER." My next story for you is on its way, and I consider it the best I have ever done.

Good luck to you and the new paper!

Yours sincerely,  
EDGAR.

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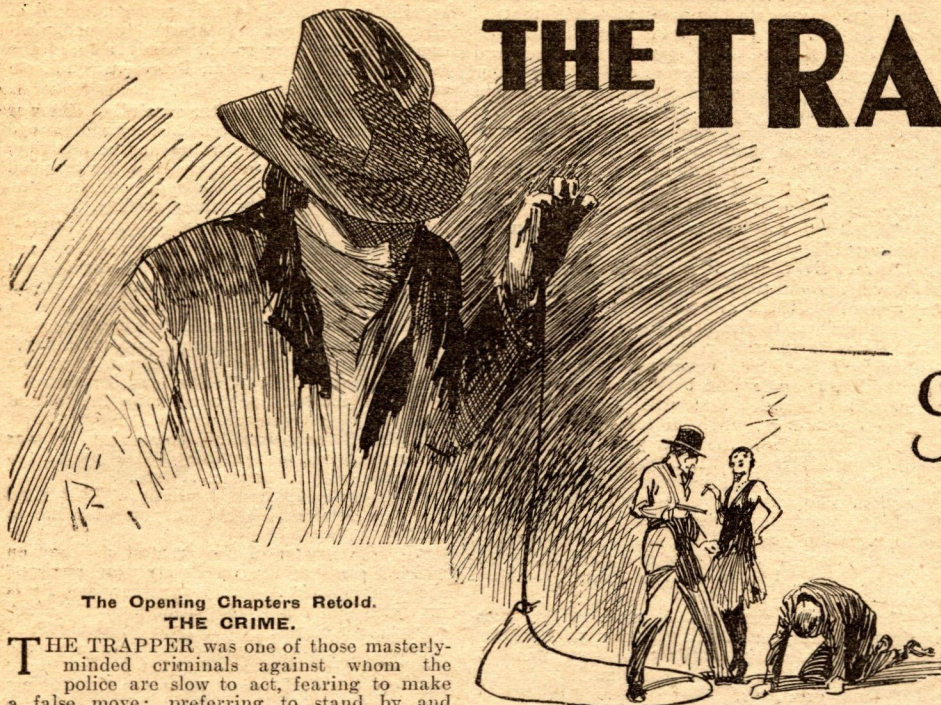
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# THE TRAPPER!

A DRAMA  
OF THE NIGHT-HAUNTS  
OF LONDON

By  
GEORGE DILNOT

Author of "Scotland Yard," etc.



The Opening Chapters Retold.  
THE CRIME.

THE TRAPPER was one of those master-minded criminals against whom the police are slow to act, fearing to make a false move; preferring to stand by and watch points until the crook over-reaches himself.

Yet sometimes it is difficult to hold oneself in check when the enemy becomes daily more impudent.

Chief Constable Winter, of the C.I.D., almost let go when he received an envelope from the Trapper enclosing a wire noose such as the game-keeper uses for snaring rabbits. It was a deliberate insult—a challenge, too. He felt a deal worse when the Trapper had the impudence to leave behind him a similar token after his raid on Dutchy Ogle, the noted "fence," of Dalston.

Then came the climax with the case of young Dick Estrehan—an affair that gave the Yard no option but to act.

Estrehan was a clerk in the employ of Messrs. Hint, Hint, Sons & Barter, a reputable firm of stockbrokers. He decamped with £20,000.

Investigations proved that Dick Estrehan had been hitting the high spots around the West End of London with a girl named Stella Cliffe. On her he had spent the money he had embezzled from his employers. That she was a crook he discovered too late; that she had a soft corner in her heart for him he did not realise at all. To be quite fair to Stella, it must be recorded that Estrehan had posed as the son of a millionaire and that she and her confederate—Velvet Grimshaw—had believed they were merely parting a fool from his money.

So Dick Estrehan vanished into the blue, and Detective Martin Wilde was given the job of finding him.

At the offset the case of Estrehan was not suspected of being linked with that of the Trapper, but the Yard was shocked one morning to learn that Messrs. Hint, Hint, Sons & Barter had received bonds to the value of their £20,000 from an unknown source. The document had arrived accompanied by a wire noose of a type already known to the police.

The Yard now realised that the Estrehan case was involved in a larger issue—the capture of the Trapper—that the young clerk had fallen into the hands of the master crook. They deduced, too, that if they could trace Estrehan, he might lead them to his master. Detective Martin Wilde began his task by a search for Stella Cliffe. He found her at the Gnomes Club, a doubtful concern near Piccadilly.

Things were in full swing when Wilde arrived. Couples were dancing to the time of a blaring jazz band. Hectic scenes usual in this type of establishment were in evidence.

Wilde caught sight of Stella Cliffe beneath an archway, in company with Velvet Grimshaw, the crook with whom she had worked in swindling Dick Estrehan of his £20,000. He also spotted Quenton Thorold, an American millionaire, who had previously performed acts of valuable service to this country.

