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STREET & SMITH'S

OCT. 31, 1931

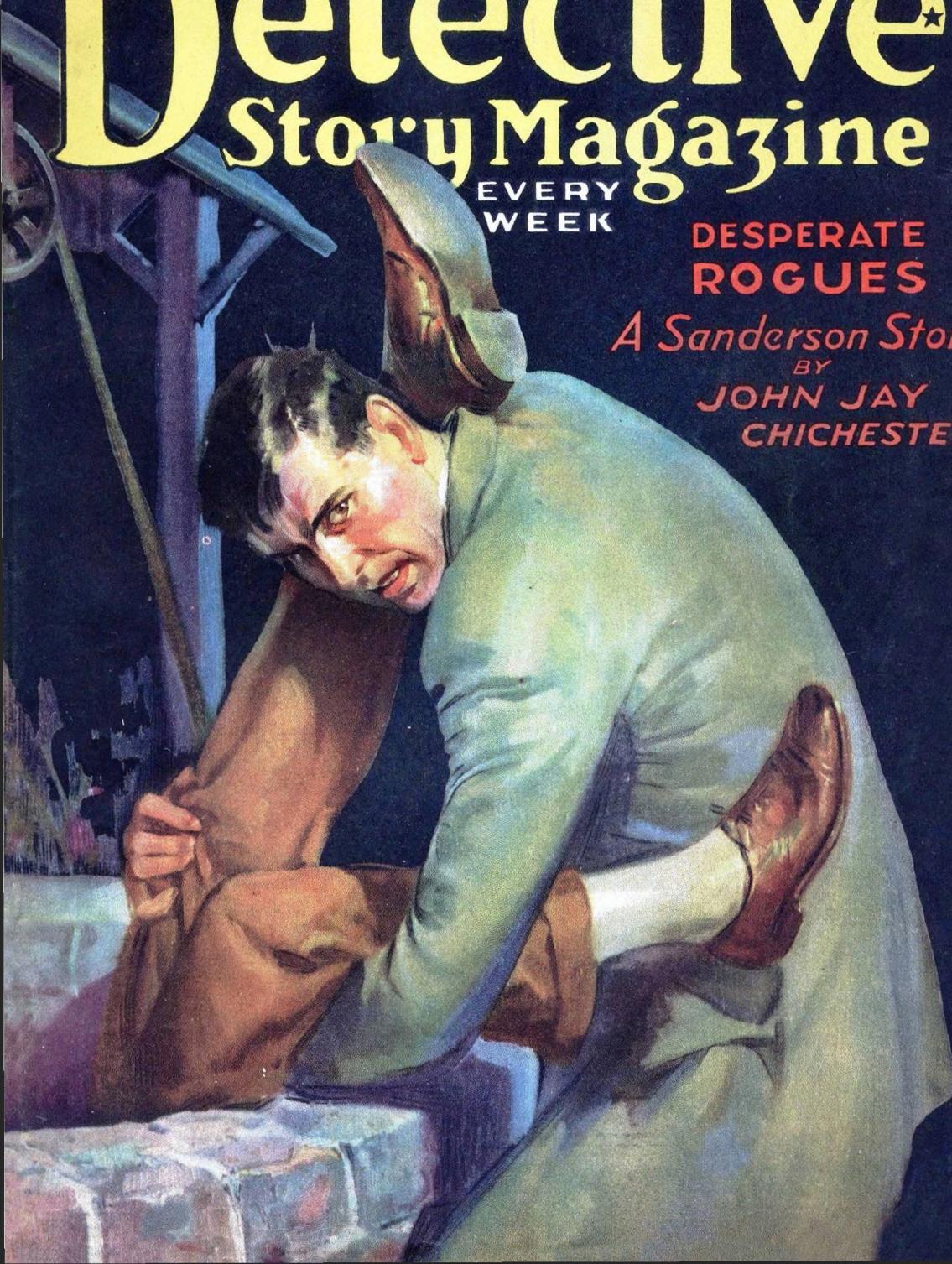
# Detective Story Magazine

EVERY  
WEEK

DESPERATE  
ROGUES

*A Sanderson Story*

BY  
JOHN JAY  
CHICHESTER







# "Have You Forgotten the Dreams You Used to Have?"

REMEMBER how we used to sit and talk before we were married? We planned so many things together—how much we would save each week—where we would go on our vacations—the house we would build in the suburbs.

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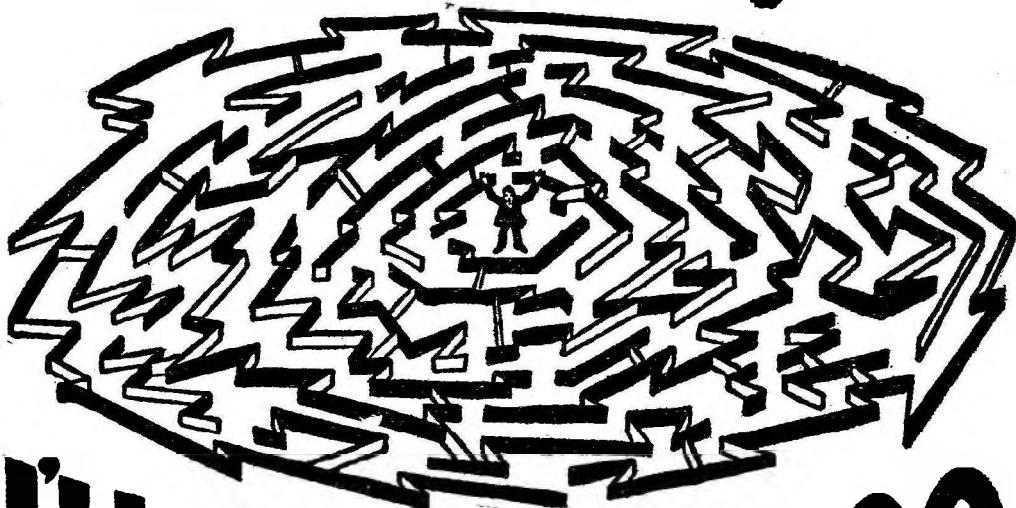
Publication issued every week by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Copyright, 1931, by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., New York. Copyright, 1931, by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., Great Britain. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 4, 1917, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Foreign subscription, \$8.50.

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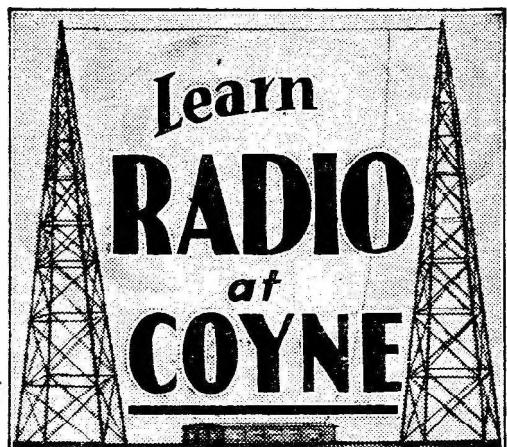
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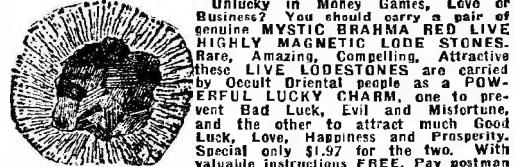
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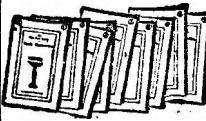
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Name .....

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Age .....Occupation .....

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Ed snickered.

"Won't it be grand!" he grinned. "Now he can quit punching time-clocks and eating 40-cent lunches." He raised his voice. "Drop me a postal sometime when you get out into big business and start making \$10,000 a year, will you, Frank?"

They both laughed uproariously. And probably it did seem like a joke to them that a \$20 a week clerk would have the nerve to think he could ever get anywhere or make real money without some special "gift" or "pull."

But they laughed too soon. Just yesterday I sat down and wrote to Ed who is still at the shop, dragging along at the same old job. "Dear Ed"—I wrote. "You asked me to send you a card when I got into big business and started making \$10,000 a year." Well, here's your card. Yesterday I was promoted to the job of assistant Sales Manager of the Western Metal Works, at a salary that goes with it. I loan you my copy of that book on salesmanship you used to think was such a joke."

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National Salesmen's Training Association

Dept. R-584

N. S. T. A. Bldg. Chicago, Ill.

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Copy FREE?



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Zoom to the crest of a hill—dive down into the valley—bank around that sharp turn in the road—and "gun" her for the straightaway!

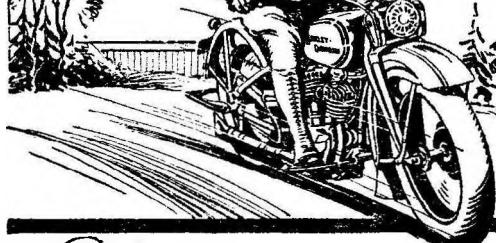
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**New Models—Lower Prices**  
—a Single at \$195!

The 1932 models are out—at lowest prices in Harley-Davidson history! See them at your nearest dealer's. A Single—a true Harley-Davidson—speedy and thrifty—at only \$195 f. o. b. factory! Ask the dealer about his Pay-As-You-Ride Plan.

Mail the coupon for  
literature showing  
the 1932 Twins,  
Single and  
Sidecars.



*Ride a*  
**HARLEY-DAVIDSON**

MAIL THE COUPON

Harley-Davidson Motor Co., Dept. 88 Milwaukee, Wis.  
Interested in your motorcycles. Send literature.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

My age is ( ) 16-19 years, ( ) 20-29 years, ( ) 31 years and up.  
( ) under 16 years. Check your age group.

# PICTURE PLAY

selling at the new  
price of

**10c**

per copy is now the  
circulation leader of  
the movie magazine  
field



Get your copy  
to-day

**10c**

per copy

# WATER-MATIC

## Turns Cold Water Into HOT WATER INSTANTLY!



Trade-Mark Reg. U. S.  
Pat. Off. Pat. App. For.

## Earn \$30 to \$40 DAILY

### 7 EXCLUSIVE FEATURES

WATER-MATIC differs from anything of its kind. Superior to out-of-date and old-fashioned heaters with 7 amazing improvements.

1. Delivers  $\frac{1}{2}$  Gallon hot water every minute!
2. Acts instantly, works every time. AC or DC current
3. Handy and Portable
4. Insulated porcelain, safe for children
5. Will not rust, tarnish or short circuit
6. White-finish matches fine plumbing fixtures
7. GUARANTEED against breakage or part replacement.



SNAP WATER-MATIC on Cold Water faucet, plug into electric socket and zip—Running HOT Water! Attaches quick as wink—NO fuss or plumber bill. \$3.95 pays everything. *Nothing else to buy!* Works instantly AC or DC current. Made of strong

#### SHOCK-PROOF PORCELAIN

insulated against short circuits and burn-outs; SAFE! Gleaming white finish matches your sink; equipped with famous Belden electric plug and cord. WATER-MATIC is the original big capacity HALF-GALLON-A-MINUTE detachable electric water heater based on a new discovery by America's foremost engineers. Sold under a POSITIVE GUARANTEE against breakage or replacement of parts.

#### 1,000 AGENTS NEEDED!

WATER-MATIC is sweeping the country. *Industries are pouring in from every section.* We need live men and women as active agents. If you live where homes, stores, offices, garages or farms are wired for electricity, and WANT TO GET INTO BUSINESS FOR YOURSELF with one of the fastest selling specialties, SEND IN THIS COUPON TODAY!

THIS COUPON IS WORTH 1.20

WATER-MATIC HEATER CORP. Dept. 1014, 1140 Broadway  
New York, N. Y.

I wish to take advantage of your SPECIAL AGENT'S OFFER and enclose MONEY ORDER for \$2.75 (Canada \$3.75) for which kindly rush me your Official Agent's Outfit including Complete Sales Information, Order Blanks and One (1) \$3.95 WATER-MATIC HEATER (110 Volts AC or DC) ready for immediate use.

Upon receipt of Heater and Data, it is agreed that I am authorized to act as your Official Representative and collect my cash commissions of \$1.20 on every WATER-MATIC (110 Volts), and \$1.75 on every SUPER WATER-MATIC (220 Volts) I sell. I promise to send you all orders immediately as received so that you can ship to my customers directly and collect the balance C.O.D. (Outside of U. S. price is \$1.00 extra on each unit and remittance must accompany order.)

#### Get into BIG MONEY

Why half-starve on a part-time job when you can get into the BIG MONEY with WATER-MATIC!

No experience needed. Once you see how WATER-MATIC works on your own faucet, you become so enthusiastic NOTH-

ING CAN STOP YOU! We show you everything — how to demonstrate; how to close sales; collect your CASH. Startin Spare Time—10 Sales an Evening's Easy Work, nets you \$12.00 CASH IN HAND. Full time earnings averaging 25 Sales a Day net you \$30.00 a Day, \$180.00 a Week, \$720.00 a Month. More than \$9,000.00 a year. Territory is Going Fast. Tomorrow May Be Too Late.

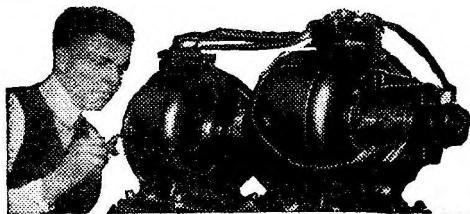
MAIL THE COUPON AT ONCE

# WATER-MATIC

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_



## Learn Electricity

By Actual Work in Great Coyne Shops

Disatisfied with your job? Not making enough money? Then let me show you how to prepare for a real job at real pay—in ELECTRICITY—the money-making field!

### Twelve Weeks of Shop Training

Come to Coyne in Chicago and learn Electricity the quick and practical way—By actual work on actual equipment and machinery. No useless theory! The average time to complete the course is only 12 weeks. No previous experience necessary.

### FREE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

We employ three men on a full time basis whose sole job is to help secure positions for our students. Also some of our students pay a large part of their living expenses through part-time work we get them. Get the facts! JUST MAIL COUPON BELOW FOR A FREE COPY OF MY BIG ELECTRICAL BOOK.

### COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL

500 S. Paulina Street, Dept. 71-45, Chicago, Ill.

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, H. C. Lewis, Pres.  
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 71-45, Chicago, Ill.  
Please send me your Free Illustrated Book on Electricity and Coyne.  
This does not obligate me.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....



## Accounting

THE CONTROL OF BUSINESS

Accountants command big income. Thousands needed. About 9,000 Certified Public Accountants in U. S. Many earn \$5,000 to \$20,000. We train you thoroughly at home in your spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous bookkeeping knowledge unnecessary—we prepare you from ground up. Our training is supervised by Wm. B. Castenholz, A. M. C. P. A., assisted by staff of C. P. A.'s. Low cost—easy terms. Write now for valuable 64-page book free. *LeSells Extension University, Dept. 1065-H Chicago*

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SPLENDID SALARIES

### WE HELP YOU GET ONE

R. Mail Clerk	Steno-Typist
P. O. Laborer	Immigrant Inspector
R. P. Mail Carrier	Bookkeeper
Postal Agent	Auditor
Customs Inspector	Prohibition Agent
City Mail Carrier	U. S. Border Patrol
Postage Auditor	Watchman
P. O. Clerk	Skilled Laborer
File Clerk	Postmaster
General Clerk	Driver
Postal Clerk	

INSTRUCTION BUREAU, Dept. 461, St. Louis, Mo. Send me FREE particulars. "How to Qualify," "How to Get a Position," marked "X." Salaries, locations, opportunities, etc. ALL SENT FREE.

Name.....

Address.....

AGE RANGE 18 to 50

Please mention this magazine

## Asthma Left Him Four Years Ago

No Sign of It Since. Found Quick and Lasting Relief.

Folks who seem making a losing fight against asthma or bronchial cough will find cheer in a letter from Frank E. Mead, R. 3, Greene, N. Y. He says: "I had asthma for 40 years, and in that time, tried about everything for it, without success until I tried Nacor. Right then I started getting well. Four years ago, I felt able to get along without Nacor or any other medicine, and I've been free from asthma and in wonderful health ever since."

Hundreds of people who suffered for years from asthma and bronchial coughs, state that their trouble left and has not returned. Their letters and a booklet of vital information will be sent free by Nacor Medicine Co., 773 State Life Bldg., Indianapolis, Ind. Write for this free information, and find out how thousands have found lasting relief.

## Are You Premature In Loss Of VITAL POWERS?

To men over 35, who feel the need of regaining prematurely lost VITAL POWERS, VIGOR, PEP, and ENERGY—use the amazingly scientific DJRAL VIGOR TAB. A glandular stimulant recommended by physicians to increase natural powers with long lasting results. \$1.95 postpaid for ONE MONTH'S treatment. 3 boxes \$5. Super strength \$2.95. 2 boxes \$5. (C. O. D. 15¢ extra. Cash only outside U. S.)

Doral Laboratories Dept. K-4, 303 West 42 St. N. Y. City.

## A BABY IN YOUR HOME

I have an honest proven treatment for sterility due to functional weakness which I have used with wonderful success in thousands of cases. It is the result of 35 years experience and has been praised in the highest terms by hundreds of married women, childless for years, who became happy mothers. If you will send me your name and address I will gladly send you a treatment and a copy of my booklet, "A Baby in Your Home" which tells how to use it and many other things married women should know. Both will be sent free in plain wrapper. Write today.

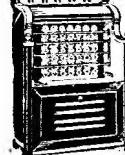
Dr. H. Will Elders, Suite 301-L  
7th & Felix, St. Joseph, Missouri

## Talkie and Movie

Producers are clamoring for new short story ideas, plots, etc. Perhaps you can write one that we can shape and sell for you. One writer (V. M.) received \$3,000. New York best Market. Write now for free booklet, without obligation, HOW TO WRITE FOR THE TALKIES BY Irwin R. Franklin, Staff Consultant, (Author of FLIGHT, Etc.), and Famous Director!

Daniel O'Malley Co., Inc., Suite 3, 1776 Broadway, N. Y.

## HEAT 1½¢ Per Hour!



AMAZING INVENTION—New Radiant Heater. Burns 96% air. Makes its own gas. No piping. No installation. Gives roomful of clean, healthful, penetrating heat, like sunshine, for 1½ cents an hour. Hotter than gas or electricity, at 1/10th the cost. Easy to light and operate. No smoke, No soot or ashes. No odor. Portable—carry it anywhere. Low priced. Guaranteed.

AGENTS!  
Make big  
money. New  
easy plan. Write  
quick for territory  
and Outfit Offer!

Liberal Offer. Try it 30 days at our expense. Write at once for special introductory low-price offer and territory opportunity. No obligation. Send today.

THE AKRON LAMP CO.  
860 High Street, Akron, Ohio

when answering advertisements



## HELLO, EVERYBODY

I have a message for every man or woman who wants to get into Broadcasting as an:

<b>Announcer</b>	<b>Program Manager</b>	<b>Musician</b>
<b>Singer</b>	<b>Sales Manager</b>	<b>Reader</b>
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Advertising</b>	<b>Writer</b>
<b>Publicity</b>	<b>Musical Director</b>	<b>Director</b>

**—Or Any Other Field of Broadcasting**

Excellent positions in Broadcasting are open to men and women who have mastered the technique of radio presentation. Read below how you, too, can prepare yourself for a big-paying job in Broadcasting.

# Let FLOYD GIBBONS show you how to get before the "Mike"

**C**AN you do something? Have you an idea for a Radio program? Can you describe things? Have you a Radio voice? Are you musically inclined? Have you the ability to write humor, dramatic sketches, playlets, advertising? Can you sell? If you can do any of these things—*Broadcasting needs you!*

Last year alone, more than \$31,000,000 was expended for talent before the microphone to entertain and educate the American people. The estimated number of announcers, speakers, musicians, actors, etc., who perform yearly at the 600 or more American Broadcasting Stations is well over 300,000 persons.

### The Fastest Growing Medium in the World

The biggest advertisers in the country recognize the business strength of Broadcasting. They rely on it more and more for publicity, promotion and sales work. They are seeking new ideas, new talent, every day.

If you are good at thinking up ideas; if your voice shows promise; if you possess hidden talents that could be turned to profitable broadcasting purposes perhaps you can qualify for a job before the microphone. Let Floyd Gibbons show you how to capitalize your hidden talents!

Merely the ability to sing is not sufficient. It must be coupled with the art of knowing how to get the most out of your voice for broadcasting purposes. Merely the knack of knowing how to write will not bring you success as a radio dramatist. You must be familiar with the limitations of the microphone, and know how to adapt your stories for effective radio presentation. It is not enough to have a good voice, to be able to describe things, to

know how to sell. Broadcasting presents very definite problems, and any talent, no matter how great, must be adapted to fit the special requirements for successful broadcasting.

Floyd Gibbons, one of America's foremost broadcasters, has developed a unique method for training men and women at home for this fascinating work. This home study course offers you a complete training in every phase of broadcasting. Now you can profit by Floyd Gibbons' years of experience in Radio. You can develop your talents right at home in your spare time under his guidance, and acquire the technique that makes Radio stars. Out of obscure places are coming the future Amas, Grand Andys, Graham MacNamee, Rudy Vallee, Olive Palmer, and Floyd Gibbons, whose yearly earnings will be enormous.

### Unlimited Opportunities for Men and Women

Men are needed to do special broadcasting of all kinds: Descriptive broadcasting of political events, banquets, football games, boxing, wrestling, baseball and hundreds of other occasions of a similar nature. Many men have made places for themselves as news broadcasters, book reviewers, play directors, readers, program builders, advertising writers, salesmen, and in scores of other highly paid Broadcasting jobs.

Women, too, have found Broadcasting a profitable new field of endeavor. There is hardly a station in the country which does not feature women broadcasters. Broadcasting Stations are always interested in a woman who can present a well prepared program devoted to domestic science, interior decoration, etiquette, child welfare, styles, beauty and home making.

### A Complete Course In

### Radio Broadcasting

by FLOYD GIBBONS

The Course has been planned to give you a thorough and practical training in how to announce.

to sing, to write, to sell, to manage Broadcasting Stations.

A few of the subjects covered are: *The Microphone, The Human Voice in Speech and Song, The Psychology of Announcing, Showmanship, Continuity, Writing for Broadcasting, Selling by Broadcasting, Commercial Sponsorship, Knowledge of Music, Publicity, Voice Culture, Studio Management and dozens of other subjects.*

### Valuable Booklet Sent Free

An interesting booklet entitled "How to Find Your Place in Broadcasting," tells you the whole fascinating story of the Floyd Gibbons School of Broadcasting. You can find out without obligation the opportunities there are for you in this work—and how you can acquire the experience and background so essential for successful Broadcasting.

Let Floyd Gibbons show you how to qualify for a leading job in Broadcasting. Let him show you how to turn your undeveloped talents into money. Here is your chance to enter a lifelong profession—to fill an important role in one of the most glamorous, powerful industries in the world. Send for "How to Find Your Place in Broadcasting" today. See for yourself how complete and practical the Floyd Gibbons Course in Broadcasting is. No cost or obligation. Act now—send coupon below today. **Floyd Gibbons School of Broadcasting, Dept. 510, U. S. Savings Bank Bldg., 2000 14th Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.**

**Floyd Gibbons School of Broadcasting**

Dept. 510, U. S. Savings Bank Bldg.,  
2000 14th St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Without obligation send me your free booklet, "How to Find Your Place in Broadcasting." I want to prepare myself, during my spare time at home, to enter the field of Radio Broadcasting.

Name ..... Age .....

Address .....

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

# DRAWING turns INK to GOLD

THE small crude sketch (1) was drawn by Herschel Logan before he had Federal School training. The large drawing of Lincoln (2) shows his recent work. Note the improvement. Today his drawings are seen in National Exhibits. Recently he made \$100.00 over his regular monthly salary. He says, "Any average fellow with the same instruction should be able to accomplish similar if not greater results."



## Many Earn \$500 Monthly

Opportunities for artists have never been better. Publishers pay millions for illustrations every year. The Federal Home Study Course has been prepared by over fifty of the Nation's leading artists. If you like to draw, cash in on your talent. It's easy to learn the "Federal Way." You may have talent lying dormant in you, just as Logan had. Our Vocational Art Test will find that out. Send your name, address, age and occupation and we will send you the chart free. Act today.



## Federal School of Illustrating 10501 Federal School Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn.

**Free Sample**

**NEW SOLES 9¢  
as low as 1¢  
PAIR**

**Pays You UP TO \$6.00 an Hour**

Take orders for this amazing "Plastic Leather" that resembles shoes, but is low as a pair. No nail or tools necessary. Just an oil cloth and a few minutes like butter on bread. File all cracks and breaks. Dries hard and smooth overnight. Write for FREE SAMPLE. No experience necessary. You can make leather soles earn up to \$60.00 per day. Miller of Ohio made \$135 his first week. No experience necessary. Start square time. Write today.

The Perfect Manufacturing Company  
Y-620 Daylight Bldg.  
CINCINNATI, OHIO

**Does Your ENGLISH Betray You ?**

How often do you lose your greatest opportunities for more money, and for greater popularity because of mistakes in English, which you make, unknowingly? Can you talk and write your way to a better position with higher pay? Unless you have a perfect guide, you may be putting yourself back from whatever business and social advancement you desire.

**SPEECHCRAFT**, perfected by a group of nationally known educators after 25 years of research and teaching, is your infallible guide. It will make you a master of Correct English, Effective Speech and Letter Writing.

**SEND FOR THIS FREE BOOK**

Write for our new, big book, *The Way to Win*. With words of wisdom and encouragement for the ambitious men and women who want to get ahead and earn more money. (State age in writing.)

**SPEECHCRAFT, INC.** Chicago, Ill.



Please mention this magazine

## Agents Something New! 3 SALES IN EVERY HOME Triple Your Profits



**RUBBER  
ART  
RUGS**  
*Colorful  
Serviceable  
Practical  
Economical*

Now Send for Catalogue of this and  
other Quality Products  
Direct from Rubber City. **Free Outfit to buyers.**  
Write quick for all particulars. **SEND NOW.**

**CHRISTIE MFG. CO., 720 Erie St., Akron, Ohio**

# Getting Up Nights Lowers Vitality

If you feel old and run-down from Getting Up Nights, Backache, Leg Pains, Nervousness, Stiffness, or Burning, caused by Kidney Acidity, use quick-acting Cystex (Sisstex). Often shows big improvement in 24 hours. Guaranteed to satisfy completely or return empty box and get money back. Only 75¢ at druggists.

## LEARN TO Mount Birds

We teach you At Home by Mail to mount Birds, Animals, Heads, Tax Furs and Make Rugs. By a taxidermist. Excellent for beginners. women and boys. Tremendously interesting and fascinating. Decorate home and den with beautiful art. **Make Big Profits from Spare Time Selling Specimens and Mounting for Others.**

**Free Book**—Beautiful book telling all about how to mount birds, animals, heads, furs, etc. If you state your AGE, Send Today. You will be delighted.

Northwestern School of Taxidermy 4727 Elmwood Bldg., OMAHA, NEB.

**CRIME DETECTION SECRET SERVICE AND FINGER PRINTS**

**SECRET SERVICE BOOK**

**FREE**

For 30 Days Reading  
No Money Down—Actual Crime Cases—  
If You Are Interested—We Will Send you this stirring  
Book on Crime Detection and Secret Service and  
Identification Work for 30 days free reading. Send no  
money. If you decide to keep it, then send only  
\$1.00. If not, return it **TODAY**. Not  
sent back under 17 years of age.

T. G. Cooke, Book Dept. 27-77 1920 Sammside Ave., Chicago

# LADIES

I positively guarantee my great successful "Relief Compound." Safely relieves some of the longest, stubborn and unusual cases in three to five days.

FOR OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY women from all over the country have used this compound with remarkable results. Testimonials without number. No harm, pain or interference with work. Mail, \$2. Double strength, \$3. Booklet Free. Write today.

**D. D. P. SOUTHBURG REMEDY CO., KANSAS CITY, MO.**

**CORRECT Your NOSE!**

Improve your appearance with the Anita Nose Adjuster. Shapes flesh and cartilage—quickly, safely and painlessly, while you sleep or work. Results are lasting. Doctors praise it. 87,000 users. Write for 30-Day TRIAL OFFER and FREE BOOKLET.

**ANITA INSTITUTE, L-54 Anita Bldg., Newark, N. J.**

when answering advertisements

# this gland

## Can Often Be Re-stimulated

### *Say Physicians*

Thousands of men who have given up hope because of the decline of a certain gland—will now learn that science has at last developed an amazing corrective method. This gland—called the prostate—cause of so many of the distressing symptoms that scourge the lives of older men—sciatic and rheumatic pains, foot and leg pains, broken sleep, bladder distress, nervousness, ebbing strength, etc.—can now be reached by a method so simple that every man can have its benefits, right at home.



## Results Tested by 50,000 Men Past 40

Although comparatively new, this type of treatment has been quickly accepted by many hospitals, specialists and sanitariums. Doctors of a well-known Sanitarium have advised it for home use. Already 50,000 men have proved its amazing efficacy. And so quick and positive have been the results of this method that it will be sent to you with the understanding that if it does not produce results that will amaze you, within 7 days' time, its cost to you is absolutely nothing.

## FREE Book Explains Method

If you are a victim of prostate gland disorder—if you have tried medicines or old, disappointing treatments without relief, this is the message you have long wanted to hear. Or if you are one of those men, who, though getting along in years, have not realized how the tiny prostate gland often brings about unpleasant changes and health faults, you likewise will want to hear of this vitally important discovery. Without cost, without obligation, either type of man may learn full details of this scientific achievement by simply mailing the coupon—printed herewith for the convenience of the readers of this publication. The book mentioned will come to you directly from the office of the President of the International Institution sponsoring the method—mailed in a plain wrapper, marked Personal. Address W. J. KIRK, President, 7646 Morris Avenue, Steubenville, Ohio.

If you live West of the Rockies, address The Electro Thermal Co., 303 Van Nuys Building, Dept. 76-Z, Los Angeles, Calif. In Canada, address The Electro Thermal Co., Desk 76-Z, 53 Yonge St., Toronto, Canada.

W. J. Kirk, President  
7646 Morris Avenue  
Steubenville, Ohio

Please send me, without cost or obligation, a copy of your informative booklet (mailed in plain wrapper) which gives full details of this new treatment.

Name .....

Address .....

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

*Genuine*  
**BRAND NEW**  
**CORONA**  
Model No. 3  
**at NEW LOW PRICES**

**Now Only**  
**\$39.90**  
or  
**on Easiest**  
**Terms**  
**Ever Offered**  
(SMALL CARRYING CASE)



**Yours for Only \$1.00** **DOWN**



Hurry! If you want to be in on the biggest "BUY" in Portables. Only a very limited number of these Brand New Coronas available at this *Special Low Price* and *Easy Terms*. Don't wait. Here's your chance to get a wonderful nationally advertised Corona at a *real bargain*. Has up-to-date improvements and carries our regular New Machine iron-clad guarantee. Remember this exceptional offer good only while supply lasts.

**Sent On 10 Days Trial!**



Send for your 10 day trial of this new Corona Now. Try it the entire time at our risk. See for yourself the neat, smooth, perfect work it does. Note how easy and quiet it runs. Learn the joy and convenience of writing on a portable. Write all your personal and business correspondence during our generous trial—without obligation to buy. Compare its many improved features—its neat, compact and sturdy design; its superior workmanship, and its bright sparkling finish with other machines costing much more.

**Iron-Clad Guarantee**

Act At Once—only \$1 brings this shiny new Corona for full 10 days' trial—Write all the personal and business letters you want. If you decide to keep it send only \$3 a month until the special low price of \$12.90 (term price) is paid.

**FREE Carrying Case**

Beautiful Leatheroid carrying case with nickel trimming is included free with each Corona while limited quantity lasts. If you have ever wanted a wonderful portable—here's your chance. Don't wait until it's too late. Send the coupon NOW.

**LIMITED OFFER**—At this Bargain Price and unheard of easy terms—10c a day—these wonderful New Coronas will go in a hurry. Remember the Corona comes to you fully complete—book of instructions and all—nothing extra to buy. Send at once!



International Typewriter Exchange (Corona Division)  
 231 W. Monroe St., Chicago Dept. C-1023

Send the Corona F.O.B. Chicago for 10 days' trial at the special low price offered. I enclose \$1.00 deposit with the understanding that if I am not perfectly satisfied I may return it Express Collect and get my deposit back. If I decide to keep it I will send \$3.00 a month until I have paid \$12.90 (term price) in full.

Name ..... Age .....

Address .....

Town ..... State .....

# Chelsea House

*The Brand of*  *Good Books*

## THE DARK GARDEN

By Mary Frances Doner

BETWEEN the two was a barrier that seemed unsurmountable, a barrier of caste and position, and yet love in the long run was able to break it down.

There was innocent, beautiful Marjie Hollins, poor, with no social standing, madly in love with Dick Winthrop, who, in turn, was engaged to an aristocratic daughter of a proud family.

Love had come to them as a summer idyl. There was little thought of the future or the complications that might ensue as they pressed close to each other under the June stars. But they were not free agents. Circumstances hedged them about. The situation became more and more impossible.

The story that Mary Frances Doner tells in "The Dark Garden" is one that grips at the heart of the reader. The emotional strain is deep and the entire novel is packed with adventurous incidents which make the book live long in your memory.

75c

75c

**CHELSEA HOUSE**  
**PUBLISHERS**  
  
 79-89 SEVENTH AVE.  
 NEW YORK CITY



# YOU'RE WANTED for a Big Pay Radio Job

J. E. Smith, Pres., Nat'l. Radio Institute, the man who has directed the Home Study training of thousands for the Radio Industry, the only other man in America.

*I'll Train You at Home in Your Spare Time  
for RADIO·TELEVISION·TALKING MOVIES*



## Aircraft Radio

Aircraft is needing more and more trained Radio men. Operators employed through Civil Service Commission earn \$200 to \$250 a year.



## Talking Movies

An invention made possible by Radio. Offers many fine jobs to well-trained Radio men, paying \$75 to \$200 a week.



## Television

The coming field of many great opportunities is covered by my course.

## Set Servicing

Spare time set servicing is paying N. R. I. men \$200 to \$1000 a year. Full time men are getting as much as \$65, \$75 and \$100 a week.



## Broadcasting Stations

Need trained men continually for jobs paying \$1200 to \$5000 a year.



## Ship Operating

Radio operators on ships see the world free and get good pay plus expenses.

**I**F YOU are earning a penny less than \$50 a week, send for my book of information on the opportunities in Radio. It is free. Clip the coupon NOW. Why be satisfied with \$25, \$30 or \$40 a week for longer than the short time it takes to get ready for Radio?

### Radio's growth opening hundreds of \$50, \$65, \$75, \$100 a week jobs every year

In about ten years Radio has grown from a \$2,000,000 to a \$1,000,000,000 industry. Over 800,000 jobs have been created. Hundreds more are being opened every year by its continued growth. Men and young men with the right training—the kind of training I give you—are stepping into Radio at two and three times their former salaries. J. A. Vaughn, 4075 S. Grand Boulevard, St. Louis, Mo., writes: "Before I entered Radio I was making \$35 a week. Last week I earned \$110 selling and servicing sets. I owe my success to N. R. I."

### You have many jobs to choose from

Broadcasting stations use engineers, operators, station managers and pay \$1,200 to \$5,000 a year. Manufacturers continually need testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, service men, buyers, for jobs paying up to \$7,500 a year. Shipping companies use hundreds of Radio operators, give them world-wide travel with board and lodgings free and a salary of \$80 to \$150 a month. Dealers and jobbers employ service men, salesmen, buyers, managers, and pay \$50 to \$100 a week. There are many other opportunities too.

### So many opportunities many N. R. I. men make \$200 to \$1000 while learning

The day you enroll with me I'll show you how to do 28 jobs, common in most every neighborhood,

### I Give You 8 Outfits of Radio Parts for Practical Home Experiments

You can build over 100 circuits with these outfits. You build and experiment with the circuits used in Crosley, Atwater Kent, Eveready, Majestic, Zenith and other popular sets. You learn how these sets work, why they work, how to make them work. This makes learning at home easy, fascinating, practical.



for spare time money. Throughout your course I send you information on servicing popular makes of sets; give you the plans and ideas that are making \$200 to \$1,000 for hundred of N. R. I. students in their spare time while working. My course is the one that pays for itself. G. W. Page, 220 Eighth Ave., S., Nashville, Tenn., writes: "I picked up \$30 in my spare time while taking your course."

### Talking Movies, Television and Aircraft Radio are also included

Special training in Talking Movies, Television and home Television experiments, Radio's use in Aviation, Servicing and Merchandising Sets, Broadcasting, Commercial and Ship Operating are included. I am so sure that I can train you satisfactorily that I will agree in writing to refund every penny of your tuition if you are not satisfied with my Lessons and Instruction Service upon completing.

### 64-page book of information Free

Get your copy today. It tells you about Radio's good jobs, what they pay, tells you about my course, what others who have taken it are doing and making. Find out what Radio offers you, without the slightest obligation. ACT NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President  
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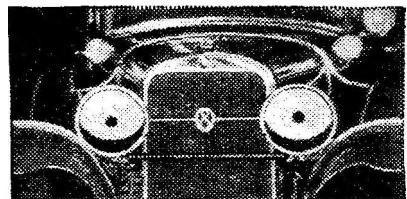
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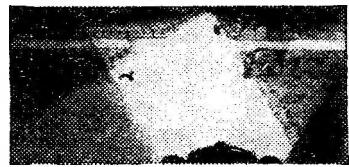
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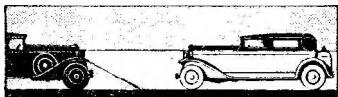
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# CRIME CONTAGION

By C. WILES HALLOCK

## WELLINGTON WEATHERBY BEN- DEMEER BLAKE

Woke in the night all a-chill and a-shake,  
Racked in the grip of a terrible ache  
Throbbing from toe tips to head.  
Dazed and perplexed by his desperate  
plight,  
Groaning and groping, he switched on the  
light.  
Pain, for the nonce, was forgotten in fright,  
"Hands up! Don't speak!" some one  
said.

Wholly bewildered, too ill to upbraid,  
Wellington Blake watched the gun moll,  
dismayed,  
While she concocted a hot lemonade.  
"This here will make you feel swell!"  
Softly, she urged, while he drank with a  
groan.  
Then: "You're too sick to be left here  
alone,  
You need a doc!" So she called one by  
phone.  
"Well, I'll be fadin'. Farewell!"



There crouched a woman, a mask on her  
face,  
Pointing a gun with cool courage and grace.  
Clearly, the girl had been prowling the  
place.  
Strangely, she stared and drew near.  
Came to the bedside, and touching his  
brow,  
"Man, you ain't well!" she exploded.  
"Say, now,  
Mister, you're burnin' with fever—and  
how!  
Gee, it's a good thing I'm here!"

Quickly, she caught up her rod and her  
flash;  
Also Blake's bric-a-brac, jewels and cash;  
Went to a window and lifted the sash,  
Beat it—and thought: "What a break!"  
Seven days later, the same prowling frill  
Prowled an apartment, went suddenly ill.  
The cops took her down to the quarantine  
mill  
With measles. She'd caught them from  
Blake!

# DESPERATE



By JOHN JAY

*With the beloved burden in his*

## CHAPTER I. THROUGH THE STORM.

**T**HE roadster tore swiftly through the inky darkness, and, since the roads were strange, Maxwell Sanderson gave voice to a sharp protest. If he and Barton Clark were to risk their lives—as, indeed, they had more than once—it was not to be merely for the satisfaction of escaping a threatened rainstorm.

“Ease up, you reckless idiot!” Sanderson shouted in Clark’s ear.

“Do you want to land us in the ditch?”