Wilde's peering eyes searched the crowd for a sight of Estrehan, but apparently the youth was not there. Hardly had he concluded that he would not find his man here when the place was plunged into darkness. A torch-light flashed for a moment and a shot rang out. Almost immediately afterwards the lights came on again, to reveal Stella Cliffe bending over the body of Grimshaw. Upon his jacket collar was found a wire noose.

Everyone present at the club was searched to the skin, the utmost precautions taken by the police, and yet the murderer of Grimshaw was not discovered. It was the intention to hold Stella as an important witness, but somehow she cleverly managed to slip through the guard.

Wilde found himself at a dead end. He was thoroughly baffled by the dramatic turn the case had taken, and that same night decided to take Quenton Thorold into his confidence. The following day the detective called at Thorold's flat, and was there introduced to Patricia Langton, a personal friend and assistant of the American. Wilde approved and consented to their offer to assist him in solving the crime—although their part was to be played quite unofficially.

It was while these three were discussing the situation at Thorold's flat that three letters arrived—one for each of them. On being opened, it was found that each envelope contained a wire noose—another insolent challenge from the Trapper.

In the hands of the master crook, Estrehan found himself in a sorry plight. Waking from the influence of a powerful drug he found himself in an office, still with the masked stranger. It did not take him long to realise how entirely he was in this man's power. It was true that the £20,000 he had stolen had been made good, but in return he must give a year of his life. The alternative obviously being prison.

The masked man was speaking. "You will know me only as Mr. Nemo from Nowhere. You will belong to me—life and reputation. If you let me down, I'll toss you to the wolves as I'd crush a noxious insect. Get that?"

What could he do?

"No need to threaten," Dick muttered. "If you mean what you say, I'm your man for anything, even if it means murder."

Now continue the story:

IN DISGUISE.

THERE are men who would be better dead, although the world would call their removal murder," said the Trapper, with a cold suavity which made his hearer's skin prickly. "Have you ever considered, Estrehan, what a number of skunks there are about—people who get away with dirty tricks whom the law is powerless or too incompetent to touch? There's Velvet Grimshaw, for example. Here's a young fool like yourself—forgive me if I am personal—ruined for life, driven into the ranks of crime. "You are not the first who has suffered through him. A properly civilised community would shut such a man up like a lunatic or a wild beast. Would it not be for the good of everyone if he were put out of the way? A procurer of women is sent to prison. A manufacturer of criminals may go on, if he is cunning enough, till he dies of old age in a suburban villa. There are crooks—burglars, hold-up men, even ordinary sneak thieves—who do take chances. The parasites of the underworld take no chances. They escape legal punishment. They shelter behind their dupes and their tools. Is that fair? Is that logical?"

Estrehan's breath came in short gasps. He was alert enough to apprehend the drift of the singular being who sprawled across the desk. He stared in helpless fascination, and dumbly shook his head.

"I am talking like this," went on Nemo, "because I want you to understand a point of view. In primitive communities, when the law fails, honest men take the administration of justice into their own hands. In the great so-called civilised countries of the world men and women are made amenable for the more obvious crimes, but the subtle, ruthless crook slips through the net. A time will come when the meshes of the net will be finer. Until that time comes there are those of us who have decided that certain men shall pay for their actions when there is a probability that they may succeed in evading the direct agencies of the law.

"We are, if you like, a vigilance committee to deter and to punish. Men like Grimshaw"—his jaw stiffened pugnaciously—"have to be dealt with as rats that carry a plague. There are others to whom a lesser punishment is due. We shall see that it comes to them. In a narrow and technical sense, we ourselves are criminals, but we are doing a work that in the future will be recognised as necessary and essential to the welfare of the world. We know the risks that we run, but we are the pioneers of an ideal."

There was the ring of the fanatic in his voice as he concluded. Estrehan was



impressable, and in his present frame of mind he was not inclined to seek for fallacies in the reasoning so fervently presented. The memory of the manner in which he had been duped was still hot in his mind. He hesitated only as a man might hesitate before a desperate but attractive gamble.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked. "Why should you select me?"

Nemo shrugged carelessly.

"You happened to be the first to hand. We have Velvet early on our list, and as he has been devoting some attention to you, you naturally came under our eye. I believe you have learned your lesson. You are young, desperate, and have some intelligence. I believe something can be made of you. Nor will I conceal that we need recruits who are tied to us. You dare not betray—even if you would. But you join us freely or not at all. You have your choice. The door is open."

Estrehan half-rose. He had glimpsed things that appalled him. The other watched with a whimsical, half-mocking smile, and he sank back on the couch. Outside that door was certain disgrace. If he fell in with the wishes of the unknown there was at least a hope. Yet he still hesitated.

"I believe you are the devil," he burst out in petulant and impotent irritation. "I don't know what to do. You said—you hinted—I couldn't kill a man in cold blood."

The smile of the other broadened into an amused chuckle.

"That's where the shoe pinches, is it? Don't worry. You won't be asked to. That part of the programme will be for others—when it comes."

"Then there's another thing," said Dick, his eyes avoiding the gaze of Nemo. "There's a girl—Miss Cliffe. I can't—I won't do anything against her."