Bart relaxed the pressure of his foot against the accelerator and the speedometer dropped to a more conservative forty miles per hour. A happy grin rode across Clark’s mouth.

“She’s sure a dandy car for the money, Max!” he exclaimed enthusiastically. “Huh, I thought you were the chap who liked a thrill!”

“Save that speed for sometime when the police are after us,” the “Noiseless Cracksman” retorted.

# ROGUES



## CHICHESTER

*arms, he pleaded for admission.*

"To me it's not a thrill to risk our necks for no good reason at all. Forty an hour, my headlong friend, is quite fast enough for me under normal circumstances when the night is dark and the road a strange one."

"I'm trying to make the next town before the storm breaks; it's going to be a peach of a storm, take it from me."

Suddenly, the brakes of Clark's brand-new roadster screamed, and the car again slackened speed as the blaze of the headlights revealed the

motorist's pet peeve, a detour sign. Ahead the smooth sweep of the concrete highway was interrupted by construction work.

"Of all the luck!" Bart exclaimed. "That's an unpaved trek we've got to take, and Heaven knows how many miles——" A reverberating crash of thunder chopped off the remainder of the sentence and the anticipated rain began to fall.

"The detour seems to be optional at that," said Sanderson. "There's a sign, I see, with the customary warning 'Proceed at your own risk.'

If we drive carefully, I think it'll be better that we stick to the concrete road."

"I know we'd better!" Clark agreed with emphatic vehemence. "Guess we're in better luck than I thought." He sent the car cautiously forward and drove on slowly, for the ribbon of pavement which had been allowed to remain intact while the other half of the highway was being relaid was extremely narrow and, with a blinding rain slashing against the windshield, it was precarious going.

This idea of a motor trip had been Barton Clark's. Having reached Philadelphia after one of their most successful exploits—the Lakewold adventure which had netted them the largest haul of Sanderson's profitable career as a jewel thief—Bart had succumbed to the lure of this cream-colored roadster. It was charming to the eye with its low, rakish lines, dazzling the vision with an abundance of glistening nickel, and tempting the pocketbook with an attractive price. Sanderson personally would have preferred to travel by rail.

The fury of the storm increased—blinding flashes of lightning, crashes of thunder that rocked the very earth, torrents of rain bucketing down in an almost solid wall of water.

"We'd better stop until this rain slackens a bit," Sanderson suggested. "I'll make it, all right," answered Clark, his shoulders hunched tensely over the steering wheel. "Not much farther to go before we get to a town. There's a fairly good hotel at—"

Just how it happened, neither of them ever knew. The left wheel of the car got off the concrete and began sinking into the loose dirt of the fill. Their position was instantly

precarious, for the road at this point was built upon an embankment.

"Jump!" shouted Maxwell Sanderson. "We're going over!" He followed his own advice and leaped, but Clark clung stubbornly to the steering wheel, trying to right the car. His effort had exactly the opposite effect; the roadster went plunging down the steep side of the embankment.

Perhaps it was a broken gas line, with a spark from the exhaust pipe to ignite the volatile liquid; the gasoline tank exploded with a dull explosion which completed the wreckage and showered the blazing stuff about. From Sanderson, himself safe, came a shout of horror; it did not seem possible that Clark could have escaped. But as the Noiseless Cracksman went sliding down the incline, a flash of lightning revealed Bart picking himself up from the bottom of the ditch, several feet from the blazing wreckage.

"I'm all right, Max!" Clark called. "I got out just as she went over, but I almost didn't."

It was, of course, like Sanderson that he should accept the situation philosophically; he offered no reproaches and made no complaint. Despite the deluging rain, the burning gasoline flamed lustily for a few moments before it was extinguished.

"There goes my new car and our baggage along with it!" Clark exclaimed morosely. Suddenly, he was seized by a panic of apprehension. "Max! The diamonds! Aren't they in one of the bags?"

"No, thank Heaven," the Noiseless Cracksman answered cheerfully. "That would have been disaster, indeed, but the diamonds are safely here in my pocket."

"Anyhow," Clark persisted dismally, "I've made a sorry mess of things. I was a fool not to stop until

the storm had passed over, and I'll thank you to give me the swift, hard kick that I deserve. What had we better do, Max?"

Maxwell Sanderson buttoned the upturned collar of his coat tightly about his neck.

"We'd better look for some sort of shelter, of course," he said briskly; "after it's stopped raining, we'll find some way of getting on to the next town. After all, old man, we've no valid complaint. You're out a car and we're both out our clothes, which can be replaced. Let's be moving; we'll only get soaked all the more standing here."

The pair started on up the road on foot, their bodies bent against the driving rain which beat against them with unabated fury. They had sloshed along for the matter of perhaps a quarter of a mile when one of the intermittent flashes of lightning revealed, at a point where a country road crossed the paved highway, a farmhouse in black silhouette against the sky.

"There's a haven for us, Max!" Clark shouted above the storm's bedlam. "We'll get those people to take us in; maybe they'll put us up for the night."

The approach to the house appeared to be by way of the cross-road, but, as the two men approached the place, there was evidence of desertion, grass so long uncut that even the path had been obliterated. Reaching the house itself, it became apparent that the farm was an abandoned one. The porch was sagged and broken, and the front door hung open, creaking dismally.

"If this isn't the rotten luck!" Bart exclaimed grumpily.

"Better than being out-of-doors," Sanderson answered. "Maybe we'll find a stove or a fireplace. Let's

have a look about." He flashed his small battery lamp as they entered the house and Clark struck a match. The two made their way toward the kitchen. They were more fortunate than Bart had expected, for the kitchen contained a stove. It was a rusted, broken affair but it promised, at least, a means of producing a fire to drive off the damp chill and dry their soaked clothes.

Clark, looking for something in the way of fuel, opened one of the kitchen doors; a muffled exclamation of startled amazement escaped him.

"Max! Look! We've bumped into something!"

And, indeed, it appeared they had. Within the small and otherwise bare kitchen closet was stored a small arsenal: two sawed-off shotguns, four automatic pistols, and any quantity of ammunition. There was also a stout crowbar and a long, flat piece of metal, notched at the bottom.

Sanderson stared with an expression of puzzled interest, his lips puckered into a soft whistle.

"Just what do you make of it, Max?"

Before Sanderson could reply, there was a momentary lull in the storm and a sound reached their ears—an approaching automobile coming up the road in low gear. Quickly, the Noiseless Cracksman extinguished the flashlight, closed the door of the cupboard closet, and stood for an instant or two in the darkness.

"Yes, Bart," he said softly, "we have bumped into something. I wonder just what? I should like very much to know."

"We'd better clear out, that's what I say," Clark answered uneasily. "Whatever it is, we don't want to get mixed up in it. We've had one narrow escape to-night and

I've no intention of bulling our luck."

The Noiseless Cracksman groped his way to one of the kitchen windows and looked out. The approaching automobile was still some yards distant, traveling at little more than a crawl. Sanderson flashed his battery lamp again, this time cautiously; the beam, very likely by accident, touched the ceiling, revealing an open space directly above the stove, furnishing an economical heating arrangement by allowing the heat to reach the room above.

"If we can find the stairway——"

"I don't want to get mixed up in this," Clark broke in. "I don't know what sort of a game it is, Max, but, if you'll take my advice, we'll clear out."

Sanderson, ignoring the protest, began searching for the stairs, and Clark, grumbling under his breath, followed. Reaching the second floor of the abandoned farmhouse, there was no difficulty about locating the room over the kitchen, with a heat vent in the floor. It was a space about eight inches square, and the Noiseless Cracksman flattened himself on the bare boards with as much comfort as possible, waiting to play eavesdropper.

"They say curiosity killed a cat," muttered Clark. "I hope it doesn't do the same to us."

## CHAPTER II.

### BROCK'S GANG.

THE heavy clumping of feet on the uncarpeted floor of the empty house sounded like the invasion of a small army. There were gruff, tense voices, and the kitchen was

suddenly flooded with light as some one lighted a lantern. Maxwell Sanderson, peering down through the heat vent, counted several men; at first, he thought there were four, but a moment afterward he saw the fifth. This last fellow was with the other four and yet he appeared to be an outsider. He lacked the desperado manner; he fairly seemed to cringe.

"Who's got that bottle of hooch?" one of the men demanded.

"Give me a drink of it—please!" This was the outsider speaking, his voice ragged with nervousness.

"Yeah, give Cummings the bottle." A sarcastic laugh accompanied the remark. "Maybe a little red liquor will cure a yellow streak."

A quart bottle of liquor was passed around. One of them, Sanderson noticed, did not drink, and this man, it soon appeared, was the leader of whatever enterprise was in contemplation. He now spoke in a harsh voice of authority.

"Now, listen, you guys, we've got no time to be pickin' daisies. The local goes down in thirty minutes, and, after that, the track will be clear until the *Comet* comes poundin' through."

"Unless she's late and the dispatcher sends a freight in ahead of her," spoke up the man some one had called Cummings. His voice was a little more steady now. "Of course, that don't often happen, but on a night like this——"

"Shut your trap and keep it shut," snarlingly interrupted the leader. "You did your part when you gave us the low-down on it being Tuesday that the *Comet's* mail car carries the biggest lot of registered mail from the banks to the Federal Reserve. That lets you out, see, and Ed Brock don't need no mail clerk to tell him how to swing this job."

The leader, who had identified himself by the name of Ed Brock, strode heavily across the kitchen and opened the door of the closet which contained the sawed-off shotguns and the automatic pistols. Swiftly, he apportioned them, but offered no weapon to Cummings. The latter helped himself to another drink from the bottle.

Crisply, Brock began giving instructions and, listening from above, both Sanderson and Clark felt their blood congeal with horror at the hideousness of the plot. It was to be, of course, a robbery of the mails, but that was not what made it such a ghastly plan. After the local train had steamed past, with a clear track until the *Comet* thundered eastward, Brock and his gang meant to remove one of the rails—and wreck the crack train! With the mail car in the ditch, the mail clerks too stunned for resistance, perhaps dead, the ghoulish bandits would batter their way in and help themselves to the rich registered pouches.

Cummings, the mail clerk who had turned traitor to the postal service for a promised share of the loot, had been totally misled, and this was his first intimation of the real method by which Brock intended to proceed. A hoarse cry of horror burst from the cat's-paw.

"No!" he shouted. "That's murder—wholesale murder! The engineer, the firemen, the passengers! Men, you can't be serious! Were you ever in a train wreck? Do you know the horror of it? I've been in one. I know! Those innocent people, almost hundreds of them, sleeping in their berths. Little children torn—"

Ed Brock took a threatening step forward.

"Shut your trap and keep it shut!" he ordered harshly. "I'm running

this show, and I'm telling you for the last time—shut your trap."

The mail clerk groaned helplessly.

"You lied to me, Brock. Curse you, you lied to me!" he shouted. "You told me that we were going to flag the train, stick up the engine, uncouple the passenger coaches—"

"Never mind what I told you," rasped Brock. "I'm telling you what we're going to do now. If you don't like it—"

"You shan't do it!" cried Cummings.

"And how do you think you're gonna stop it?" demanded another voice.

Cummings darted a wild, desperate look about him. Perhaps, thinking only of the awful picture, he didn't stop to consider what the effort might cost him, what it was almost sure to cost him. He made a wild plunge toward the door.

"I'll show you how I'm going to stop it. I'll show you that's what I'll do!"

Brock fired once, twice, three times. Each bullet took effect, but it was not until the third shot that the fleeing mail clerk, having reached the out-of-doors, crashed forward on his face, slid off the edge of the narrow back porch of the kitchen, and lay quite still in the high grass. Brock picked up the lantern, walked to the doorway, and stood staring at the inert heap which a moment before had been a living man.

"So much the better, fellows," he grunted. "He was no more good to us, anyhow, and that makes one less to cut in on the divvy. And let that be a lesson to you other guys. What Cummings got is what anybody gets when they try to double-cross Ed Brock." He gestured toward one of his men. "Let the boys have another tip out of the bottle and we'll be on our way."

### CHAPTER III. VICTORY.

FOR a moment or two after the kitchen went dark and the empty house echoed with the departing footsteps of the Brock gang, Sanderson and Clark remained quietly in the room overhead. Clark was the first to speak.

"Fiends!" he whispered. "That's what they are, Max, fiends!"

"Also they are fools," the Noiseless Cracksman responded, his voice tense and vibrant. "They haven't the sense to see all that horror will probably serve them no purpose. The mail car, being next to the engine, will get the brunt of the smash. If live steam doesn't defeat the scheme, the car will probably be so badly battered that they won't be able to get inside. Admitting they do get inside, they'll find things in such frightful confusion it will be almost impossible to get the money pouches."

Clark nodded slowly in the darkness and shuddered.

"You're right, Max, and that poor devil they shot, he was right, too. He'd been in a train wreck and he knew. Isn't there some way that we can stop it?"

Sanderson leaped to his feet, played the beam of his little flashlight across the room toward the stairs, and started forward.

"We've got to find a way, Bart; it's up to you and me to stop it, somehow. I've never taken much stock in the thing people call Providence, but it seems foreordination that we should leave the railroad and make this detour by road, that the rain should drive us to this place. The fate of a great many people is in our hands, old man; yes,

we've certainly got to stop it, and I think, if we use a bit of judgment and keep reasonably cool heads, we can. Anyhow, we've got to do our best."

"They're two to one against us, Max; really, four against one, considering that we've got only one gun between us, but that doesn't make any difference. There are too many lives at stake for us to weigh the odds."

"The thing I like about you, old boy," murmured Maxwell Sanderson, "is that you never hesitate when it comes to the pinch. You've never failed when it got down to the acid test, and I don't think you ever will. Hustle along now, for we've not a minute to lose after the local goes past. Ah, there she is whistling again!"

Rushing out of the old barn at Sanderson's heels, Clark stumbled over the body of Cummings, the former mail clerk, paused for an instant, struck a match the flame of which he shielded under the cup of his hands, and bent down.

"Poor devil's completely done for, Max. Brock was right; he always shoots to kill. I was hoping there might be a chance. A rat, maybe, but that was one last fine thing he did trying to stop the wreck."

"Save the eulogy until later," said Sanderson, for the local, not many minutes ahead of the fast mail car, had poked her nose above the grade and was battering a stream of electric fire from her headlight against the falling curtain of rain.

The two had come now to the bandits' car as they reached the road. Sanderson was hurrying on past the machine when Clark had a suggestion to make about that.

"Don't you think it would be a good idea to open the drain in the gas tank, Max? That would keep

'em from making their get-away." He was more than a little surprised that the same idea hadn't flashed into the mind of the quick-witted Noiseless Cracksman.

"We're not policemen, Bart, and their get-away doesn't concern me in the least; our job begins and ends with stopping them from derailing the train."

"That's so," the other admitted, "but, just the same, I'd like to see those four thugs get what's coming to them."

Between the road and the railway tracks there was a narrow strip of woods, not much more than a hundred yards in width. There must have been some path of easy passage, known to the train wreckers, but Sanderson and Clark were not so fortunate as to find it, and they had no choice but to go blundering and crashing through the underbrush. Had it been a quiet night, all this racket surely would have betrayed them, but the beat of the rain, the whine and moan of the wind, and the steady cannonading of thunder drowned out the lesser sounds.

Wet branches slapped viciously against their faces; briars snagged at their clothing. They were in the midst of their struggles with the thicket when the local passenger roared dully past, shaking the ground for a minute or so and then becoming lost in the distance.

"We might have done better," said Clark, "if we'd gone around by way of the road. I don't believe we'll ever get out of here."

"Here's the path, thank Heaven," grunted Sanderson. "I was pretty sure there must be one. Quiet now, man; they're liable to hear us if a lull comes."

The two had got to the edge of the woods and directly in front and below were the railway tracks; the

flash of a lantern glistened upon the wet rails, and they heard the clank of metal against metal. The work of removing one of the rails had begun. One of Brock's gang ripped out a coarse profanity.

"Gimme a hand, one of youse guys," he growled. "These cursed bolts is rusted solid."

The gun came out of Maxwell Sanderson's pocket. With a flick of his thumb, he released the safety catch and he was ready to get in action.

"I hope," he said, "that this little surprise attack will put them on the run. Our game is to make a noise like an army once I begin shooting over their heads. Keep low to the ground, old man, for there's a possibility they may return my fire. I'm not shooting to kill but those fellows won't be so considerate if they do give us a battle."

Clark drew a deep breath as he dropped to his knees at the edge of the underbrush.

"You may fire, Gridley, when you are ready," he whispered with a levity that was a bit hollow and forced.

At this moment, a vivid flash of lightning revealed the four men below, Brock with the lantern, two of them with a long bar wrench loosening the bolts of the joint plates, and "Skeeter" at work prying up the spikes that held the rails tight to the ties. In that brief instant of illumination, Sanderson could have easily picked off any one of them, placing his shot with a mathematical nicety, for his marksmanship was accurate and dependable, equal indeed to that boasted by Brock.

As the peal of thunder died away, leaving the countryside silent, Sanderson's voice boomed through the night in a roaring shout.

"Close in on 'em, men! We've got

'em!" His automatic pistol barked and belched flame as four shots rang out in rapid succession. Crouching low to the ground, he began dodging back and forth, this to make it appear that the firing was coming from different points and from several weapons.

The effect of this sudden attack, as was to be expected, brought bewildered confusion to the bandits. The lantern was quickly extinguished; Brock wasn't such a fool as to make himself a lighted target.

"Dead or alive, men!" thundered Sanderson. "Spread out, fellows! Surround 'em!"

"All right, inspector. Come on, Jack; there's only four of those birds," added Clark, helping along the bluff made so convincing with Maxwell Sanderson scuttling back and forth, his gun blazing briskly. Brock and his three thugs naturally believed that they faced a superior force of post-office inspectors who in some mysterious manner had got wind of the plot to wreck and loot the mail train. Hoarsely, profanely, Brock ordered the other three to retreat under a counter fire, and the darkness was rent by streaks of fire as the bandits took to flight.

Sanderson, reloading the cartridge magazine of his automatic with miraculous speed, kept zigzagging back and forth with Barton Clark bellowing in a variety of assumed voices. In the excitement, Clark leaped to his feet only to drop hastily down again as a bullet droned past like some venomous insect, within inches of his head.

"Be careful, Max!" he gasped. "Those fellows are shooting close."

There could, of course, be no pre-meditated accuracy; it was all a game of intimidation and blind chance, the light of the roaring pistols offering the only target. In the

midst of all this bedlam, Clark thought he heard his friend give voice to a suppressed exclamation, a queer, catching intake of the breath that sent a shiver of dread through him.

"Max!" he cried anxiously, groping his way along the ground. "Are you all right?"

Maxwell Sanderson blundered heavily against the other, pushing the gun into the latter's hand.

"Carry on, Bart," was all he said, but his voice was tense and gasping.

"You're hurt! You——"

"Don't talk! Shoot. We've got 'em on the run now. Don't worry about me; nicked me a little, that's all."

Clark groaned in an agony of apprehension, knowing perfectly well that the damage wasn't so slight as Sanderson wanted him to believe, but he did as he was told, caught the grip of the automatic and continued the firing. He did not, however, shoot high; he wanted revenge upon those fiends.

Brock had got himself and his men some distance along the track without a casualty, and now he was telling the other three to make for the woods and scatter.

"Work your way toward the car," was his order, "but keep under cover, see, until we know them dicks ain't got our bus spotted and some of 'em ain't layin' for us there. Post-office bulls, curse 'em, but I can't figger out how they got tipped on this job."

"We're spiked, that's sure," mumbled Skeeter, reloading his gun as he crouched behind the shelter of a ditch, "but just the same them guys is yellow, fer they're keepin' distance."

Later it occurred to Brock as strange that the supposed postal detectives had not charged in pursuit

and, thinking back afterward, he recalled that the fire from the guns of the "officers" had been very light; he was never able to figure it out but at the moment he only considered that he was being tremendously lucky. A minute or two later, the quartette had got off the railroad right of way, and gone slinking through the woods, cautiously worming their respective paths through the snapping underbrush in the direction of the car.

Maxwell Sanderson had found the support of a tree and was leaning against it, breathing heavily, his hand pressing tightly to his right side.

"Not much more than a scratch, old boy," he said to Clark. "Plowed a bit of a hole around the ribs, I think, but it's nothing to worry about. Rather jolted the wind out of me, but I'll be able to pull myself together in no time at all. Perhaps you'll have to help me do a little first aid."

Barton Clark struck a match, shielded the flame and held it close to the face of his friend. He saw what he already suspected, that Sanderson was in a pretty bad way.

"Where did the bullet get you, Max?"

"A little below the shoulder here. Don't get all steamed up over this, Bart; I tell you I'm going to be all right in a few minutes. We'll have to fix up some bandages though and stop the bleeding."

Clark groaned.

"We prevent a train wreck, save a disaster and wholesale slaughter—and this is our reward!" he exclaimed bitterly. "Those four fiends get off without a mark. We should have minded our own business."

"I'd do the same thing over again and so would you, Bart. No whimpering, old man, for I tell you that

I'm going to be all right. Come, let's see what sort of a doctor you would have made."

It was a slow, awkward job in the darkness, and, as Clark worked with clumsy, unsteady fingers, the fury of the storm suddenly abated. The wind seemed to have abruptly blown itself out, the rain ceased, and the sky cleared a little. On the other side of the woodland strip, there burst into life the roar of Brock's automobile; even the clashing of gears being meshed in frantic haste was faintly audible. The bandits, assured that the car was not being watched by detectives, were making a fast get-away.

"If we ever needed a car, Max, we need it now. How am I going to get you anywhere on your own feet? You're in a bad way, Max; don't try to fool yourself about that. If we'd tinkered their machine, as I wanted to do, we might have managed."

At this moment, with the throb of the fleeting motor still beating upon the air, a great beam of light reached out its probing shaft around a sharp curve up the tracks, a hoarse whistle sounded and the ground began to vibrate with the swift onrush of a speeding train. The fast mail car gathered even greater speed and came thundering down the grade at a clip of fifty-five miles an hour.

The great locomotive, drivers pounding, roared past, the engineer leaning out the cab window, his hand on the throttle; he would never know how nearly this had been his last run. The mail car with its clerks sorting mail, getting the pouches ready for the next station! The dark Pullmans with their peacefully slumbering passengers who, by barest chance, had escaped that awful and most hideous of all tragedies, a train wreck!

Sanderson watched the long line

of cars until they had passed and only the red dots of the tail lights from the last coach winked back at him. His lips, tightly compressed, relaxed into a smile of satisfaction and content.

"Safe—all those people!" he said quietly. "That's really what mattered, Bart. It's worth"—a stab of pain shot through his chest—"it's worth whatever it may cost."

He was admitting to himself for the first time that the wound was perhaps serious, but he had no complaint. He always played a game, any game, win or lose, and did not grumble at the whims of fortune when the wheel of chance spun against him.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### CLARK'S PLIGHT.

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IT required all the strength he had, even with the stalwart help of his friend, for Sanderson to reach the dirt road which was heavy with mud and made the going all the more difficult. Clark was at his wit's end trying to think what was the best thing to do. The way Max faltered and staggered, he knew that the other couldn't make it much farther. Where should they go? Where could they go with any assured safety?

"Max," he said, himself panting for breath, "we're up against it; no two ways about that. Here we are a couple of bums and we've got to have a plausible story or we've got the police on us. The only explanation I can think of is to tell the truth."

Sanderson's senses were dulled but his brain was sufficiently alert to find a vital flaw in this suggestion.

"No, Bart," he responded thickly, faintly, "that won't do. Often hard to get the truth believed. Body back there by the barn—Cummings's body, you know; first thing we know we'll find ourselves facing charge of murder."

"Hadn't thought of that," Clark groaned. "I'd forgot all about that poor devil."

"So had I for the moment. Let me think; let me—" His voice became a vanishing thread of sound, and his weight sagged more heavily on Clark's supporting arm.

"I'll have to do something about the dead man—dispose of him in some way. There'll be some place—the old barn, perhaps the woods."

Sanderson was again able to speak.

"A well. Liable to be one near the barn. Best place. Mustn't be found. Danger—both of us."

"I get what you mean. Probably, a well near the barn where the stock was watered." Clark experienced a revulsion of distaste. "Hate like the devil to give a man a burial like that, but men in our fix can't afford to be sentimentalists. I'll go back and attend to that when I've done something for you. But the story we're going to tell—we've got to agree on that." He paused for a thoughtful moment or two. "How's this? We made camp with another bo; he thought we had a few dollars on us, tried to get it; we put up a scrap and he plugged you. How's that sound?"

Whether Sanderson had heard, Clark did not know for the Noiseless Cracksman suddenly stumbled, pitched forward and lay a dead, sagging weight within the supporting arms of his friend. Clark stood there with a feeling of despairing helplessness. For all he knew, Max might be dying; his life might hang by so

slender a thread that minutes might hold the balance. There was not a house in sight, not a light anywhere. How far to the town? He didn't know, but no matter what the distance, it was too great for him even to consider the possibility of carrying a limp, dragging burden of one hundred and seventy pounds in this heavy muck when even his own footing was none too sure.

A little way ahead, a dog barked, usually a dismal sound amid a countryside stillness, but Barton Clark's hopes were stirred.

"Where there's a dog," he thought, "there's pretty sure to be a master. Chances are I'm getting close to a house; I can't get poor Max much farther, and he's got to have a doctor quickly."

With an almost superhuman effort, he gathered his stricken friend into his arms and went on, staggering, slipping; once, he lost his balance in the soft mud and went down.

The logic of his theory about the dog was borne out presently by the bulking outline of a square, two-story farmhouse not far back from the road. The windows of the unpretentious dwelling were in darkness; this was as it should be. Growling in unfriendly challenge, the dog, a mongrel of no pronounced breed, met them from within the boundary of a disreputable, neglected fence. Clark plunged in through the opening where a wagon lane led up from the highway; he hadn't the breath to order the animal back but the dog retreated grudgingly, noisily, lacking the courage to attack.

A window on the second floor of the house was flung up; the head of a man appeared and an irate voice demanded to know, "What th' tarnation is th' matter with you down there?"

"There—there's been an accident," Clark panted. "A man's been hurt; I've got to have help for him—a doctor."

"Ain't so fur to town, a scant two miles," came the unsympathetic response. "I ain't no doctor."

Barton Clark burned with anger at this heartlessness.

"At least," he retorted, "you can let me in long enough to use your telephone."

"Ain't got no telephone."

"I tell you a man's hurt, badly hurt. We can't make it into town without help." And then he had an inspiration, adding: "I'll pay you well for your trouble."

This offer was answered with an unintelligible mumbling; apparently, the householder had turned back into the room to ask the advice of his wife. As Clark had hoped, the promise of financial reward was attractive. It seemed to him, however, an eternity before the couple came to a decision.

"I'll come down and let yer in," was the final surly reply. A match was struck, a lamp lighted; there was the wait of a minute or two while the man was getting into some clothes, and then the light moved, disappeared and reappeared on the ground floor of the house.

The door opened at a crazy, sagging angle, and Clark blundered across the threshold with his beloved burden nearly slipping out of his numbed arms. There was no couch, no chair suited to receive the inert form; he had no choice but to let Sanderson rest upon the floor.

Bare of feet, his nightgown stuffed hastily into the top of his trousers from which a pair of frayed suspenders swung at either side in twin loops, the farmer stood gaping, the lighted lamp raised level with his head. He was a squat, solidly built

man with a white beard stubble on his sullen, heavy face.

His wife, also, came pattering down the narrow stairs in a pair of flopping slippers, a faded wrapper about her tall, gaunt body; a green-eyed, harsh-mouthed woman whose disfavor was instantly apparent.

"Don't yer let 'em in, Abner!" she cried in a rasping, shrewish voice. "They ain't nothin' but a couple of bums. I tell yer, Abner Sneed, don'tcha let them two rapscallions inside this house!"

The farmer was evidently accustomed to letting her have the say.

"Ye'll have to git out," he mumbled. "My old woman—well, ye'll have to git out."

Clark had been bending over Sanderson to see if the latter still breathed.

"Now see here," he protested hotly, "you can't turn an injured man out-of-doors. It may mean his life. He's my friend and now that I've got him inside he's going to stay until I've got hold of a doctor."

"You put these bums out, Abner Sneed. Pay! How could sich as them pay anybody fer anything?"

Clark saw that an appeal to greed if not an appeal to sympathy would win the woman over. He masked his resentment and tried a different tack.

"I suppose we do look pretty disreputable at that," he said. "Perhaps I shouldn't blame you, madam, but the truth is that we are not the sort of tramps you usually meet. We've been bumming it on a lark—for a wager, you see. I can and will pay you for the trouble—spot cash. Here!"

\* He put one of his grimy hands into his pocket and brought forth a roll of bills that made the couple gape and gasp. The woman's eyes lighted avidly.

"Fifty dollars now," Clark continued. "That ought to be fair for the present, but I'll pay you well for anything you do for my poor friend."

Mrs. Sneed's hand darted out, and her clawlike fingers seized the money that was offered her. She examined the bills critically, perhaps with a degree of suspicion. It was new currency, crisp and clean, and most of the paper money which came into her possession was soiled and tattered by many previous ownerships. It was not until she held one of the tens against the lamplight and saw the silk threads running through the fiber that she was satisfied.

"They kin stay, Abner, leastwise 'til a doctor gits here," she said. Then she turned to Clark and asked sharply: "What's the matter with him? How'd he git hurt?"

Clark thought it wiser to avoid explanations for the present, particularly with the attitude of the couple so hostile.

"There's no time for going into details," he blurted hurriedly. "The first thing is to get a doctor. You say that you haven't got a telephone?"

"No, we ain't got one; nearest one's 'bout half a mile on down the road," replied the farmer.

"And they ain't home," supplemented the woman. "Ye'll have ter go clean into town."

"All right," said Clark, "but my friend can't lie on the floor. You've got to let him have a bed." When Abner Sneed made no move, he added curtly: "Give your wife the lamp and lend me a hand with him."

There were, it seemed, only two bedrooms in the farmhouse, one occupied by the couple and the other by their son. As the two men prepared to take Sanderson upstairs, the woman went ahead to arouse and

disposses the boy. The latter, despite his drowsy, grumbling protests, was evicted, a tall, gangling youngster of seventeen, and the unconscious Sanderson placed on the crackling mattress of straw. The latter's body twitched with some muscular reaction, and Mrs. Sneed, a highly superstitious person, began to bewail loudly the possibility of a death in her house.

Clark gave hurried instructions that Sanderson was to be left undisturbed until the doctor arrived. A moment later, he was plowing again along the muddy road, heading for the village with all the speed that was possible.

As he floundered forward, he bitterly lamented the further adverse circumstance of being unable to save himself the trip by using the telephone at the next farmhouse. In addition to the time it would have saved in getting the doctor to Sanderson, it would have given him the opportunity of going back and disposing of Cummings's body while the physician was on his way.

"We're getting all the tough breaks!" he thought. "Just one thing on top of another."

He slopped on through the sucking, clinging mud and about half a mile on along the road came to the next farmhouse which was more prosperous-looking than the Sneed's. He paused, partly for a breathing spell and partly to consider an idea that flashed into his mind.

"That woman might be mistaken about these people being away," he told himself, "and if they are, I could get inside to their phone."

He turned in, gained the porch and began hammering his fists against the door. There was no response. He tried the knob and found it unyielding.

"And this," he muttered, "comes

under the head of justifiable burglary. I've got to do it." Choosing the nearest window, he tried the sash, found it fastened and promptly put the pressure of his shoulder against the glass. The pane cracked, splintered, and he had an opening large enough to admit his arm. It was now but the task of an instant to release the catch and get inside.

A lighted match guided him to the hallway where he discovered the telephone, an old-fashioned affair such as are still to be found in the rural districts, with a crank to be vigorously turned when central is called.

The hour was late for an early-to-bed country town, but the operator responded with a promptness which completely satisfied even Barton Clark's impatience.

"There's been an accident out here," he told the girl. "I want a doctor, the best doctor you've got."

"Doctor Redfield," she answered, "is our only physician. Shall I ring him for you?"

The voice of Doctor Redfield, coming over the wire after a brief wait, was crisp almost to brusqueness. His curt questioning "Yes?" would have been disconcerting, no doubt, to any patient whose need was not urgent.

"A man has been shot by a tramp, doctor; I've taken him to the Sneed farm. He's badly wounded, unconscious. How soon can you come?"

"Be there in twenty minutes. The Sneed farm; yes, yes, I know where it is."

No questions; Barton Clark was relieved that it had been unnecessary to make lengthy explanations. He had hung up the receiver when it occurred to him that it might be very unwise to arouse the antagonism of any of these country folk, and he took the time to scribble a

brief note, by match light, attaching a five-dollar bill as payment for the broken window.

"And I guess there'll be no trouble about that," he said under his breath. "With the fix we're in now, it's just as well to having every one feeling friendly." Dislike, he knew from experience, is often the willing parent of suspicion.

Back on the road again, he retraced his way with all possible speed, passed the Sneed place without pause, on his way to the abandoned barn and the task of grim necessity which, if he left undone, might accuse Sanderson and himself of murder.

Clark hoped that Brock's gang might have taken the dead man away with them in their car, but this was a possibility he had little faith in, for the flight of the gang had been too precipitate for that to be likely. He found Cummings where the poor wretch had pitched forward with Brock's bullets in his back.

"This is what it cost you, poor devil, for trying to do the last decent thing! You're a kind of a hero, I suppose, all being said and done, and are entitled to a decent burial, but this can't be helped. We're in for it ourselves."

Having no flashlight, Bart began floundering around in the darkness, searching for the well which, according to his memory of farms, should be somewhere near the barn to water the live stock. He had the good luck to stumble across it, the boards concealed by the thick-grown grass. A good deal of effort was required to drag off this platform, but he managed it, and this left the unpleasant but necessary part, a gruesome, repulsive but inescapable business. He returned to the dead man, braced himself to the ordeal, and bent down.

"I'm sorry, you poor devil," he murmured, "but it's got to be done. After all, when you're dead, what does it matter?"

He slipped one arm beneath the arms of the stiffening form, the other under the knees and staggered with his grim burden toward the well.

"I'm sorry," he said again, his voice husky, and then he let go. A splash and it was finished. Clark suppressed a shiver, stood for a moment staring blindly into the darkness, and then dragged the cover of rotting boards, across the opening.

Now that the tension of this was over, all his anxious thoughts centered upon Sanderson. Was all tonight's drama to have its climax in a kind of poetic justice which would bring Max and himself to book for all their previous transgressions? Perhaps it was written in the cards that Sanderson was to pay with his life.

"A losing game," he thought. "There has to be an end sometime, and maybe this is it."

Plunging back toward the road, he stopped suddenly, held in the grip of a sort of paralysis by the alarming realization that he had made a supreme, stupid blunder.

"The diamonds!" he gasped. "They're in that wallet—Max's coat. If the doctor goes through Max's clothes before I get there—Oh, what a thing to forget!"

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## CHAPTER V.

### ONE CHANCE.

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CLARK broke into a dead run, hoping against hope that he would be in time to forestall the consequences of this almost incredible oversight. Sanderson, of course,

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calm and clear-thinking under all circumstances, would not have made so gigantic a blunder.

No matter how lax the local police officials might be in their methods, it would have been ridiculous optimism to presume for a moment that they would allow the possession of a fortune in diamonds by two shabby, unshaven strangers to escape the severest kind of investigation; and there could be no explanation that would stand the acid test, and, for that matter, no plausible explanation of any kind that Clark had the ingenuity to invent. It is doubtful, furthermore, if even the quick-witted Maxwell Sanderson with an uncanny ability to squirm out of tight places would have been equal to this ticklish emergency.

It had taken Barton Clark fully half an hour since telephoning the doctor, and another ten minutes or better was required to get back to the Sneed farm. As he had discouragingly anticipated, the parking lights of the physician's car winked at him from the private lane. He had reached the diminutive porch of the house where he heard the dismal creaking of a gate somewhere to the rear, and then the pound of horse's hoofs, breaking into a sharp gallop. Dimly only he was able to see the silhouette of the animal, a man bestride.

Since it wasn't Doctor Redfield it must be either the farmer or the latter's son. Going where, and for what purpose? The answer to that, of course, was sheer guesswork, but Clark found it fraught with disturbing possibilities. Perhaps a police officer was being summoned, a natural procedure for a physician in a case of a patient with an unexplained gunshot wound.

Or it might be—and a shiver of dread ran through Clark—that San-

derson was dead, that the village mortician was being summoned. The superstitious farmer's wife would be demanding that the presence of death be removed as speedily as possible.

Barton Clark's impulse was to go rushing into the hall, but he checked himself, opened the door gently, and crept across the threshold quietly. It was wiser, if he could, to be forewarned as to the exact direction the situation had taken.

A small kerosene lamp with a smoke-fogged chimney was on the mantel. The sound of voices came from the stairs, Mrs. Sneed's shrill and excited, that of Doctor Redfield lower-pitched but incisive.

"Ye got ter git 'im out of my house," she was insisting.

"I've already told you, Mrs. Sneed, that the man will have to stay here for two or three days. The chances of his recovery are very good if he gets the proper care; moving him at the present time would be little short of murder."

"A small loss!" She snorted. "Where's my boy goin' ter sleep, I'd like to know!"

"I shouldn't be surprised Sam's slept in the barn before now, but, if he's got any objection to that, he can be put up at one of the neighbors. I've sent for a nurse, but a couch will do for her. No arguing now, Mrs. Sneed; the man stays here until I give orders for him to be moved."

"Who's goin' ter pay fer all th' trouble of fixin' up extra victuals?" the woman demanded complainingly. "Th' fella what was with him didn't come back, an', mark my words, Doctor Redfield, he ain't ever comin' back. Like as not, it was him who shot th' other one."

"Hm-m-m!" grunted the physician. "I'll guarantee any reasonable

bill for your trouble. Now I'm going downstairs and have a pull at my pipe."

Barton Clark relaxed his tensity in a deep breath of relief. Max was alive with the chances of recovery in his favor, and the horseman, galloping village bound, was no doubt being sent to fetch a nurse.

"If the diamonds are all right," he thought, "we've still got a gambling chance. Might as well know about that and have it over with." But before he could more than gain the foot of the stairs, he saw the doctor's feet appear at the top, coming down. The steps were narrow and steep; he waited.

Doctor Redfield, a compact man with a vigor greater than one would expect in his years—he must have been sixty or thereabouts—was tamping his pipe with the care of the critical pipe smoker and had a box of matches in the other hand. He paused and, as he struck a light, looked at the other through a thin haze of smoke.

"I'm the man who telephoned, doctor," said Clark. "Lost my way on that confounded road. It was mighty decent of you to come so promptly."

"Decent? Duty, that's all. You'll be glad to hear the chap upstairs—friend of yours, I presume—is going to make the grade, barring complications. A wonderful constitution, and that's very much in his favor. Lung punctured, but not a deep penetration. I removed the bullet. Yes, I should say that your friend has quite an excellent chance of recovery."

The doctor's expression, it seemed to Bart, took on a noticeable grimness as he asked: "How did it happen?"

This question did not take Clark by surprise; he had anticipated it.

Telling the entire truth was inadvertable. He would have much preferred to paint Sanderson in his true heroic rôle, but that would entail the admission that they themselves had been armed and that, naturally, would only magnify suspicion. The account, too, must exclude the dead man, for what proof could he offer that Cummings hadn't been shot in a pistol fight with Sanderson? It was a ticklish situation, but Bart had his story ready.

"It begins, doctor," he said, "with my buying a car in Philadelphia this morning. During the storm, I drove off the road where the State highway is being repaired, you know. The car overturned and caught on fire. No doubt, you're wondering what that's got to do with my friend being shot.

"Well, there was nothing for us to do but make for the nearest town on foot. The storm was pretty bad, and we welcomed a chance to take refuge in an abandoned farmhouse. There were four men there, hard-looking customers; I don't know who they were or who they thought we were, but we heard enough of what was said to know they were planning a robbery. We didn't get away quickly enough. They shot at us in the darkness, and that's how it happened."