"H'm! That's the little she-devil who helped to twist you. So she's not opened your eyes. Do you still want to marry her?"

The younger man muttered something confusedly.

"No accounting for tastes," said Nemo. "All right, son. You can rest easy. She shall marry you." He spoke with a nonchalant certainty. "That fixes that. Now you are one of us. Can you work a typewriter? Come and sit down here and let me have a list of those securities you have hypothecated. I'll see that they go back to the right place."

He paced to and fro about the room, and as Estrehan finished the list put it in his pocket without looking at it.

"Now about yourself. You will have to lie low for a while, and I guess you can't do better than stay where you are. Not that anyone is likely to recognise you. I have taken some liberties with you while you slept. There is a glass over there. Take a look at yourself."

Estrehan obeyed, and gave a gasp of horror. Some stain had been applied to his face, and the reflection he saw was that of a mulatto.

"You will find a bottle and some cotton-wool in the cupboard," went on Nemo. "You can finish off your hands and arms with that. Better do your face over every morning. I'm not sure how the stuff wears. Don't look so worried, boy. It's all for your good."

Dick rubbed his cheek with a tentative forefinger.

"I don't like it. Why is disguise necessary?" he asked.

"Take it from me, there's more than one reason," retorted the masked man. "I can hush up the affair of the bonds, but I shan't be able to stop comment on your disappearance. Suppose someone dropped in here and recognised Dick Estrehan? Again, it may be necessary for you to drop out of here and leave no trace. Once you've cleaned yourself no one would connect a dusky clerk with a white man. The average crook makes the mistake of disguising himself after his crime. An intelligent one disguises himself for his operations and escapes in his own proper person. No one expects disguise in the first place, and everyone expects it in the second."

"I don't anticipate," he went on, "that you will be much troubled with callers, although you must be prepared for them. This is an

inner room, a private office. You can eat and sleep here for a couple of days—I'll see that you are provisioned—and after that it will be safe for you to take a stroll now and again. Out here"—he opened the door and disclosed a big outer room with a counter dividing it in two—"is the general office of Messrs. Maule, James & Co., East Indian merchants. I shall find some clerical work for you to do, and in your spare time you may exercise your ingenuity in concocting letters to, and from the Indian branch of the firm in Calcutta. Is that clear?"

"I have to act just as if this was a genuine business?"

"Precisely. Here is a private address book. Opposite each name is a cod word—"Jute," "Cargo," "Coffee," and so on. All letters that are addressed to the firm you will open. The fourth word in each letter will be one of these. You will re-address envelopes and send them on. Most people who call in person will ask for Mr. James. You will reply that Mr. James is not expected for some hours. Some of the callers will then ask you to give him a card on his return. If any of them presents a wire noose it will indicate that the man or woman who presents it has authority, and you will obey any instructions they may give you. On occasion you will get telephone messages, which you will write down and send on."

"I think I understand," said Estrehan doubtfully.

"One thing more. You must ask no questions. Keep your mouth shut and your fortune is made. By the way, your own name is Thompson. You are a Eurasian."

"Very good, sir."

"That's all, then. I should like you to go outside for a moment."

Estrehan moved into the outer office. The door shut behind him and he heard a bolt click into its socket. In five minutes it was shot back. There emerged a limping stoop-shouldered, middle-aged man with a slight moustache and wearing tinted glasses.

"Good-day, Thompson," he said.

"Good-day, sir," replied Estrehan.

#### MR. MARKWELL GETS A SURPRISE.

MR. ISAAC MARKWELL smiled greasily on his visitor, and placed a chair where the light would fall on her face. The head of the Cosmopolitan Detective Syndicate was, as might be expected, a man of experience. With his black moustache, piercing eyes, and slim, white hands he looked rather like a conjuror. Time was when Mr. Markwell had flourished, a shrewd lawyer. The big criminals of an age had elected him their "mouthpiece," and though some of his clients had been hanged, there were others who had to thank his ingenuity for the chance to renew their war on Society.

The legal forces of the Crown dreaded and suspected Mr. Markwell. He did not scruple to hit below the belt. His witnesses might frequently be perjurers—and this was the most obvious of his fertile expedients—but they were well drilled and not to be shaken. No one could prove that Markwell had concocted their lies. And the Treasury, the Home Office, the Public Prosecutor, and Scotland Yard knew that although the most flagrantly guilty of crooks might slip from under the sword of justice at the Old Bailey, only the most clever of them got away with the proceeds of their crimes. Once in Markwell's hands they were skinned thoroughly and efficiently. "Sailor Bill," for instance, was known to have had three thousand pounds when he was arrested for stealing the Downshire jewels. Yet when Markwell had got him acquitted, within a week he had been forced to borrow small sums to pay the rent of a tiny back room in Kennington.

The authorities waited patiently for Markwell to make a false step. A hundred alert eyes were on his every action. He knew they were waiting, and contemptuously self-confident did the very thing that they expected. He was tempted to handle a tricky insurance swindle. Then a pounce had been made, and for once Markwell found his resource fail him. The biggest guns of the Public Prosecutor were trained on him, and he had gone down—fighting—for seven years.