"So that's the way it happened, eh?" The doctor nodded as though he were satisfied with the explanation. He took a pipe from his pocket. "Think I'll step outside and have a smoke. Most people accuse me of using a vile brand of tobacco."

"Just a moment, doctor," Clark interposed. "Is there any objection if I go upstairs?"

"Every objection!" the physician broke in firmly. "I have given the patient an opiate, and he must not be disturbed."

"But, surely, it can do no harm, doctor, if I go up quietly and do not speak to him," Clark persisted.

"Nor can it do any good," Doctor Redfield said. He took a step forward and, by seeming accident, brushed his hand against the side of Clark's coat where Sanderson's automatic pistol bagged down the pocket. If the move was a deliberate one, it was done with such deft carelessness that Bart took no notice. His mind was on the diamonds.

"You know best, of course, doctor, and I shouldn't, you may be sure, do anything that would injure his chances. And what about a nurse? Is there one available?"

"That's been attended to," the physician replied. "I'll stay until she arrives. Will you join me on the porch?"

Barton Clark picked out the least uncomfortable of the four chairs in the farmhouse sitting room.

"I'm rather fagged out, about done up, in fact," he said, leaning back and closing his eyes. "I'll stay here."

Doctor Redfield went out onto the porch, leaving the door open behind him; and there he stood with a wisp of pungent smoke trailing across his shoulder, silent and patient.

"He's suspicious of us, all right!" Clark exclaimed under his breath. "The old fox thinks he's fooling me, too! I wonder if it's really a nurse he's waiting for? A lot more likely he's sent for the police!"

Doctor Redfield hardly moved, and, when he knocked out his pipe, he immediately refilled it, struck a match, and puffed slowly. Minutes dragged past. The countryside was gripped by that complete stillness in which even a flying beetle, striking against a window, is a startling sound. Barton Clark, with his body apparently relaxed but his nerves

tight as drawn wire, cudgeled his wits in vain. What would Sanderson do if their positions were reversed? That was the answer he always sought when faced by a problem. But even Max, surely, would have been equally helpless under the present circumstances.

From far in the distance came the sound of an approaching motor car, laboring heavily through the mud. As it came closer, there could be small doubt the car was the one which the doctor expected. The latter turned and looked in through the open door; Clark sat with his legs stretched straight in front of him, his eyes closed and apparently asleep. For a moment, Redfield hesitated before he stepped off the porch and went striding down the path to meet the machine.

Instantly, Clark's body jerked taut. Leaping to his feet, he reached the window, drew back the drawn shade and peered out into the darkness. He watched the approaching car until the dully gleaming headlights swung toward the house, revealing Doctor Redfield now a safe distance away.

"This is my chance—my one chance!" Bart spun around and made a dash for the stairs. Three steps at a time, he went up. The door of Sanderson's room was open, illuminated by a squat little kerosene lamp, turned low and the light further subdued with a piece of bent cardboard against the glass chimney.

Sanderson's eyes were closed, and his cheeks had a waxen look that caused Clark to catch his breath with a painful stricture of apprehension in his throat. Only the faint rising and falling of the bedcovering across Max's chest reassuringly destroyed the illusion of death.

The bedroom lacked a closet, and

Sanderson's clothes hung from a nail on the wall. Clark took one broad stride across the threshold and reached for Max's coat. The breast pocket was flat with emptiness. The wallet containing the stolen diamonds was gone!

That he had more than half expected exactly this situation did not make it any the less appalling. There was only one explanation. Doctor Redfield had them, and there was hardly any measuring the possible consequences.

The farmhouse bedroom had but one window, and it had been left open at the bottom for ventilation. There reached Clark's ears from outside the sound of gruffly pitched voices, one of them Doctor Redfield's. Clark crept closer to the window and crouched down below the bottom of the sill, trying to hear what was being said. The conversation below reached him with intelligible distinctness. Now and then, he did lose a word, but these omissions did not seriously interfere with the sense of what was being said, and the talk confirmed his worst fears: the doctor had been awaiting the arrival of the sheriff and was now confiding his suspicions concerning the wounded patient in whose pocket he had discovered diamonds worth a fabulous sum. Apparently, the sheriff was examining the stones under the gleam of the car's dash light.

"Holy smoke, doc, do you suppose these are real?"

"They certainly are, sheriff," Doctor Redfield replied. "That's an independent fortune you're holding there in your hands. Of course, the man may honestly own those diamonds, but I very much doubt it. The other fellow tells a wild-sounding story about their car being wrecked and running into a gang of

thugs in an empty farmhouse. Don't take much stock in it myself, but I pretended to swallow it; you see, I didn't want any trouble until you got here."

The sheriff made some response which was unintelligible.

"Watch your step," the doctor warned. "Remember, the fellow's got a gun."

A third voice now made itself heard, a woman speaking this time —no doubt, the nurse whom Redfield said he had sent for.

Clark had heard enough. Still desperately indecisive, he crept away from the window, careful not to let his shadow appear against the pane, and paused, staring down at Sanderson's bloodless face. His arm went out, and he let his fingers rest lightly on the back of Max's hand —a little gesture of affection from which he expected no response. Much to his surprise, Sanderson's eyes fluttered open, and a shadowy smile of recognition flitted faintly across the latter's mouth. His lips moved, and Bart bent closer to catch the threadlike whisper.

"We got a tough break to-night, Bart, but that's all right; we saved a disaster, and it's worth a lot to us in self-satisfaction. Perhaps to-night will help—when the final books are balanced. Does the doctor say I'm going to make the grade?"

"Sure you are, Max, but I've made a mess of things—an awful mess. I forgot about the diamonds being in your pocket, and the doctor's got 'em. I don't have to tell you what that means!"

Sanderson's head moved in a faint nod. Neither fear nor reproach showed in his face. He was, of course, like that always, cool and calm regardless of how tight the pinch might be.

"Not so good, eh, Bart? You'd

better tell me—just what to expect." Sanderson's voice had become a trifle stronger.

"The sheriff's been sent for, and he's just got here. He and the doctor are talking things over outside now. I've let us in for it, Max! How are we going to explain the diamonds?"

"Have you told them anything at all?" the Noiseless Cracksman murmured.

"Doctor Redfield wanted to know about the shooting—how it happened," Clark answered. "I told him part of the truth. I had to tell him something! Told him I'd bought a new car in Philadelphia, that I ran off the road and it caught fire. We took shelter in that old house, found four ugly fellows there and one of 'em took a shot at us. But they'll demand we explain the diamonds; that's where they've got us." Bart's tense whisper ended in a groan. "I'm up against a stone wall, Max. Can you suggest what we can do?"

"What you can do, yes," Sanderson responded. "Get away from here immediately, before your escape becomes impossible."

"But, Max, I'd feel like a dirty quitter, leaving you in the lurch like this. It's all my own stupid fault, leaving the diamonds right where the doctor was dead sure to find them."

"That can't be helped now, old man." Sanderson's voice had become faint again. "What's done is done, and you can't help me by sacrificing yourself. There's but one thing for you to do—clear out while you can, before it's altogether too late."

Clark knew this was true, and that the best chance, also, of aiding Sanderson lay in himself being free. Sanderson's hand lifted an inch or

so from his chest; the fingers of the two men met, and a lump came into Bart's throat. A mist in his eyes, he turned from the bed and toward the door, but, before he could set foot upon the stairs, he knew that he had delayed too long. The sheriff and the doctor were entering the house, cutting off escape in this direction and leaving but one other—the second-floor window. Nor was there to be any time wasted with further dallying. Bart spun around, re-crossed the room, jerked wide open the sash which creaked lustily in protest, and slid his body across the sill.

It was not much of a drop, the matter of about eight or nine feet, but he landed with a tremendous crash in a dead rosebush. A thorn tore him wickedly across the hand, and, as he regained his feet, the sheriff came running out of the house.

"Halt!"

Clark crouched lower to the ground, zigzagging for the safety of a grove of trees where the shadows would swallow him up as though he had actually melted into the darkness.

"Halt, I say!" roared the sheriff again. "Halt or I fire!"

The threat did not alarm Bart in the least, but, when the sheriff's gun blazed away with five shots in rapid succession, one of the bullets whistled uncomfortably close and spattered against one of the trees, a bare six inches above his head. The fleeing man raced on, reached the road and went floundering through the mud without either plan or objective. Worst of all, he had strapped himself for the purchase of the car in Philadelphia that morning, and while there had been a tidy sum of cash in Sanderson's wallet, he had less than ten dollars in his own pockets.

## CHAPTER VI.

## A REAL FRIEND.

WHAT Wall Street symbolizes in the world of finance, Maiden Lane is to the jewelry trade. Here is America's great clearing house for precious stones and one of the world's greatest diamond marts: here are gem dealers of all degree, those whose stocks of glittering treasure reach into the fabulous figures, some who specialize in pearls, others who handle only rubies.

Special squads of police are ever on the alert in Maiden Lane, for the inconspicuous fellows you see scurrying in and out of the various buildings may be carrying the price of a king's ransom tightly buttoned within an inner pocket of their coats. The jaunty chap who saunters carelessly along the street may be a well-known crook who has dared slip below "the dead line." The pretty girl who waits upon the corner may be a modern *Circe*, with thoughts of luring from the path of rectitude some broker's clerk known to be intrusted with a daily fortune.

Yes, the police are vigilant in Maiden Lane, and Barton Clark knew that he was taking a risk, perhaps a grave one. Since he and Maxwell Sanderson had robbed Varrick Court, the supposedly impregnable Varrick estate in Lakewold, it was by no means impossible that Peter Blodgett would assign operatives of his detective agency to keep watch on the building which housed the offices of Samuel Lefkowitz. Blodgett knew that Lefkowitz was the man through whom the Noiseless Cracksman disposed of his loot. Proof was lacking, but "Bulldog" Blodgett knew it just the same, just as he would know, also without

proof, that it had been Sanderson who had made the rich haul at Varrick Court.

It had strained Barton Clark's resourcefulness to the utmost for him to reach New York on a capital of eight dollars and seventy cents. He had crossed on the Chambers Street ferry from Jersey City with his last dime. There had been no money for his breakfast, much less for the price of a visit to the barber or a clothes valet to remove the heavy wrinkles from his suit. As best he could, he had cleaned off the mud spots, but he was a rather sorry-looking sight.

But, he told himself, perhaps his disheveled appearance was in his favor after all. Who would think that he was one of the men who had pulled off the rich Varrick Court robbery? Still there was danger, the gravest kind of danger, if it should happen that Peter Blodgett was personally keeping vigil for the possibility of the Noiseless Cracksman showing up at Lefkowitz's place of business.

More than once as he walked through Maiden Lane, Bart was aware that eyes were upon him. In the face of one man, obviously a detective belonging to the jewel squad, he saw an expression of puzzled interest; he walked steadily on, knowing that any outward show of furtiveness might bring disastrous consequences, for, if he were halted for questioning, he would be at a loss to give an innocent account of himself.

Luck was with him, and Bart reached the building where Lefkowitz had his office, without being challenged. Apparently, there was nothing more to be feared, but, when a man plays outside the law, caution becomes a strong instinct within him. Instead of leaving the elevator

at the sixteenth floor, he rode to the eighteenth and went back by way of the stairs.

Although Maxwell Sanderson had done business with Sam Lefkowitz for a number of years, this was Clark's first visit to the diamond broker who also did a select business in stolen gems; in fact, Bart had never met the man, and he now thought how it would have simplified matters if Sanderson had arranged a password, looking forward to precisely this sort of an emergency.

A turn in the corridor brought Clark to a door which bore the brief legend, "Samuel Lefkowitz, Diamonds." He turned the knob and faced Miss Sadie Rosen who, in addition to being Mr. Lefkowitz's entire office force was also his niece.

Miss Rosen knew her job, and more than once had given ample proof of her ability to meet any situation. A pair of dark, quick eyes took in this disheveled young man with one swift glance which traveled from his unshaven face, down his wrinkled suit to the mud-spotted legs to his trousers and his unshined shoes. She sensed an air of tenseness in his manner, and that might mean anything, with, perhaps, the promise of something unpleasant. Beneath Miss Rosen's desk was a floor button which connected with a buzzer in her uncle's private office. Her foot moved toward it, ready to sound the proper warning signal.

Long since, Miss Rosen had discovered that, if the muscles of the face were in action, it was a great aid to masking those involuntary expressions which it is often difficult to control, and her method was the use of chewing gum. It might not be refined, she admitted, but it was a little trick which she had found most trustworthy. Chewing vigor-

ously, she watched the unkempt young man close the door and advance toward her.

"I want to see Lefkowitz," said Clark.

"Well, whaddaya wanna see him about?" demanded Miss Rosen, her pronunciation slurred by a mouthful of gum.

"You're Miss Rosen, aren't you? I've often heard Sanderson speak about you. I'm Clark."

Miss Rosen chewed more vigorously. A frown wrinkled her forehead. She was instantly upon the defensive, suspecting that this was a ruse concocted by Detective Blodgett which had as its purpose trapping her uncle into admissions that he had dealings with the Noiseless Cracksman.

"Sanderson?" she repeated quite blankly. "That name doesn't register with me, mister; I don't know anybody named Sanderson."

Barton Clark smiled wisely as he moved his head in an approving nod.

"You're cautious," he responded, "and that's as it should be. You're thinking this may be one of Blodgett's little schemes, but let me see your uncle and I can convince him in short order that I'm genuine."

But Miss Rosen was not going to run the risk of being misled by what might be no more than a smooth bit of plausibility.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" she snapped. "A lot of names I never heard of—Sanderson, Clark, Blodgett! What kind of a game do you think you're playing, anyhow?"

Clark gestured impatiently. "Oh, come, Miss Rosen; let me see Lefkowitz," he urged her.

The toe of Miss Rosen's shoe had pressed upon the signal button, two short rings which meant that her uncle's presence was desired in the

outer office. The door behind her opened, and Samuel Lefkowitz, rotund, bald, well-dressed and very sure of himself, stood upon the threshold. He carried a sheaf of papers in one of his plump, white hands, as though his appearance were a matter of business detail and had nothing at all to do with Clark's effort to see him.

"This fella," said Miss Rosen, "was just asking to see you. Some kind of talk about—about a man named Sanderson."

Sam Lefkowitz looked annoyed. "Again I should be bothered with such nonsense!" he exclaimed with a wave of his hands. "Where people get such ideas, I shouldn't know—that I should know anything about that jewel stealer they call the Noiseless Cracksman. Ach! So angry it makes me, such foolishness."

"He says, Uncle Samuel, that his name is Clark," added Miss Rosen.

The expression of Mr. Lefkowitz's face did not noticeably change. "Well, Mr. Clark," he demanded acidly, "what was it? Quickly please, for with such important business as I got to get settled this morning, I ain't got the time to be bothered with no detective fellows talking nonsense."

"Will you give me five minutes to convince you that I am Clark?" Barton Clark asked quietly, knowing that all this was but a mask of caution.

Lefkowitz stepped back from the doorway with a sigh of resignation that sounded genuine enough. "I guess it shouldn't do no harm to find out what crazy idea the police has got into their heads this time. For just five minutes I will let you talk, yes."

Barton Clark passed through the little gate of the railing which bar-

ricaded Miss Rosen's desk, and passed into the diamond broker's luxuriously furnished private office. The other man sat down in his swivel chair and surveyed his visitor with a pair of shrewd eyes.

"Out of a hundred men I could have picked you as Sam Lefkowitz," said Bart. "Usually one gets entirely the wrong picture of a man about whom you know a great deal secondhand, but you fit my picture of you—exactly."

A grunt was Lefkowitz's only response as he flipped open his cigar humidor and helped himself to a smoke.

"My job," Clark pursued, "is to convince you that I'm the chap I pretend to be. That, I think, can be done quite easily. There must be a good many chapters of the Noiseless Cracksman's life known only to three persons—Sanderson, you and myself. Incidents and details that neither Peter Blodgett nor any other detective could possibly know. It would, of course, have been simpler if Max had thought to give you and me a password in case a necessity like this did crop up; but I think we can manage."

Sam Lefkowitz took a heavy puff at his cigar and remained cautiously silent.

"There's the trip that Sanderson and I took to Bermuda—at your suggestion. Max was flat broke, and that meant both of us; we share and share alike as you must know. He made a trip to New York in disguise, and Blodgett spotted him in the subway. Max was right here in this room when Blodgett came bursting in, sure he had the Noiseless Cracksman cold. But he didn't get Max for the very good reason that you've got a secret vault behind that apparently solid wall. If that's not enough, I can give you the exact

value of the stones Max and I took away from the Wallachs——”

But Clark was not allowed to finish; abruptly, Sam Lefkowitz got to his feet and thrust out his hand across the desk.

“More than that should not be necessary!” he exclaimed warmly. “Right away I seen you, Mr. Clark, out in the odder office, I was not so suspicious of you as I let you think. But I got to be careful, for good reasons that I don’t have to tell you.”

Barton Clark nodded emphatically as he clasped Sam Lefkowitz’s hand.

“I suppose you wonder why I came, eh?”

“It ain’t that I got to be a mind reader to know things is bad with you and Mr. Sanderson,” replied the diamond broker. “Tell me quick; you got me worried.” Both the expression of the diamond broker’s face and the tone of his voice showed his anxiety.

“Max is in a tight hole, a very tight hole, Lefkowitz!”

“Not pinched?”

“Well, not exactly under arrest, Lefkowitz, but it amounts to the same thing. He will be under arrest when he can’t satisfactorily explain his possession of the Verrick diamonds.”

The diamond broker inclined his head in a jerky nod.

“Yeah, I knew it was Sanderson done that job at Lakewold; I knew that no sooner I seen the headlines in the newspapers day before yesterday. I guess Detective Blodgett knows it, too. Was it Blodgett?”

“It will be Blodgett the very instant anything gets into the papers that there’s a wounded man in Griggtown, Pennsylvania with more than a hundred thousand dollars’ worth of diamonds that he can’t ex-

plain. An item like that will send Blodgett to Griggtown on the first train.”

“Yes!” Sam Lefkowitz agreed tensely. “How did it happen—Mr. Sanderson getting shot?”

“Max didn’t have it coming to him—not this time,” Bart answered, his voice husky with emotion. “It was a rotten break, Lefkowitz, an ironic reward for a man doing a noble act.”

“Tell me,” urged the diamond broker.

“I won’t go into the details of the Verrick Court robbery, Lefkowitz; it’s enough to say that we managed to make a get-away. In Philly, I was seized with the crazy notion of buying a car, showing that a lot can depend on a small detail.” Swiftly, he recounted the rest of the experience, the wrecking of the roadster, taking refuge in the abandoned farmhouse, the plot of the mail robbers to wreck the train, and Sanderson’s unhesitating decision to try and stop such a horrible disaster. At this point, Sam Lefkowitz nodded his head with a glow of admiration shining in his eyes.

“Mr. Sanderson would!” he exclaimed. “Of course! Ah, my brave friend Mr. Sanderson would do just that, and that he should maybe lose his own life in saving other lives—that would make no difference! A diamond thief, yes, but a very brave man—the bravest man I should ever know even did I live to be older than that Methuselah fella!”

Clark went on with his account of what had happened, confessing his own stupidity in leaving the wallet containing the diamonds on Sanderson’s person when he had gone back to dispose of the mail clerk’s body for fear that this might lead them to getting mixed up in a charge of murder.

"You see," Bart concluded, "I'd have told the truth about the shooting but I was afraid it would look bad to admit that we had a gun. Anyhow, I did the best I could with an explanation and we might have got away with it except that the doctor found the diamonds. There was nothing for me to do but get away; Max and I agreed on that. All the money we had between us was in that cursed wallet—all except ten dollars, and I had to stretch it mighty hard to get to you. There was no one else I could come to, Lefkowitz; and, so, here I am."

The diamond broker tapped off the end of his cigar ash and reached for the telephone by means of which he could talk to his niece in the outer office without arising from his chair.

"Listen, Sadie," he said, "until I should tell you different, I ain't here to anybody. No, not even to Marcus Pearlman. Bah! What should I care about missing a profit of six or seven thousand dollars when a good friend I gotta get out of a bad difficulty?" He hung up the receiver and returned his exclusive attention to Barton Clark.

"It was right you should come to me," he said, "and now we got to do some talking and some thinking—mebbe more thinking than talking. You ain't got no money, but that should be the easiest part about it. There's always plenty of money in my safe, Mr. Clark, but there ain't always ideas just to reach in and pull out like they was dollar bills. Have you maybe got one already?"

Bart made an empty gesture with his hands. "No, I haven't," he admitted dismally. "For hours, I've ransacked my brain for just one glimmer of an idea. I've been trying to figure out what Max would

do to get me out of a jam like that, if our positions were reversed. Max would find some way"—another discouraged gesture—"but I'm not Max; I haven't got his imagination."

Sam Lefkowitz agreed with a meditative nod.

"Yes, our friend Sanderson would find some way, no matter what the obstacles. A resourceful man if one ever lived. His plan would be bold and daring, and yet so simple it should make one gasp. We must put our heads together, you and me, and yet even two brains like ours shouldn't be half Sanderson's when it comes to thinking ways out of tight places. How long should you guess it would be, before they take him from that farmhouse?"

"That wound isn't serious, thank Heaven!" Clark exclaimed fervently. "Yes, I know what you mean; our best chance would be to get Max away before they clap him in jail. But by the time it would be safe for us to move him, the sheriff will have beat us to it. No, I'm afraid that's a pretty forlorn hope."

"What kind of a jail have they got at Griggstown, Pennsylvania?" asked Lefkowitz as he helped himself to a fresh cigar and pushed the humidor invitingly toward Clark.

Bart smiled without much mirth. "If I'd waited at Griggstown to size up the jail, I'd have been inside of it. They were mighty hot on my trail and I got away by a mighty narrow margin."

"That jail should be looked over maybe," Lefkowitz suggested. "If we couldn't think up no odder way—well, it wouldn't be the first time some fella had escaped from one of them flimsy country calaboozes."

"I'd thought of that," Clark said, and both of them lapsed into silence for several minutes.

"Also," said the diamond broker,

his brow clearing of a meditative frown, "I begin to get still anudder idea. Sanderson is in a bad fix by reason of it he can't explain how he got those diamonds; if I should be able to do the explaining for him—me being in the diamond business, you understand—"

"Yes, I know what you mean, Lefkowitz. You'd pretend that Sanderson was in your employ—something like that." Clark shook his head slowly. "It's darned decent of you that you're willing to take a risk, but the risk's too big as compared with the chances of success. In the first place, you see, if our possession of those diamonds was strictly legitimate, why did I make a get-away when the sheriff came. No, Lefkowitz, any story like that would be very closely investigated; they'd make us prove it to the last detail. You'd be getting into a pretty bad mess yourself, and I'm pretty sure it wouldn't work. Anyhow, the chances are too slim for you to take the chance."

Sam Lefkowitz sighed heavily. "I guess you should be right, Mr. Clark. And, too, we ain't got no way of knowing what kind of an explanation Mr. Sanderson has told that sheriff fella. It ain't such an easy nut to crack." He paused thoughtfully. "How are you with that dis-guising business? Good at it like Sanderson, no?"

"I'm no match for Max at anything," Clark answered, "but I'm pretty sure I can do well enough at changing my appearance to make it reasonably safe for me to take a trip back to Griggtown. That's what you mean, of course?"

Again the diamond broker lapsed into a deeply meditative silence, drumming the tips of his plump white fingers against the arms of his swivel chair. His heavily lidded eyes

drooped nearly closed, and it was some time before he stirred.

"Griggtown!" he loudly grunted. "Griggtown, Pennsylvania! I remember that place. Sure! I remember it like only day before yesterday I had been there. A long time ago it was, too, when I was selling goods on the road for Friedman & Glasner. A county-seat town it is, Mr. Clark, with the courthouse in the middle of a public square, and a big, ugly statue of some hero fella who got killed in some way. All the stores is built around that public square, you understand. Sure! I remember it just like I was looking at a picture this minute. Why, believe it, I could tell you even the names of the two customers that used to buy goods from me."

Barton Clark felt a little impatient over the other's reminiscent rambling, but he remained silent and let Lefkowitz continue.

"Somehow or odder," the diamond broker went on, "Griggtown got left off the railroad. Two miles maybe it is from the railroad depot to the business section, and back in those times I sold goods on the road, it used to be a hack pulled by horses took people to the trains. I should guess maybe they got an automobile bus now."

"You think I was wasting good time, eh? It's the jail at Griggtown I was thinking about, too; I got a picture of that in my head. I am going to tell you about that jail where I guess they'll lock up our friend, Sanderson. Better luck there shouldn't be than that they lock up the Noiseless Cracksman in a flimsy jail like that. From a window in my room at the American House, I seen that jail a dozen times—a no better place to keep Maxwell Sanderson than should be a chicken coop with no locks on it."

Barton Clark brightened with this encouragement.

"If he wasn't wounded," went on Sam Lefkowitz, "I should say we needn't bother ourselves with worrying about nothing, for Mr. Sanderson would get by himself just like jumping out an open window, but we gotta take into account that he's hurt."

Sam Lefkowitz slid open a drawer of his desk and brought forth a fat packet of bills. Barely an instant did he hesitate before matching it with another.

"Plenty of money is always better than not enough," he said, "and stingy I couldn't be over a few thousand dollars more or less when the Noiseless Cracksman is in trouble."

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## CHAPTER VII. IN GRIGGTOWN.

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HAVING arrived at Griggtown at the unsatisfactory hour of three o'clock in the morning, and having found the night clerk of the American House a grumping, grunting, uncommunicative fellow who was also quite deaf, Barton Clark aroused himself at dawn and hurriedly began dressing. The principal reason for his haste was the anxiety to know exactly what had happened to Sanderson during his own enforced absence of the past forty-eight hours.

Various apprehensions disturbed him, not least of which was the fear that Max's bullet wound had developed an infection with perhaps consequences of fatality. Another possibility which alarmed him was that Max might be removed to a hospital in some other town, there being none in Griggtown. Such a

contingency would upset the plan of manipulating a crush-out from the flimsy jail.

Knotting his necktie before the mirror of the shabby dresser of the hotel room, Clark surveyed his own reflection with critical intentness.

"I think it'll get me by," he murmured, meaning the alterations he had made in his appearance, and, while his disguise was nothing so elaborate as Maxwell Sanderson's deft fingers would have been capable of, still Bart had not done so badly. An oversize coat with the shoulders padded gave him a bulkier look; the color of his hair had been changed with an application of dye, and he had borrowed Max's simple but efficient little trick of widening his nose by inserting in either nostril a tiny hollow shell of pink celluloid. A pair of rimmed glasses completed the effect.

Clark's disguise proposed to fool but one man, Doctor Redfield, and for double security, he intended to keep clear of the physician's path, for the latter was unquestionably a shrewd old fellow and recognition would cost his own liberty as well as threaten whatever chance there was of aiding Sanderson's escape.

Dawn comes early at this season of the year, and a glance at his watch told Bart that the town would not as yet be awake and stirring. Remembering what Lefkowitz had said about the Griggtown jail being visible from some of the rooms of the American House, he stepped to the window. A sharp, startled exclamation escaped him, and a look of discouraged amazement leaped across his face.

The grim building of stone which confronted his bulging-eyed stare was unquestionably a jail, but what a different jail from the one that Sam Lefkowitz had described!

Recovering from his surprise, it was easy enough to understand. Years had passed since Lefkowitz had visited Griggtown as a traveling salesman, and the flimsy affair of Sam's optimistic memory had been replaced by this modern structure which, apparently, had been designed for the sternly determined purpose of frustrating any attempt at escape. The building, while not a large one, gave every outward evidence of being the last word in prison architecture.

After staring at it for several minutes with his unaided eye, Bart turned back into the room, got a pair of binoculars from the bottom of his suitcase, returned to the window and adjusted the powerful glasses to the correct focus. This close-up of the Griggtown bastile confirmed his first impression. Perched high upon the wall, near the roof, was something that added to his consternation—an alarm box to which led a series of insulated cables. The purpose of this was at once apparent; before a prisoner could successfully make his way through those strongly barred windows, he would first have to silence the electric system.

Something akin to a groan slipped from Barton Clark's throat as he lowered the binoculars. For a moment or two, he was almost completely overwhelmed by a feeling of defeat and despair, and then his jaw set stubbornly in defiance of those grim gray walls which faced him from through the hotel window.

"I'll do it somehow!" he said through his locked teeth. "Max would find some way to do it for me, and I'll find some way to do it for him!" Yet his confidence did not quite equal his determination.

In the hotel lobby when he went downstairs a few minutes later, the

proprietor of the American House was behind the desk at the foot of the stairs, a genial, moon-faced man, a good deal of shrewdness mixed with the jovial twinkle of his blue eyes.

"Mornin'," he called out in a booming voice, hearty with professional hospitality. "Botts is my name." And he promptly offered his hand.

Here, Clark knew instantly, was a talkative man and a sure source of information. He introduced himself, using the fictitious name he had signed on the hotel register, and spoke of the two-mile walk from the isolated railroad station into town upon his arrival. That was just to start the conversation, and he certainly had no idea at the moment that it was to have so important an effect upon his plans.

Mr. Botts gave voice to great indignation that any guest of the American House should be forced to walk two miles at three o'clock in the morning, carrying his own luggage.

"It's a shame, that's what it is!" cried the hotel proprietor, banging his fist on the desk. "Bud Phelps is too darn independent to be runnin' a bus line; he don't seem to understand that th' travelin' public is entitled to consideration. Of course, bein' fair to Bud, he usually don't get no passengers off the 2:50 and he does meet it when arrangements are made in advance. But even at that, he ain't doin' fair by th' public or th' town. That rattletrap car he's usin' as a bus is a disgrace to Griggtown. The main trouble, I allow, is that Bud ain't interested in th' hackin' business since his uncle died and left him some money."

Botts had quite a little more to say about Bud Phelps and Clark listened with concealed impatience,

watching for an opening to veer the conversation in a direction where he could get some information about Sanderson.

"That stone building I noticed from the hotel window—jail, isn't it?" he finally got a chance to say. "Quite an imposing structure, Mr. Botts."

"Too danged imposing for a peaceable community like ours!" the hotel proprietor declared explosively. "A pretty penny that cost the taxpayers of this county!"

Mr. Botts went on to explain the combination of circumstances which accounted for the erection of the imposing county jail. It seemed there had been a number of jail breaks, the last of which had been that of a condemned murderer against whom there was high public feeling. On a wave of emotionalism, a new county jail had been voted and certain politicians, seeing a chance to avoid some fat building contracts, had pressed their opportunity.

"Speaking of your jail," said Clark, "I hear there was some sort of a shooting here in Griggtown night before last."

The hotel proprietor nodded. "Yes, and a queer sort of business it was, too, but I allow Sam Hudson will get to th' bottom of it if anybody can. Sam Hudson's sheriff of this county, you know. Best sheriff we ever had."

"Queer business, you say?" Bart urged.

"Danged queer," reaffirmed Mr. Botts. "Fellow was brought to a farmhouse about five miles from town. He'd been shot. There was some kind of tale about him bein' plugged in an abandoned place farther on down th' road, but Doc Redfield found a lot of diamonds on him—thousands of dollars' worth. Nate Smith, the jeweler here in town, says

they'll maybe run a hundred thousand dollars."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Barton Clark, registering appropriate amazement.

"There was another one of 'em," pursued the proprietor of the American House, "but he got away. Sheriff Hudson thinks they're a pair of high-class crooks that pulled off a fancy job in Philadelphia or maybe New York, or maybe Boston or Chicago. He's sent out a batch of telegrams to different cities, and I allow it won't be long before he gets on a hot trail."

Pretending to cough, Barton Clark whipped a handkerchief from his pocket and covered his face for fear that his features would betray some tenseness of expression which might be the means of arousing the suspicion of the talkative but shrewd hotel keeper. No, it wouldn't be long before the sheriff got on a hot trail. Botts was right about that!

"The one who got shot," asked Bart, "is he badly hurt?"

"A fellow that gets shot through the chest is always badly hurt," answered Botts, "but he's not goin' to die, if that's what you mean. In fact, Sheriff Hudson was able to move him in from th' country and chuck him in jail last night. We ain't got a hospital in Griggtown, you know. Been talking about it, but it takes considerable money to—"

At this moment a sharp, commanding voice called imperatively to Mr. Botts from the rear, summoning him to help with the breakfast. Mrs. Botts apparently, and Mr. Botts immediately became transformed from the genial host to a merely well-disciplined husband.

"You can get your breakfast at seven thirty," he called back over his shoulder as he vanished.

But Barton Clark wasn't greatly interested in breakfast. Morosely, he walked out of the hotel, circled the block and went slowly past Griggtown's imposing county jail. But closer inspection only increased his despair, for he saw that even to reach Sanderson with a message was a baffling problem. The barred cell windows were shut off from all possible approach by a high outside stone wall which formed a kind of stockade or prison yard. It was within this inclosure, as he afterward discovered, that prisoners sentenced to hard labor bent their backs over a rock pile.

A very clear and discouraging picture of what to expect was in Clark's mind. Eventually, one of those telegrams sent out by the Griggtown sheriff would reach some chief of detectives who would recognize that the Pennsylvania prisoner was the perpetrator of the Verrick Court robbery at Lakewold. It was almost certain, also, that the story would get into the newspapers, and Peter Blodgett's detective agency had in its employ an efficient young woman whose business it was to read the newspapers with great thoroughness. Long before Sanderson had sufficiently recovered to make his escape physically possible, granting that it was possible at all, detectives from New Jersey, doubtless augmented by the presence of Peter Blodgett himself, would arrive in Griggtown and take many precautionary steps against the elusive Noiseless Cracksman ever slipping through their fingers.

After a sauntering circuit of the Griggtown county jail, Clark returned to the hotel. It was not so much that he wanted his breakfast as that there seemed no other place for him to go. Eat breakfast, however, he did, although without any

appetite. He hardly tasted the food at all and he sat for a long time over his second cup of coffee, tracing endless, meaningless patterns on the tablecloth with the nail of his thumb as he cudgeled his brain. Not so much as a glimmer of an idea came to him. Presently, he left the dining room and wandered back into the lobby, slumping glumly into one of the rocking-chairs near the window.

Apparently, it was about time for a departing train for there was a pile of grips and salesmen's sample cases near the door, and one apprehensive guest was grumbling about the un-dependability of the local bus line. The automobile which "hacked" between the town and the railroad station finally appeared at the hotel entrance, a touring car much the worse from wear and neglect, with a noisy motor which complained loudly of unground valves and worn piston rings. The man whom Clark supposed was Bud Phelps, owner of the so-called "bus line," lounged behind the steering wheel, totally indifferent to either his passengers or their baggage. The hotel handy man brought out the grips and the sample cases, putting them into a boxlike extension at the rear of the car.

As Bart watched the dilapidated touring car lurch forward and depart upon its boisterous way, the seed of an idea began to germinate within his mind. He sat for almost an hour, maturing it into a plan of action and a scheme of strategy, and was more than a little pleased with himself that his imagination had done so well by him. There was, he admitted, no absolute assurance of success but the probability was encouraging.

Mr. Botts, proprietor of the American House, soon gave Bart an opportunity to put his plan in motion.

Mr. Botts strolled over and lowered himself into an adjoining chair. The truth of the matter was that he had become just a little curious about this guest who evidently had no goods to sell and was spending his morning doing nothing but sit and stare out onto the street.

"Goin' to be with us long?" inquired Mr. Botts.

"Well, that depends," Clark answered. "I've been wanting to settle down in some good town and establish myself in a little business of some kind. I've been sitting here, thinking I might be interested in buying out the hack business. If the price is right, of course."

"Bud Phelps says th' hackin' business here in Griggtown hardly keeps a man in bread and butter," frankly warned Mr. Botts. "You see, so many folks own their own cars these days. Why bless you, even the kid who squirts soda over at Nolan's Drug Store has got a secondhand flivver."

"Just the same," Clark insisted, "I'm pretty sure I can make the hacking service pay. I could combine it with—well, maybe with a little garage business. Between the two, I guess I could make ends meet."

"Mebbe so," said Mr. Botts, but he sounded dubious.

"Anyhow," Bart pursued, "I'd like to find out what Phelps would ask. If you'll introduce me to him, I'll appreciate it."

"Oh, sure," agreed the hotel proprietor, grinned and added, "I guess Bud'll appreciate it, too."

Before the end of the day, Barton Clark had become the owner of Bud Phelps's disreputable automobile and the negligible good will of the Griggtown hacking business for the price of eighteen hundred dollars.

## CHAPTER VIII. IN THE SOUP.

DOWN at one end of the row of white, clean cells, a Negro prisoner was mournfully singing, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." At the other a young fellow with a haunted look in his eyes and continually trembling lips which he could not hold firm paced back and forth, tortured with the dread of the penalty that he must pay; he had shot a man in a holdup and the man had died.

Sheriff Hudson's third prisoner was the mystery man who refused to explain his possession of a hundred thousand dollars' worth of unmounted diamonds, and because he was patient as well as prisoner, some special pains had been taken to make Maxwell Sanderson comfortable. He lay between a pair of sheets instead of plain blankets. Two soft pillows had been provided for him. A small table had been brought into the cell and placed beside the iron cot, and Doctor Redfield called twice daily to dress the chest wound and watch for any sign that an infection had developed.

So far, Sanderson had avoided anything approaching a persistent cross-examination, but he had no optimistic illusions. He knew that he was in for it, and that long before he had sufficiently regained his strength to attempt an escape, the Griggtown sheriff would have connected him with the Verrick Court robbery at Lakewold. That's what licked him this time—those diamonds found in his possession. It overtaxed even the Noiseless Cracksman's fecund imagination to find a plausible explanation for a rightful custody of a hundred thousand dollars' worth of gems. Since he could

not explain, he remained silent—a guilty silence almost as incriminating as though he had come clean with the whole affair.

Sanderson placed very little hope in the extremely doubtful possibility that Barton Clark would be able to do anything from the outside. Bart would make every effort, of course; that was a foregone conclusion, but the situation was one which required something more than loyalty and courage. It would demand an imaginative and strategetic mind which, frankly, he did not think Clark possessed. And funds! He knew Bart was broke, flat broke, and it didn't occur to him that Clark would appeal to Lefkowitz.

Still, as he lay on the narrow cot listening to the Negro prisoner crooning "Swing low, sweet chariot, for to carry me home," and the endless *tramp-tramp* of the young fellow who awaited trial for murder, Maxwell Sanderson could not help busying his brain with groping thoughts of escape. It occupied the time if nothing else.

Late during the afternoon, Sheriff Hudson let himself through the stout steel door which separated his office from the cell room, a smile of grim elation spread across his heavy-jowled face. He made his way directly to Sanderson's cell where he paused just long enough to open the lock, and then he strode on in.

"Well, Gentleman Jim, or whatever they call you," growled Hudson, "what have you got to say for yourself now?"

At the sheriff's approach, Sanderson had closed his eyes, feigning weakness. He meant to discourage questions as long as he possibly could. Each day that he could gain was just so much strength more he would have if he got a lucky

break, but there was such an exultant note in Hudson's voice that he knew the latter had received enlightening information.

"No use trying to hedge with me—not now!" said the sheriff. "I guess I've found out where you got those diamonds. Ever hear of a place in New Jersey called Lakewold?"

Sanderson showed neither consternation nor surprise; it was what he had expected, sooner or later.

"There is a Lakewold in New Jersey, I believe," he answered quietly; "quite a winter resort."

"Now don't try to bluff," grunted Sheriff Hudson as he reached to his pocket and produced a telegram. "I'll read you this, and you'll see that we've got you with the goods."