Naturally, when he came out his legal career

was done. There remained the resource of the private inquiry agency, where a man of his knowledge and ability, who was not afraid of dirty fingers, might help himself to good pickings while keeping to the windy side of the law. So the Cosmopolitan Detective Syndicate came into being.

He summed up his visitor carefully. She was simply dressed, but even his masculine eye could discern that her clothes had cost money. Her figure was that of a girl, but her troubled face was that of a middle-aged woman. She might have been either forty or fifty.

"You sent in no name," he began silkily. "Of course, in our business everyone does not care to let the clerks know their identity. I am the head of the firm. You may rely upon my discretion."

The woman fidgeted with her handbag.

"I do not think that names are necessary," she said firmly. "This will, I think, serve as a sufficient introduction." She leaned across the desk and put ten five-pound notes in front of him.

Markwell was wont to boast that he was never surprised at anything. He picked up the notes with an impassive face.

"I understand," he said quietly. "This is, no doubt, a retainer. What do you wish me to do?"

"It is a matter of the greatest delicacy on which I can scarcely consult my own lawyers," she explained. "A good many years ago I was inveigled into a marriage with a man who afterwards deserted me. I had news of his death in Canada, and I married again. Now a person has turned up who asserts that he has proof that my husband was alive at the time of my second marriage. He has made heavy demands upon me, and to-night we have an appointment at my house. There is a question of inheritance. I should like you to be present."

He scented possibilities.

"Ah! An inheritance. Perhaps a title?" he insinuated quietly.

She passed by the question as though she had not heard, and cast a glance at her wrist-watch. "I must know the truth," she said. "You shall see this man and he must be silenced. It is now half-past five. He is due at my house in half an hour."

"I will do what I can. It would be better if you trusted me fully. Without knowing the full facts I may be hampered. Where is your house?"

"Number 439, Berkeley Square."

"Thank you! I will give a few instructions and be ready to go with you in five minutes."

He was back well within the time with his hat and coat on. A hasty recourse to a directory and to "Who's Who" had shown him that 439, Berkeley Square, was the town house of the Viscountess Elford. The present peer, her son, was sixteen years old and still at Eton. Here were all the signs of an aristocratic skeleton which Markwell trusted would add a comfortable sum to his bank balance.

A neat sedan was waiting at the door, and the woman he assumed to be the viscountess motioned him to a seat by her side. She answered his attempts at light conversation in monosyllables. At Berkeley Square the car drove away ere they had reached the top of the steps leading to the pillared doorway. The door itself was held open by a liveried servant. Markwell was shown into a room at the rear of the house. Although dusk had scarcely begun to fall the curtains were drawn and the place was brilliantly lighted. He hummed a snatch of a song as he waited for the viscountess to return to him. A picture which he took to be a Constable engrossed his attention.

Although he had heard no sound he became uneasily aware that he was not alone in the room, and wheeled swiftly on his heels. A man was standing by a recess regarding him silently from beneath a black mask.

"Good-evening, Mr. Markwell!" he said evenly.

"Good-evening!" returned the other.

"I had been hoping to have the pleasure of your personal acquaintance for some time. Now I have managed it. The last occasion on which I saw you was a good many years since. Don't strain your memory. You were a little too preoccupied to notice me. One of His

(Continued on page 26.)



# Bafflers!

## THE NEW DETECTIVE STORY GAME

Problem No. 3 is entitled:

### THE DUNBURY WAYSIDE MYSTERY

**H**ORACE TWICKENHAM, a farmer, near the village of Dunbury, Essex, arose at dawn one morning in August, and, having attended to the stock, drove his cows down the road towards a pasture a quarter of a mile from the house. The road ran between fields bordered with bushes.

About two-thirds of the way down, a patch of bright red in the bushes at the south side of the road caught his eye, and on approaching he was appalled to discover the body of a young woman, clothed in a flimsy silk dress of brilliant red. She had obviously been hurled into the wayside hedge, for whole bushes had been broken and flattened out by the impact of her body. A single glance at the unusually pretty face of the girl and at her bruised throat told Twickenham that she had been strangled, and strangled by powerful hands. The victim was of medium height and of good figure.

Twickenham, recalling that one should not

move the body of a person who might have been murdered—for fear of destroying valuable clues—immediately rushed to the house and telephoned to the Dunbury constable. The constable arrived in less than fifteen minutes, and with Twickenham he proceeded to note in detail the condition of the body and the bushes in the immediate neighbourhood.

The constable and Twickenham noted the following facts:

1. The body lay with head to the west and feet to the east. On the right foot was a high-heeled black patent leather slipper. The slipper from the left foot was missing. The light-coloured silk stockings were splashed by dew from the bushes. The red dress was also stained in patches a darker red from splashes of dew. The earth around, although soft, showed no footprints.

2. On the soft dirt road one farm-cart track and the tracks of a motor-car were distinctly visible. The motor-car tracks swerved sharply

from the centre of the road to the southern side of the road ten feet east from the point where the body lay, and swerved back to the centre of the road, some five feet west of that spot.