Aloud the sheriff read:

"Reply to your inquiry. Get in touch with police, Lakewold, New Jersey. Daring jewel robbery there about week ago. Loot said to be more than hundred thousand, mostly diamonds. Signed by Chief of Detectives, Philadelphia."

Putting the telegram back into his pocket, Hudson grinned more spaciously. "What have you got to say about that?"

"Not a word, sheriff," the Noiseless Cracksman replied calmly, almost cheerfully.

Hudson stared down at his prisoner with an expression of mingled anger and admiration.

"You're a cool one, all right," he grunted, "but what's the use of your being stubborn? I've got the goods on you, and keeping your mouth shut isn't going to help you any. Sure you can keep mum, but what do I do then? Why, I just send a telegram down to Lakewold, New Jersey, tell 'em I've got you in custody, and have the guy you swiped 'em from come to Griggtown and

identify his stuff. 'Where'll you be then?"

"I've nothing at all to say," Maxwell Sanderson repeated, and closed his eyes, making it quite clear that, so far as he was concerned, the interview was at an end.

The Griggstown sheriff flushed angrily, and his eyes contracted as, with an involuntarily belligerent gesture, his hands clenched into a pair of heavy and capable-looking fists. But, of course, he would not yield to the temptation of getting rough with a helpless man.

"If you wasn't flat on your back with a bullet hole through your lung," he blustered, "I'd mighty soon make you loosen up."

A shadowy smile flitted across the Noiseless Cracksman's mouth as his eyes went open again.

"I think not, sheriff," he retorted. "Nor could you do it with me flat on my back with a bullet through my lung. Step just a little closer, sheriff."

With a quick reach of his hand, Maxwell Sanderson's long, lean fingers closed about Hudson's wrist. He exerted no great pressure but it was the Griggstown sheriff who was suddenly helpless, for the latter knew that he was at the mercy of a jujutsu grip and that if he struggled he would break his own arm. In that moment of advantage, Sanderson might easily have got hold of the officer's gun, but even had he done so he would have lacked the strength to gain his feet and make a get-away.

"Leggo!" shouted Sheriff Hudson. "Dang you, let go!"

Sanderson released the other man's wrist, realizing that he had done a very foolish thing in yielding to the impulse of showing his jailer that he was not so helpless after all. Hudson backed hastily to safety.

"I'll remember that," he growled and, making no further effort to press his questions, went out.

"What a fool I am to have done that," Sanderson told himself as the door of his cell clanged shut. "That fellow will be on his guard after this, and that little trick might have come in handy. What a crack-brained idiot I was to tip him off and to an ace that I might have played later on!"

The Noiseless Cracksman was undisturbed the remainder of the afternoon, and, when the turnkey showed up, along about six o'clock with the trays of food for the prisoners, it was evident that Hudson had taken the little lesson to heart. A deputy accompanied the turnkey and remained watchfully at the door of Sanderson's cell until the bowl of broth and sliced chicken, a special menu because of his invalidism, had been placed on the table beside his cot.

Sanderson was stirring his broth with a spoon when he brought to the surface a tiny glass vial such as are sometimes used to distribute samples of perfume. His frown of annoyance over what he first thought to be the carelessness of the cook, swiftly gave way to an excited interest. Within the very small glass container was something white—obviously a bit of paper. Eagerly, he removed the cork and fished out the message. He read, written in almost microscopic script:

DEAR OLD PAL: I'm on the job and have a plan. You're sure to get the rap for the last job, but make 'em extradite you. That will take time. Watch for other messages like this.

B. C.

"Good old Bart!" Sanderson exclaimed softly under his breath, and his eyes were slightly moist. "He's got more cleverness than I thought.

Quite a neat little trick. I wonder how he managed it."

But that part of it Clark had not found greatly difficult. The food served to inmates of the Griggtown jail was prepared in the kitchen of the American House at so much per head—a circumstance which Clark had speedily turned to his own advantage.

## CHAPTER IX.

### AN INTERESTING ITEM.

EXACTLY as Barton Clark had expected, it was the industrious young woman who clipped the newspaper for the Blodgett Detective Service who picked up the clew that put Peter Blodgett on Sanderson's trail. The young woman's name, although that is a fact of no great importance, was Miss Hemmingway.

It was an item of but a few brief lines, concealed among the back pages of a New York morning paper, which caught Miss Hemmingway's trained attention. It said:

The New York police department yesterday received a telegram from Sheriff Hudson at Griggtown, Pennsylvania, saying that a mysterious prisoner is being held in the county jail until he can account for the possession of diamonds valued at one hundred thousand dollars which, so far, he has failed to explain. The arrested man gave the name of Atkins. A companion is said to have disappeared. The New York police have asked further information.

Miss Hemmingway neatly cut out the item, rose from her desk and tapped on the door of Peter Blodgett's private office. Receiving permission to enter, she put the clipping on the blotter pad, within reach of her employer's hand.

"I thought you might be interested in seeing this," she said.

Nor was Miss Hemmingway wrong. Peter Blodgett was interested, and noticeably so, for the Varrick Court robbery at Lakewold was fresh in his mind. He was certain, without having any actual proof, that it had been one of the Noiseless Cracksman's jobs; the estimated amount of a hundred thousand dollars coincided with the amount of the Varrick loot.

No longer than was required to lift the telephone receiver from its hook, Peter Blodgett was demanding "long distance," and, a moment later, putting in a call for Sheriff Hudson at Griggtown, Pennsylvania, he was impressing the importance of an instantaneous connection. The telephone, however, does not always give such swift toll service, and it was fully half an hour before Blodgett had the Pennsylvania sheriff on the wire.

"Hello there, sheriff; this is Peter Blodgett, New York. Blodgett's Detective Service. Former deputy police commissioner, you know. You've got a man under arrest down there with some diamonds on him. Give me all the dope, will you, sheriff? I've got a hunch he's a bird I've been after for a long time."

Sheriff Hudson needed no urging, and, even before he had completed the description, Blodgett knew that the Griggtown prisoner was Maxwell Sanderson. The clincher, had any clincher been needed, was supplied by the sheriff's mention of Sanderson's jujutsu trick.

"That's him, sheriff!" Blodgett shouted triumphantly into the transmitter. "That's him, all right—Maxwell Sanderson, alias the Noiseless Cracksman. Keep an eye on him, sheriff; keep an eye on that human eel every minute. He's slip-

pery as spaghetti on a fork. Yeah, I know you said he'd been shot, but watch him just the same. I'll be up there on the first train that I can get."

"You'll have a warrant for him, I suppose?" suggested Sheriff Hudson.

"I'll have a whole suitcase full of 'em," Blodgett retorted over the wire. "And let me tip you off to something else, sheriff; that fellow who got away from you—he's the Noiseless Cracksman's helper, and they're closer than brothers. Keep your eyes open, and we'll bag both of 'em, for when one of those birds is in trouble you can depend on it that the other one is waiting around the corner. Yeah, keep your eyes open, sheriff, or you'll find a couple of bars missing from one of your jail windows."

"Not *my* jail," declared Hudson with a booming laugh. "We've got a jail here that *is* a jail."

"Uh-huh, and you've got a jail breaker that *is* a jail breaker, don't forget that," warned the New York detective. "Keep your eye on Sanderson every dog-gone minute! G'-by, sheriff; see you in a few hours."

The conversation completed, Peter Blodgett jabbed a blunt forefinger against one of the buttons on his desk. In response to his summons, one of the Blodgett Detective Service operatives popped in from the outer office to find his chief rubbing his palms together and grinning, almost literally, from ear to ear.

"Well, Mahoney," Blodgett announced gleefully, "we've got Sanderson!"

"Again?" This was just a bit tactless on the part of Operative Mahoney, and a flush spread over Peter Blodgett's face, reminding him

as it did that this would not be the first time that the Noiseless Cracksman had been apparently firmly within their grasp only to slip through their fingers. Blodgett's jaw hardened.

"Believe me, Mahoney, this is once that we have got him. He won't find it so easy this trip. Sanderson got away from me twice after I had the bracelets on him, but I've learned my lesson. No more lone-hand stuff with Mr. Maxwell Sanderson. I'll take along a New York officer, and one of the boys from the office for good measure. Houdini himself couldn't get away from me, the precautions I'm going to take this time."

Operative Mahoney nodded, in perfect accord with his chief.

"I guess the Noiseless Cracksman is the cleverest crook that ever lived and the devil's own luck along with it. Too bad you couldn't have bagged him yourself, chief."

Blodgett brushed that aside with a wave of his hand.

"Now listen, Mahoney; here's the dope. Sanderson's luck finally came to an end—the devil's own luck, as you say. He got shot near some hick town in Pennsylvania. Don't know the exact circumstances, but the important thing is he's nabbed and they've got him in jail. He had the Varrick loot on him, see, and it's a cinch the New Jersey authorities will be after him, too. Now I want Sanderson myself; I want him back here in New York State to answer for the jobs *I* have had a hand in.

"He's got to be extradited, Mahoney, for he'll never sign a waiver, not in a thousand years. Spar for time, that'll be his game. Now I want you to grab a couple of those old warrants we've got against him, take along a good man from the D. A.'s office and hop the first trip

for Albany. Get the governor to sign extradition papers. We want to beat the Jersey lads to it, see? Get ours to the Pennsylvania governor first, you understand?"

Operative Mahoney nodded. "And you're going to Griggtown, eh, chief?"

Peter Blodgett's teeth locked together, and his jaw muscles bulged.

"You're mighty right I am!" he exclaimed. "And I'm going to camp there on the steps of that jail night and day. Night and day, Mahoney! If the Noiseless Cracksman gets away from me this time, so help me, I'll lock up this office, throw the key into the East River and go out of business."

If Mahoney thought this a somewhat reckless statement, in view of Maxwell Sanderson's record of escapes, he kept his own counsel.

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## CHAPTER X.

### BLODGETT GLOATS.

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SOMEWHAT leisurely, as such communities are inclined to be, Griggtown was considerably bewildered by the suddenness with which Barton Clark transformed his newly acquired automobile bus line. It was the frankly expressed opinion that Bud Phelps's successor in the hacking business was a fool and wouldn't last long.

Almost overnight, Bart had junked the ramshackle touring car which had hauled passengers to and from the railroad station, replacing it with a resplendent limousine with an inclosed driver's seat. It was a vital part of his plan that the driver's seat should be entirely separated from space allotted to passengers.

No matter what might be said as

to his judgment, certainly there could be no criticism of his industry, for never had Griggtown enjoyed such dependable bus service. Every arriving train was met, whether it be day or night. Nor did it seem to discourage him that passengers were few and that he often traveled empty.

"Business will pick up soon," Clark told Mr. Botts, the proprietor of the American House. "You wait and see."

"Guess I'll do more waitin' than seein'," pessimistically opined Mr. Botts.

"Maybe you'll be surprised," Clark retorted, not at all meaning what the other thought. He had a great deal of confidence in his scheme although he was more than a little disturbed by the possibility of a situation which might easily spoil the entire plan. Despite every effort to avoid a meeting with Doctor Redfield, circumstances had perversely arranged that he should bump squarely into the physician on two occasions, and both times—unless it was his imagination—the physician had given him a stare of intent scrutiny, puzzled and curious by a vague feeling of familiarity. The doctor was a canny old bird, and there was no telling when he might see through the none-too-perfect disguise and recognize that this was the man he had met at the farmhouse the night Sanderson had been shot.

Rigidly following his rules of meeting all trains, Clark was at the isolated railroad station when the eleven p. m. train steamed in from Philadelphia. It was raining, a blinding, drenching downpour. There were two arriving passengers and Bart's hands froze rigidly about the rim of his steering wheel, for one of them he instantly recognized as the

burly, bulking figure of Peter Blodgett.

Not that he hadn't expected it. News travels fast in a place like Griggtown and, through the loquacious Mr. Botts, Clark knew that "some New York detectives" had telephoned to Sheriff Hudson. There hadn't been much doubt in his mind that it would be Blodgett. Nevertheless, Clark was stirred by a feeling of uneasiness. It was by no means impossible that Blodgett might detect some flaw in his make-up, and even suspicion would be a disaster. A few questions, the discovery that he had appeared in Griggtown from nowhere after Sanderson's arrest and had bought out the hacking business—well, that would be enough.

"Hotel, gentlemen?" Bart inquired gruffly.

"Yes," said one of the two arrivals.

"Sheriff's office," grunted Peter Blodgett, and flung in his bag. It was a large bag and heavy; he had come prepared for a considerable stay in Griggtown.

The new closed car was slipped quietly into gear and purred gently as it took the rise of the road that led away from the railroad station. Having discharged his second passenger at the entrance of the American House, Clark drove on around the block to the county jail. There was a light burning in the sheriff's office. Hudson was waiting up for the detective from New York.

"That'll be a dollar, sir," said Bart. Was it only his fancy or did Blodgett's head jerk up sharply at the sound of a voice that he had heard before? True, it had been a good five years back, but some men do have a keen memory for voices, just as others seldom forget a face.

Anyhow, nothing happened. The

detective paid over the dollar and turned away.

"Your bag, mister?"

"Take it to the hotel—the best hotel in town."

"Yes, sir," Clark answered with a deep regret that the American House was the only hotel in town. "And that's not so nice either," he said under his breath. "Blodgett and I parked under the same roof and Botts likely telling him about the fool stranger who blew into town and bought out the hacking business!" He had hardly foreseen that his position was to become so complicated with risk at every turn.

Eager to enjoy victory over the Noiseless Cracksman, which was a great satisfaction despite the fact that it was not his personal victory, Peter Blodgett mounted the steps of the county jail, two at a time, and opened the door marked "Sheriff."

"Sheriff Hudson?"

"That's me, and I guess you're Blodgett." Hudson grinned. "Well, this fellow you call the Noiseless Cracksman is still in custody, Mr. Blodgett. All that talk you give me over the phone about him being the champion escaper didn't worry me a bit, as you'll see when I show you through. We've got a jail here that's escape proof."

Blodgett offered Hudson a cigar, took one himself, and clamped it between his teeth at a cocky angle.

"I could tell you some tales about the Noiseless Cracksman that might shake your confidence, sheriff. By the way, does Sanderson know I was coming?" He gave a nod of satisfaction as the other man shook his head. "Good! It's going to give me a big kick to spring it on him personally—and the sooner the better."

Hudson turned and reached for the keys to the cells.

"By the way, sheriff," said Blodg-

ett, "in your talk over the phone, I mentioned this pal of Sanderson's. Did you look into that? Any strangers in town who can't give a satisfactory account of themselves?"

"Yep, I looked into that," Hudson answered, "but there aren't any suspicious characters."

Blodgett smiled tolerantly. "Ah, but sheriff, he wouldn't be a suspicious character. He's no match for Sanderson, of course, but neither is he a *Simple Simon*. He'd be clever to make his presence in Griggtown plausible."

Had Sheriff Hudson been a man of livelier imagination, Barton Clark might have joined Sanderson behind the bars before the passing of another hour. But it did not even remotely occur to the local official to place on the suspect list a solid fellow who invested a substantial sum of money in a business of his own.

Detective Blodgett frowned as he lighted his cigar.

"It's not natural," he said between puffs. "Not natural at all. Why, those two, Sanderson and his pal, would go through anything for each other. I don't understand it; don't understand it at all." And his tone indicated that it was something that he intended looking into personally. His frown cleared and his eyes lighted with a gleam of pleasant anticipation. "All right, sheriff, let's go on back and have a look at Sanderson." With a gesture of unconscious caution, his hand slipped beneath his coat and touched the reassuring butt of his revolver.

Sheriff Hudson led the way into the cell room and flashed on the lights. The young fellow awaiting trial for murder screamed shrilly in his sleep with the fear that would give him no peace. Blodgett waited impatiently as the door of Sanderson's cell was unlocked. The steel

bars swung back, and the New York detective stepped inside. The light from the corridor struck his face.

"Hello, Sanderson."

Maxwell Sanderson, always a light sleeper, was already fully awake. Blodgett's arrival in Griggtown was really no surprise to him.

"Hello, Blodgett," he answered without antagonism. "I was rather expecting that you'd show up. Well, it rather looks as though you'd got me this time."

"Right you are!" Peter Blodgett exclaimed heartily. "This time I have got you—cold. Call it a lucky fluke for me, call it anything you like; this time, I've got you."

"No argument about that, Blodgett, eh?" the Noiseless Cracksman agreed with philosophical cheerfulness. "Life's a queer business; this happens to be the time that I actually did have a break owing to me."

"What do you mean by that?" the detective demanded curiously.

"Nothing I'd care to explain," answered Sanderson who had no intention of making a bid for sympathy. "Just take my word for it. Fate handed me marked cards on this deal. Oh, well, I'm not complaining; maybe I'll get still another hand before the game's ended."

"Not a chance in the world, Sanderson; you've played your last chip. You're through now, absolutely and finally through, and you've got sense enough to know it. You're going to be tucked away for a long time."

"It does look very much that way at the present moment," the Noiseless Cracksman admitted.

"Meaning, of course," Blodgett grunted, "that at a later moment it may look different. Not on your life, Sanderson! I mean to use every precaution to see that you don't use any of your clever tricks; that's exactly why I came."

"Nice of you to think so highly of my talents."

"Now, see here," the detective pursued, although he must have been fully aware that it was a waste of words, "why not accept your final defeat like the thoroughbred I know you are? Waive extradition and let me take you back to New York with me. You haven't got a chance of slipping through my fingers this time and you know it."

"You don't really expect me to, do you? Honor bright. Blodgett, now do you?"

"No, to tell you the truth, I don't," the other man answered. "I know exactly what's in your mind. You're hoping to play for time until you've got some of your strength back, and then you'll have some sort of a try at making a get-away. Eh?"

Sanderson's shadowy, intriguing smile flitted briefly across his lips. "I can be just as honest as you are; yes, you're quite right, Blodgett, and I mean to give you the slip again if I can."

Sheriff Hudson gave a grunt of amazement; here was a type of criminal it was beyond him to understand. He was rather angry with himself that he should have so much admiration and respect for this exceptional person called the Noiseless Cracksman, and yet he knew why. Maxwell Sanderson had more courage than any man he had ever met.

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## CHAPTER XI. THE TRICK THAT DID IT.

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FOR more than a week, Peter Blodgett kept an unrelenting vigil in Griggtown while the governor of the State should decide whether custody of Maxwell Sander-

son, alias the Noiseless Cracksman, should be awarded to New York or to New Jersey. Varrick, victim of the Lakewold jewel robbery, was determined, as a matter of personal satisfaction, that Sanderson should atone in New Jersey and hired expensive attorneys to press the contention. Adam Decker, Sanderson's unremitting Nemesis, was just as insistent that the Noiseless Cracksman be tried and imprisoned in New York, and Decker also employed high-priced lawyers.

During this legal squabble, Sanderson himself continued to make a rapid recovery, and, as his condition improved, added precautions against even the remotest possibility of his escape was taken. Sheriff Hudson had a justifiable faith in his county jail but, to humor Peter Blodgett, an armed guard was kept outside the locked cell door. Night and day, without respite, this watch was maintained. Frequently, Blodgett himself stood watch, relieving one of Hudson's deputies, and it was a source of much amazement to the sheriff that Sanderson and Blodgett seemed actually to be personal friends.

During the same interim of waiting, Barton Clark continued to run his automobile between the town and the railroad station and to stay as much as possible out of two men's paths—Doctor Redfield's and Peter Blodgett's. His occasional contact with the latter was unavoidable. Perhaps it was the very boldness of Clark's movements that saved him from suspicion, for he continued living at the American House and got himself to the point where he could give the detective a casual greeting without inwardly squirming with uneasiness.

Finally, the governor reached a decision; he signed the papers which

delivered Maxwell Sanderson into the custody of the New Jersey authorities. Deeply disappointed, naturally, Peter Blodgett did not pack his bag and catch the first train back to New York. Most emphatically, he did not. Much to the indignation of two husky and capable-looking sheriffs from New Jersey, Blodgett remained upon the scene.

"Boys," he explained at the Griggtown jail as the legal formalities were being complied with, "Sanderson's your prisoner and I know you feel that it's no longer any of my business. But I've spent the last six years trying to put the Noiseless Cracksman in prison. If he gets away from you to-day, as he's got away from you several times, it means I've got to do the job all over again. I guess I'll just stick around and go along with you." He smiled grimly. "Anyhow, I'd like to see anybody stop me."

The hour was ten in the morning, allowing thirty minutes for the New Jersey officers to get to the railroad—quite ample time. The day must have matched Maxwell Sanderson's spirits—dark and dismal with a threat of rain. Sanderson was led from his cell and into Sheriff Hudson's office. He walked a bit unsteadily but his head was up and his eyes steady and fearless.

"Men, he's your prisoner now," said the sheriff, and the two New Jersey officers stepped forward. Handcuffs clicked, and Sanderson flinched slightly; his head went down for a moment. Handcuffs are not pleasant when a man has been born a gentleman.

"All right, Mr. Noiseless Cracksman," mocked one of the New Jersey sheriffs, "let's see you pull some of your fancy-escape stuff."

Sanderson smiled faintly. "Gentlemen, you compliment me!" he

murmured. "There are, I believe, four of you, and, if you left me free this instant, I'm sure I couldn't get two blocks from here without physical assistance. Yes, you indeed compliment me—which is far more than you do for yourselves."

"Aw, cut it out; don't try pullin' no high-hat stuff with us, see. You ain't nothing but just another crook," one of the sheriffs said.

Sheriff Hudson had gone to his official safe and removed from an inner compartment Sanderson's wallet containing the Varrick diamonds. Varrick had made a frantic demand for them, but it was a rule of the law that they remain in police custody as evidence. The New Jersey sheriff almost reverently accepted responsibility for the hundred thousand dollars' worth of gems and carefully placed them inside his coat.

"It's getting close to train time, men," said Hudson. "I'll drive you to the station in my car."

One prisoner and four bodyguards—five counting Hudson—descended the steps of the county jail. The local sheriff's touring car stood at a bend of the driveway. They got in, and Sanderson didn't have the strength to lift his own weight. One of the Jersey sheriffs had to give him a lift. Blodgett's eyes met Sanderson's and the detective flushed; he did feel just a little ashamed of himself. It might be cautious police work, but it certainly wasn't sporting. Five guards to one prisoner.

"What a brave lot of fellows we are!" Blodgett exclaimed under his breath.

Sanderson looked slowly about him and then he sighed. Only the night before he had got a message from Clark, floating in the bottom of his soup, telling him that everything was going to be all right.

Ridiculous, of course! Whatever Bart's plan may have been, it must have failed; perhaps Bart hadn't taken into account that so many guards were to accompany him.

Sheriff Hudson, sitting at the steering wheel, trod heavily upon the starter button of the car. The motor leaped into life, the gears meshed, and the machine started forward, but it reached no farther than the corner of the block behind the American House. There it died, and no amount of coaxing could again stir it into life.

"Out of gas!" growled one of the Jersey sheriffs in a voice of deep disgust.

Hudson climbed down and examined the gas tank. He found it full, almost to the top. Obviously, it wasn't a lack of fuel, and, this possibility being removed, it must be the ignition. Ignition trouble is a big repair order when there's only twenty minutes to make a train.

"Fellows," he growled ruefully, "I guess we'd better not risk my trying to get the car running. I see the automobile bus hasn't pulled away from the hotel yet. We'll transfer to that."

A thrill of expectancy jerked Maxwell Sanderson's nerves suddenly taut. He hadn't the faintest idea how it had been managed but he was very sure that Barton Clark was responsible for the strange behavior of the sheriff's car. Bart's scheme was getting under way. But did Bart realize that he had five armed men to deal with? Would the beloved idiot have the good sense to call it off when he saw how completely the situation overwhelmed him? Max was immediately more concerned over Clark's safety than his own chances of freedom.

The shining new limousine which

had supplanted Phelps's ramshackle taxi swung around the corner, apparently on its way to the railroad station, empty of passengers. Sheriff Hudson hailed it, and Bart, managing to look quite unconcerned, put on his brakes. Hudson explained that his own car had developed ignition trouble and the taxi was needed to take the officers and their prisoner to the depot.

"Yeah; sure," said Clark, and opened the door. He dared not look at Max for fear an exchange of glances would betray him, and Sanderson, after one swift stare which told him the taxi driver was indeed Bart, lowered his own eyes. What did Bart intend doing, anyhow? Inwardly, he groaned for the piece of desperate folly he was sure his friend was about to commit; but he dared not utter a single word of protest.

The transfer was made and, since Hudson decided to go along, the five were in the rear, Clark on the driving seat separated by the glass panel. The elegant hack rolled into motion, gathered speed.

All the windows of the limousine were tightly closed. Peter Blodgett, always liking fresh air, reached for the silvered handle which raised or lowered the glass, but the handle turned without effect.

"Try and open that window on your side, will you, sheriff?" Blodgett demanded.

But Sheriff Hudson found the same thing.

The car sped on. Barton Clark reached down and pulled gently at a short length of wire which ran beneath the floor boards. His mouth was compressed into a tight line and the muscles of his face were tense.

Upon the six men in the rear of the inclosed car, including even Sanderson, the effect of pulling that little piece of wire was nothing short

of amazing. It took only the matter of seconds—half a minute at most. In fact, it was Sanderson, perhaps because his strength was at the lowest ebb, who first sagged forward, his senses completely blotted out by a sudden sleep which swept over him with scarcely any warning of drowsiness.

Peter Blodgett gasped and he was powerless to move a single muscle of his body. Yet he remained for a moment longer in the dazed possession of his faculties. He saw the two New Jersey sheriffs flop sideways and Hudson go slipping down from the seat to his knees. The sheriff's car that wouldn't run! The windows that wouldn't open! Now this! Sanderson's trick! Another Sanderson trick! Sanderson had done it again.

And then Blodgett himself knew nothing more.

Barton Clark darted a swift glance back over his own shoulder, through the glass partition. His pulse was hammering madly, and his face grew white with fear as he saw the six men all tangled together in the rear compartment.

"What if I gave 'em too much of the stuff?" he groaned.

No time to stop now! A dirt road veered sharply to the left, leaving the paved highway, a desolate road which he had carefully investigated days before. He twisted the steering wheel and sent his car scuttling down this narrow lane. He honked his siren in a series of hoarse blasts, and at this signal two men appeared from the woods thicket.

"Quick, boys!" Clark panted as he himself leaped to the ground. "Maybe I gave 'em too big a dose of the stuff. I didn't know it knocked 'em out as quick as that. Get Sanderson out first; it's Max I'm concerned about. I'll take care

of him while you two look after the others."

The effect of a few minutes of fresh air, two or three sniffs of ammonia and a little artificial respiration was miraculous. Sanderson opened his eyes, blinked dazedly for an instant or so, and then let his bewildered stare rest upon the activities of the two strange men.

They had first completely disarmed Blodgett and his operative, Sheriff Hudson and the two Jersey officers. Then, one man at a time, the five were being dragged from the car, securely bound hand and foot, and also gagged. Soon each one began to recover consciousness. One of the Jersey sheriffs was writhing and flailing upon the ground in baffled rage, and it was to this man that Sanderson pointed.

"Bart!"

"Yes, Max."

"That fellow's got the diamonds—yes, the Verrick stuff; it's in the breast pocket of his coat."

Clark needed no further suggestion, he darted forward and, the next instant, had the precious wallet which had caused most of the trouble.

The last of the officers had been securely trussed up, including Peter Blodgett, and the pair who had so deftly and swiftly done this job examined their handiwork to make sure that there were no loose knots.

"All right, guv'nor; that's done; and we better clear outta here."

Clark helped Sanderson to his feet and aided him to the limousine, grinning happily.

"Pretty slick, Max, if I do say so myself."

"You've got me just a little dizzy with it all," Sanderson admitted, "but I don't think we're quite in the clear yet, old man. Within a short time, this car will be——"

"Yes, I know what you mean," Clark broke in, "and we've thought of that."

The other two men got in the rear, and Bart sent the limousine forward. Less than half a mile farther on, he stopped.

"All right, fellows; here's where we switch. Not so easy riding, but a lot safer."

A few yards up a rutted little woods road, awaited a large truck upon the sides of which was painted the name of a responsible firm of piano manufacturers, and the truck was loaded, apparently with a shipment of pianos, boxed as pianos usually are in transport.

"This is our get-away, Max," Clark explained. "It'll take a pretty smart cop to suspect that you and I are riding inside one of these piano boxes. As soon as the truck pulls out, I'll run the car half a mile or so back here in the woods where I'll guarantee it won't be found for some time. Oh, we'll make it now, all right."

"Yes," agreed Sanderson with a nod as his hand rested over that of his pal for a brief moment of affectionate pressure, "I do believe we will."

Clark helped him down and into the truck and showed him the trick door in the end of one of the piano boxes which was to be their hide-away until they had passed through the zone of danger. Then he returned to the closed car and vanished with it through the woods. When he returned, he found Sanderson comfortably established on some soft bedding which had been provided to make their ride easier. The truck crawled into motion.

"I'm still in a daze of bewilderment as to how you managed," said Sanderson. "Tell me first, Bart, what kind of trick was that in the

car—putting us all to sleep before any of us knew what was happening?"

"Monoxide gas from the exhaust pipe," Clark explained. "You've heard of people being overcome in a garage with the doors shut. Well, that's the effect of monoxide gas. I guess that's what gave me the idea. I fixed up a little device so that by opening a valve I could send the vapor from the exhaust pipe into the rear of the car. I was scared to death when I saw all six of you flopping; didn't know if I'd given too much. A little of it acts as an anaesthetic and too much of it is death, you know."

"Yes, I know the deadly properties of carbon monoxide," said the Noiseless Cracksman, "and, of course, it was only effective if the windows of the car were closed. That's why Blodgett couldn't get the window open."

"That's right; I disconnected the handles."

"By Jove, Bart, nothing I ever did was half so clever as this escape you've engineered for me! Genius, old man! Positive genius! But I'm wondering how you managed—financially, I mean."

"Sam Lefkowitz, Max. And it was Sam who made the arrangements for this truck and these two fellows to help me."

"Ah! So Sam saw me through, eh? I don't think I realized his friendship would carry him so far as this. Now begin at the beginning, Bart, and give me the details—all of 'em."

Clark did, and Sanderson frequently interrupted with chuckles of appreciation.

"Perfect, Bart; a perfectly conceived and a perfectly executed piece of strategy. Nothing I ever did approaches it."

"It was desperation, Max," Clark said slowly. "I'd got you into the mess by leaving those diamonds in your pocket and I had to get you out. And luck was with me. Maybe, after all, success was our reward for preventing the train wreck back there that night. Lady Luck's a pretty fair-minded dame, I guess."

"Oh, I say, old man, there's one thing you neglected to tell me. What did you do to Sheriff Hudson's car that it suddenly stopped running?"

"That wasn't much," Clark an-

swered. "I simply poured a gallon of plain, ordinary water into the gasoline tank. Water's heavier than gasoline and goes to the bottom. As soon as the engine used the gasoline that was in the carburetor, the motor stopped. And, of course, there I was, waiting for just that to happen."

The truck jolted violently and, immediately after that, got onto a paved highway. Gathering speed, the heavy tires sang against the road, and to Sanderson and Clark it was indeed a joyous song.

A Thrilling Novelette about an anguished reporter,  
"THE FINAL PAY-OFF," by H. M. S. TITUS,  
in Next Week's Issue.

#### FINGER PRINTS FOR LOST CHILDREN

**I**T is said that over three thousand children are lost yearly in the United States. A bill is to be introduced in Congress, making the suggestion that all school children in the country be finger-printed.

With a record of every child's finger prints, there could be no mistake in the case of kidnaping or other identification. Often it is impossible to recognize a child after it has disappeared for two or three years, because during the growing stage many children change very much.

It is said that many wealthy people have their children's finger prints taken, because it is children of this class that are most apt to be kidnaped. In the case of a wealthy child being taken away, it has happened that another child was substituted when it was returned. If a year or more had elapsed between the disappearance of the child and its return, the wrong child could not be substituted, if the parents had their own child's finger prints on record.

Another suggestion has been made that the footprints of every newborn child be taken, particularly of children that are born in hospitals. In case of a boat or train disaster, identification would be greatly facilitated. Such a system would prevent nefarious persons from taking advantage of a lost child during such a panic. It has often happened that persons would claim children who did not belong to them.

*He was more mighty than  
those who could see.*



# ALL-SEEING BLIND

By HECTOR GAVIN GREY

**T**HE blindman's got 'im down! The blacksmith's lickin' 'im!"

The shouts of the villagers died down; old George Hadly, blind Kentuckian blacksmith, was pushing his antagonist across the green to the pump, his muscles knotted in a vicious arm lock around the younger man's neck and shoulders. There was a high, quick laugh, the hiss of many in-drawn breaths as George lifted his

opponent into the air and over his head and threw him sprawling, like a grain sack, on the other side of the horse trough.

Several picked himself up, dusted the dirt from his leather-covered knees and elbows and joined in the laughter. His hand held out, he advanced on old George, calling that the friendly struggle was over.

"You're too good for me, George," he admitted.

A happy grin creased the black-

smith's face. He was a fine specimen of a man, standing head and shoulders above every one except Feveral himself. There was a time when his sightless eyes had looked out blue and humorously, but years of gazing at molten iron had produced some sort of cataract and he could see no more. But his ears made up for his lack of sight, and it was his custom and delight to indulge in friendly wrestles with the stronger of his neighbors, thus proving that, when one of the five senses is taken away, the loss is made up by adding power to the others. Feveral was a newcomer to the village, a government man, and he had to be shown like the rest. Now old George was happy.

The sport over, the circle of watchers broke, and one by one sidled toward the rear of Jim Mandel's place. No one was certain whether to invite the government agent to the enjoyments and relaxations provided by Jim or not. Certainly, Feveral did not appear to have anything to do with the prohibition unit—but it was never safe to rely too much on appearances. Old George settled the problem:

"Come over to the smithy," he growled, hooking his arm in Feveral's.

Some one grinned. George kept a store of his own in the rear of the shop—five-gallon cans of mountain distilled liquor. It was best to let old George stand treat to the Federal man; it implicated nobody. There was not a judge within a hundred miles who wouldn't throw a liquor charge against old George right out of court.

Still linked together, the great blind blacksmith and the government agent crossed the green, turned into a short dirt road which

led to the foot of the hills against which the village nestled, and then, guided by the *clink-clang* of hammer on anvil, pursued a tortuous path to the smithy. This smithy was situated just outside of the village, on the right-hand side of the post office. Right behind it grew the green, stunted forest spreading up over the mountains; right over it, one might almost say, for the roof of the shed was never in full sunlight. George could not see the delicate tracery of light worked by the sunbeams falling through branches, but he knew by the smell and the sounds of his assistant's activities and the chatter of birds that it was well-nigh four o'clock in the afternoon and that his son, Tim, had not yet returned from the near-by town.

"If Tim was here," said old George, "we'd make a night of it. He's gone to draw the money to buy Silo's farm. I'm givin' up blacksmithin'."

Feveral loosened his arm. "Isn't it dangerous bringing money across the hills?"

Acute to every inflection of a speaker's voice, old George caught the disapproval. He chuckled.

"You don't unnerstand that we hill folk don't rob each other. Leastways, 'tis seldom there's any robbery hereabouts. Now in the cities— Say, where do you hail from, anyways?"

Now this was a question Feveral had never answered quite to the satisfaction of the villagers. He disposed of it now evasively:

"The government's making a survey of airplane routes," he said with a confident note in his suave voice. "Don't let on to any one, but I'm authorized to purchase a site for an airplane beacon."

"What's an airplane beacon?" the blindman demanded practically.

"A light which shines at night to guide airplanes on their course," said Feveral.

Old George steered his way deftly past the smithy furnace and scattered anvils. The hammering grew busier as he entered. His assistant knew that old George's ears were, in some respects, better than eyes for judging how hard a fellow was working. The heat from the stove beat on George's cheek; he could not see the crimson glow, but he felt it hot and blazing. Feveral, whose accent hinted at an education in one of the Eastern universities, murmured beneath his breath.

"Who's he?" snapped George, who had caught the almost imperceptible sound of a name.

Feveral laughed. "Who—Thor? My, you've got sharp ears. Why, Thor was the god of blacksmiths. He had a great hammer with which he beat people's brains out—sometimes."

*Clang-clang* went the assistant's hammer. He was guilty in his "busyness;" he had stopped to while away time with a cigarette and a short bantering talk with a passing girl just before his employer arrived.

"Did he—this Thor fellow—have a hammer as big as this one?" demanded George. Without groping, he stretched out an enormous arm and picked up a short-handled hammer from a corner of the smithy.

Feveral took it and weighed it on his shoulder. "Is this the one you used to work with?"

The other chuckled, flattered at the amazement in his visitor's tone.

"I could beat that all day long," he boasted.

"Must be seventy-five pounds," said Feveral.

"Eighty-four," said George. He reached into a metal bin, and, after

rummaging around, produced a canvas bag that clinked musically. Inside the bag were bottles—square ones.

The assistant breathed a sigh of relief when old George and Feveral retired to a small room at the rear of the smithy. George heard the sigh and poked his head through the door.

"Don't quit work on my account," he advised with heavy humor.

When he closed the door, he heard Feveral pouring out a drink. He could hear everything. He even knew that Feveral was shaky of hand.

The government man did not stay long. When he had gone, old George put the glasses and bottles away and sat down to wait for Tim. The assistant went home at five or thereabouts—when the sun went down, as a rule.

Timmie was late. George heard him jump to the ground from the light, two-wheeled rig he had taken for his journey, and knew by the way his son's feet dragged on the floor of the smithy that Tim was tired.

"You have a good trip?" he asked.

Tim grunted assent. He put something on the anvil. George frowned.

"What made you get gold instead of bills?" he snapped.

"Silo don't believe in paper money," came the sharp answer.

"Still and all, you oughtn't to have got metal," said old George. "There's a curse about gold. 'Tis like a magnet that draws men to wet it with blood."

"Rot," was the unfilial reply.

A short pause. Then Tim asked: "Ain't we got any candles left?"

To old George night was the same as day. And he had forgotten to

buy candles at the store when he went down to the village.

"Blow up the fire," he suggested.

Tim worked the creaky bellows of the charcoal furnace; sparks flared and danced in the dark angle of the roof, and on the almost paralyzed retina of old George's eye there came a warm, dark-red tinge. This was the nearest he could get toward actually seeing light or differentiating it between darkness. And this crimson tinge came only from hot fires, not from sunshine or candles.

"Feveral was up here this afternoon," said old George suddenly. "He tried to down me there on the green, but I was too much for him."

Tim grunted. "I don't like that fellow."

"Why?"

"He's sly and——"

"And what?" snapped his father.

"Oh, nothin'!"

George heaved his huge bulk from the blackened bench where he sat and crossed to place a heavy hand on his son's shoulder. His voice, when it came, was anxious and hard.

"Listen, Timmie, boy! Do you remember when you went away last spring and come back with all that money—the money we're able to buy the Silo farm with?"

Tim's shoulder twitched under the pressure of the hand. "What about it?" he rasped.

"Where was you then?" said old George.

The son jumped up. "I was in the city like I said."

"What city?"

"What's you frettin' fer?" Timmie rapped out. "I told you I earned a pile of good wages."

Though he had drawn away, old George followed him unerringly, guided by the sound of breathing, of

clothes touching the anvil he passed, of leather soles and heels on the hard earth floor. When George grasped his son again by the shoulders, his voice was low and intense.

"Ye earned no fower thousand dollars," he whispered accusingly.

Again Tim pulled away. "What d'ye mean?" His voice was sullen.

"I mean ye, nor any man, did not earn fower thousand dollars in fower month," said old George.

He heard his son's rapid breathing. "What you want to start up about that now?" Tim asked in a querulous tone. "Ye said naught when I come home fust."

"But I say it now," came from the blindman harshly. "There's danger arou' us, Timmie. I feels it."