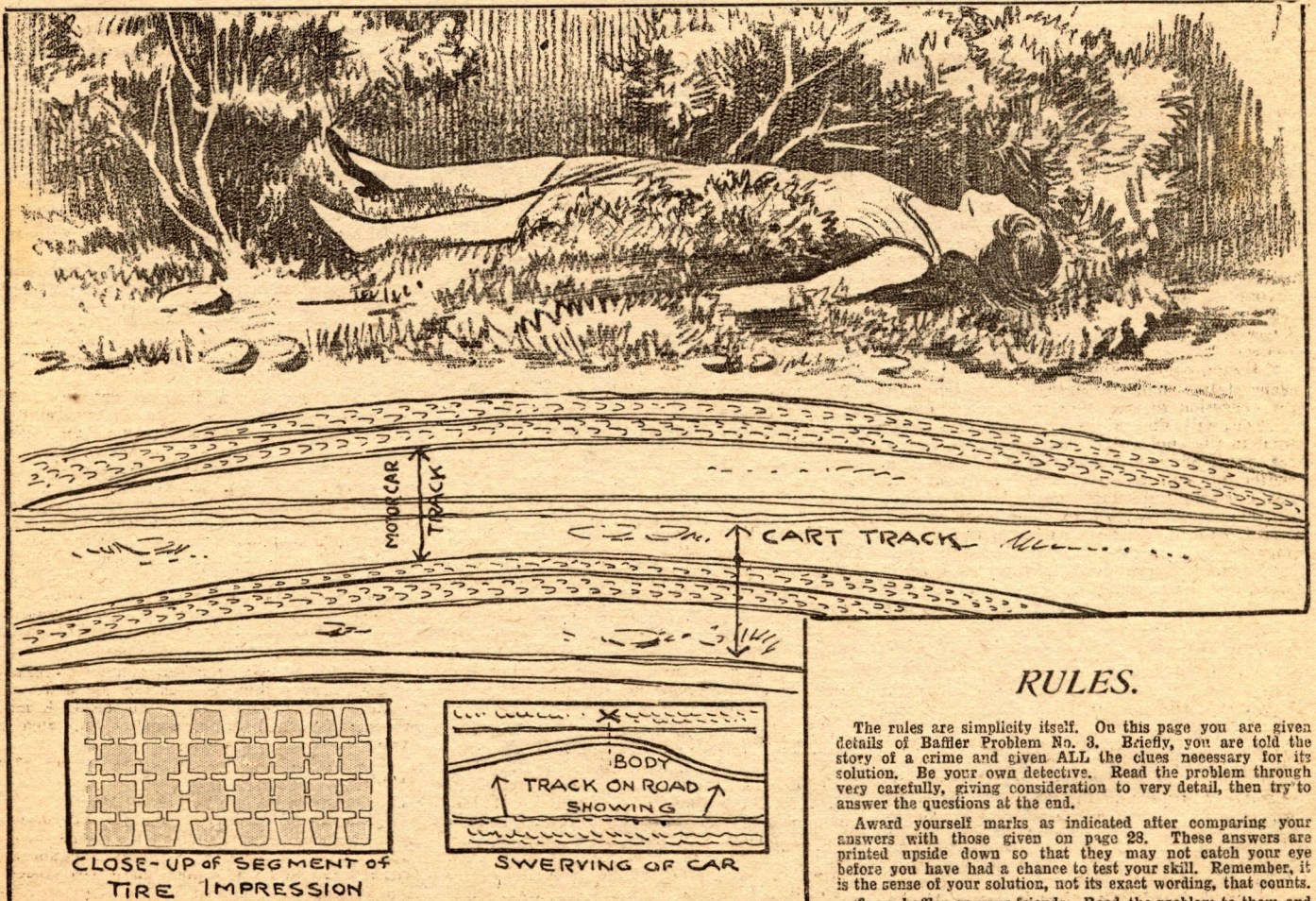
Charging Twickenham to guard the body and the surrounding scene, the constable rushed to the nearest telephone and gave the news to the Chelmsford police. Chelmsford was the nearest large town. The police agreed to send an expert medical officer and their detectives. Meanwhile they demanded information which might aid in apprehending the murderer, asking several pointed questions.

Fortunately Constable Barge, although he had never had elaborate training in crime detection, possessed a remarkable native intelligence and was able to answer all of the questions with what proved to be substantial accuracy. Indeed, besides answering their questions, he displayed a bit of initiative in later seeking and finding an important piece of evidence. This eventually established the guilt of the murderer when he was later arrested upon suspicion by the Chelmsford police.

Considering the evidence available as described, and do not forget the police sketch, if you had had Constable Barge's responsibilities how would you have answered the questions of the detectives?

These are the questions to be answered:

1. What brand of tyres did the motor-car have? (Marks 1.)
2. Was more than one man in the car? (Marks 2.)
3. Approximately how long had the body been there when discovered? (Marks 2.)
4. In which direction was the car travelling? (Marks 2.)
5. For what piece of evidence which might have afforded valuable clues would you have looked? (Marks 2.)
6. Where would you have looked for it? (Marks 1.)



### RULES.

The rules are simplicity itself. On this page you are given details of Baffler Problem No. 3. Briefly, you are told the story of a crime and given ALL the clues necessary for its solution. Be your own detective. Read the problem through very carefully, giving consideration to very detail, then try to answer the questions at the end.

Award yourself marks as indicated after comparing your answers with those given on page 28. These answers are printed upside down so that they may not catch your eye before you have had a chance to test your skill. Remember, it is the sense of your solution, not its exact wording, that counts.

Try a baffler on your friends. Read the problem to them and see what they can make of it, awarding a small prize—if you like—to the first to give the correct solution.

Reproduction of the policeman's sketch made on the scene of the crime.



## THE TRAPPER.

(Continued from page 24.)

Majesty's judges was addressing a few biting remarks to you. It was seven years, wasn't it?"

Markwell eyed him steadily with unmoved countenance. He showed his white teeth in an even smile.

"I take it that I am in the presence of the gentleman who has been doing a little black-mailing?" he said.

The black-masked man laughed.

"My dear Mr. Man, why be so crude? We belong to the same fraternity, you know. How much real private inquiry work do you do in a year? Do you know why Sir Dennis Endor shot himself in Paris last year? Why was the engagement of young Lantil broken off? What led to old Tibbald going through the bankruptcy court? Why is Lady Farthing keeping to her country house? In the words of an eminent statesman, I pause for a reply."

Two heavy wrinkles showed on the inquiry agent's forehead. The other man seemed to be particularly well posted on his affairs.

"What are you trying to do?" he asked. "Scare me off?"

"Oh, the little jackals like myself run away from the carcass when the wolf wants to feast. I simply mention these things. How much do you think that you have in the bank?"

Markwell twisted his moustache and put by the question with a snort of disdain.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter! You carry a cheque-book. Sit down and write a cheque for fifteen thousand pounds. Make it payable to the Middlesex Hospital."

Markwell broke into a gust of scornful laughter.

"What is all this comedy about?" he demanded.

"I am glad that you see the joke. Do you see anything funny about this?" He picked a heavy hunting-whip from a corner and ran the lash through his fingers. "I am a big, strong, fairly young man. You are getting on, and you are out of condition. The windows are shuttered, and there is no one in the house but my assistant who opened the door, and the lady whose little fairy tale brought you here. Do you appreciate the position?"

The inquiry agent folded his arms calmly.

"You can't frighten me," he asserted.

"We shall see," said the other, a grim note beneath the lightness of his voice. He advanced a step and flicked the lash lightly in Markwell's face. "We debated whether we should kill you, but we thought this was better. Make up your mind—quick!"

"Curse you—no!" Markwell sprang furiously forward with clenched fists.

With the agility of a practised boxer the other evaded the clumsy lunge. The whip descended with a vicious snick, and a reddened weal showed on the face of the inquiry agent. Half-blinded, he renewed the assault. A table crashed to the floor, and he fell entangled with it. A ceaseless rain of stinging blows continued to fall as he picked himself up, and with blood streaming down his face tried once more to get to grips with his antagonist. Half-sobbing with inarticulate curses, he struck futilely at the empty air. The cutting lash twined about his legs, his shoulders, his face. The black-browed man, light-toed, alert as a dancer, and swung the whip with methodical, merciless precision. Once Markwell contrived to grasp the cruel thong, but it was pulled roughly from between his fingers. He fell again, and this time he did not rise. He cowered on the floor with his hands clasped tightly about his head. There was blood on the carpet and on the furniture. But not till his coat had been ripped to ribbons was the other satisfied. He flung the whip from him, and addressed the sobbing, shuddering heap on the carpet.

"Now, you dog! Will you sign?"

Painfully, slowly, and quivering in every limb, Markwell got to his feet. His face was a ghastly crimson and white, and as he wiped it with a handkerchief he left a grotesque smear. He dragged out a cheque-book, and, tottering to a chair, began to write with a shaking hand.

The other stood by him and took the cheque as it was finished. Carrying it nearer to the light he compared it closely with another document. He shook his head and stooped, with a

significance that was not lost on Markwell, to regain the whip. He tossed the cheque back scornfully.

"Still trying to cheat? Haven't you had enough?"

Markwell flinched back to the wall.

"I—I—I—not again!" he cried in sudden terror.

"Your ordinary signature next time."

The inquiry agent wrote another cheque.

"For heaven's sake give me some brandy!" he moaned, and drank greedily at the flask which was proffered to him. "You've got your cheque," he said with a return of decision to his voice. "Now I suppose I may go."

"Not yet," said the other quietly. "There's a big account against you. This is only a first instalment."

At two o'clock the next morning a constable saw a belated car draw to the pavement a hundred yards away. Before he had reached the spot it whirled swiftly away, and two strange figures limped towards him, leaving a murky stain on the pavement with each step. He gave a low, incredulous whistle and rubbed his eyes.

"What kind of a game d'ye call this?" he demanded sternly.