The other scoffed. "Danger from whom?"

"This government man?"

"What—oh!" A pause. "You're talkin' about Feveral?"

"I'm a-talkin' about Feveral," stated old George. He pushed his way across the smithy and pinned Tim in a corner. "We folks all thought Feveral was a surveyor or somethin', but to-day, after we wrastled, I wasn't so sure."

Tim started, a violent, apprehensive start which communicated every ounce of its fear to the blindman. His son was frightened.

"What do you mean?" Tim asked softly.

"I mean," said old George, "that Feveral told me he was lookin' fer an airplane-beacon site, and that the government was agoin' to buy one."

"That's likely," Tim started. "There's the airport over at——"

"An' there's the hilltop above the village," George interrupted him, "and every one knows that's government land—all but Feveral. If

he's a government man, what does he want spying round here—when the government owns the best site fer any beacon that ever was, right on the mountaintop? They wouldn't put a beacon down in the valley, they wouldn't."

There was no disguising their mutual fear or the blindman's anger at his son who had brought trouble on their heads. Mixed with fear was rage, mixed with rage was anger, not at Feveral but at Timmie.

"What did ye want to do it fer, Timmie?" he stormed, yet always keeping his voice to a low pitch that could not be heard far outside the smithy.

"Do what?"

"Steal that money from the city. What city did ye go to, Timmie?"

"Atalanta."

"An' Feveral comes from Atlanta. His voice has that somethin' in it that the fellows that come out here huntin' last fall had. They thinks us blind up here in the hills, as blind in our heads as I am in my eyes. But we see and I see what other men can't see, Tim. Feveral is a detective."

"So you say!"

But there was hysterical fear in Tim's voice. Old George caught him in an iron grip.

"Now, Tim," he rasped, "you're goin' to give back that money. I won't have no one say that my son's a thief. I won't have——"

He stopped short. "Some one coming up the path," he muttered. After a split second he added: "It's Charlie Hess from the village."

Came louder footfalls, a knock of a stick against a wall, and a loud, inquisitive voice. "Didn't see you come back this even', Tim."

"What you doin' up this way?" snapped Tim.

Charlie Hess leaned indolently

against the doorpost. "Waal," he drawled, "I just a-heerd a bit o' gossip I reckoned you'd like to know. The postmistress up and told Sally Blaine and I'se walkin' out with Sally's girl friend and so I hears it."

"I ain't fer talkin' to-night," growled Tim.

Charlie Hess heaved away from the door and turned away.

"That's all right," he said in a detached fashion. "'Twas nothin' important. Only that this government fellow, Feveral, got a letter to-day, and the letter come open by accident and it shows he don't belong to the government a-tall. It was sent from a *dee-tective* agency in Atalanta."

Old George listened in dead silence—listened until Charlie Hess had gone—until Tim had locked up the smithy. He and his son lived together for the present in a small two-story house at the end of the lane leading from the village to the smithy and then up the mountain.

Tim broke the silence. He broke it with the chinking of gold in a bag being lowered into a small pit behind the stove. This was the hiding place which old George used for his small store of money. But to-night it was full, overflowing with wealth. Four thousand dollars!

"I'll carry the anvil," George said without being asked, and, feeling his way, bent over the smallest of the anvils in the shop. It was, at that, a tremendously heavy affair; George's huge muscles swelled and burst and he strained at the inert mass. But he placed it down over the entrance to the hole.

"What are you doin' now?" he asked Tim, as more clinking of metal came to his ears.

"Fillin' the bag the bank give me," said Tim. "I'm puttin'

washers into it to make it look like there was money there."

Old George bit his lip. There was a hard, bitter accent to his son's voice, a meaning determination.

"You'll send back the money to its rightful owner ter-morrow?" the blindman commanded—with a questioning note that showed his doubt.

"P'raps," said Tim—and then: "Yes, I'll send it back."

Old George licked his lips, gone suddenly dry. He wished he had not told Tim about Feveral now. Oh, well, Charlie Hess would have said something, anyway, and it was just as well that Tim should know his danger. But old George certainly wished the money was not in the smithy or not anywhere here a-tall, but in the hands of its rightful owner. Robbery never did any one any permanent good.

They walked home together. But five houses from their own, a voice hailed them—a voice that came from far up. It was Feveral, looking out of the window of the room in the house in which he boarded—Mrs. Cummings's house.

"Hello!" called Feveral.

Old George did not answer. But Tim stopped. "Hello yourself," he called back.

"Come in a minute," said Feveral. "I wanna chat with you."

Old George heard his son's breath come and go in a sharp double hisssss! He reached out.

"Let me go, dad," said Tim in a low tone. Then louder: "I don't mind staying a bit, Mr. Feveral." He continued his whisper to his father. "Let me talk to 'im, dad. Maybe I'll hear somethin' that'll help us."

"You come too," Feveral called, and George knew that he meant him.

The blindman thought rapidly.

There was much to be gained by staying outside—by going home, maybe, so that just in case anything happened, he would swear that he was home and that Tim was home with him. From the lack of sounds from the house, he knew that Mrs. Cummings had gone down to the little picture show in the village, a drafty barn where the "Exploits of Elaine" were being shown twenty years after their first exhibition in the States. There are hundreds of these backwoods movie houses in the country where the audience is unmindful of films that flicker and streak and now and then go black and white in broad, alternate flashes.

"I don't reckon I'll come in," he called up and shuffled along the street to his own house. He felt his way by touch to the front door, stopped, and turned. Very gradually, he crept back along the street, hugging the wooden picket fence on the nearest side. Outside Mrs. Cummings's house, he stopped and crouched down. Though blind, he knew that other's have eyes. He did not want to be seen.

He heard Timmie's voice, then Feveral's; heard Timmie's raised in harsh anger—in fright. Then came another sound, not a voice. Shaking, his great hands twisting and clawing together, George listened and waited until there came a little crackling sound and then a subdued roar. About this time, the air became pungent with smoke that stung his nostrils. Timmie did not come out of the house—nor did Feveral.

When the smoke told him that Mrs. Cummings's house was burning down, old George turned and ran with great heavy strides back to his own house. Far behind him and down in the village, he heard

the shouts of men and children who had seen the flames of the burning house rise into the sky and reflect themselves in the reddened, low-hanging clouds that trailed over the mountains like fleecy blankets.

Mrs. Cummings's house was roaring now, crackling and smashing in an inferno of flame. Standing by his doorway, old George was for a moment choked by a wave of hot gas and smoke which the wind blew along the street. Shouts grew louder. He thought he heard some one running—some one who ran not to the fire but away from it. Then he went indoors to wait until people came to ask him when he had seen Timmie last.

No one blamed old George. He was known for his honesty, and was a popular man even before he had gone blind. But as for Timmie—well, facts are facts, and there are no getting around them.

They had found a charred body in Mrs. Cummings's house—a body which was but a cinder. On this body they had found a ring, and, from the peeled smoky stuff that once was flesh, they had taken a scrap or two of clothing—clothing such as Timmie never wore. Detectives came from the neighboring township. There was a coroner's inquest. Old George had to testify.

What was the use of swearing an alibi for Tim? Tim wasn't in the village. Tim had disappeared. But before he had disappeared, he had gone into Mrs. Cummings's house and met Federal. Had he quarreled with Federal? Old George admitted to creeping back to the house and overhearing words.

He expected to receive a visit from the detective agency in Atlanta. But no one came. No one knew whom to notify about the

death. All Federal's papers were burned in the fire. The postmistress did not remember any address on the letter that came to Federal.

One thing was asked: Where was the money that Tim had brought from the bank? Old George admitted to having it hidden in the smithy. He did not say that he suspected Tim of stealing it, that he had ordered Tim to send the money back. And old George himself did not know to whom to send the money back. He had not had time to talk much with Tim. It had just been those few minutes, say fifteen, in the smithy before Charlie Hess had come up with his gossip and then the walk home and Federal's call from the window—and Timmie's acceptance of the invitation. And then—words and peculiar sounds and the crackling of flames and the pungent odor of the burning house!

The coroner didn't question old George much. There was a coroner's jury which brought in a verdict of murder against Timmie. The body found in the remains of the burning house was, according to an expert to whom the skull was sent, battered by a heavy instrument into insensibility before the house was set on fire.

After that, old George never bothered to return to his own house, but slept in the little room back of the smithy. He discharged his assistant. He grew morose, admitted having four thousand dollars hidden in the smithy somewhere, bragged of it to those who visited him now and then, and dared any man to find it.

It must have been three weeks after the final report from the expert to whom the skull was sent, and after the verdict of murder

against Timmie, that old George smashed his liquor bottles. Liquor deadened his brain, drugged his keen sense of hearing. And he needed both, for, you see, old George had purposely bragged about having four thousand dollars in his smithy. And once he let it slip—it might have been by accident—that the money was buried under the anvil behind the stove.

He was sitting in his rear room; after nightfall, wondering whether he had done right to allow the fact that there was a treasure hole under the anvil, when his ears first told him that some one was approaching the house stealthily, from behind. Though every nerve in his huge blind body quivered, he made no movement but sat still and quiet there in the dark. In the smithy itself there was a faint, ruddy illumination from the dying charcoal fire, but it was all one to old George. The prying one outside, whoever it was, retreated and, for the space of half an hour, there was silence.

Old George rose, went into the smithy, felt about for a can, which he filled with water from a tank outside the shed, returned and poured the water over the charcoal fire. A great hissing and hot wave of scalding steam arose. When the air cleared somewhat, working by feeling, old George found a greasy oil lamp, which he lit and placed near the door. His hands, fumbling over the door edge, came upon two bolts he had attached—great iron bolts he had fashioned himself from four-inch iron bars. Extraordinary precautions to safeguard four thousand dollars! Perhaps!

Then he returned to the rear of the shed, took a bottle of water out of a canvas bag and placed it by his side where he sat at a bench near the door. The contents of the bot-

tle, to any unknowing observer, might have been liquor—and indeed, from the way old George's head rolled to one side, he might have been drunk.

A new sound broke in on his consciousness—a sidling, dragging shuffle, changing at intervals to a quick, nervous run. Charlie Hess, the village gossip, coming up the path! The blindman allowed more life in his expression. What would bring Charlie here at this hour?

The newcomer explained his presence quickly. He was folding a paper in his hands—a paper he could not show George, but whose contents he read in an excited, high-pitched voice.

"Say, George," he began, "that boy of yourn hadn't no need to kill Feveral."

George started. His sightless eyes stared at where the voice came from. "No?" he said.

"N-no!" stammered the gossip. "It says here—this paper's got Feveral's *pickchure* on it. Two *pickchures*. Sideways and full face. It says Feveral is wanted for robbin' the mails. He was a post-office detective, the postmistress says, though it don't say so on this paper. She's got one stuck up in the post office, offerin' a *reward* for 'is apprehension. Pears he was in a low-down agency in Atlanta, and had to run for it and hide. That's why he came up here. And to think Timmie reckoned the *detective* was arter him."

For a long moment, old George did not speak. His massive head dropped; he seemed broken. But then he rose, and his tone sent the gossip scurrying for safety.

"Get out!" he growled.

When Hess was gone, the blindman blew out the lamp and retreated to the room at the rear of

the store. The doors of the smithy were still wide open. After a long five minutes or so, there came again that queer, treading sound from behind the shed; a sound that was less than the whisper of insects in the tall grass that grew stubbornly around the shed and onto the path; a sound more trifling than the distant hum of a mosquito—and mosquitoes sang about the doorway, rejoicing in the warmth still radiating from the masses of iron of the anvils and stove. It was the sound of a person approaching the smithy, a person who crept on tiptoe, one step at a time, carefully—terribly carefully.

Old George stood up, bent his head to get under the door into the smithy, and picked up the short-handled, eighty-four-pound hammer from the near corner. Then he, too, moved on tiptoe, until he was right behind the large door leading from the smithy onto the path down to the village. Behind the door, he laid down the hammer and stood waiting.

Suddenly came two quick, clean-cut steps. George knew that a man stood in the doorway. He heard the metallic click of an electric torch being snapped on—or of the safety catch slipped back sharply from the trigger of an automatic. These unfamiliar sounds, he could not distinguish, but he knew by the man's breathing when he had moved into the smithy, and he took a great giant step forward and clasped a twisting, cursing body in his arms. He felt down his prisoner's shoulder to his waist, found the hand that gripped the electric torch, and tore the instrument of illumination away. But in grasping for it, his hold relaxed and his prisoner twisted free—inside the smithy.

With one sweeping motion of his arm, old George slammed the door and bent then to shoot one of the enormous iron bolts. A blare of sound, a crashing bullet above his head—and he jumped forward and stopped still. The smithy was now in pitch darkness—a darkness familiar to the man who was blind, but terrible and ominous to the stranger whose flash lamp was taken away from him.

Not a word did old George speak, nor the stranger either. Old George heard the stranger move along the far wall, brushing it. Allowing his foot to make a shuffle on the floor, old George leaped back, and there was another concussion of sound. The stranger was firing in the dark at the noise, but his ears were not well-trained, and he missed George's retreating motion. Now old George had his perspiring palm against the handle of his eighty-four-pound hammer—the hammer of Thor.

Picking it up, he started to make his way along the wall toward the stranger. He would meet him in a moment, and he trusted to the sound of the other's breathing to warn him before he came to close for a crushing blow. But he traversed two sides of the smithy without meeting his enemy. He paused, doubtful.

He was opposite the anvil, under which the gold was buried—the gold that the stranger had come to steal. Perhaps—he raised the giant's hammer above his head.

Came the creak of a bolt drawn by frantic hands.

Old George swung the hammer around his head. It touched the wall as it circled, and, in rapid succession, three bullets smashed the stove beside him, the anvil, and the last, tearing through the muscled shoulder, spattered the wall with

lead and blood. The stranger was opening the smithy door now.

Gauging the distance and direction, old George flung the hammer.

The mighty mass of iron landed on something soft and yet brittle. There was an agonized howl, a scream and a sob. The blindman staggered forward, carried off his balance by the effort of throwing the enormous weight. There was the click of a trigger pulled on an empty chamber, another groan. Then old George was down on his knees, feeling in front of him until he found the injured man who lay writhing on the threshold. Swiftly, the blindman's hands traversed a face, feeling its features, corroborating what ears had told him.

Gunshots are not loud. In a closed place, they may be almost deadened. Old George drew a deep breath. The man under his hands twisted and panted in pain. His back was broken.

Old George found the empty gun, broke it open, felt the empty chambers, and threw it far back in the smithy. Then he stood up and loudly shouted, hands cupped to mouth.

Charlie Hess, who lived on the outskirts of the village, heard his shouts first. Charlie always did hear things first. But this time, Charlie did not come alone—not when terrible shouts like that were floating down the valley. He brought the sheriff and a crowd of half-dressed men.

They ringed the smithy doorway while old George bore his enemy into the open.

"Is there a moon?" asked old George.

"Yes," some one shouted.

There was no need to shout, but all were worked to a high pitch of

excitement by the dramatic wonder of the desolate scene: night by the foot of a mountain, the enormous blindman who had shouted for them to come, and find a groaning wretch who was laid in a patch of pale moonlight.

"Look at him close," said old George, "and tell me his name."

It was quite a time before any one answered, although there were many murmurings and mutterings and exclamations of amazement and wonder.

"What's 'is name?" repeated the blindman savagely.

The sheriff answered. Disbelief was in his voice even as he pronounced the impossible name:

"Feveral!"

Then: "'Tis Feveral, sure enough," a dozen voices corroborated.

And one said: "Here's his picture on the poster."

Perhaps there was just a slight wave of relief over George's face. After all, one trusts most to sight, and a blindman, who throws a hammer onto a stranger with no more evidence than his ears give him, must surely experience a twinge of doubt.

"'Tis right enough," said old George then. And he turned to the smithy.

The sheriff caught his shoulder. "But—hey! You can't leave it this way."

Old George turned round. "Don't you-all understand?" he said impatiently. "My Timmie didn't kill no one. This detective fellow asked him inside 'is house because he was after the money Timmie brought from the bank to buy the Silo farm. And he thought he had it, only Timmie'd left the gold in the smithy and was carrying metal washers in the sack. Feveral didn't find that

out until arter he's killed Timmie and changed clothes with him. He even put his own ring on my lad's finger. Then he set fire to the house, so's no one could swear who'd been killed, but you'd all reckon Timmie was the murderer. And when the hunt fer Federal reached here, you'd all remember he was killed and burned and would tell the police, who'd quit huntin' fer him.

"There was," said old George, "just one thing wrong. Timmie wasn't carryin' the money. And I reckoned I heard Federal runnin' from the burnin' house right afore you all arrived. If I told you what I'd heard, you'd all 'a' been talking about it, and Federal'd never have come back. But so long as he reckoned he was thought dead, he risked coming to get the four thousand dollars I told you all was buried under the anvil here. An' I waited fer him."

Followed a silence of astounded bewilderment. Then, as one mind after another took in the circumstances, there were murmurs and

ejaculations of wonder and admiration.

"By gum! Old George can lick 'em all! He's got more eyes than we've!"

George went into the smithy and returned the great hammer to its corner. Though it had not brought Timmie back, it had cleared his name and demolished his murderer. He heard the sheriff ordering four men to form a stretcher with their arms to take Federal down to the jail—and telling another to fetch a doctor.

Then, little by little, the noises were stilled, and the night left to the mosquitoes and bullfrogs. Old George tossed on his cot, unable to sleep. Finally, he went to sit outside in the air. What was that Federal had once said about the hammer and about a god? The god of the blacksmith was a feller named Thor.

He reflected that Thor must've been a great god. And he felt, in some queer way, indebted to him. It was almost as if Thor had revenged Timmie's murder.

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Coming Next Week, "STEALING INNOCENCE,"  
by M. I. H. ROGERS.

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#### WHERE DID HE LEAVE THEM?

PERHAPS he never had any, but it is also possible that he left them home for the occasion. At any rate, when he was being tried, he surprised everybody by exposing a set of toothless gums, so the court dismissed the case.

It all came about over a quarrel in a board meeting. The president of the Tax Payers' Association of Waukegan, Illinois, said that one of the chairmen tried to bite his nose off at a board meeting. The chairman contended that this was impossible, whereupon he opened his mouth and convinced those present that he could not have bitten anybody, because he had no teeth.



*He suddenly realized that the other's greedy nature had made him a dupe.*

# THE SECOND SIN

By CHRISTOPHER B. BOOTH

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

ETTA COBURN returns to Rodgersport after twenty years to tell Mark Leaming that he must confess that he was the one who killed her husband and not Enos Drinkwater who had been sent to prison.

Leaming promises that he will confess. The following morning, the Misses Toothacher discover that Etta Coburn has been strangled to death in her home. When the investigation takes place, Miss Lydia Toothacher names as a suspect Otis Rodgers whom she had seen that morning carrying wood in the death room in order to mend the fire.

BACK NUMBERS CAN BE EASILY PROCURED.

## CHAPTER V.

### ANNOUNCING THE MURDER.

**B**EGINNING as a boarding house, Daggett's Inn had grown with the increasing popularity of Rodgersport as a summer resort until the original structure had become completely lost behind and underneath an am-

bitious accumulation of alterations and additions. There had been a time when Mrs. Daggett did all the cooking and carried most of the food into the dining room; she had, poor soul, not lived to see a kitchen almost as large as the original establishment had been, elaborately printed menu cards, glassed-in porches, bedrooms with private

baths, and tennis courts for the guests to play on, to say nothing of a swimming pool and riding horses that were rented by the hour.

Mrs. Daggett, during her lifetime, had lived in the constant fear that her husband would overreach himself. She had been afraid of his plans and schemes, of an entire summer's profits going for lumber and carpenter work, of notes and mortgages always being signed and always falling due. She could see only disaster ahead and, in a way, she had restrained these ambitious expansions.

Disaster was, indeed, now close upon John Daggett's heels, and his confident and exuberant optimism was faltering badly; in fact, he was a man half beside himself. Beneath his eyes were hollow, dark circles which told a story of sleepless nights. He was nervous and irritable with worry over the increasingly complicated state of his finances.

On the day that Etta Coburn was found murdered in her old ruin of a house, John Daggett had a note of two thousand dollars falling due at Mark Leaming's bank, and there was no possible way that he could meet it. After spending most of the forenoon trying to devise some method of paying at least the interest, he started for the bank, prepared to get on his knees, and beg Mark Leaming for a thirty-day extension.

The building which housed the Rodgersport Trust Company typified the character and the methods of Mark Leaming. It was the same building the bank had occupied for forty years, but it had been remodeled beyond recognition; the old front had been torn out and replaced with an imposing front of plate glass, the entrance decorated with imposing columns, and a flashing

brass plate, always freshly burnished each morning, told one the year of the institution's establishment and the amount of its resources.

Most startling, however, was the transformation of the interior. Gone were the age-battered fixtures and fittings, replaced by a modern elegance in keeping with Mark Leaming's idea that a bank should breathe an atmosphere of prosperity; it impressed people, so he maintained, with the power of money. Yet, it was to be suspected, the renovations had been large, inspired out of gratification for his personal vanity. His own private office demonstrated that—rich paneling, rich rugs on the floor, a fine desk, and leather upholstered chairs.

John Daggett arrived at the bank, hoping that he would find Mark Leaming in a good humor, for it had been his repeated experience that the other man's decisions as a banker were frequently decided by his digestion. Pausing for a moment outside the glistening brass railing, the hotel proprietor looked in through the open door of Leaming's inner sanctum, and he was filled with dread, for one glimpse was sufficient to tell him that Leaming was in an ungracious mood, a look of tension upon his face.

"It *would* be just my luck," thought Daggett, "that my note falls due the day that Mark has got the dyspepsia and is down on everybody!"

However, in dealing with Mark Leaming, notes due to-day could not be delayed until to-morrow, so John Daggett pushed through the swinging gate of the brass railing to meet the situation as best he could.

Mark Leaming was occupied with some papers upon which he was making some notations. One cold, sour glance he gave to John Dag-

gett, and turned back to the document upon which he was working.

"Sit down, Daggett," he said curtly. "Talk to you presently."

The financially involved hotel proprietor sat down, but he found it impossible to relax. Of late, uneasiness always seized him when asking Mark Leaming for favors, yet the village banker's face had never seemed so forbidding as it was this morning; the corners of his mouth were caught back by harsh lines, and his chin jutted forward in an unfriendly, unrelenting aggressiveness.

Did those papers have something to do with the affairs of Daggett's Inn? John Daggett strained his eyes, trying to see across the desk. Finally, Leaming put down his pen and turned in his chair. The swivel creaked faintly. But, before the banker could speak, the door which John Daggett had closed a few moments before was opened with somewhat startling suddenness, and Jason Strawbridge, the county attorney, strode in.

There were few people in Rodgersport who would have dared to push their way into Mark Leaming's private office like that, but Strawbridge was attorney for the bank and wasn't a man to stand much on ceremonious formality.

Strawbridge's opening of the conversation was no less abrupt than his entrance.

"You remember Etta Coburn, don't you, Mark?" His voice had a grim sound, and he looked stern. Leaming stared for a moment in what may have been considered a very natural surprise; then he nodded without comment.

"Knew she'd come back to Rodgersport?"

Leaming turned in his chair and slipped open the lid of his cigar

humidor; this gave him an opportunity to avert his eyes.

"Smoke, Jason? Yes, I knew that Etta Coburn had come back to Rodgersport; I suppose every one in town knows it. Why all the excitement?"

"Last night," said Strawbridge, "Etta Coburn was murdered."

If Mark Leaming's body stiffened in his chair, so did John Daggett's, for the announcement of a murder was startling news to receive in a quiet and peaceful community like Rodgersport. For the instant, Daggett's mind was jarred loose from his own troubles.

"Who could have wanted to kill the woman?" asked the hotel proprietor. "How—how was she killed, Jason?"

"Strangled to death," replied the county attorney.

John Daggett gave voice to an exclamation of horror. Leaming's face seemed to have an added pallor, but he spoke no word. There was a moment of silence within the luxuriously furnished private office. It was broken by the scratch of Leaming's match as he lighted his cigar. His hands were steady and, through a blue film of tobacco smoke, he looked into the lawyer's eyes. Sharp eyes they were, always.

"Etta Coburn," explained Strawbridge, "has been home about a week—eight days, to be exact. Just before coming up from Boston, she cashed a check for a thousand dollars, and it's a reasonable supposition that she brought the money to Rodgersport with her. Doctor Jim says she seemed to have plenty of money—cash, I mean. Yet this morning we find in her purse only a dollar bill and a few odd cents in change." He was addressing Leaming. "It occurred to me that she

might have deposited the money with you; that would account for what became of the thousand."

Mark Leaming again turned in his chair, this time to tap gently the first gray ash from his freshly lighted cigar into an ash receiver. As he did so, he shook his head.

"With every new account opened, a notation is made and sent immediately to my desk. A new depositor always receives, the following day, a personal letter from me, thanking him for the business. I can tell you, quite positively, that Etta Coburn had no money with us. But, just to make sure——"

He reached out his hand to one of the two telephones on his desk, pressed a button which would connect him with the bookkeeper's department, and inquired if Etta Coburn had any money on deposit. The answer was "no."

"I didn't expect there would be," said Jason Strawbridge. "And, since it would have been impossible for her to have spent anything like a thousand dollars in our town without her extravagance being talked about, one of two things are true; either she got rid of the money before she left Boston, or it was stolen from her by the strangler."

Mark Leaming took a deep puff at his cigar.

"Have you any idea who did it?" he asked.

There was, Strawbridge felt, no good reason why he shouldn't frankly admit the suspicion that was attached to Otis Rodgers; he could be as secretive as he chose without being able to stop Lydia Toothacher's wagging tongue. So he gave Leaming and John Daggett a brief account of the situation as he had found it.

Leaming made no comment at all.

Daggett absently took from the desk the cigar that had been meant for Strawbridge; slowly, he began shaking his head.

"A man in the hotel business," he said, "gets to know human nature pretty well; he has to if he's going to get along with the public. I've known Otis Rodgers since he was a kid, and you'd have a hard time convincing me that he killed anybody. Drunk as I've seen him at times, I've noticed that he was kind to animals. And animals like him, too—and I never yet saw an animal take to a man who had a streak of cruelty in him."

"It's always been my notion that Otis might have good stuff in him, if he just got a grip on himself. You say he stole some money from Marion Collamore's house last winter. I don't believe that either. If I remember right, it happened around the Christmas holidays—which would mean that Sam Collamore was home from school on his mid-winter vacation. Sam's a pretty wild kid, and the summer I gave him a job at the inn—well, I've got my own reasons for thinking that Otis Rodgers wasn't the one who took Marion Collamore's money."

Leaming stared steadily, coldly at John Daggett.

"How does it happen, then," he asked with a touch of sarcasm in his voice, "that *you* haven't given Otis Rodgers a job?"

"I have," answered Daggett, "two or three times. Oh, I admit his drinking, but I insist that if he got a good tight hold on himself——"

Jason Strawbridge was moving toward the door; obviously, he wasn't particularly impressed by Daggett's defense of Otis. A moment later, the lawyer, with a brisk word of parting, was gone, leaving the banker and the hotel proprietor

alone. Little did the latter realize how he had antagonized the other man, and how far reaching would be the consequences.

Leaming leaned back in his chair; one eyelid drooped nearly shut, leaving the other gleaming with a penetrating coldness that gave John Daggett a feeling of sudden chill. His thoughts snapped back to his own difficulties.

"I have a note falling due to-day——"

"For two thousand dollars," harshly interrupted Mark Leaming. "Well?"

"Things haven't turned out exactly as I had planned——"

"With you," cut in Mark Leaming, "things never do. Same old story, eh, Daggett?"

"Has it been my fault," John Daggett earnestly and desperately defended himself, "that the cool weather has kept people at home during July? Am I to blame that No. 1 Highway is torn up and that traffic has been routed through Augusta. Those two things on top of the business depression has——"

"Not interested," snapped Mark Leaming. "Can you pay half on that two thousand-dollar note? That's what I want to know."

John Daggett swallowed his Adam's apple twice.

"No," he admitted, "I can't; there's no possible way that I can pay even half of the note—not to-day. But if you'll let me have a ten-day extension—I've cut expenses to the minimum; if you'll bear with me just a little while longer——"

"Daggett," again broke in the banker, "you are positively the worst business man I've ever dealt with. Your incurable optimism makes you a bad risk, a dangerous man to give a loan. Against my

better judgment at times, partly because there's a feeling in town that the inn should be kept open, I've been carrying you. I've gone further than I should with you, and I'll not go an inch further."

John Daggett had a sudden feeling of dizziness; there seemed to be two Mark Leamings sitting in front of him.

"You mean——"

"I mean, Daggett, that you'll have to make a complete assignment. The bank, to protect its interests, must take over your property—to-morrow."

"Wait!" cried Daggett. "You can't do this to me. You—you're as much responsible as I am. Be fair, Leaming; you encouraged me to go ahead and build a wing of thirty additional rooms. I wouldn't have bought that extra strip of beach property, if you hadn't told me——" Abruptly, his voice came to an uncertain pause, for he suddenly realized that Leaming had really given him very little specific advice, that Leaming had one of those careful tongues which could create a certain impression without his actually having said what he seemed to say.

"Exactly what did I tell you?" icily challenged the banker.

"Well, you encouraged me to go ahead; it was you who suggested that I build the new beach swimming pool."

"You're mistaken about that," smoothly denied Leaming. "Come, now, Daggett! You've simply overreached yourself; you're at the end of your rope and you know it. I can't extend your note, and that's flat and final."

"If you gave me a week or ten days——"

"Nothing doing, Daggett; the bank's got to take you over."

"And close down the inn during the month of August?"

"Close down the inn? Not at all, Daggett; not at all. We shall keep the place open under the bank's management until it's possible for us to get out with a whole skin. There's no use arguing; not a particle of use. Whining won't get you a thing."

John Daggett had another attack of dizziness that made the room swing before his eyes; he seemed to shrivel up as his shoulders slumped forward. Leaming was freezing him out, freezing him out cold; he was losing the property that he had made his life's dream, that he had built up from almost nothing. Every dollar he had was gone. A ruined man at fifty-five.

For a moment, he sat lifelessly, dazed, beaten and helpless. Despite the confused state of his mind, he thought he saw things more clearly than he had ever seen them before; jumping red spots of rage began to dance before his eyes. In a frenzy, he was on his feet, shaking both clenched hands close to Mark Leaming's face.

"You dirty, smooth, oily-tongued crook!" he shouted. "I see your game. I see it now. You've wanted Daggett's Inn just as you've wanted to get your grasping, greedy hands on everything else in this town that was worth having. The bank will sell the property, and one of your cat's-paws will buy it for a fraction of what I've put into it. You encouraged me to borrow money, hand over fist, until you had me sewed up so tight I couldn't squirm. You're a thief, Leaming; that's what you are—a thief. Take my property away from me, will you?"

There was no question about it; John Daggett was temporarily demented. Afterward, he had scarcely

any recollection of flinging himself and making a grab for Mark Leaming's throat.

"I'm going to kill you, Mark Leaming; I'm going to kill you here and now!"

The threat, however, was easier made than carried out, for John Daggett was not a muscular man, and Leaming was more than a match for him. When two employees of the bank rushed in, they found their president in no great danger; he had John Daggett by both arms and was firmly holding him, despite the latter's writhing and twisting, and cursing helplessly.

"Remember what I said, Leaming," he continued shouting. "I'll get you for what you're doing to me to-day. You thief, you crook, I'm not through with you yet."

"Get him out of the bank as quietly as you can," Leaming told the two employees. "Don't call an officer unless it's absolutely necessary."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### DAGGETT REMEMBERS.

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IT was pure coincidence that Elmer Daggett met Alice Leaming at the railroad station this same morning. Elmer did not ordinarily drive the inn's automobile bus to and from the trains, but his father's forced policy of retrenchment had so cut down the staff of employees that it became necessary for him to pitch in and turn his hand to all sorts of jobs around the hotel.

Neither did Alice ordinarily see a friend off on the train, but her chum, Elsie Williamson, was going down to Boston and wouldn't return for several weeks; in fact, Elsie might

not return at all, for her uncle was making an effort to get her a job with a publishing house. Elsie's mind was turned toward literary fields.

The 11:15 had pulled out of the station, Portland bound. From across the platform, Elmer had seen Alice, and waited for her around the corner of the baggage room. He took her completely by surprise.

"Why, Elmer!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing wearing that funny-looking cap?"

"Doubling for the hotel porter," he told her. "Have you heard the big news?"

"Big news?"

"Then you haven't." There was excitement in his manner. "You're walking, aren't you? Then I'll tell you as I drive you home."

Alice Leaming shook her head. "No, Elmer, I don't think I'd better; I know I hadn't. We agreed to—"

Elmer caught her firmly by the arm. "I'll drive around down Waldo Street," he insisted. "Let you off at the corner of Waldo and Seaside, if you want, and you can walk the rest of the way."

Alice hesitated, then gave in without further remonstrance. A moment later, she was seated beside him on the driving seat of the hotel bus, and Elmer was heading for the back streets of the town to avoid going through the business section where there was the possibility of Mark Leaming seeing them together.

"Are you holding onto the seat?" said Elmer. "You'd better, for what I'm going to tell you is going to just about floor you. I just heard it about fifteen minutes ago myself."

"Stop being so mysterious and tell me."

"There was a murder in this town last night."

"Oh, Elmer! No!" Alice's voice was aghast.

"Yes, and it was the Coburn woman. Choked to death, so they say."

The girl gasped and shuddered. For an instant or two, she sat rigidly, an expression of dazed horror spreading over her face. She started to speak and then shut her lips tightly together and shot a quick, frightened glance toward Elmer's face.

"Who—who did it?" she finally asked.

"Yes—who?" repeated Elmer, with an emphasis that made Alice shudder again. Doubtless, their minds were thinking in the same channel, ugly thoughts that went back to Monday night. There flashed before Alice the revivified picture of her Uncle Mark at the dinner table with a worried, uneasy frown between his eyes; another of Elmer and herself pausing in front of the Coburn house, listening to the *tap-tap* of the walking stick that must have been her uncle's—and then a third picture of which Elmer knew nothing whatever; rather, a little series of pictures. Monday night, after she and Elmer had returned from their rendezvous on the Beach Road, she had heard her uncle walking restlessly back and forth in his room, and the next morning he had looked as though he had not slept. Then, this morning, there had been a terribly tight expression about his mouth, a somehow false and unconvincing effort to appear jovial—an unnatural rôle for him.

It was all very mysterious and disturbing, but she felt ashamed of herself for the awful suspicion that had crept into her mind. Her uncle

a murderer? It was impossible, she told herself; utterly and preposterously impossible. She was suddenly angry with herself and at Elmer for harboring the same thoughts she had.

"See here, Elmer Daggett," she flared, "are you intimating——"

"I haven't said a word, have I?"

"Just because Uncle Mark went to the Coburn house that night we walked down to the beach—well, for that matter, we don't know he *did* go to that awful house. We didn't see him."

"No," agreed Elmer, "we didn't actually see him; you're right about that, honey."

Alice Leaming laughed with a touch of hysteria in her voice.

"It's so utterly ridiculous!" she cried.

After that flare-up he had with Alice Monday night, Elmer didn't mean to let himself get in bad with her again over her uncle.

"Oh, sure it's ridiculous," he said with perhaps a shade too much emphasis. "Even if it *was* Mr. Leaming who went into the Coburn house Monday night, it doesn't prove anything. I guess—well, I guess neither of us had better say anything about it to anybody."

Alice gave Elmer a grateful glance for supporting her. From that point on, conversation between them wasn't much of a success. Both were ill at ease and words came awkwardly; the girl couldn't help thinking of the peculiar behavior of her uncle. Of course, she told herself, it might have been another of his indigestion attacks.

The hotel bus reached the street which ran parallel with the imposing Leaming house three blocks below—the summerhouse that a New York stock-market operator had built and which Mark Leaming had

bought in for a song when the original owner was wiped out in 1920; Leaming seemed to have a gift of profiting from other people's misfortunes.

Elmer stopped the car and gave Alice's hand a parting squeeze.

"Don't worry, honey," he told her. "We're just an imaginative pair of fools."

"Why, there's nothing to worry about, Elmer," Alice answered, but her smile was wan and forced.

Elmer looked hastily about. There was no one within his range of vision, so he leaned forward and kissed her.

"Oh, Elmer, you shouldn't—not in a public street!" But she kissed him back before leaping down from the driving seat beside him.

Elmer Daggett drove on to the hotel and put the car in the garage. One of the inn's guests was at the gasoline pump, fuming indignantly because there was no one in attendance. Elmer filled the man's tank, checked the oil, and put water in the radiator, but his mind wasn't on his task. He spilled oil on the fender and sloshed water on the hood, much to the irate guest's added irritation. After the man had driven off, he stood in the open garage doors, staring across the inn's back lawn.

"Alice is right, of course!" he exclaimed aloud. "It's utterly ridiculous! I'm nothing but a fool, getting any such idea in my head."

He started for the hotel, stopped to pick up a tennis racket that a careless player had left behind, mounted the steps, entered the lobby, and went into the little private office behind the clerk's desk. In the doorway, he paused at the sight of his father sitting in a chair with his head between his hands; although his face was not visible,

John Daggett was the picture of despair.

"Dad!" cried Elmer. "What's the matter? Are you sick?"

The proprietor of Daggett's Inn slowly lifted his shoulders, and Elmer was further alarmed by the haggardness of his father's features, the tragic, stricken look in his parent's eyes.

John Daggett groaned hollowly.

"I *am* sick, son," he said thickly, "sick into my very soul. I'm through, Elmer; they've got me licked."

"You mean——"

"Leaming has shut down on me. The two thousand-dollar note due to-day—I couldn't meet it, couldn't even pay the interest. Leaming wouldn't give me an extension. The bank—the bank's taking us over. I'm ruined, Elmer. I haven't got a dollar left to my name; even the beds you and I sleep in belong to the hotel corporation."

Elmer's face went white with the shock of the news.

"Surely not so bad as that, dad! If we can hang on through August, with the expenses cut down——"

"That's just it, son; we can't. Leaming is taking us over; I guess he's taking us over to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow?" repeated Elmer, his voice rising to a shout. "But he can't do a thing like that—turn you out with only twenty-four hours' notice!"

John Daggett got unsteadily to his feet and walked to the water cooler in the corner. His hand was trembling as he lifted the drinking glass to his dry, parched lips. Another groan escaped him.

"But he can, son, and, after the fool I made of myself this morning, he will; yes, he certainly will now. You see—you see, son, I haven't

wanted to worry you with my troubles, and I thought business would pick up and that I could wiggle through. Early this spring, I incorporated; I thought maybe I could sell a little stock in the company and get in some cash. But, the way times are, you can't sell stock in anything. Then, when the pinch got tighter—— Oh, what's the use explaining all the details? Leaming knows how to coax a man into a bad hole, either to Shylock a high rate of interest out of him or to squeeze a man out.

"I see it all now. Leaming wanted to squeeze me; he wanted the inn. Well, he's got it, Elmer. I might have stayed on as manager; that would have been better than nothing. I don't know what I'm going to do, Elmer." He gestured hopelessly, as he repeated in a dull, empty voice, "I don't know what I'm going to do."

Elmer had the urge to put his arm about his father's shoulders, but there had never been much demonstration of affection between them, and at this moment there assailed him the apprehension that he might be responsible.

"Was it on account of me, dad—my keeping company with Alice? Was that why Leaming's frozen you out?"

John Daggett paced up and down the brief length of the diminutive office before he answered his son's question. Then he shook his head.

"No, Elmer," he answered heavily, "I guess not. Leaming's had in mind for some time to take the property away from me; I can see that now. He saw that all I needed was a little financial encouragement to go plunging ahead to my ruin. He didn't want family feelings mixed up in it; I guess that's just about

the real reason he didn't want you and Alice being sweet on each other."

The ruined innkeeper took a step toward his son; his hand was trembling, and there were tears in his eyes as he caught Elmer's shoulder.

"I've loved this place, and it's always been my dream, ever since your mother and I started it, to build Daggett's Inn into a big, fine property and a good, going business for you to carry on after I'm gone. It's mostly on your account—" His voice faltered and broke.

Elmer's eyes, too, were moist; this was the first time he had ever seen his father on the verge of tears.

"That's all right, dad," he said huskily. "I'll probably be the better off from having to make my own way. Don't you worry about me; I'll get along." He gave his father's arm a squeeze. "And you'll get along, too!"

John Daggett abruptly turned away and went to the window. There fell a few strained moments of silence. Elmer was still dazed by the shock of the news he had just received.

"Dad!"

"Yes, son."

"Are you sure, dad, that Mark Leaming deliberately got you into this jam?"

"The more I think about it, the surer I am. He means to own everything in this town that's worth owning and I guess he will. The man will stop at nothing to get what he wants."

There was another long pause. Elmer drew a deep breath.

"Had you heard that the Coburn woman was murdered last night?" he blurted.

John Daggett nodded absently. The murder was far in the back-

ground of his mind, a lesser tragedy to him than the sudden death of his own hopes and dreams.

"I don't believe you heard what I said, dad."

John Daggett moved his head again. "Yes, I heard you; Etta Coburn was murdered last night. Strawbridge told me."

Elmer hesitated, momentarily at a loss to put into words what he wanted to say.

"What I'm going to tell you," he began, "may amount to nothing; it does seem pretty ridiculous, but—well, somebody killed her. Monday night, I met Alice on the Beach Road; she'd been away and we hadn't seen each other in two weeks. We started back past the Coburn place, and we saw Mark Leaming turning in. No, that's not exactly right either; we heard him; we heard him tapping his walking stick along the sidewalk. There's nobody else in Rodgersport who does carry a walking stick. He flashed a light as he went in the Coburn gate. I guess maybe you've noticed that he's nearly always got one of those vest-pocket flashlights."

John Daggett spun around suddenly. "What's that you were saying, Elmer? Something about seeing Mark Leaming going into the Coburn house, did I understand you?"

Elmer repeated his information.

"I guess I wouldn't think so much about it," he added, "except for what Alice told me. Mr. Leaming, so Alice said, was all stewed up over something at dinner Monday night. She thought it was his indigestion, but, after we saw him sneaking into the Coburn place after nine o'clock at night, she realized that he was worried stiff."

"This morning, I saw Alice at the station and told her about the mur-

der, and she was scared half to death. Then we decided that we were a couple of fools letting our imaginations run away with us, and we agreed to forget it. But since Leaming has done what he's doing to you—well, I just don't seem to be able to get it out of my mind. Maybe you think it's ridiculous, and maybe it is—”

But John Daggett didn't say that he thought it ridiculous. He stared at his son for a moment, his eyes gleaming with a suddenly fired intensity while his mouth gaped open in a petrified expression of credulous amazement.

“You saw Mark Leaming going into the Coburn house last night?”

“Monday night,” Elmer corrected. “And I didn't actually see him. Please understand that. The fog was too thick. Alice and I heard him—heard his walking stick. You know how he comes *tap-tapping* down the street; you must have heard him yourself any number of times. Alice and I thought he was trying to catch us together. We scooted back to the corner of the Beach Road. He—or whoever it was—turned in, and he had a flashlight.”

John Daggett started pacing up and down the little office. He began shaking his head.

“No, son,” he said, his voice sunk to a low pitch and vibrating with excitement, “I don't think it's ridiculous; I don't think so at all. And I've got a very good reason.”

“You have?” exclaimed Elmer.

“As luck would have it,” the father went on, speaking very rapidly, “I was in Leaming's office when Jason Strawbridge showed up with the information that Etta Coburn was murdered. Strawbridge wanted to know if she carried an account at the bank; he was try-

ing to trace a thousand dollars that the woman cashed a check for just before leaving Boston.

“Doesn't it seem peculiar to you, son, that Leaming made no mention to Strawbridge of being at the Coburn house Monday night? It sure seems peculiar to me—if he wasn't covering up something. There's something in this, son; certain as you're alive, Mark Leaming knows a lot about that murder.”

Elmer's mind was racing; it seemed to him that his thoughts had never come so fast. After a moment of reflection, he shook his head.

“To hint that Mark Leaming killed anybody for a thousand dollars—that is ridiculous!” he cried protestingly.

“Sh!” warned John Daggett. “Not so loud! No, of course Mark Leaming wouldn't risk murder for a thousand dollars, or ten times a thousand; but it would have been smart of him to make it appear that the theft of a thousand dollars was the motive—especially with Otis Rodgers, poor devil, doing Etta Coburn's chores.”

“So?” grunted Elmer. “Otis is the one they think did it? If Otis was anywhere within ten miles, of course they'd suspect him!”

“And here's another point,” John Daggett went on hurriedly. “I stood up for Otis Rodgers, told Strawbridge that Otis, drunk or sober, couldn't have done a cold-blooded thing like that—strangling a woman. And Leaming didn't like my saying that; I can see now that he didn't like it. Do you see, son?” He paused for an instant. “He wants Otis to be suspected; the stronger the suspicion against Otis, the safer it will be for himself.”

Elmer debated for a moment, and then began shaking his head as he

made an empty, baffled gesture with his hands.

"I'm afraid we're all wet, dad; and in a way, I'm glad we are. It would be a pretty terrible thing for Alice, her uncle being a murderer. I guess we did just about convince ourselves that Mark Leaming killed the Coburn woman, but there's one thing we both overlooked. What could have possibly been his motive? She's been away from here twenty years; a week or ten days after she's come back, Mark Leaming chokes her to death. Now is it reasonable? Is it really possible?"

John Daggett made another trip to the water cooler, drew a glass of water for which he was really not thirsty, and stood with it raised midway to his mouth. A man's memory performs odd and almost uncanny feats at times; some trivial incident stored far back in some forgotten pigeonhole of his mind will suddenly leap out from the dim and distant limbo of forgotten things, coming back to him with all the clearness of a yesterday's happening.

Back twenty years leaped John Daggett's memory. He and Mrs. Daggett had just started up in the boarding-house business. Mark Leaming had been such a wild young fellow with his drinking and chasing after women that no one would have ventured the prediction that he would steady down, becoming the president of the bank and the richest man in Rodgersport.

Mark Leaming had boarded with the Daggett's, spending his money on liquor, women and fine clothes, and had always been two or three weeks behind with his board money. Daggett recalled the picture of Mark Leaming and himself sitting on the porch with their feet propped up on the railing.

A woman had come down the

street in the gathering twilight--Etta Coburn, the prettiest thing in town, and years too old for her husband. Etta Coburn had been taking an evening stroll down along the beach. Mark Leaming had dropped his feet from the porch railing and gotten up, winking broadly and wisely at John Daggett.

"Guess I'll take a little walk," he had said meaningly.

John Daggett, of course, wasn't such a fool but that he understood.

"You better be careful, Mark, whom you walk on the beach with; I'd let Rufe Coburn's wife alone, if I was you."

That was the picture that flashed back through John Daggett's mind after being so long forgotten. How far had Mark Leaming gone with Etta Coburn? He didn't know. Regardless of how far he might have gone, why should Leaming have killed the woman? Neither could John Daggett answer that; nevertheless, he was sure, within his own mind, that, if he knew all the circumstances of the relationship between the two, he would also know why Mark Leaming had gone to the Coburn house on Monday night, why he had again gone back on Wednesday—and choked her to death. It didn't at once occur to him that the shooting of Rufe Coburn was the connecting link in the chain.

Elmer stared curiously at his father, and became a little impatient of the long silence. Suddenly, the elder Daggett put down the drinking glass with a clatter, and smacked a clenched fist into the palm of the other hand.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed in a tense whisper. "Something tells me that I've got the right answer. He killed Etta Coburn to keep her mouth shut."

"Her mouth shut about what?" demanded Elmer, looking dubious.

"About the other murder—her husband. Listen, Elmer, I haven't got a bit of proof, even less proof than you've got that it was Mark Leaming who went to the Coburn place Monday night. But I know I'm right. No use going to Strawbridge; he'd only laugh at me and maybe think I was just trying to spatter up Mark Leaming to get even with him for closing me out. Only one thing for us to do, son, and that's to keep our mouths shut about this until we have got something we can go to Jason Strawbridge with."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### FRAMING OTIS.

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THE detective who came down to Rodgersport from Augusta was named Fernald. His original home was Oldtown, Maine, and he had Indian blood in him. A quarter breed, so it was said. What is left of the once-proud tribe of Penobscots are quartered on a government reservation at Oldtown, and marriage between them and the whites is not uncommon.

What sort of detective "Indian Jack" Fernald would have been elsewhere must remain a matter of conjecture, but, within his native State, his fame reached from the Rangeley Lakes to the Kennebunk River. In solving crimes of the woods, he was without a par. Plus the natural aptitude for following dim trails through the forests, Indian Jack had added a study of finger prints to his official equipment when made a member of the State police, and had become an expert.

Fernald, other than a tendency to swarthiness and high cheek bones, had no visible Indian characteristics. He was stocky of build, inclined to portliness of girth, and his eyes were a peculiar blue, frequently with a twinkle of humor in them.

But there was no twinkle in them this morning as he sat in the outer office of the county attorney, waiting for Jason Strawbridge to finish with some business connected with his private practice. The salary of a public prosecutor in Maine is so small that no lawyer could afford to take the office unless he could at the same time have his earnings from other legal work. For half an hour or more, Strawbridge had been closeted with a client while Indian Jack Fernald waited impatiently for the conference to reach an end.

Three days had passed since the murder; the previous afternoon, Etta Coburn had been buried beside her first husband. Whether or not this might have been her wish, no one knew; the funeral arrangements fell to the lot of a half sister who still lived over on Gull Island; she could probably see no reason for reducing what might be left of Etta's estate—to which she was the ostensible heir—by carting the body back to Boston where the second husband was interred. It was a large funeral, one of the largest Rodgersport had even seen; the sensational circumstances of her death guaranteed that.

Three days ago, Etta Coburn had been brutally strangled with her gay-colored scarf, and no arrest had been made; the townsfolk were by turns surprised, bewildered and angry. What was the matter with Jason Strawbridge that he didn't act? Why was he letting the murderer remain at large? For it was a matter of public agreement that

Otis Rodgers was the guilty man. Lydia Toothacher's story and theory of the crime had been broadcast, enlarged upon and embellished until there was scarcely a doubting mind in the entire community. But Otis Rodgers was allowed to keep his freedom while Strawbridge kept his own counsel and a curt "Nothing to say for publication" was all that a staff correspondent for the *Portland Press-Herald*, and the two reporters from Boston could get out of him.

The door of Jason Strawbridge's private office opened; he ushered out his client—a woman who was having trouble with her husband and had been weeping—and beckoned Indian Jack Fernald to enter. The State detective entered the little cubby-hole of a back room and sat down. For a moment, the two men exchanged questioning glances, each waiting for the other to speak the first word.

"Anything new since last night?" finally asked Jason Strawbridge.

Fernald shook his head grimly. "Rodgers hasn't made a move, and he hasn't touched a drop of booze. He's scared to death."

"Must be," growled Strawbridge. "Yep, he must be pretty scared to get on the water wagon for three whole days. He knows he's being watched, and I guess he means to have the clear use of his wits when we reach out and gather him in."

Indian Jack pursed his lips and said nothing.

"The vice president of the Boston bank where Etta Coburn had her checking account called me on the phone this morning," went on Strawbridge. "The teller who cashed that thousand-dollar check for her the day she came to Rodgersport had remembered that he gave her the money in twenty-dollar bills—which doesn't mean a thing.

We still don't know what part of the thousand dollars she got to Rodgersport with. In other words, Fernald, we're exactly where we started."

Indian Jack nodded glumly in agreement. "That's right; we're exactly where we started, and we've got to do something."

"Don't I know it?" growled the county attorney. "The whole town's getting down on me for not having slammed Otis Rodgers in jail, and a man who's in politics, Fernald, doesn't want his home town down on him. I'm going to act."

"Suits me," grunted Indian Jack Fernald. "I don't know what's going to come of it, but, if you didn't take action, I'd have to anyway. I'd come to tell you that. Glad we agree. We'll go after Otis Rodgers, go after him hard, and see what we can scare out of him."

"I've already telephoned Sheriff Curtis to fetch him in," said Strawbridge. "They ought to be here any minute. Curtis didn't need any urging, I can tell you that; he's been riding me, too."

There was a half minute of silence. Fernald's hand went to his pocket, extracted a piece of spruce gum, and put it in his mouth.

"From what you've told me," he said, "our man isn't easy to break down. You recall the time you had him up for questioning about a robbery."

"Maybe it'll be different this time; he's pretty badly scared now," Strawbridge hopefully replied.

Another pause!

"We haven't got a thing on the fellow," Indian Jack went on grimly. "Presumably, the motive was robbery, and yet there's no actual evidence that anything was stolen. The woman's wrist watch, worth five or six hundred dollars, wasn't touched; we only suppose that she

should have had several hundred dollars in cash. There weren't any finger prints. He was an hour in the Coburn house the morning after the murder, but she was killed the night before."

"Are you trying to convince me that Otis Rodgers isn't our man?" growled Strawbridge.

"Not a bit of it," grimly retorted Fernald. "I'm emphasizing how important it is that we break him down at the start. As things stand, you'd never get a conviction. A grand-jury indictment, yes; but after the public temper has cooled off—"

"I know," Strawbridge cut in brusquely. "The fact that Otis Rodgers is, logically, the only person who could have killed the woman wouldn't mean a thing; any trial judge in the State would instruct an acquittal."

"Logic's all right," said Indian Jack. "I'm trying to use it right now. This forty-five minutes or an hour that Rodgers was in the Coburn house the morning after the murder—what was he doing?"

"Yes—what?" growled the county attorney. "The only answer I've got to that is Otis's own statement when I very diplomatically questioned him Thursday morning. He says he had a beautiful hang-over and sat down on the cellar steps for quite some time."

"Bunk!" snapped Fernald. "It's too thin. Now I'll tell you what I think he was doing."

"Tell me," said Fernald, but his voice didn't register much enthusiasm.

Indian Jack chewed vigorously at his quid of spruce gum.

"It's my idea," he said, "that Rodgers killed her Wednesday night when he came to fix the evening fires. It's my idea that he was

drunk and that the Coburn woman canned him. When she paid him off, he saw that big bunch of bills which were in her purse. Maybe he grabbed her then and maybe not. Maybe he tried to get away with the money, and she caught him at it. Anyhow, he was drunk. Next morning, he was sober—reasonably sober for a fellow who swills as much hard stuff as Otis Rodgers does. He realized that he'd left his finger prints plastered around, especially on that patent-leather purse which takes a finger print like a piece of glass. Perhaps he'd taken the wrist watch and realized that it was a mistake; perhaps he brought it back again.

"The purse didn't have any finger prints—not even the Coburn woman's. Neither did the watch. Both of 'em had been wiped clean. Same thing with the furniture upstairs. You'd expect to find finger prints on a woman's dressing table, wouldn't you?"

Strawbridge nodded. "Purely negative evidence, but I see what you mean and you may be right. Otis was upstairs when the Tooth-acher sisters called. He streaked down the back stairs and into the basement, got himself a load of firewood and pretended to make his first discovery of the body."

"That's my picture, Strawbridge." "I like the sound of it, Fernald. But proving it—that's the job."

Indian Jack leaned forward.

"Etta Coburn's bedroom faces the street," he explained. "If any one happened to be standing in the window, and some one else happened to be passing along the street, and chanced to look up through the right spot through the trees—well, it would be possible to recognize the person at the window. I tried it yesterday."

"Well?" impatiently demanded Jason Strawbridge.

Fernald smiled, a grim, wise smile. "You're acquainted with this town better than I am; I thought you might know somebody who might be persuaded to remember that they saw and recognized Otis Rodgers at the second-floor window of the Coburn house last Thursday morning."

The county attorney stared, instinctively shocked by the suggestion.

"You mean frame him?"

Fernald shook his head. "Not for any purpose other than to get the truth out of him. He'll deny he was on the second floor; get him committed to that and then spring a witness on him. If he's guilty he'll think we've got him dead to rights and go all to pieces; and then we have got him."

Jason Strawbridge debated swiftly and reached a quick decision.

"Yes," he agreed, "since it's only a trick to get the truth out of him, the ends justify the means, and I'm willing to try it. But it was foggy Thursday morning, too foggy for any one to have seen——"

"Let's hope Otis Rodgers doesn't remember that," grunted Indian Jack. "Now get busy and dig us up a witness."

Sheriff Curtis had a weakness for the spectacular and so, while Otis Rodgers displayed not the slightest inclination to offer resistance, and no formal complaint had been lodged against him, the murder suspect was paraded down Water Street and brought to Jason Strawbridge's office in handcuffs. Curtis hadn't long been a high sheriff, and this was by all odds the most important arrest he had ever made; he was flushed with excitement, extremely

conscious that many eyes were upon him.

Otis Rodgers walked with his shoulders held very straight, his mouth tight, his hands clenched, his face a dead-white, and a haunted look of fear in his eyes. His nerves would have been in a fearful state regardless of his arrest, for it's a terrible shock, when a man has been drinking heavily over a long period, suddenly to leave off the liquor altogether.

Sheriff Curtis piloted his prisoner up the wide, worn stairs of the Odd Fellows Building and into the office of Jason Strawbridge where the latter waited with Indian Jack Fernald.

"Here's yer prisoner," announced the sheriff.

Strawbridge hadn't expected that Otis Rodgers would be brought in handcuffed, and he was about to order the steel wristlets removed, when it occurred to him that this grim symbol of the law might have the effect of helping to destroy Otis's morale.

"Sit down, Otis," he said.

Otis Rodgers complied, sitting stiff and rigid in the chair facing the county attorney and the State detective. There was nothing left to Sheriff Curtis but to remain standing.

Strawbridge leaned forward, fixing the prisoner's gaze with a long, steady stare; the latter drew a deep breath, and a noticeable quiver ran through his body.

"I don't have to explain why you've been taken into custody, eh, Otis? You know that without being told, don't you?"

Otis moistened his lips. "Yes, I suppose I do," he admitted huskily. "I guess—I guess I'd be pretty dumb if I didn't."

"And you're not so dumb at that, huh? Not so dumb you can't stay

sober when you need the clear use of your wits."

Otis said nothing. He seemed to be bracing himself all the tighter for any shock that might come.

Strawbridge started in by asking some of the same questions that the suspect had already answered during the deliberately casual questioning of the previous Thursday morning. And Otis's answers were the same, with no noticeable change. He had done his usual chores at the Coburn place Wednesday evening, a little earlier than usual if anything. Etta Coburn had been alive then. She hadn't talked very much. He had asked her for some money, and she had given him five dollars. He had gone down to the water front and bought a quart of molasses rum for four dollars. No, he didn't know the name of the man who had sold him the liquor. What had the fellow looked like? He couldn't remember.

He had, Otis admitted, got pretty drunk on the quart of molasses rum, a solitary drunk in his shed room behind Sid Lord's sail-loft—the ramshackle old building which was all that was left of the once-proud structures where the Rodgerses had built their boats and sent them out to sea.

Thursday morning, Otis said, he had a pretty bad hang-over. He was late going to do Etta Coburn's chores, and, even when he got to the house, he didn't feel equal to the simple tasks of pumping the water and splitting up a few armfuls of wood; so, he still maintained, he sat down on the cellar steps, waiting for his giddiness and nausea to pass. He wasn't sure how long he sat there; it didn't seem like an hour, but maybe it was. Finally, he felt better, went down into the cellar, split a few sticks, and carried them

upstairs where he found the woman dead.

Indian Jack Fernald put a fresh piece of spruce gum in his mouth and leaned forward.

"When she paid you the five dollars, Otis," he asked quietly, "did she have to go upstairs after her purse?"

The suspected man debated this question at some length.

"Why don't you answer?" snapped Jason Strawbridge.

"I'm trying to remember, Mr. Strawbridge. Whether I heard her going upstairs, I mean. When I asked her for the money, she said, 'All right; I'll give it to you before you leave.' Then I went out in the kitchen to shake down the stove and carry out the ashes. It makes a good deal of racket, shaking down a stove, so I guess she could have gone upstairs without my having heard her."

"She didn't by any chance send you upstairs to fetch down her purse?" Fernald pressed on.

Otis Rodgers shook his head. "No, sir, she didn't."

"Did she ever send you upstairs?"

"She never did."

"Then, as a matter of fact, you were never on the second floor of the Coburn house—at any time whatsoever?"

"I never was," Otis Rodgers replied firmly and positively.

"Never in your life, then, were you ever on the second floor?"

The murder suspect looked uneasy. "Not that I can remember," he answered slowly.

"What about building the fires in her bedroom—did she build 'em herself?" Fernald's voice had sharpened.

"There isn't any fireplace in her bedroom; and no stove either."

"If you've never been upstairs, Otis, how do you know that?"

"She told me."

Indian Jack Fernald hunched his shoulders forward and leaned closer.

"Now, as a matter of fact, Otis, weren't you in the woman's bedroom Thursday morning—during the time you want us to believe that you were sitting on the cellar steps holding your head."

Below the twin rings of the handcuffs, Otis Rodgers hands clenched in a quick, nervous spasm. He swallowed twice.

"No," he denied, "that's not true."

"Otis, you're lying!" the State detective turned to Strawbridge. "Let's have in that witness of yours."

The county attorney rose to his feet, pushed past Sheriff Curtis, and opened the door. Stepping across the hall to the office waiting room of Doctor Jeffries, the dentist, where he had planted his witness to have him within ready call, he beckoned to Harold Dearborn.

Harold Dearborn was a lineman for the electric-light company. An interest in local politics had given him and Strawbridge something in common; there was little side money in it for Harold around election time and he had become, by degrees, Strawbridge's political handy man, ready to run any sort of errand or do any chore that he was bid. He seldom if ever questioned his instructions.

"All right, Harold," said Jason Strawbridge, "we're ready for you in here. Got the details clear in your mind?"

"Sure, judge; sure." Harold always addressed the county attorney as "judge."

When Otis Rodgers saw that Harold Dearborn was the mysterious

witnesses whom Strawbridge had gone to fetch, a puzzled and perplexed look came into his face. A moment of silence suddenly gripped the room.

"You know Otis Rodgers, don't you, Dearborn?" began the county attorney.

Harold jerked his head. "Why, sure; Otis and me have known each other ever since either one of us have been old enough to know anybody."

The handcuffed man in the chair continued to look puzzled—puzzled and anxious.

"You remember what happened last Thursday?"

"Why, sure, that was the mornin' Missus Coburn was found murdered," promptly answered Harold, remembering his lines with all the facility of a professional actor.

"Did you see Otis Rodgers Thursday morning?"

Harold Dearborn stared the prisoner straight in the eye.

"Yes, I seen Otis Thursday mornin'; I seen him on the second floor of the Coburn house—along about ten o'clock."

Otis Rodgers's head snapped back as though some one had clipped him a hard blow on the point of the chin. His whole body began to tremble.

"Under what circumstances, Harold?" prompted Strawbridge.

"There was some trouble with a transformer box on High Street," smoothly fictionized young Dearborn. "It was on a pole in front of the Coburn house. They sent me out there to fix it. Well, I was up there on that pole with my safety belt hitched onto the cross-arms. It had been kinder foggy but the fog was liftin' and there come a clear place, the way it'll be with fog sometimes, and I could see through an open patch in the trees, right

straight across the yard and straight into one of the second-floor windows of the Coburn house. That was when I seen Otis—most as plain as I see him right now."

Otis Rodgers slumped down in his chair, a hollow groan slipping past his bloodless lips.

Again Indian Jack Fernald took a part in the examination.

"What have you got to say now, Otis?"

Otis Rodgers had nothing to say. His fingers working convulsively, he sat in crushed, dumb silence.

"We've got you, Otis," went on Fernald. "You might as well make a clean breast of the whole business."

"I'll go as easy with you as I can," baited Strawbridge. "At least, there's no capital punishment in this State."

Otis Rodgers's head lifted slowly. The look of fear was gone from his face, replaced by an expression of indescribable bitterness.

"Yes," he cried, his voice rising to a shrill shout, "you've got me. You had to have a goat, and I'm it. I'm the goat for everything that goes wrong in this cursed town. If money's stolen, Otis Rodgers stole it! If a woman is strangled to death, Otis Rodgers did it."

The telephone in Jason Strawbridge's outer office started ringing, loudly and persistently. No one paid any attention to it.

"Don't pull that stuff, Otis," sneered the county attorney. "You might as well confess and get it done with."

The accused man's mouth twisted in what was probably meant for a smile. A hoarse, hysterical laugh ripped loose from his throat.

"You're right, I might as well. But I didn't kill her. I'll tell you the truth; I'm a fool to waste my

breath, but I'll tell you the truth about what I was doing upstairs Thursday morning."

Strawbridge's telephone continued ringing; still, it was ignored.

"Most of what I told you was true," Otis Rodgers went on heavily as he awkwardly lifted his handcuffed wrists and tried to wipe the perspiration which was now standing out on his forehead. "About her giving me the five dollars and my getting a quart of rum. It was true that I had the heebie-jeebies the next morning, and I did sit down on the cellar steps for a few minutes.

"Then I pulled myself together and carried up the wood. She was there on the floor—dead. The whole house was a wreck, drawers pulled and everything all scattered around. It was easy to see that somebody had been searching for something. I looked upstairs; it was the same thing up there.

"And I said to myself that if there's so much as a dollar bill missing out of this house that they'd blame me for it, murder and all. Her purse was on the floor; it was open and empty. I did some fast thinking and I decided that the only safe thing I could do was to put things back in their place so that it wouldn't look like there'd been a robbery. The dollar and odd cents you did find in her purse—that was my money; I put it there, and put the purse in one of the drawers. Now you have got the truth about what I was doing up in her bedroom."

From the wall by the door, Sheriff Curtis snorted derisively. Beyond the door, the telephone continued ringing in frantic little metallic jets of sound.

"Answer that, will you, sheriff," growled Strawbridge. "Tell 'em I'm busy and can't be disturbed."

He returned his attention to Otis Rodgers. "Now see here, Otis, what's the sense of your being a fool? You've said yourself that you don't expect anybody to believe this yarn you've handed us. No jury on earth—"

Sheriff Curtis was back in the doorway. His eyes were fairly bulging out of his head with a fresh excitement, which was even more

stirring than the town's first murderer in twenty years had been.

"Jason!" he shouted pantingly. "That—that telephone call was—was from the bank. They want us over there right away. It's Mark Leaming. He's disappeared. He's been missing since last night. Nobody knows what's become of him. They want us over at the bank right away."

Be sure to read the solution of this unhappy tragedy in the next week's issue.

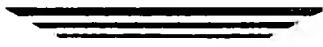


#### NO PERJURY IN TORONTO COURT

**A** YOUNG woman of Toronto was estranged from her husband. She discovered that he had taken two hundred and fifty dollars from her, which had been intended for the purpose of providing a tombstone for her father's grave. She went to the store where her husband was employed and asked for the return of the money.

The story the woman told in court was that her husband struck her with a steel shoe stretcher, knocking out two of her teeth, cutting one eye, and stunning her. The judge, however, decided that the woman's testimony was a "tissue of falsehoods." He said that he intended to take steps to stamp perjury out of his court.

The husband admitted that he struck his wife with his fist, but not with a steel shoe stretcher. Apparently, being struck with a fist is not so great a crime as being struck with a shoe stretcher in the Toronto court, for the man was fined ten dollars. The wife was discouraged in her attempt to malign her husband.



#### PROTECTION NOT NEEDED

**Y**OUNG bootblacks in New York City who hover around many of the parks carrying their shining apparatus in a box, came up against a real racketeer, recently.

The racketeer appeared in an automobile and collected all of the shoe-shining boys in that vicinity. There were about forty of them. The young racketeer said: "I have now taken over the shoe-shine concession here, and every boy must pay me fifteen cents a day, and I will protect you."

A twelve-year-old was not intimidated. He spoke his mind right out, saying: "We don't pay you or anybody else for protection."



# STICKLER FOR TIME

By HERMAN LANDON

*He waited with insane passion for the strike of eleven—the hour of vengeance.*

**T**HOUGH tall and strong-limbed, the intruder appeared in the hunting lodge with the sneakishness of a rat. The door made scarcely a sound as he entered, and his tread across the floor was stealthy and noiseless. When within a few feet of the rough-hewn pine table, he stopped and looked with smiling malice at the man seated there.

"Hello, judge," he said in a suave

voice that yet carried a hint of a snarl.

Parkwood started at the sudden interruption. He was big and broad-shouldered, with an intellectual face. He was in flannel shirt, knickers, long sport stockings and rubber-soled shoes, the kind of dress city men assume when vacationing in such lonely spots as this particular section of the Berkshires. For an instant, his hand shook, for the

softly spoken words had fallen like a crash of thunder on the utter stillness, and then he steadied himself with the ease of a man whose nerves are under perfect control. Dropping the book he had been reading by the light of the oil lamp, he gazed levelly at the man who had disturbed his quiet evening.

"Hello," he said calmly. "Who are you?"

With a laugh, the man came closer. He had a rather handsome face, but his mouth was weak and his eyes were crafty and treacherous.

"You are Parkwood, aren't you?"

"That's my name," said the man in the chair. "What's yours?"

The intruder, standing close up to the table, fixed a look of smiling hate on the occupant of the cabin.

"Yes, you're Parkwood. I couldn't be mistaken, even though you've snipped off your mustache and taken to wearing glasses. You look just as pious and sour as you did eight and a half years ago. You were District Attorney Parkwood then. Now you're Judge Parkwood. Soft for you, judge. You've been sitting pretty while I've been doing my allotted stretch in the big gray house."

"Oh," said Parkwood easily, appraising the visitor through his shell-rimmed lenses, "I'm beginning to understand."

"Splendid, judge! Simply splendid!" The visitor spoke with a smile, but spite and malice glittered in his shifty eyes. "But I'm afraid you don't recognize me. Well, I don't suppose you can remember every bloke you sent to the big gray house when you were district attorney. You were bent on convictions, and you usually got them. Ah, come now, judge. Look at me."

He stretched his tall, lithe figure

and grinned wickedly at the man seated across the table.

"I'm humiliated, your honor. It hurts me to see that you don't recognize the only college man you ever sent to jail for cracking a crib. Have you forgotten the pious lecture you gave me as a prelude to sending me up for ten years? You pointed out that a man who possessed my gifts and enjoyed my advantages was far more culpable than the ordinary kind of crook. You handed me a long, sanctimonious sermon. I've hated you for it ever since."

Parkwood saw a bright, deadly glitter in the eyes fixed upon him, but he spoke evenly.

"Then, I take it, my pious lecture was a waste of breath."

"It was, your honor. It only made me mad all over. I hated you for your smug, hypocritical spiel, and I hated you because you went out of your way to convict me. I hated you even more because you were the first and only man to send me to jail. I swore that some day you would pay for it."

"Pay?" said Parkwood casually. "How?"

"With your life." The visitor spoke softly and smilingly. "And you are going to pay to-night."

"So that's it." Parkwood's heart may have been crowding his Adam's apple, but he did not show it. "It's very strange that I don't seem able to remember you. Who are you, anyway?"

For a moment, the visitor looked as if his vanity had been hurt, then he laughed disagreeably.

"You're bluffing, judge. You remember me only too well. Right now you are quavering in your boots. You haven't forgotten Harry Walton—Smiling Harry, as the newspapers used to call him. He smiled when you preached that

pious sermon to him, and he smiled when you sentenced him to ten years. Remember, judge?"

"Hm-m-m," said Parkwood. "Yes, I seem to remember you now. How do you happen to be out of prison?"

"My term expired a month ago. I got a bit of time off for good behavior. Good behavior!" "Smiling Harry" gave a scoffing laugh. "If the warden could have known what I was thinking when I lay awake in my cell nights, there would have been no time off for good behavior. Guess what I was thinking, judge?"

"Repenting your crimes, I hope?"

"Hardly. Guess again."

"I suppose you were planning what to do when you got out?"

"Right, judge." The words came in gentle, playful accents, but there was heartfelt hate in the speaker's eyes. "There was just one thing I wanted to do, and I smiled as I planned it. I schemed how I would kill the only man that ever got a conviction against me. I tried to imagine how you would look and act when I tickled you with the knife. I killed you a thousand times in my thoughts. Do you wonder it made me smile?"

Parkwood took a cigar from the pocket of his flannel shirt and lighted it with an imperturbable air.

"So you killed me with a knife in your thoughts. Is the knife your favorite weapon?"

By way of answer, Smiling Harry drew a long knife from his inner pocket and, unsheathing it, exhibited a keen edge.

"See it, judge?" His voice was almost silken. "It will make a clean slit across your throat. A knife is a much more artistic weapon than a gun."

Leaning over the table, he thrust the knife close to Parkwood's eyes. With a gleeful laugh, he made a few

imaginary slashes with the blade. Parkwood looked on as carelessly as if it had been a harmless curio, and Smiling Harry frowned. The other's placid demeanor was disappointing.

"Well, judge," Smiling Harry said with a sneer intended to mask his sense of frustration, "feel like preaching another little sermon? We have lots of time, and I'm enjoying this."

"No, I'll spare you the sermon, but I'm curious to know how you found me."

"No sermon? I'm sorry, judge. Thought you might feel like making a farewell speech. Well, no matter. I started looking for you a month ago, as soon as I got out. You were a hard man to find. I didn't get a definite trace of you till last week. Then I heard you had gone to this rummy, God-forsaken place for your vacation. A hard-working judge like you needs a vacation now and then, of course."

"Yes, and so does a hard-working professor of anthropology."

"A professor of anthropology?" Smiling Harry scowled perplexedly. "Say, is that supposed to be funny? Well, it's no wonder your jokes are feeble to-night. Hope you're enjoying your vacation, judge?"

"Immensely."

"That's good. It will be your last. What I don't get is why you came to this howling wilderness and why you came all alone, with nothing but the birdies and the squirrels for company. It's three miles to the nearest town. I know because I came afoot. You have no neighbors, no amusements, no— Say"—and Smiling Harry looked as if he had conceived a happy thought—"did you think you had better go into hiding when you heard I was out of stir? Is that why you buried yourself in this hole?"

"Oh, hardly." Parkwood regarded him with quiet contempt. "Like all criminals, you are vain and conceited. I never gave you a thought. You see, I'm not the least bit afraid of you."

Smiling Harry's chin sagged. He stared sullenly at the man in the chair. Such indifference was beyond understanding. Suddenly, with the knife in one hand, he stepped around to the other side of the table and ran his free hand over Parkwood's clothing. His bewilderment grew.

"You're not armed," he muttered. "You haven't got a chance. I don't understand. Wait, though. Those jujutsu tricks of yours!" He laughed derisively. "They made you famous when you were district attorney. It was said that you would go into the toughest joints and brace the toughest gangs with no other weapon than your hands. Well, judge, those stunts won't do you any good now. This knife"—flourishing it in the lamplight—"beats a million jujutsu tricks."

"Oh, perhaps so." Parkwood shrugged his broad shoulders. "Just the same, I repeat that I am not afraid of you. You see, I'm a man. I've always kept myself clean and healthy. You are only a disgusting rat."

Smiling Harry flushed. His smile took on a black and ugly twist that bared his teeth. Low cunning and beastly passion smoldered in his treacherous eyes. For the time, save for the ticking of the nickel clock on the mantel shelf, the cabin was utterly silent.

"You're bluffing," Smiling Harry declared, but his voice lacked conviction. "You'll sing a different tune when I start to carve your throat."

"Well, why don't you start?" Parkwood smoked placidly.

The other was silent. He looked out through the window. The ground was bathing in moonlight. With the knife, he made a few absent flourishes in the air. Parkwood smiled.

"Disappointing, isn't it?" he asked quietly. "You have been nursing this crazy hate a long time, I can see. It's made you a bit unbalanced. You have been looking forward to this occasion, and now you find that it falls short of your expectations. You hoped to see me cringe and shake and whine for mercy, but I'm doing none of those things. It goes against the grain, even for a rat like you, to kill a man who refuses to show the least fear."

Smiling Harry turned his eyes from the moonlight outside the window and glared at the man in the chair.

"Think so?" There was a snarl in his voice. "Oh, you will whine, all right, and cringe, too."

"That remains to be seen. By the way, have you considered the consequences? What about the electric chair?"

"So that's it!" Smiling Harry brightened of a sudden. "You think I won't kill you for fear of being caught. Well, don't fool yourself, judge. I've considered everything—every little thing. I've left nothing to chance."

"Sure of that? I take it, for instance, that you had to inquire your way to this cabin. That means you were seen by people and talked with them."

"Wrong, your honor." Smiling Harry, save for the morbid gleam of hate in his eye, was suave and contented again. "I wasn't seen by a soul. I didn't have to ask directions. In the village yesterday, I heard some people talking about the

judge who was living in the cabin on the Saddleback Road. That was enough."

"And was that all you heard?"

"It was all I needed to hear."

Parkwood's palm concealed a queer smile.

"And you weren't seen on your way out here to-night?"

"I was not. Listen, judge. I don't know how many nights I lay awake in my cell planning this job. It's a perfect plan, all pat and polished. They will never get me for it. They won't even suspect me. It will be the slickest job ever pulled off. Talk about the perfect crime! This is it."

"Others have thought so. They were fools."

"Maybe so. But listen, your honor. I'm playing absolutely safe. To-morrow somebody will find you sitting here with your throat cut, but nobody will suspect that Smiling Harry Walton did it. The sheriff himself will swear that he couldn't have done it."

"Really?" Parkwood was faintly puzzled.

"Yes, really," Smiling Harry mimicked with evil contentment. "You see, judge, I've got the swell-est little alibi in the world. A man who is locked up in jail doesn't go about committing murder."

"Jail?"

"That's what I said—jail. I mean the jail over at Falmouth, just three miles from here. You ought to look it over, judge. It's sadly in need of repair, but it isn't a bad place as jails go. I had a look at it the other day. Jails fascinate me. It gives me a kick to imagine myself inside trying to get out. That's what I did the other day. Just by looking at it, I found a very good way to get out."

He paused, grinned cunningly

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across the table, and Parkwood gave him a perplexed look.

"The next day," Smiling Harry added with pride, "I heard there had been a stick-up in the amusement park just outside Falmouth. The stick-up occurred ten days ago, but the sheriff and his crew were still looking for suspicious characters. Just to accommodate them, I put on a bit of acting. My looks and actions were so suspicious they promptly threw me in jail. That was this morning. To-night, as soon as everybody was asleep, I slipped out the way I had planned. In a little while, as soon as I've settled with you, I'll walk back and slip in again. Nobody saw me slipping out, and nobody will see me slipping in. You get the idea, judge?"

"Yes, and it's rather good," said Parkwood. "Quite ingenious, in fact. But what about the stick-up charge?"

Smiling Harry's face glowed with pride.

"Nothing to it, judge. It will collapse at the preliminary hearing. You see, the night that stick-up took place, I was playing poker with a police sergeant and a couple of politicians in Boston. It's an honest-to-goodness alibi."

Parkwood nodded and gazed calmly at the knife in Smiling Harry's hand.

"You seem to have arranged things rather well," he commented, "but I still think you have forgotten something."

"Forgotten what?"

"Well," and Parkwood ashed his cigar with deliberation, "for one thing you have made a mistake in me. You expected me to cringe and whine. Instead of that, I'm calmer than you are. It puzzles you. You don't know what to make of me. You want to break down my forti-

tude, and you can't do it. Deep down in your black and twisted heart, you know that I'm a man and that you are a rat."