"Get a cab! Take us to a doctor!" groaned one of the figures, and sinking on the pavement gave way to infantile weeping. The other gibbered incoherently. The policeman shrilled his whistle for assistance and walked doubtfully round the pair.

"If this don't take the bloomin' biscuit!" he asked. "Two blokes naked as the day they were born, and tarred and feathered like Whitehall was the Wild West! Bless if they ain't each got a piece of twisted wire fastened to the lobes of their ears! Wish I'd noticed that car more particular!"

## THE RETURN OF STELLA.

WINTER stood straddle-legged in front of the mantelpiece with his hands deep in his trousers-pockets, and blew a cloud of smoke in the air.

"Enough is as good as a feast, Wilde," he proclaimed. "The Trapper is becoming a nuisance. We can't have men tarred and feathered, however much they may deserve it, within a stone's throw of Scotland Yard in this way. I'm afraid to go near the commissioner. He's bound to ask if the department is full of half-wits and cripples."

The crinkles around the corners of Martin Wilde's eyes eased a little. He knew the signs. An unsolved crime afflicts the executive at Scotland Yard with an irritable itch. For though the Yard affects a philosophic indifference to public comment, it is really extremely sensitive. And it is only human nature to relieve the blood pressure by a kick now and again at the man who is doing the job. Nevertheless, he smiled imperturbably.

"I know," he said. "All the same, the thing can't be rushed. We're against something. A man who can drive a callous old Shylock like Murraystein out of his senses, and terrify a tough bird like Markwell so that he's frightened to say a word, must be worth meeting. It's a matter of time, sir. I'm working a little more than twenty-four hours a day as it is."

"What's the strength of this last stunt? You've seen them?"

The inspector crossed his legs and adjusted himself more easily to his chair.

"Oh, yes, I've seen them! They're in the infirmary—moulting—and they are likely to remain there for a bit. The constable who picked them up is about as useful as a sick headache. You've seen his report. These two men were dropped from a car, but as he doesn't know what sort of a car it was, nor what the man who drove it was like, nor did the two jettisoned men tell him anything that mattered, he doesn't carry us much farther. He got help and took them to the infirmary. The night man here, as soon as he heard of the case, 'phoned to me, and I hot-footed it down to see what I could see. That was nothing. I might as well have stayed in bed. Markwell had been mercilessly flogged before he'd been tarred and feathered. He'd recovered enough to know me, but the doctors say it will be weeks before he is fit again. You couldn't get a word out

of him with a tin-opener. His nerve has completely gone. All he would say was that he didn't intend to prosecute, and that what had happened to him was his own affair and no business of mine. The other man sits up in bed and counts interminably on his fingers. So I left them. I sent men down to make inquiries at their homes while I tried their offices myself. I found the fire brigade at Murraystein's place, which had been gutted. At Markwell's office there had been a burglary. Someone had been busy burning papers in the grate of his private room, and there was a wire noose lying on his desk. You might say that Markwell and Murraystein are out of business, since all their records are gone. Our friend is a swift worker."

The chief constable rolled his cigar to a different angle.

"It's a teaser," he admitted. "How many men are on it now?"

"Eight, counting myself."

"Well, if you want more you must have them, if we use every darn man in the C.I.D. I tell you, Wilde"—he smacked his hands sharply together—"this has got to stop!"

"We're doing what we can."

"I know you are. But it doesn't need a telescope to see what is happening. Our American friend is right. Here's a madman, or a gang of madmen, on a lunatic crusade. The longer they dodge us the worse it will be. We don't know where they will hit next."

The telephone interrupted him, and he lifted the receiver. He stiffened at the first words, and as he barked sharp questions into the instrument Wilde sat bolt upright and made no secret of his interest. The chief constable at last relinquished the instrument with a weary smile.

"A little bit more for your collection, Wilde. That's the secretary of the Middlesex Hospital. He's just seen the papers. He received two cheques this morning, one signed by Markwell for fifteen thousand pounds, the other by Murraystein for ten thousand. They were in a plain, typewritten envelope, and the only other enclosure was a thin wire noose."

Wilde received the news with an unemotional grunt.

"The methods of this gentleman certainly seem effective. I wouldn't have thought that there was a man breathing who could have induced either of them to subscribe five shillings to charity."

Winter resumed his place by the fire and eyed his subordinate curiously.

"Just one other thing," he said. "Your official reports keep to strict facts. I know that you won't commit yourself in writing till you are sure of your ground, but tell me now unofficially, as man to man, have you got any notion?"

The inspector stood up, and their eyes met squarely.

"I'll have to go along to the hospital," he said.

There was a pause of a second or two. The chief constable waited expectantly, and as he realised that the other would go no farther his eyes twinkled.

"All right," he said. "I understand. In your place I'd do the same. But make sure."

Wilde's hand was on the door when, following an abrupt knock, a messenger showed himself.

"Oh, here you are, sir! I was looking for you. There's a couple of ladies waiting for you downstairs, and they say their business is urgent. Here's a card."

The inspector read Patricia Langton's name.

Written across the card in neat handwriting were the words: "I have brought her." He half-turned, but with a quick change of mind decided to say nothing to Winter. There would be time enough for that. He ordered the women to be shown to his room.