Smiling Harry bared his flashing teeth in a snarl.

"Think I'm going to back out after waiting all these years for my satisfaction? Think I haven't got the nerve to kill you?"

"Then why don't you go ahead, instead of entertaining me with all this conversation?"

Smiling Harry's fingers tightened viciously about the knife handle. He glared at the dispassionate face across the table as if it were a thing that baffled him.

"There's no hurry. We have all night." He chuckled contemptuously. "I suppose you think I'll make a slip, leave a clew of some sort?"

"Murderers generally do."

Smiling Harry flung a laugh in his face.

"All right, I'll leave a few clews, but not the kind you're thinking of. I came across a muddy stretch tonight. I suppose I've left a few footprints in your cabin. The dicks are welcome to them. They will start looking for a man who wears shoes a size and a half larger than mine." He looked down with satisfaction at his footwear. "I found these kicks in a barn on my way over. I'll change back into my own later."

"A commendable forethought," Parkwood murmured.

"Glad you appreciate it. You see this cigarette?" He threw the butt to the floor and put his heel on it. "It isn't my brand, but the dicks will look for somebody who smokes it. That will be clew number two."

"Quite interesting," Parkwood drawled.

"And here is clew number three."

Smiling Harry struck a match against the wall, forming a scratch on the pine sheathing. "The dicks will see this scratch. They will notice it's fresh, and they will think the murderer made it. So they will start a hunt for a man six inches shorter than I am."

"That's rather deep."

"Not too deep for the dicks. They know that a man, when he strikes a match on the wall, always strikes it at a point level with his shoulder. It never fails. I deliberately selected a point six inches lower."

"Very clever," said Parkwood. "I'm only wondering if you are not too clever."

"Keep wondering. I'll fix up clew number four as soon as I am through with you. I'll just toss things about a bit, making it look as if I killed you for your money. It'll get the dicks all tangled up, and my alibi will put them completely off the track."

"Oh, probably," Parkwood admitted, "but I still think you have overlooked something."

"Yes?" Smiling Harry stared hard and sullenly. "Oh, I see. You think I'm going to leave a few finger prints around. No, judge, I'm not that dumb. Maybe you've noticed that I haven't touched a single thing with my hands since I entered the room."

"Wise precaution," said Parkwood easily, "but I still insist there is something you have failed to consider."

An astounded look wiped some of the hate from Smiling Harry's face. He came closer to the man in the chair. Suddenly, he gave a harsh, gloating laugh.

"You're stalling, judge—playing for time. You know you haven't got a chance for your life. See that clock?" He flung out his hand and

pointed to the timepiece on the mantelshelf. "When it begins to strike eleven, I'll begin to carve your throat. You were always a stickler for time, judge. If you said you would be at a certain place at a certain time, you would be there on the second. You never failed. Well, now you're going to die on the second."

He leaned toward the man in the chair. Black, hateful lines stood out all over his face. His breath came hard and raspingly, as if an insane passion were choking him. The clock ticked serenely on.

"Wouldn't you like to preach a little sermon, judge? Or maybe you would like to practice a few of your jujutsu tricks? If you do, you had better hurry. You have just three minutes."

Parkwood's broad figure tensed a little. He saw murder in Smiling Harry's blazing eyes. He cast an eye on the clock. Two minutes! He glanced at the knife. Smiling Harry was clutching it so hard that the knuckles showed white.

One minute!

The knife in Smiling Harry's hand swung backward in preparation for the deadly thrust. It gleamed wickedly in the lamplight.

A peal from the clock shattered the stillness. Smiling Harry threw out an evil laugh. The knife described a curve in the air. And then—

Smiling Harry's hand paused in

mid-air. For a second, he stood rigid, motionless. His eyes grew vague. Suddenly, with a snarl, he sprang aside, but a figure leaping across the floor caught him and twisted his arm. The knife fell to the floor, and two awful yells of pain broke from Smiling Harry's lips. Again his arms were twisted, and his body shuddered in agony.

Then his arm was released. He staggered and sank into a chair. Out of terrorized eyes, he stared at the newcomer who had leaped to the attack so swiftly and silently. A look of incredulity entered his torture-stricken face.

"Well, Harry, how did you like my jujutsu performance?" asked the newcomer. "You look a bit sick."

Smiling Harry touched his stinging arm and turned weakly to the man in the chair, the man he had threatened.

"Don't you know my brother?" asked Parkwood. "You should. He's the judge and the jujutsu artist. I'm only a professor of anthropology, but professors need vacations, too." He heaved a long breath and turned to his brother. "Thank Heaven you were on time, Sam. You said you would return from your moonlight walk at eleven, and you returned right on the first stroke. This rat had a brilliant plan. He had thought of nearly everything. There was just one thing he didn't know—that he had the wrong man."

#### ORGANIZED CROOKS

**I**T is said that London burglars have organized a company to take care of funds received by any of their members. The crooks turn in whatever they steal, and this money is invested by them. In time it is believed that they will have enough wealth to be able to retire and live on their income.



# WORMING IN

By ROBERT McBLAIR

*Defiant, he faced men who had neither fear nor mercy.*

## CHAPTER I.

### A NUMBER GOES UP.

THE "Kid" seemed to notice the sudden silence. He turned his bright-hazel eyes rapidly from one to the other of the three men at the table with him. Their hard, lined faces told him nothing. At his right, "Sleepy Joe," a derby pushed back from his dark, plump face, turned the ice in his glass with a dirty finger, while the droopy lids half covered his bulging eyes. Opposite Sleepy Joe, the natty figure of Tony the Barber sat upright; his head was

bent forward so that the gray brim of his soft felt hat cut off all except the hard line of his mouth and, under his pointed chin, the salmon pink four-in-hand, knotted so neatly above the white edge of his pearl-gray vest.

Next, the Kid glanced at Brocco, who sat opposite him in the speak-easy booth. Brocco, a powerfully built man of forty, was leaning back against the booth partition. His cold, green-gray eyes seemed fixed on a spot just above the Kid's head. The stiff straw hat, pushed by the partition, stood up an inch above the lock of graying-brown hair mat-

ted against his forehead. As the Kid watched, Brocco brought up a stubby hand, glittering with two diamond rings, and drew a deep pull from the stub of a cigar. Brocco pursed the wrinkled lips under his red blob of nose, puffed out suddenly, and a perfect ring of smoke sailed slowly out and up. Brocco unbuttoned his gray tweed coat and watched it.

The Kid couldn't see where the ring of smoke went. But Brocco's green-gray eyes, as cold as the ice in his drink, watched the bluish loop of smoke as it paused and thickened and settled down, like a hangman's noose, over the Kid's thick mop of tousled brown hair.

"What's on your mind, Brocco?" asked the Kid, lustily clearing his throat.

Brocco brought his eyes down slowly from the noose in the air. He gazed at the Kid as if he had never really seen him before. He looked at the Kid's wide shoulders, at the well-developed chest under the thin, pale-blue sweater, at the clean, white handkerchief in the breast pocket of the Kid's well-cut dark-blue coat. His gaze went to the Kid's soft collar and inconspicuous tie. Then, as if he hated to do it, he raised his cold, hard stare to the Kid's young face.

"Kid," said Brocco, "your number is up."

A muscle twitched slightly under the Kid's strong jaw. Otherwise, his expression did not change. The right corner of his good-humored mouth still turned up in a half smile. The nostrils of his straight, blunt nose dilated as he drew a deep breath. His well-modeled, rather square countenance revealed nothing of his thoughts. Only his bright-hazel eyes, glancing swiftly around the smoke-filled room, seemed in-

terested in locating the source of this promised death.

There were a couple of drunks at the bar; the bartender was shaking a cocktail; the fat, free-lunch tender was playing the slot machine. The Kid's eyes came back to Brocco who was chewing on his cigar. On the Kid's right, Sleepy Joe's finger had come out of his high ball and his hand had disappeared under his coat. He was twisted so that he faced toward the Kid. Tony, the Barber's eyes were still down, but he, too, had turned toward the Kid, and his hand was in his right coat pocket.

The Kid chuckled. Then he laughed out loud—a hollow laugh.

"Out of six million people in New York, Brocco," said the Kid, "why pick on me? What's the big idea?"

Brocco's cold eyes showed offense that his news had been taken so lightly. He cleared his throat.

"Your number's up," he said. "That's all." He raised a ringed hand toward the old shuffling waiter. "Another round," he directed, and the waiter bowed and went to the bar.

The Kid's tongue tip ran across his lips.

"The Ace order it?" he asked.

Brocco straightened his stiff hat and nodded.

"Why?" asked the Kid.

"He says you know too much," said Brocco. "He sent you up to the border to bring back a load. Instead of going, you turn up at the brick garage in time to see him and me come out, after Dick Moran got rubbed out there. I ain't saying we had anything to do with that cop's getting rubbed out. I'm saying the Ace thinks you may be a stool or a dick. He never did think you belonged in this racket. You ain't the kind for it, he says. I was talking

to him last night, and he says to me, he says: 'The Kid ain't going to get well.'"

The waiter came up with three high balls and a lemonade on a tray. He picked up the empty glasses, set the lemonade in front of the Kid and a high ball in front of each of the others. Brocco slapped a two-dollar bill on the white-and-red checked tablecloth. That did not allow for a tip. The Kid took a quarter out of his pocket and laid it on the bill.

"How's the little girl to-night?" he asked the old waiter.

"She is better, sir. Thank you, sir! Thank you!"

Brocco made an angry gesture. Suddenly, he pulled the cigar from his mouth and flung it in the old waiter's face.

"Beat it, you——" he snarled.

"Yes, sir! Pardon me, sir," said the old waiter, and he backed hastily away, brushing the sparks from his face.

The Kid's clear skin had gone white.

"Brocco," said the Kid, "you are a dirty skunk to do that!"

Brocco's narrowed eyes were like slivers of ice.

"And you are a fool!" said Brocco. "I tell you your number goes up, and you stop to talk to a waiter about his granddaughter. The Ace is right. You simply don't belong in this racket." Brocco lit a fresh cigar.

The Kid took a sip of lemonade.

"The Ace is always right," said the Kid, "to hear him tell it." He put his glass down. "Why did you tip me off, Brocco? The Ace wouldn't thank you for that. In fact, if he finds it out, I guess the Chopper would be putting the finger on you next, wouldn't he? Seems to me you are putting a lot of con-

fidence in Tony, here, and in Sleepy Joe. If they squeal to the Ace, you'd be wearing a wooden overcoat."

Brocco leaned back and emptied his glass in a gulp. He banged it on the table, and leaned forward, his face flushed.

"I'm telling you," he snarled, "because I'm offering you a way out."

"A way out?" repeated the Kid, his eyes widening.

Brocco tapped the tablecloth. His voice went low.

"The Ace is getting too big," he said. He wiped his lips, keeping his cold eyes hard on the Kid. "See?"

The Kid whistled softly.

"I see," he said. He picked up his drink.

Sleepy Joe and Tony the Barber, relaxed. Their hands came up to their drinks. Brocco leaned out and, seeing the old waiter behind him in the next booth, said: "Bring me another drink, you sap."

"Best-a go easy on that stuff to-night, Brocco."

Brocco turned his heavy body and stared at Tony.

"Say, who's going to run this mob, you or me? Who asked you for any advice?"

Tony smirked and shrugged his padded gray shoulders.

"O. K. boss," he said. "I justa say, if you and the Kid are going up to the club to-night——" He shrugged.

"I know what I'm doing," said Brocco. "Always."

The Kid looked at Brocco.

"You mean," said the Kid, "that I am to go up to the club with you to-night? And bump off the Ace in the club with his mob all around him?"

Brocco said nothing.

"Suppose I refuse to do it?" said the Kid.

Brocco said nothing. His cold,

green-gray eyes kept looking at the Kid.

"You mean," said the Kid, "that I am to bump him off in the middle of his mob? What becomes of me, then?"

"You'll have the drop on them," said Brocco. "And I'll be the big shot then. I'll look after you."

The Kid ran his fingers through his thick brown hair.

"Yeah," said the Kid. "I see how you are looking after me now." And he asked again. "Suppose I won't do it?"

Brocco said nothing, only looked at him.

"You mean," said the Kid, "I'll do it, or else?"

Brocco said nothing.

The Kid looked down in his glass. There was a slight moisture on his broad, smooth forehead. The muscle came out on his jaw. He looked up at Brocco.

"All right," said the Kid. "Let's go. But you'll have to lend me a rod. I don't pack a rod."

"I'll give you a rod when we get there."

Brocco looked at his watch.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE SMOKE-OFF PLAN.

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WE leave here in ten minutes," said Brocco. He put the watch back in the breast pocket of his gray tweed coat. "The Ace will be at the club then. Hey! Another round!"

The Kid leaned his elbows on the table.

"Look here, Brocco," he asked, "why does the Ace think I'm wrong? I came back from the border trip because a cylinder got cracked. I had to come back. I saw you and

the Ace come out of the brick garage. Sure! And I read in the papers that Dick Moran, the plain dick, had been rubbed out in there. But have I made any break to squeal. Have I?"

Brocco pursed his lips and blew a ring of smoke.

"You ain't had a chance to, Kid. Either me or Sleepy or Tony been on your tail every minute. Notice that?"

"No," said the Kid. He ran a hand through his mop of thick, brown hair. "Well, if we are going up together, we'll use your car. I'd better run mine around to the garage. It's full of cordials. Save that for the new mob, eh, Brocco?"

"Sure," said Brocco. "Sleepy'll help you."

The Kid slid out of the bench. Sleepy Joe slid quickly out, close behind him. Bareheaded, the Kid, his sturdy figure in the dark suit very straight, went out of the front door, followed close by the plump, dark, quick-moving Sleepy Joe. The green-painted door swung to behind them.

Brocco straightened his straw hat. He and the dapper Tony sat sedately side by side on the booth bench while the white-haired, sunken-faced old waiter placed another round of drinks on the table. Brocco drank his in a gulp, wiped his lips, and turned his heavy body toward Tony.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded.

Tony shrugged and threw out his hands.

"Everything-a fine, Brocco."

"The devil it is," said Brocco.

"You're yellow."

Tony shrugged.

"The Ace"—he shrugged again—"he's a bad-a guy."

"Not after to-night, he ain't,"

said Brocco. "Listen. With him out the way, who'll be the big shot? Tell me. Chopper? Harry? You? Sleepy? Who'll be the big shot? That's what I want to know."

"Sure," Tony shrugged. "Brocco, he the big shot. But thees-a Keed. I no like thees. The Ace, he say the the Keed is undercover man. Is thees-a right?"

Brocco chewed his cigar.

"I don't know," said Brocco. "The Ace says he is. He says the Kid joined up with us too soon after that other copper was rubbed out. The Ace don't like that. The Ace is scared we was too easy letting him in. I mean, just because a guy is running small lots of good stuff down from Canada don't mean nothing. That don't make him regular. The Ace liked his stuff; you remember, it was in this joint the Kid showed it to him. And the Ace took him on. But since this Dick Moran job, the Ace is scared of his shadow. He says the Kid's got to go."

"And we do-a the dirty work, eh?" snarled Tony.

"Sure," agreed Brocco. "We do the dirty work, and the Ace gets the dough. But not after to-night."

Tony's olive face was sullen. He pushed away his drink.

"And the Keed?" he asked. "He bump-a off the Ace. Then-a what? If he a cop-a once, he a cop-a still. What-a then?"

Brocco threw back his head, opened his mouth, and laughed, his heavy shoulders shaking. But he made no sound.

"Honest," said Brocco, "you're dumb, all right!" He brought up a bediamonded hand and sucked in a mouthful of smoke. Then he blew a large ring, which hung suspended over where the Kid had been sitting. Turning toward Tony, he lowered

his voice. His blunt finger tapped on Tony's slender hand.

"You are talking to the big shot now," said Brocco. "Here's what's going to happen. I and the Kid will go in the club alone. You and Sleepy can wait outside. I won't need you. Listen. The Kid goes in with me. I give the Ace the wink and say we are all going for a ride over in Brooklyn—meaning we are taking the Kid, see?"

Tony, tense, nodded, staring into his glass.

"Then-a what?" asked Tony.

"The Kid's got a gun in his pocket, see? The mob knows the Kid don't never pack a rod. If the Kid welshes, if he loses his nerve and don't make a try for the Ace, I shoot him. I say he had a gun on him, and I saw him make a move for it to bump the Ace, see?"

Tony, his face a bit paler, nodded into his glass.

"But," said Brocco, jabbing his finger into Tony's hand, "if he's got the nerve, if the Kid bumps off the Ace?"

Tony's nostrils dilated. He breathed deeply.

"What then?" asked Brocco. "Listen, and see if I've got nerve. If the Kid does, what do I do? As soon as the Ace drops, I plug the Kid. I fill the Kid with lead. What then, huh? I'm the guy that killed the guy that killed the Ace, see? I'm protecting the Ace. I'm in right with the mob. No double cross, see? The Kid takes off the Ace's shoes. But Brocco steps into them. Have I got nerve or not?"

Tony drew a deep breath. He wiped a faint moisture from his delicate upper lip. He nodded slowly, many times.

"O. K., Brocco," said Tony.

Brocco spoke swiftly out of the side of his mouth.

"Cheese it," said Brocco.

The green-painted door had swung open. The Kid, a trifle pale, but wearing his frequent half smile, was walking toward them, followed by the plump, quick-moving Sleepy Joe.

The Kid came up to the table. His steps were silent in the rubber-soled shoes that he wore. He stood by the table. His well-modeled, rather square countenance gleamed with a faint moisture. His bright-hazel eyes were on Brocco.

"All fixed," said the Kid. "You ready?"

"Sure," said Brocco.

But he leaned back against the partition. His eyes did not rise above the top of the Kid's pale-blue sweater. His glance strayed to the bar.

"I want another shot," said Brocco.

He rolled his heavy frame out of the bench and the booth. The white-haired old waiter backed rapidly out of his way as Brocco crossed to the bar. The Kid, standing very straight, followed him. Tony, the Barber followed the Kid, keeping his right hand in his dapper gray coat pocket. Sleepy Joe, holding to his derby as he leaned, picked up his drink, drained it, and followed Tony. The shrunken old waiter, a slip of paper in his hand, hovered near.

"The same," said Brocco, and he threw half a dollar on the mahogany bar. "And fill it. Don't gyp me."

The bartender smiled. The Kid moved beside Brocco.

"The club is on Thirty-ninth Street, isn't it, Brocco?" he inquired. "I expected a customer to meet us here to-night. I'd better phone him."

The Kid started for the phone booth, but Brocco grabbed his arm.

Brocco picked up his drink with his right hand and drained the glass, holding the Kid's arm with his left hand.

"None of that," said Brocco. "We'll start now."

The Kid shook Brocco's hand off.

"There's no need to hold me," he said.

"O. K.," said Brocco. He started for the door, but the white-haired, sunken-faced old waiter, intervened in apology.

"Pardon me, sir. Please. The check, for the last-a round."

"What!" cried Brocco. "What!"

"Pleesa, mist'. Two dollar. You no pay, I lose."

The old waiter, bent with age, held out the check in a hand that trembled. Brocco's whole face suddenly stained to a red as dark as the blob of his nose. He clenched his bediamonded right hand, drew back, and drove his fist against the old man's bony nose. The old man went, like a falling dead thing, over a chair, which spun away and let him drop.

For an instant, the barroom was very still. The blare of the radio sounded very loud. But only for an instant. The Kid's hand caught Brocco's collar and swung the heavy figure half backward against the bar. Then the Kid's fist swung with a sharp, smacking impact against Brocco's cheek. A spot of red appeared at the corner of Brocco's mouth. Brocco's right hand dropped toward his side pocket, but the Kid caught his wrist. The Kid's face was white. His eyes shone.

"You dirty bully!" exclaimed the Kid. He jabbed the heel of his hand against Brocco's mouth. "You filthy dog!"

Brocco's face was so white that the veins made a plain pattern of purple on his blob of nose. His eyes

turned from the Kid to Tony the Barber, who stood with his right foot forward, his right-hand coat pocket pointed toward the Kid's stomach. Just behind Tony stood Sleepy Joe, his hand under his coat.

Raising his free left hand, Brocco wiggled his shoulders up higher and more comfortably on the bar. He waved Tony and Sleepy Joe away.

"O. K., Kid," said Brocco, taking out a handkerchief and wiping his mouth. "I forgot he was your friend, Kid."

Brocco stuck the handkerchief back into the breast pocket of his coat. His face, still very white, wore a curious strained smile. His cold eyes seemed very hard and bright.

"Well," said Brocco. "Are you all set?"

"I'm all set," said the Kid.

"No hard feelings, eh, Kid?" asked Brocco, smiling that curious smile. "That old waiter's been getting my goat. I forgot he was your friend. All set for the smoke-off?"

"I'm all set," the Kid repeated. His face was grim.

"O. K.," said Brocco. "Sleepy will drive. You sit with him. I want to talk to Tony about something."

"All right," said the Kid. He smoothed down his hair, led the way through the green-painted door. Sleepy Joe followed quickly behind him. Brocco held the door open for the dapper Tony. As Tony passed through, Brocco, his face white and set in that curious smile, met Tony's eye and winked.

"O. K.," said Tony. His face, too, was white.

The car, a low-hung front-drive speedster, black, with nickelized trim, and a tan top, stood at the curb. Sleepy got behind the wheel and started the motor. The Kid, bare-headed, slid in the front seat beside him. Tony, holding his gray fedora

carefully, got in the rear seat, and Brocco followed.

"All set for the big smoke-off," said Brocco.

Slowly, the car started. The traffic light went green at the corner. Sleepy stepped on the gas. The Kid looked back.

"I haven't got a rod," said the Kid.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE ACE SPOT.

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YOU'LL get a rod, all right," answered Brocco.

Sleepy twisted into a crosstown street, thence into Fifth Avenue. The taxicab stream, from the theaters letting out, stopped them at several corners. The Kid smiled as he watched the men and women in evening clothes pass in the taxis. He straightened his tie. Sleepy sat with both hands on the wheel and his foot on the clutch, ready to go. Tony sat in the seat behind Sleepy, a hand in his pocket, and Brocco behind the Kid, his stiff straw on one side, a cigar in his mouth, and a hand in his pocket.

They shot forward again, and turned into Thirty-ninth Street.

"Stop at the corner, Sleepy," directed Brocco. "Now you two punks wait here, see? I might need you. Come on, Kid."

The Kid and Brocco got out onto the sidewalk, Brocco pausing to take something out of the door pocket before he slammed the door. Across the street, next to the corner, loomed the four-story, red-brick façade of the club, the one-time private residence of a well-known millionaire.

"All set, Kid?" asked Brocco.

"All set," replied the Kid, standing very straight.

"Come on; then. Here!"

Brocco took the Kid's right arm in his left. He slipped something heavy into the Kid's right-hand pocket. Holding the Kid's right arm in a confidential manner, he drew him across the street. Near the opposite curb, he paused.

"Get this right, Kid. I'm for you, but the Ace put your number up. If you bump him proper, you'll be jake. What I mean, the mob will know you're regular then. But, as it stands, the Ace says you are a dick, and poison."

"He says I'm a dick?" asked the Kid.

"Sure. That's why you're nominated. He says you come looking us up right after that copper was rubbed out. You know, McCoy. Well then, this Dick Moran gets his, and the Ace is scared of his shadow. He says he thinks you're wrong, and you've got to go, see? So, don't miss him, Kid."

"Did he kill McCoy?" asked the Kid.

"Aw, what do you care?" said Brocco. "The point is, he thinks you are a dick friend of McCoy, see? He thinks you are the guy who has sworn to send him to the hot seat for it, see?"

"Where did he get that idea?" asked the Kid.

"You ask enough questions to be a dick, at that," snarled Brocco. "What do you care where he gets his ideas? The point is, don't miss him. See?"

"Don't worry," said the Kid. "I'll get him, all right."

"Let's go," said Brocco.

Still holding the Kid's right arm in a friendly way, Brocco walked with him along the sidewalk, and up the stone steps to the wide, grilled

door. Brocco rang the bell; the left door swung inward; the Kid and Brocco stepped into a lighted lobby about ten feet square. A dark-faced man there saluted Brocco, and pushed a signal bell with his foot. The iron grille of the curtained inner door swung open, and the Kid stepped forward, followed by Brocco. From outside came the familiar sound of the front-drive car's motor, the way Sleepy started it. The sound roared by the house.

Brocco snarled. He stood for a moment with his eyes narrowed, his stiff straw hat on one side of his head, the stub of chewed cigar smoking against his nose. Then he turned viciously on the doorman.

"Where's the top card?"

"Upstairs, Mr. Brocco."

Brocco glanced into the dining room and dance floor, and crossed the lobby's deep soft carpet to the elevator. The Kid stepped in beside him. They could see the dancers turning for a moment. Then they shot up to the second floor. The car stopped, and from rooms along the corridor came the sound of celluloid chips clicking on green baize tables. The air was heavy with cigar smoke. From the far end of the corridor came the indistinct cry of: "Make your bets, gentlemen!"

"What you stopping here for?" asked Brocco.

"Sorry, Mr. Brocco," said the elevator man. They went past the third floor and the car stopped at the fourth.

"The top card in?" asked Brocco.

"Yes, Mr. Brocco," said the emaciated elevator man. "I believe they are all back there to-night, sir."

"They would be," snarled Brocco. "Hold this car, see? Wait till I come out."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Brocco."

The Kid and Brocco stepped out of the elevator and started along the soft deep carpet of the hall. The big black door at its end was closed. Brocco stopped.

"Say," he said softly, "I wish I had another shot. Listen, Kid, don't miss him! If we don't rub out the Ace, we'll never get out of this club, see?"

"Will we get out—anyhow?" asked the Kid.

"Sure. I'll handle that. It's a gamble, but I'm taking it. With the Ace rubbed out, what I say goes. And they got plenty reasons for being sore with the Ace. He's gotten too big in the head. Don't miss! You'll never get out of this club alive now, the way they think you are a dick. Didn't you see them two triggers on the first floor go to telephone up to the Ace? I never thought of that before we come in. Now there's only one way out. Bump the Ace, and they'll think you're regular. It's a gamble for both of us. Come on!"

Brocco's heavy-shouldered figure in the gray tweed suit strode to the big double door at the end of the corridor, and his bediamonded hand knocked three times, then twice, then once. A panel slid back; an eye focused on Brocco's blob of nose; the brass knob turned, and the door opened.

"All right, Kid."

Brocco put a hand in the small of the Kid's back, keeping the Kid in front of him as they entered the high-ceiled, oblong room, brightly lighted by crystal chandeliers. The door slammed heavily to behind them.

"Hello, Chopper," said Brocco heartily. "Hello, Harry. Where's the Ace? Oh, there he is, behind you! What you guys got the screens

up for? It can't be that you are expecting trouble?"

There was no answer to Brocco's question. He stood there, his big figure looking rather helpless, his eyes showing their whites as he looked to right and left at the screens. He and the Kid stood between two screens, which jutted out about ten feet from the door. The screens were slitted, horizontally, about five feet from the floor, and through these slits could be seen pairs of peering eyes.

Brocco pushed the Kid forward, toward the group of three men in front of the carved, white marble mantel. Two of them were standing, their bodies between the Kid and Brocco, and the slender man who was seated at the mahogany desk behind them, quietly continuing his game of solitaire.

"Hello, Ace," said Brocco. His voice was high and taut, and had a quaver in it. "Why all this funny business, Ace? Sleepy and Tony and me, *and the Kid*, was just starting for a ride over to Brooklyn, see?"

The Kid and Brocco could see the rather sharply cut, almost delicate features of the man behind the two bodyguards. They could see his slender, pale hand as it took a card off the pack, hovered with it over one pile and then another, and finally laid it carefully in place.

"Yeah?" inquired the Ace without looking up. "And what did you come by here for, Brocco?"

In the silence, Brocco's dry swallow made a little click.

"Why, the Kid hadn't ever been up here before, Ace. And he said he had something very important to give you. He wouldn't tell me what. Something to give you." Brocco pushed the Kid forward. "Eh, Kid?"

Then Brocco's face went whiter still. For the Kid, with a movement quicker than Brocco's sight, had turned just a bit toward Brocco, and in the Kid's hand was a blue automatic, the gun that Brocco had given the Kid.

"Stick 'em up, Brocco," said the Kid in a quiet voice.

Brocco's pudgy hands slowly went up above his shoulders. At the same time, there came a quiet rustle from the two bodyguards at the table. Chopper, the moon-faced, rather Oriental-looking fat man, had a gun in each hand, held on Brocco and the Kid. Harry the Greek's dark, pointed face had shot forward and over the gun which he held on the Kid's back, his lean body had the attitude of a pointer dog.

"Brocco," said the Kid quietly, "tells you that I had something for you, Ace. I have. It's Brocco himself. He told me that you had put the finger on me, Ace. Said you thought I was a dick. He told me to come up here with him and bump you off, or else he would have to bump me off. His idea was to bump you off, and then take over the entire mob."

Brocco's yellow teeth clenched his cigar as his lips opened and trembled. His gray-green eyes stuck out.

"That's a lie," said Brocco. "The Kid's a dick, Ace, like you thought. He's trying to get in good with you by lying about me, Ace. He's trying to worm in on this mob so he can pin the McCoy job on you, Ace. He's a dirty, sneaky dick, and that's all."

The "Ace" put down his cards. He leaned back in his swivel chair and lit a cigarette, lighting the match with his thumb nail. Drawing a deep draft, he let the smoke filter out through his delicately chiseled

nose and finely cut lips. There was something that would have been handsome in his face; the slightly curved nose gave it a lean distinction. But its premature lines and wrinkles somehow suggested a mask. And his black eyes glittered unpleasantly.

He put up a slender hand and brushed back the lock of black hair which had fallen over his whitish forehead.

"Both of you guys love me so much," said the Ace in a rasping voice, "I don't know which loves me the most. I guess you'd better match for it. Maybe it's a good thing for me, though, Brocco, that Tony called up from the watchman's phone on the corner."

"Tony?" Brocco snarled. "Tony phoned you that?"

The Ace shook a lock of hair back from his eyes.

"Phoned me what?" asked the Ace. "I ain't said what he phoned me. But I guess I'll tell you and surprise you. Tony said you and the Kid was on the way upstairs to give me the works!"

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ACE WINS.

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PUT your gun in your pocket, Kid," said the Ace. "It's apt to make Brocco nervous, like that. And I guess the boys have got him covered. Tell me, Kid." The Ace got up, and with his hands in the side pockets of his brown suit striped with white, swaggered over and thrust his chiseled features sneeringly in the Kid's face. "Tell me, who do you think youse are, coming up here with Brocco like this?"

The Kid's eyes met the Ace's glittering black gaze.

"Well, I'm not a killer, anyway," said the Kid.

"Meaning what?" sneered the Ace."

"I don't go round shooting coppers in the back," said the Kid. "I'm not that kind of a rat, anyway."

The Ace's lined, old-young face flushed an ugly pink.

"Meaning that I do?" asked the Ace.

"Yes," said the Kid. "That's about your speed, Ace."

The Ace's chiseled features contracted. His hands moved convulsively. But he stopped, put his head on one side, and stared at the Kid, the cigarette hanging from his mouth corner.

"What's the game, Kid? What are you trying to make me do, eh? You are pretty smart, you think, eh?"

"Not so smart," said the Kid. His rather square face was damp. "I'm just telling you. You thought I was a dick and you got some of your trigger men to take me for a ride. I'm just telling you what I think of you. I'm a white man. When I've got anything against a guy, I talk to his face."

The Ace snorted, in a sneering laugh. He threw the cigarette onto the soft red carpet; it lay there, burning.

"That's an idea," sneered the Ace. His black eyes glittered from Brocco to the Kid and back again. "Brocco says you are a dick and want to get me. You say Brocco come up here to give me the works. You two guys would like to settle that little argument, I guess, eh?"

"Suits me," said the Kid. "You and Brocco look just alike to me."

"Yeah?" The Ace's slender legs

took two long steps backward. "Chopper," he said to the moon-faced fat man, whose two guns covered the Kid and Brocco, "you think you and Harry could take these boys out and let them settle this little argument?"

"Take 'em for a little ride, you mean, Ace?"

"Sure," said the Ace. "Take 'em out for a little air, and let them settle this between them. Take 'em out to the quarry, Chopper, and let 'em argue it out."

"O. K.," said Chopper.

"You can use my car," said the Ace. "But don't get no blood on it, Chopper. That's a brand-new car, registered in my name, too. So don't get no blood on it. You take these two friends of mine out to the quarry, and let them settle this argument between 'em. How about it, Brocco?"

Brocco's gray-green eyes lit with hope.

"O. K. by me, Ace. I'll settle with this guy, and then I'll come back and settle with Tony for lying on me to you."

The Ace put a cigarette in his mouth corner, lit a match with his thumb nail, and stood looking from the Kid to Brocco.

"That's an idea, too," said the Ace. "You boys settle your argument. And whoever wins, come back here and have a drink with me, eh?" The Ace laughed unpleasantly. "Chopper," he said, "you and Harry will stick around to see who wins, eh?"

"Sure," said Chopper. "Harry and me will stick around to see who wins. All right, boys. Let's go. After you, Kid."

Some one pulled the door open. The Kid led the way down the carpeted hall, which now was lined with half a dozen hard-looking young

men. Brocco came behind the Kid. He tried to swagger. Behind Brocco, close to both Brocco and the Kid, crowded the moon-faced yellowish Chopper, and the lean Harry the Greek. The four men crowded into the elevator.

"Mr. Brocco told me to keep the elevator waiting," said the elevator man, closing the door and starting down.

"I see," said Chopper. "Well, we'll all use it."

The elevator dropped without stopping to the first floor. The music had stopped. The door of the dance floor was jammed with curious, staring men and girls. An unusual number of hard-faced young men faced the elevator. Brocco and the Kid followed close by Chopper and Harry the Greek, crossed the lobby and went out into the street.

"You drive, Kid. You know where the quarry is?"

"Sure," said the Kid, and slid behind the wheel of the robin's-egg blue, low-hung car parked at the curb. Brocco got in beside him. Chopper and Harry climbed in behind. As the Kid started the car, four men ran from the club and jumped into a black limousine behind it. The limousine followed, a half block behind, as the Kid turned south at Lexington Avenue.

"This is a good car," said the Kid. "Lots of speed."

No one answered him. No one spoke as the car gathered speed, shot dizzily past intersections, ignored traffic whistles, outdistanced a cop on a pursuing taxicab, whirled right and left, dodging, and finally crossed Brooklyn Bridge at a respectable gait. The car shot ahead again across the bridge, raced through the borough to the suburbs, where the lights in the scattered dwellings were

out, and there was no traffic. Suddenly, the Kid stepped on the gas, then turned sharply on two wheels into a deserted road, where he flung on the brakes, swept the door open and jumped out, a gun in his hand.

Brocco in the front seat, Chopper and Harry the Greek in the rear, recovered their balances to see the Kid smiling at them over the hole of the gun's muzzle.

"Hold everything," said the Kid. "Get out, Brocco. You and I will go down the hill and settle our argument. Chopper, you and Harry will wait here for one of us, eh?"

"Sure," said Chopper. "Anything you say, Kid."

"Don't make any quick moves," said the Kid. "I'm kind of nervous. Get out, Brocco!"

The Kid slid back into the front seat, keeping his face toward the two in the rear seat, and forced Brocco out ahead of him. Walking beside Brocco, watching Chopper and Harry at the same time, he moved into the darkness of the down slope.

"Sure, we'll wait in the car, Kid," called Chopper.

But as soon as the stocky figure of Brocco had vanished down the slope, Chopper plucked at Harry's sleeve.

"Ain't but one path back up," whispered Chopper. "One of 'em—the one that's left—will come back up it. Come on. Get your gat out. Take it easy!"

Softly, silently, the heavy figure of Chopper, followed by Harry the Greek, crossed the grassy, uneven ground to where a path went to the right of the sudden gulf of an abandoned quarry.

"Listen!" hissed Harry the Greek.

From the neighborhood of the foot of the path came the sounds of

feet thrashing about through grass and leaves, grunts and heavy breathing; and the noise of a blow, like a thud on flesh and bone. Suddenly, two shots rang out.

And then silence!

Harry the Greek, his skinny hand trembling, touched Chopper's shoulder. Chopper jumped and swore.

"That was Brocco's gat," whispered Harry. "His .38; I know the sound. He was too heavy and quick for the Kid."

Something scuttled across Chopper's foot.

"Keep still now," muttered Chopper. "Keep behind this bush. When you see him, wait till I shoot first. We don't want to miss. Let him walk right into it."

They waited, crouched behind the bush, watching the black hole of the path. The grass was damp. A white moth fluttered against Chopper's gun, and vanished. From the side of the hill drifted the sleepy chirp of a bird. The city was a faint hum, far away. All around them was darkness.

Then, down the path, sounded a small stone, rolling. Chopper and Harry tensed. A second small stone rolled, this time nearer. They half rose, their guns held ready.

"Put your guns up, gentlemen!"

The words froze Chopper and Harry. They stood motionless. For the words had come, not from the path, but from behind them. The Chopper cautiously looked around. There, silhouetted against the leaf-screened light of the automobile, but only ten feet behind him, Chopper saw the straight, sturdy figure of the Kid, a gun in each hand.

"Maybe you'd better drop those rods!" commanded the Kid. He stepped forward, and two guns thudded on the ground. "Drop the

other one, Chopper." The gun thudded down. "Atta boy! Now let's go back to the car. I guess you'd better drive, Harry. Get off the main street, so we won't run into that limousine going back." The Kid herded Chopper and Harry back to the car, walking silently on his rubber-soled shoes. He herded them into the front seat. He climbed into the back. Harry started the car and backed out to the main thoroughfare. He crossed this, and then turned toward the city once again.

"Where to, Kid?" asked Harry. "Is this a pinch?"

In the rear seat, the Kid, putting one of the guns in his pocket, smoothed down his rumpled hair, and felt gingerly of a rising lump on his cheek bone. He brushed off his suit, and straightened his tie. His face was flushed.

"A pinch?" he asked. "Don't be silly, Harry."

"Where to then?" asked Harry the Greek.

"Why, back to the club, of course?" said the Kid.

Both Harry and Chopper looked around at the Kid. Their faces showed disbelief. The Chopper's mouth was a little circle.

"And you boys keep your hands out of the door pockets, too. Never mind about your rods. I want to get us all safely back to the Ace, the way it was agreed, now Brocco is out."

The Chopper's mouth remained open.

"You mean you want to go back to the club?" he said.

The Kid laughed.

"Sure," he said. "Didn't the Ace promise the winner a drink?"

The Chopper stared at the Kid.

"You are a hard guy, all right, Kid," said Harry the Greek.

The car sped back toward the club, where the Ace and his mob were waiting for Chopper's report on the "ride."

## CHAPTER V. THE KID AND THE ACE.

THE car of robin's-egg blue rolled up to the curb in front of the club and halted. There was amazement on the face of the doorman in the vestibule when the front door admitted the Kid right behind Chopper and Harry the Greek. But the doorman pressed the bell with his foot, because Chopper, in a surly voice, told him to. Chopper and Harry, when the inside door opened, crossed the soft carpet to the elevator, side by side, just as if they were under regular military guidance.

There were exclamations from the door of the dance and dining room, for, right behind Chopper and Harry walked the straight-backed, broad-shouldered figure of the Kid. His face seemed indifferent to the scene he was causing. His strong, good-humored mouth wore a half-smile. The trio stepped into the elevator, which closed and shot upward, but not before the occupants observed men running to the house telephone.

"All the way. No stops," said the Kid to the operator. "You won't have to hold it for Mr. Brocco this time, either."

The elevator operator looked scared. He did not say anything. On the fourth landing, he stopped the car and opened the gate. Chopper, his little eyes wide, his yellowish face a bit drawn, stepped out, followed by the Kid and Harry. They

started down the hall toward the closed black door.