Patricia Langton wore an air of demure triumph as she shook hands.

"I told you three days," she said. "I'm within my time limit. You know Miss Cliffe?"

He nodded to the girl, and she returned the salute with a flash of white teeth and the suspicion of a wink. No detective-inspector, even in his lair at Scotland Yard, could abash Stella Cliffe.

"Mr. Wilde and I are old friends," she claimed.







Wilde was quick to pick her up.

"How do you know he wasn't at the Gnomes Club?" he asked swiftly. "You didn't see the murderer?"

The question took her unawares. She started and the colour faded from her cheek as she realised her slip. An instant later she was herself again.

"Well, I'm sure he wasn't there," she insisted. "I'd certainly have seen him."

The detective switched to another point.

"What had brought Velvet and you there? Was there any special reason?"

"No. We'd had dinner together, and just strolled in for a bit of fun. We'd only just come when it happened."

"I see." He gave a little thought to the next question. "Then while you were telling me that Estrehan was the murderer you fainted. What made you think that he had anything to do with it if you are so sure now that he was not there?"

"I didn't know what I was saying."

"Very well. What happened after you fainted? You were smuggled out of the place by some woman. Who was it?"

"I don't know," she declared. "Look here, Mr. Wilde," she added with asperity, "I'm a dirty little grafter and all that, but I've never been a squealer, least of all on a pal. This woman—I'd never seen her before that night—thought that she was doing me a turn. If you want her to tell you anything you go and find her. You won't get anything out of me, so stick that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Wilde passed a hand across his brow.

"All right," he said amiably. "Don't get disturbed about it, Stella. You didn't go home again after the murder. I know that. Where did you sleep that night?"

"Find out!" she snapped.

"Don't fear, I will," he returned.

It was an hour before he desisted from an attempt to break down her silence. Point by point he carried her over the whole of her story while he slowly took it down on paper. There was no discrepancy in the second and more detailed version of her story. But every time he tried to surprise her into some admission about the ally of the Trapper she parried his thrusts dourly. He gave up at last and let her sign what he regarded as an incomplete statement. But before he said good-bye he made an excuse to slip from the room.

"I want two good men," he demanded of a subordinate. "When Stella Cliffe leaves this place I wish to know her every movement, and every single person she may speak to."

(The sensational developments which resulted from the tracking of Stella Cliffe will be revealed in another long instalment of this powerful serial next week in The THRILLER.)

## The Solution of this week's 'BAFFLER' PROBLEM

on page 25.

**DO NOT READ THIS ANSWER until you have made your effort to solve the crime. For this reason the facts are printed upside-down.**

1. The murder car had Dunlop Balloon Tyres, as was shown by the distinctive pattern of the tracks.

2. It could be deduced that there were at least two men in the car. The body of the girl had evidently been thrown out while the car was in motion. Doing this would almost certainly have required a driver plus the man who hurled the body.

3. The body had been there only a short time, for the dress and stockings were splashed with dew in several places. If it had lain there most of the night the clothing would have been soaked with dew all over, not splashed.

4. The car was travelling from east to west. The forward momentum of the body was lying with the head toward the west. The fact that the skirt was compressed in the bushes and legs to be flattened out in that direction (see illustration). Also, the body was lying with the head toward the west. The fact that the skirt was compressed smooth down over the legs also showed the forward momentum of the body toward the west. If it had been thrown out with its feet in the direction in which the car was travelling, the skirt would have been blown up instead of down.

5. The missing slipper was not found near the body. Therefore, Constable Barge reasoned that it might have fallen off in the car at the time of the throwing of the body. If this had happened, the slipper probably would have been thrown out later. A search along the road might locate the black patent leather slipper. Yellow finger-marks of the murderer might logically be expected to have remained on its highly-polished surface.

6. In the bushes along the road to the west of the place where the body was found would be the logical place to look first for the missing slipper, for the person throwing the body out of the car would probably wish to get rid of such damning evidence as quickly as its presence was discovered.

Soon after, the Cheshamford police were notified by Constable Barge, the family of Agnès Carr, a typist, informed the police of the abduction of their youngest daughter from her home. The Carrs were being systematically blackmailed up to a short time before the tragedy. It was believed that the blackmailers had intended to hold the girl for ransom, and return her after additional sums had been paid.

That afternoon, later, a man looking in the vicinity was arrested on suspicion by plain-clothes men of their Cheshamford police force. He proved to be a member of the abduction gang of four, and through papers found in his pocket the others were found in Cheshamford hotel door. Rodon's finger-prints were taken and compared with the finger-prints on the black slipper which Constable Barge found in the bushes half a mile west of the scene of the Dunbury tragedy. They matched.

## LESLIE CHARTERIS

is one of the brilliant young authors of the new generation. He writes with a virility all his own. His story races along with the speed and power of the Flying Scotsman. He packs his "Story of a Dead Man" with thrills and yet finds room for amusing interludes of rare humour. He will give you a splendid evening's entertainment in—

## Next Week's Issue of "The THRILLER."