The Kid stopped before the door of a wash room. He smoothed down his hair.

"You boys wait here for me," he said.

He went in the wash room. The door swung to after him. Inside, the Kid went to the white wash-basin, stepped up on it, unlatched the narrow window of frosted glass, and pushed it up quietly. He looked out and down. A straight drop of four stories, and nothing to break the fall. He put a knee over the sill, wormed through, hung by his elbows.

His toes could find no purchase. He let himself down an inch farther and found a two-inch ledge—an inset in the bricks. A similar inset ran away in the brick at about the level of his eyes. Toward the left, and toward the right, there was nothing except the blank wall of the building. The Kid edged a foot to the left. Two feet. Two more feet. His toes had a bare purchase. His fingers slipped on the loose grit of the bricks. The side of the house seemed to be leaning gradually outward, preparing to fall the long distance down. His chest seemed trying to push him over backward.

In the hall, outside the wash room, the Chopper ran swiftly toward the big black door. He knocked three times, then twice, then once. The panel opened.

"Where's the Kid?" asked a hoarse voice.

"In the wash room. Let us in, quick!"

The door swung open. In it stood four hard-faced young men, with guns. Right behind them stood the Ace, his delicate features distorted in a snarl of fear and hate, a gun in his hand.

"Gimme a gat!" said the Chopper in a whisper. "Come on! Gimme a gat, I say!"

"What's happened, you fool?" demanded the Ace, flinging his head back to get the hair out of his eyes. "What happened, Harry? Why are you guys back here with that——"

"He bumped Brocco," cut in Chopper, "and got the drop on me and Harry. He made us bring him here."

The face of the Ace flushed an ugly pink. He walked stiff-legged toward Chopper and Harry, who in a sudden realization backed away from him.

"What's the matter, Ace?"

The Ace's black eyes glittered with a peculiar lust.

"You think I'll swallow that, eh? You think he'd be fool enough to come back here, unless you were backing him up? You think I'll swallow that? Keep your hands up!"

Then the gun in the Ace's slender hand shot twice. The Chopper and Harry the Greek, without a cry, folded over, in almost identical motions, their hands going to their stomachs as the gun spat twice more. They slumped, fell, and lay on the deep soft carpet, their hands touching, as if in friendship.

The Ace jerked another gun out of his pocket.

"These punks," he snarled, pushing the bodies with his foot, "were pulling a 'Brocco,' see? Trying to give me the works and take the mob, see? The Kid come up in the elevator, boys. See if he's in the wash room like they said. Give him what's coming to him, the hard-headed fly."

One of the hard-faced young men spoke. His voice shook.

"But the Kid did bump Brocco, Ace. Gypper phoned they heard

two shots and then saw the Kid and these two in the car."

The Ace's hoarse voice had a note of sharp fury in it.

"Is this the time to give me an argument?" he squalled. "Sure Gypper saw 'em. That's why I knew it was a frame-up. Sure the Kid bumped Brocco. Why wouldn't he, when Brocco was trying to cross him? Tony told us that. Cut out the conversation. That dick's around here, you fool! You know he has sworn to take me to the hot squat. Are we going to let him scram?"

Two of the hard-faced young men ran for the wash room. One of the others said excitedly:

"He can't get away, Ace. Listen! Here comes the mob, running up the stairs. There ain't no way he can scram. We'll fix him plenty, and dump 'em all in the river."

The Ace, a gun in each hand, stood, leaning forward, peering down the hall. From below, on the marble stairs, came the sound of feet running up. The two hard-faced young men beside him wore tense, triumphant smiles as a draft blew the door gently to.

"We'll fix that undercover rat!" said the one who had spoken.

"Maybe so, maybe not," said a quiet voice.

The face of the Ace drained suddenly white. The two hard-faced young gunmen started. They turned.

There, leaning in the open window, a gun in each hand, appeared the wide shoulders, the head of the Kid. From the neat set of the inconspicuous tie, above the pale-blue sweater, from the neat white handkerchief in the breast pocket of his blue suit, and from his easy manner, one might have thought that he was merely paying a social call—except

for the guns. For a moment, the group at the door stood paralyzed.

Then the Ace swore. His gun and a gun in the window spoke at seemingly the same instant. But the Ace's left hand splattered a jagged red, his gun fell and he dropped the other gun to grab his wrist in agony.

"Take it easy, gentlemen," said the Kid, putting a knee inside the room. "Be good, and you won't be hurt."

The Ace, bent over, and rocking his left arm as if it were a baby, shook back his head, his features distorted, and screamed hoarsely:

"Come on in! You're not so smart." He poked a thumb toward the sound of imminent feet, pounding up the stairs. "You are going to get yours, right now!"

The Kid swung his other leg in and jumped to the carpet.

"That will be too bad," said the Kid, "because I'm going to take you with me, if I go. And I swore that I would take you to the hot seat, Ace, for killing my friend, McCoy." The half smile left the Kid's face. Watching the two unmoving gunmen, he held his two guns on the Ace as the big black door burst open. "You'll go with me," said the Kid. "Maybe the hot squat is too good for you. And it's hard to get convictions, anyway."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### EVIDENCE.

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WELL, of all things! Look at this! Here's the Kid, captain!"

The first copper slid to a stop on the soft red carpet. Behind him, a curly red-faced man in plain clothes lowered his gun. The captain stared

at the Kid, who grinned cheerfully as the man in uniform disarmed the two hard-faced young gunmen. From all over the house came the sounds of the raid.

"Glad to see you so healthy, Kid," said the captain, his blue eyes alight with pleasure. "Thought we'd be too late."

"Too late?" asked the Kid, smoothing his hair.

"Yeah. That old waiter at the speakeasy was out about an hour before he came to and told us what he had heard Brocco and those other gorillas planning for you. All he knew was it was some club on Thirty-ninth Street. We figured this was it, though. And here's the Ace, huh? A sweet-looking big shot, huh?"

"I want a doctor," said the Ace, groaning.

"Shut up, you!" said the captain. "And what are these on the floor. Your doings, Kid?"

The Kid shook his head. He was staring at the Ace.

"You know who did it, Kid?" the captain asked.

"Maybe," said the Kid.

"I see," said the captain. "What you want is the guy that shot McCoy in the back, eh, Kid? That's your passion."

"That's right," said the Kid, still looking at the Ace, who was bending over his wrist, groaning. "And the guy that bumped Dick Moran. Well, the Ace, here, did that, Brocco told me."

The Ace shook the hair from his glittering eyes.

"Brocco's a liar," said the Ace. "And I can prove it. Pull out the drawer in the top of the desk. Ain't that Brocco's gun? If you don't believe me, look at the silver initials in the wooden grip. Then match up the slugs from Moran with what

that gat shoots. Brocco bumped Moran."

"Aw, shut up!" The captain approached the Ace with a doubled fist as large as a ham. "Passing the buck to a stiff, huh? You killer, I'm going to give you a present."

The Kid held up a hand. His hazel eyes shone.

"Wait a minute, cap," he suggested. "After all, we might as well get the Dick Moran case closed out. Listen, Ace. Are you willing to sign a statement to that effect?"

"Sure," said the hoarse-voiced killer. "Why not?"

The Kid sat at the desk and started writing.

"Aw, Kid," said the captain. "Lemme sock this guy!"

"No, you'd get your fist dirty," said the Kid. "Here, Ace, stop the cry-baby act and sign this, will you?"

The Ace read the statement carefully and wrote his name under it.

"What good does this do?" demanded the burly, blue-eyed captain. "You are helping this rat to pass the buck, Kid. I thought you were going to put this rat on the hot seat for shooting your friend McCoy in the back. You got any dope on him for that? No. Well, don't let him alibi out of the Moran job, then. He done that, too."

The Kid pocketed the Ace's statement. He walked over and faced the blue-eyed captain. He had his back to the Ace.

"Well, cap," said the Kid, "we've got to have evidence. I can't pin this Moran job on the Ace without evidence. And what I want him for, anyway, is the McCoy job. But I can't convict him for that when I haven't got the dope, can I?"

The Kid, looking straight at the captain, slowly winked.

The captain's mouth opened. He

took off his derby and mopped his brow.

"Why, ah, uh, I guess you can't. No, Kid," said the captain. "Only you swore you'd get the Ace for that, if he did it, and the force has been believing you'd do it."

"Well, you have to admit I tried, anyhow. Listen, cap," the Kid said, and he winked again. "Bring the Ace along. I want to show you something."

"All right, Kid. Come on, rat."

"I want a doctor," said the Ace. "And a mouthpiece."

The captain grabbed the Ace's neck and shook him as a dog might shake a rat. The Ace's teeth rattled.

"You come when I tell you to come," said the captain, throwing the killer through the door, "or a doctor won't do you no good. Hey, hold that elevator!"

The population of the various floors of the club had changed miraculously from gangsters to plain-clothes men and uniformed policemen. On the street floor and on the sidewalk, a line of sullen men, and a few wise-cracking girls were moving toward the two patrol wagons. The wise cracking stopped, and a silence accompanied the captain and the Kid as they hustled the injured Ace through the lobby and into the blue speedster at the curb.

"Hold everything, cap," said the Kid.

He spun the car around a patrol wagon and shot it down the street, and whirled it south into Lexington Avenue. It gathered speed as it hurtled downtown, skillfully under control, and finally it slowed down a bit to cross Brooklyn Bridge. On the other side, the Kid stepped on the gas again, raced through the borough to the suburbs where there was no traffic, and the few houses were dark. Suddenly, the Kid spun

the car on two wheels into a deserted road and put on the brakes.

"What are you going to do, Kid?" whimpered the Ace from the back seat. "This ain't legal, Kid! I tell you—"

The Ace's whine was stopped by the slap of the captain's heavy palm against his delicate mouth. The Kid got out.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Ace," said the Kid. "The cap and me are going down to the foot of the hill and fix a hot squat for you. I promised you a hot squat, and you're going to get it. Come on, cap. Bracelet our friend to the car, and bring your flashlight."

"Sure, Kid."

The burly captain handcuffed the Ace's wrist to the rug rack, climbed out heavily, and followed the Kid. The two of them picked their way down the path at the right of the gulf of the quarry. The captain's flashlight threw the enormous shadows of the Kid's legs before them. A bird rustled in the dark bushes.

"What's the idea, Kid?" murmured the captain.

"Here's the idea," replied the Kid.

He stepped aside. The captain's flashlight revealed a broad-chested figure lying on its face at the foot of a tree, a figure in a gray tweed suit. A spot of red showed on the grayish-brown hair. A stiff straw hat lay beside it. The figure's arms ran up, and the hands met around the tree's trunk.

As they watched, the head lifted, turned, and a pair of cold green-gray eyes winced at the bright glare.

"Well, I'm a son of a gun!" cried the captain. "They told us at the club that you had croaked this bum."

The Kid took a key from his pocket, stooped, and unlocked the

handcuffs that held the big fellow's wrists together.

"No," said the Kid, "I just struck him one with a gun butt, and then shot twice with his gun. Sit up, Brocco. I want to ask you something. Can you read?"

Brocco pushed himself up and around to a sitting position, groaning at his stiff limbs. His hand felt gingerly of the lump on his skull. He brushed the dirt from his nose and put on his hat.

"Naw, I can't, read," said Brocco. "But I can drink. I'd give a grand for a shot."

"Maybe you can read this," said the Kid. "The Ace is squawking to get from under, Brocco. He's burning you up to get you out of the way. He's putting the Moran job on you."

Brocco's stubby hand took the statement that the Kid had written. His eyes fixed coldly on the signature.

For a moment, he merely sat there, staring at the paper.

"I thought you was giving me the run around," said Brocco. "But that's his signature, all right. And nobody but him could have told you what he told you." Brocco threw the paper on the ground and cursed violently. "The rat," said Brocco. "Me the best friend he's got, and him trying to load this up on me! The dirty squealer!"

"He'll put the McCoy job on you, too," said the Kid.

Brocco started around. His cold eyes glared.

"He will, eh? Listen, Kid! The Ace seen McCoy from the window with his opera glasses. McCoy was dressed like a bum, and sitting on the bench, where they found him dead. The Ace was in his Fifth Avenue hide-out, up by One Hundred and First Street. You never have

found that place, because he pays his rent by mail, and he hasn't been back there since he slipped up there and hid the shotgun. He told me what he done, and he done it by himself. He thought McCoy was watching for him. Maybe he was, and maybe he wasn't.

"Anyway, the Ace takes the sawed-off gun, and gets in his car by himself. He rides down the street, and around the block. It's late, and nobody's on the street, see? He slows up when he sees McCoy's got his back turned, lighting a cigarette in the wind. He sees his chance, and he lets him have it. And you go to Apartment 31-C and prove it."

The Kid had been writing as Brocco spoke. He held the notebook, gave Brocco the pen, and Brocco signed it.

"That ought to burn him!" said Brocco.

The burly captain was grinning broadly as he pulled Brocco up and handcuffed the big fellow's wrists.

"Kid," he said, "you're a wonder. You swore you'd send the Ace to the hot squat for shooting McCoy. And you've done it."

The Kid led the way back up the path.

"That's right," he said over his shoulder as they climbed. "That don't bring back McCoy. Or Moran either, for that matter. But maybe it'll help teach these yellow bums to do their murder on each other, and leave honest cops to live."

The procession, with Brocco in the middle, reached the summit and crossed the grassy, bumpy ground to where the car's lights could be seen through the thick screen of bushes. They pushed through the bushes and led Brocco up to the car.

"Here's a friend of yours, Ace," said the Kid.

The Ace's slender hand trembled so that his bracelet rattled. His face was pasty with fear and wonder as he stared at the sturdy, broad-shouldered figure in the gray tweed suit and the stiff straw hat, whose wrists were manacled in front of him. In the captain's flashlight, the Ace's black eyes glittered as they ran from the Kid to Brocco, and back again, taking in what this meant to him.

"Brocco!" exclaimed the Ace. His voice held a note of terrified apology, of abject explanation. "Brocco, I thought you was dead!"

Brocco, urged by the captain, climbed in the rear seat and sank down beside the Ace. His face was distorted.

"Yeah?" said Brocco, sneering. "You mean, you hoped that I was dead. Well, that's just too bad, ain't it?"

The captain got in and sat between the two prisoners. The Kid slid behind the wheel and backed the car out.

"You boys be nice to each other," said the Kid as he turned the car toward the city and the police station. "You might as well learn how to get along. You see, you are going to have to keep each other company in the death house."

In the back seat, the captain chuckled.

"The boy's will sure be proud of you, Kid. They knew you'd take every chance. We were worried for you, Kid."

In the driver's mirror, the Kid's hazel eyes showed wide and bright. He smoothed down his hair. His squarish young face wore a half smile.

"I hope," said the Kid, "I hope McCoy knows about this."



# FORTY CENTS FOR A FORTUNE

By ASIA KAGOWAN

*The Bes he loved best was gone.*

**U**LYSSES POOGLESNUP arrived at the residence of Ezekiel Snow in a taxicab and considerable trepidation. He had been summoned by telephone, which implied a certain amount of urgency. The call had come from Mr. Snow's secretary, which implied that Mr. Snow himself had been murdered. Possibly, this latter deduction was a trifle far-fetched, but, whenever Mr. Pooglesnup got a hurry-up detective case like this, his mind was capable of the

activity of a terrier jumping after a jack rabbit. Maybe you have noticed that the terrier generally lands where the jack rabbit isn't.

The sight of the Snow residence, that old mansion on Drexel Boulevard, set the bees to buzzing still more furiously in his bonnet. When a fellow who has only been in the detective business a comparatively short time is called to a place where it takes three gardeners to keep the lawn trimmed, and where the house has forty or fifty iron-barred win-

dows—well, maybe you'd feel that you needed a larger hat, too.

Little Mr. Pooglesnup swaggered up to the front door. He found the bell, and presently was taken in tow by a butler arrayed like Solomon in all his glory never was. Scudding along in this superior being's wake, he eventually came to anchor in a huge room that bore some resemblance to a corridor of the Field Museum.

Having seen Ezekiel Snow's picture in the newspapers, he recognized him at once. Somewhat regretfully, he tossed the murder theory into the discard. The tall, thin, white-bearded octogenarian was too evidently still alive and kicking. The kicking was verbal, but it was none the less filled with fire and enthusiasm. Patently, Mr. Snow was mad about something. Not politely and grammatically angry, as a man in his social position should have been, but plain, good old-fashioned mad. He was stooping over a specimen case and swearing with an unprintable vehemence that would have made a truck driver run home and hide behind his wife.

He socked his cane violently down on the floor and glared at Mr. Pooglesnup.

"Who the blankety-blank are you?" he demanded, if a squeal of rage be a demand.

Mr. Pooglesnup, up to this minute, had been feeling abnormally large. His chest had been puffed out and his head swollen. But now he suddenly contracted to his actual five feet two, and ninety pounds. This wouldn't have been so bad if the process had stopped there, but the longer Mr. Snow glared at him the more he felt that he was shrinking. Like *Alice* in "Wonderland," he began to be afraid that his chin would strike against his feet in an-

other minute. He struggled to get his mouth open before this happened.

"I—I—I—I'm Mr. Pooglesnup," he stammered. "The d-d-d-detective, you know. Your s-s-s-secretary is—"

Mr. Snow went on the air with another choice collection of swear words. He grew calmer, however, as his vocabulary petered out.

"My secretary," he finished, "is a jackass, and a half-baked one at that. I'll fire him for this. I told him to get me a detective, not a circus freak. Now get out of here, you little, sawed-off—"

"Say!" Mr. Pooglesnup's falsetto voice abruptly took on the pitch of a wild cat's, while his gray hair appeared to bristle. "Say, do you know who you're talking to whom?" Rage had even made him forget his usually meticulous grammar. He got up on his toes and advanced like a prize fighter on the astounded Mr. Snow. "Do you know I'm the world's greatest detective?" he screeched. "Why, you old fossil, for two cents I—I—I—I—I'd pull your beard!"

One hand shot out as if to carry that threat into execution. At this point, the butler calmly collared him and began dragging him toward the door.

The temporarily paralyzed Mr. Snow came to life again.

"Perkins!" he shouted. "Perkins, leave that man alone! You're an ass, Perkins! A half-baked one at that! I'll fire you for this, see if I don't."

The butler dropped Mr. Pooglesnup and walked haughtily out of the room. Of late years, he had grown accustomed to being fired five or six times a day.

Mr. Snow hobbled over and shook Mr. Pooglesnup's hand effusively.

"I always admire a man of spirit, Mr. Googlesnug," he complimented. "I really must apologize to you for being so hasty. But this thing has upset me so I hardly know what I say any more. The Bunkerton agency has been working on it for two weeks now, and they're not getting anywhere."

With that, he sat down on an Egyptian mummy case and sobbed.

Composure came over Mr. Pooglesnup. He permitted himself a casual inspection of the room, which was filled to overflowing with those age-hallowed things so dear to the heart of a collector and an archæologist.

"I presume," he piped, "that you've been robbed of a particularly valuable specimen, Mr. Snow."

The octogenarian leaped to his feet and pounded on the floor energetically with his cane.

"Exactly!" he roared. "My Psammetichus Bes is gone. I would not have taken a hundred thousand dollars for it."

Mr. Pooglesnup did not know a Psammetichus Bes from a pink elephant, but he perked his little gray head sidewise and attempted to look like the father of all owls. The attitude was not without its effect.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Snow. "I see you know what I mean. These Bunkerton men now, they're jackasses! Half-baked ones at that! I'm going to fire them. I can see by the way you look, Mr. Snupplegoop, that you know something about Egyptology. Yes, sir, you're the man I want for this job. I'll give you ten thousand if you get that Bes back for me. How about it?"

Mr. Pooglesnup did have some knowledge of Egypt. That is, he knew in a dim way that it was the place where Moses had been found in the bullrushes. He nodded his

little gray head as if he might be the world's most eminent archæologist.

"Fine!" Mr. Snow went on. "I'll give you the facts. The trouble with these Bunkerton men, when you describe the thing to them is that they don't know what you're talking about. It was a lapis lazuli Bes of the Saitic period, you know. Of course, you understand all about that. There's no need of my describing it any further to you, is there?"

Mr. Pooglesnup assured him there wasn't. He had no idea what lapis lazuli was and he had never before heard of the Saitic period, but he realized that it wouldn't do to confide those facts to his client now.

"It came from the tomb of Psammetichus I.," continued Mr. Snow. "The hieroglyphic inscription on the base proves its authenticity. By the way, have you gone into hieroglyphs deep enough to be able to translate readily?"

"Oh, yes," lied Mr. Pooglesnup feebly.

"In that case, you will have no trouble at all in recognizing the piece," approved Mr. Snow. "Besides, the twenty-fifth dynasty cartouches have distinct peculiarities, you know. You can't fail to notice that at a glance."

"Certainly," agreed Mr. Pooglesnup vaguely. "And have you any—er—clews, Mr. Snow, as to who might have taken this—er—valuable—er—Bes?"

Mr. Snow's face turned purple. He pounded the floor with his cane.

"I know who took it," he bellowed. "Maybe he didn't take it himself, but he's at the bottom of it. He hired a burglar to do it; that's what he did. The burglar broke into my house two weeks ago. He stole a lot of silverware and things just to make it look like a regular

burglary, but what he was actually after was that Bes. How do I know? Because it's the only thing he stole from this room. And you know very well that an ordinary burglar wouldn't pick anything like that. He wouldn't know it was worth anything, would he? Why, he'd have taken a fifty-cent candlestick before he'd have taken that, unless somebody had put him up to it. And that's just what happened. Tom Clemens hired that burglar to burgle my place and get my Psammetichus Bes!"

"My goodness!" squeaked Mr. Pooglesnup involuntarily. "Mr. Clemens surely wouldn't do anything like that, Mr. Snow. Why, he's—he's—"

"He wouldn't, eh?" roared Mr. Snow, now on the verge of apoplexy. "You think he wouldn't do it just because he's a millionaire collector himself. Well, let me tell you something. Old Tom Clemens and me has been friends for thirty years, off and on, mostly off. Two years ago, we went to Egypt together, and he paid ten thousand dollars for a lapis lazuli Bes that was supposed to have come from the tomb of Psammetichus I. It was a fake, and I told him so.

"I showed him where he could have bought one like it for a dollar. I told him if he didn't pull in his ears some o' them tourists would be ridin' him around for a jackass before he got back on the boat. Of course, that made him mad. But when I picked up the real Bes he went into a tantrum and wouldn't speak to me for a week.

"Boy, was he mad! Offered me fifty thousand for it on the way home. I told him to go back and jump in the Dead Sea where he belonged. That sent him into a convulsion. He's only been to see me

three times since then, and the last time he raised his offer to a hundred thousand. And when I said money wouldn't buy it, he walked right out of the house without stopping to get his hat. The second night after that, my house was burgled and the Bes was taken. Now, does it look like Tom Clemens had anything to do with it?"

"My goodness, yes!" agreed Mr. Pooglesnup. "It most certainly does. But, of course, if he's got it we could get the police—"

"Police nothing!" erupted Mr. Snow. "He'll have it hid. If a wooden-headed Bunkerton man couldn't find it, what good do you think a solid-ivory policeman would do? No, sir. It'll take a detective with brains for this job. Are you a detective with brains, or ain't you?"

Mr. Pooglesnup struck an attitude that Pompey himself might have envied.

"Mr. Snow," he piped, "I assure you that I have handled much more difficult cases than this. I shall—er—see that the Bes is restored to you with all possible dispatch."

Mr. Snow pounced upon the little sleuth and pumped his arm vigorously again.

"I'll make it fifteen thousand," he amended, leading the way to the door. "By gravy, if you give old Tom Clemens a punch in the nose while you're at it, I'll make it twenty! Go right over there and do it now, can't you? I'll wait here for you. I'd like to see that blankety-blank jackass—"

The words suddenly stopped. Mr. Pooglesnup abruptly realized that he had been thrust out upon his mission, and that the door had closed behind him. He went slowly down the street, his mouth hanging open and his hat in his hand.

After coasting along in this fash-

ion for two or three blocks, he dropped into a park bench to think things over.'

"Goodness gracious!" he mused. "I wish I'd listened to Martha and never gone into the detective business. Why, I'd be arrested if I tried to get into a house that belonged to a rich man like Mr. Clemens. Of course, he's stolen it, but I don't see what in the world I can do about it."

Several moments of exceptionally thick silence followed these profound excogitations.

"I tell you," he went on ruminatively, "a fellow doesn't realize what he's up against when he sets out to be the world's greatest detective. I wonder now, just what Mr. Holmes would have done in a case like this. I suppose I ought to induce or deduce something."

Silence again. For ten minutes, Mr. Pooglesnup invoked the gods of analytical reason, fervently and unsuccessfully.

"There doesn't seem to be anything to deduce," he concluded feebly. "If Mr. Clemens has the—the—the—the thing, there's nothing to do but go down there and find it. I wonder what that lapis what-ya-call-it looks like. I wonder how I could get in that place. Maybe I ought to wait till night and disguise myself as a burglar. Maybe I could pretend I was a—a—a collector."

This latter idea seemed to have the brilliance of a spark of the divine fire. Its roseate hues left him blinded for a moment. Then he bounced up and danced excitedly down the street, his innocent eyes shining and his little head bursting with the spontaneous combustion of a flock of ideas.

The Clemens mansion was only three blocks away. He waltzed up to the door and rang the bell.

For a moment, only, he was dis-

mayed by the imposing front and the impaling eye of the Clemens butler. Then he recalled that to get past a butler one must have something in the nature of a card. His own card, obviously, wouldn't do. He tore a sheet from his notebook and wrote thereon the fictitious name of "Jonathan Whidby." Beneath this, he wrote: "I have a rare piece of Egyptian statuary. I should like to have your opinion on it." He gave the slip to the butler.

"Kindly hand that to Mr. Clemens," he piped pompously. "I will wait."

In a remarkably short time, the butler came back and conducted him into a room similar to the one in which he had talked to Ezekiel Snow. Mr. Clemens, a man of Mr. Snow's age, but inclined to a paunch and a red, choleric face, greeted him courteously.

"Are you a collector, Mr. Whidby?" he inquired in a whining falsetto. "I don't believe I have had the pleasure of—ah—meeting you."

Mr. Pooglesnup permitted himself a hurried glance about. He had hoped that his eye might alight on something labeled "Bes. Psammetichus I.," but he was disappointed. He began to realize that in order to conduct this search properly, he should have several hours.

"I—er," he began, sparring for time, "have just picked up a little piece that I thought you might be interested in. It's—ah—Saitic period, I should say."

Mr. Clemens's face beamed. He rubbed his hands together. It was apparent that he was deeply interested in the mere mention of anything pertaining to Egyptology.

"Ah, yes," he answered. "Just what is it, Mr. Whidby? Did you bring it with you?"

"No, I couldn't," evaded Mr.

Pooglesnup. "It's too——" He caught himself. He had been about to say that it was too large to carry, but he wasn't so sure about the size of those things. "It's a—er—Bes," he finished nervously. "A lapis—er—lazarus one."

Mr. Clemen's face clouded.

"Do you mean lapis lazuli?" he asked.

Mr. Pooglesnup saw that he had made a serious mistake. He attempted to get out of the pit, and fell in deeper.

"Of course, lapis lazuli," he corrected. "I'm sure it's genuine, Mr. Clemens. It has hieroglyphics, you know, and those Saitis cart—cart cartridges are——"

"Cartouches, you mean," exploded Mr. Clemens. "You're no collector! I know what you are! You're another one of those confounded detectives that that blithering jackass of a Zeke Snow has been sending over here. For two cents, I'd wring your neck, you impudent shrimp. For one cent! For nothing, by Rameses!"

Mr. Clemens got Mr. Pooglesnup by the collar and commenced shaking him. Mr. Pooglesnup's right fist shot up, defensively, and connected with his attacker's nose. Then something struck the world's greatest detective in the left eye. The next thing he remembered was being kicked down the front steps by the butler. He reached the street in three frenzied bounces. The fourth one carried him into the sanctuary of a passing taxicab.

But the worst was yet to come. True, the cab took him home in safety and in fifteen minutes. Here, bruised and battered both in spirit and body, he let himself in with his latchkey, only, as luck would have it, to walk straight into the arms of the Amazonian Mrs. Pooglesnup.

She pounced upon him like a hen after a fish worm.

"Ulysses Pooglesnup," she demanded, "what have you been adoin'? You're a sight! You've tore your coat! And them pants is utterly ruined! What's the matter with your face? My goodness gracious alive, if you ain't got a black eye! What in thunderation have you been into?"

Mr. Pooglesnup fingered his rapidly swelling eye apologetically.

"Well, Martha," he explained feebly, "you've got to expect things like this in the detective business. You see I'm working on a big case and——"

"Detective business!" snapped Mrs. Pooglesnup. "If I ever hear you say detective business ag'in, I'll shake the daylights out of you. I'm gonna lock you in your room this very minute. Then I'm goin' out and tear down that sign. And if you ever mention detective business ag'in—— Come on out here and let me fix that eye!"

She tucked him under one arm and carried him to the kitchen. There she applied a beefsteak poultice to the ebony optic. Three minutes later, he was locked in his study, with the key in his good wife's apron pocket and his career apparently blasted beyond hope.

In a situation such as this, it is customary for the ordinary detective to look baffled and give up the case. Mr. Pooglesnup, however, was not an ordinary detective. He spent the next two hours in pacing the floor and deducing things. By that time, he had formulated another and more desperate plan.

Hidden away in the closet of his study were a number of disguises that he had recently purchased. He now got these out and selected one that seemed to fit the case. This, he

put in a desk drawer, where it would be handy for a quick change. Then he sat down 'in his easy-chair and opened a book.

Thus Mrs. Pooglesnup found him when she unlocked the door to summon him for the evening meal. Apparently, he had resigned himself to a life of sensible inaction and husbandly obedience. After the meal, he read the paper, yawned frequently and betook himself to bed early.

His wary spouse was not altogether hoodwinked by these actions. Once before, Ulysses had played the same trick, and had sneaked out of the house at midnight to go on a detective spree. So, to-night, she sat up and watched him till half past twelve. Then, satisfied that her suspicions were groundless, she threw caution to the winds and dropped off for forty winks.

The violent slamming of a door roused her at two o'clock. Investigation, immediate and frenzied, showed that her husband's study door had blown shut. Further investigation disclosed the fact that the draft had been created by a mysteriously opened window in the study. Still further search proved that her aberrant spouse was nowhere on the premises.

An ornamental walking stick, made of tough hickory, hung on the wall of the living room. Mrs. Pooglesnup armed herself with this. She closed the window, locked it, and sat down on the edge of a chair, her eyes glued to the front door and her jaw grimly protruded, to wait for morning and the return of the transgressor.

Meanwhile, the undauntable Mr. Pooglesnup was approaching the Clemens mansion in a fashion worthy of the world's foremost sleuth and a disguise worthy of

note. This latter was listed in his own records as "No. 3—Burglar's Costume." It consisted of a red beard attached to his chin by a prominent pink garter belonging to his wife, a red sweater, plus fours made for a larger man, wool socks and golf shoes. He by no means resembled a burglar in it. In a pinch, he might have passed for a small boy going to a Halloween party, but the hour and the date were unseasonable for that. Fortunately, he gained the Clemens grounds without being observed.

At three o'clock, he hid in a clump of shrubbery near the west wing of the house, only a few feet from a window that led into the museum room. It was his bold intention to make entry through this window and search the place thoroughly for the *Psammetichus Bes*. He drew out a screw driver that he had brought along in lieu of a jimmy. It being his first attempt at burglary, this was the only tool he could muster up that seemed to fit the occasion.

He approached the window confidently, only to find it protected by a padlocked gate of iron bars.

"My goodness!" he muttered. "I can't open that with a screw driver. I ought to have a regular burglar's kit. I wonder just how they get into places like this."

He retreated to the shrubbery again and sat down to ponder over this more or less pertinent problem. At the same moment, the solution was climbing over a fence less than a hundred yards away. Its other name was known to the police as "Pinkeye" Darbey. Besides its widely known professional reputation, it was possessed of a more modern opening equipment than a screw driver.

As Pinkeye's shadow fell across

him, Mr. Pooglesnup shrank back and held his breath. The unsuspecting burglar soundlessly produced a bunch of keys and made several experimental passes at the padlock. The padlock opened. The iron gate followed. Wires were rapidly clipped—alarm wires that Mr. Pooglesnup would never have seen. With a half dozen swift, silent, mysterious movements in the semidarkness, Pinkeye opened the window and climbed in.

The world's greatest and smallest detective remained frozen to the spot. He was still frozen to it some twenty minutes later, when the housebreaker emerged from the same window and slithered toward the alley, carrying his bag of loot. Then he awoke.

"My goodness!" he surmised, somewhat brilliantly. "That man must be a burglar."

The unquenchable detective instinct flamed up anew within him. He pushed back his white cap and sprang into pursuit. Luckily, the cap fell off as he bounced into the alley, and he became less conspicuous in the darkness. His soft-soled golf shoes now lent invaluable aid.

Pinkeye Darbey kept to the alleys. Two blocks away, he climbed into a closed car he had left parked there. He had some little trouble starting the motor, and made more noise than he wished, but eventually he got under way, satisfied that it had been a good, clean job, and blissfully unaware that a small, ridiculously garbed figure was clinging like a monkey to the spare tire.

Mr. Darbey abandoned his car, which had been stolen, in another alley on the West Side, a good ten miles from his starting point. Again, he set out through the alleys. Twice, he looked back and saw a little figure tagging along a half block or so

in his wake, but he concluded that it was an early-morning newsy going about his legitimate business. Presently, he turned into a débris-littered courtyard and opened the back door of a ramshackle flat.

Mr. Pooglesnup also went into the courtyard. He noticed an open window and crouched beneath it. Then a light was turned on in the flat. Above him, the shade was drawn.

"That you, Pinkeye?" grumbled a woman's voice sleepily.

"Shut up!" growled a man's voice. "Want everybody in town to know I'm Pinkeye Darbey? With all the cops in Chicago layin' for me, anyhow? And say, old woman, the way I went through that Clemens place to-night was nobody's business. Slick as a whistle, and—"

A crash of crockery interrupted his words.

"Old woman!" the female voice was bursting with rage. "I'll teach you to call me old woman! I might be a burglar's wife but I ain't no old woman! And if you brought any more junk home like you did from that Snow place I'll bust ever' bone—"

"Sh-h-h-h! Now, Nellie!" The burglar's voice had taken on a note of proper humility for a husband. "Now, Nellie! You know I just brung that statue 'cause I thought you'd like it. It was a present, Nellie. Besides, it might o' been vallyable. It come right out of that Snow museum, and he's a millionaire, ain't he?"

"Vallyable me eye!" snorted the bellicose Mrs. Darbey. "Nothin' but a dust ketcher. I took it down to Uncle Ike's place and he gimme twenty cents for it."

Mr. Pooglesnup crept softly away. As a fellow married man, his bosom was filled with sympathy for Mr. Darbey, but, as a detective, he had

certain duties to perform. Fifteen minutes later, he was in conference with Sergeant McCulley, at the West Side police station. Fifteen minutes after that, a squad of policemen escorted Pinkeye Darbey to a haven of refuge wherein he was, for some time to come, safe from the ignominy of having plates broken over his head by Mrs. Darbey.

There were reports to be made out and papers to be attested in order that Mr. Pooglesnup might later collect the rewards offered for the information as to Pinkeye's whereabouts. These details occupied the little sleuth till morning. It was not until they were finished that he suddenly remembered his own life. Martha would be up by this time. What on earth was he going to do?

Panic struck him. He pranced nervously up and down the street, looking for a taxicab and yet afraid to get into one and go home.

"Oh, my goodness!" he muttered. "My goodness gracious!"

Shopkeepers were just opening their shops. He stopped before a door that an elderly gentleman had a moment before unlocked. It was evidently a pawnbroker's establishment. The sign said "Uncle Ike," and the windows were filled with cheap jewelry and tawdry gewgaws.

"Maybe I'd better buy her a little present," he mumbled.

An odd little statuette caught his eye. It was of azure blue, and depicted a comic-looking old man with chiseled whiskers, carrying a fussy little sword in one hand and a shield in the other.

"I believe Martha would like that," he decided. "I'll just buy it."

The statuette cost him forty cents. He tucked it under his arm and went home in a taxicab. He opened the front door and paused hesitantly on the threshold, looking

at the grim figure waiting there on the edge of the chair, nursing the hickory cane to her bosom. He held out the statuette hopefully.

"Martha," he squeaked, "I brought you a little present."

"Take that dust ketcher right out of here," snapped Mrs. Pooglesnup. "You go on into your study. There's a man in there wants to see you, and he won't go 'way till he does. You get rid of him, and then I'll 'tend to you."

Hugging his "dust ketcher" to him, Mr. Pooglesnup slunk into his study. He had hardly closed the door before Ezekiel Snow pounced upon him and wrenched the statuette away.

"That's the one! That's my Psammetichus Bes!" shouted the old collector. "By Rameses, I knew you'd get it! And say, boy, but that was a peach of a punch you gave Tom Clemens in the nose yesterday."

Mr. Pooglesnup sank into a chair, more or less dazed. His client scribbled something on a piece of paper and thrust it into his hands. Then he turned and dashed out the door.

Mrs. Pooglesnup, advancing with the cane, found her husband staring at the slip of paper.

"What's that you got?" she demanded suspiciously.

"It's a check," explained Mr. Pooglesnup. "For twenty thousand dollars. I finished that little detective case for Mr. Snow last night. He's a millionaire collector, you know, and he was in a hurry. You may have the check, Martha."

He passed it to her pompously. Mrs. Pooglesnup looked at it dubiously for a moment. Then she thrust it into her apron pocket and hung the hickory cane back on the wall.

"Ulysses dear," she remarked sweetly, "come on to breakfast."



# CLEW OF THE TWISTED WIRE

(A True Crime Story)

By HUGO SOLOMON

*A twisted wire links the culprit with the crime*

**M**URDER mysteries are always thrilling, but, when they happen in Chicago, and when the murderer is actually found by the Chicago police, a new note of interest is added to the story of blood and steel. Such a case was that of John Foley, killed in 1926, by rivals in the beer racket, but, to make it still more fascinating to the student of crime, we shall show that the victim's assassin was identified by means of a

twisted ignition wire discovered by an humble garage mechanic.

John Foley lived quietly with his aged mother at 6451 South Sacramento Avenue, Chicago; to the neighbors, he was known simply as the business agent and secretary of the Ice Cream Drivers' Union, but to the underworld he was familiar as "Mitters" of the Sheldon gang, with a lucrative beer side line which added to his income from the job as ice-cream wagon driver.

On the morning of August 6, 1926, Foley received a telephone call shortly before noon. Without saying anything to his anxious mother, he ran to his bedroom, buckled on a .38-caliber Swith & Wesson revolver, and hurried out the back door. Mrs. Foley heard the car door slam shut, the sound of her son's auto getting under way, and then all was quiet as he drove rapidly toward the vast prairie land that lies to the east of the house. Suddenly, there came a rattle of gunfire.

"Could that be my boy being murdered?" thought the perplexed mother. Only too often had she remonstrated with her son about his dissolute companions and irregular hours. Was this to be the end of her dreams and hopes for his career as an honorable citizen? Calling another son, Thomas Foley, she dashed out of the house and ran down the street in the direction from which the shots had come. Thomas, who was naturally running faster, arrived at the scene of tragedy first. There, at the corner of 65th and Richmond Streets, lay John's body on a pile of ragweeds. Just as the startled family reached his side, the wounded racketeer gave one last moan and then died.

At the sound of firing, neighbors phoned the police; in a few minutes, Deputy Commissioner Stege and his staff of detectives arrived and began to examine the ground near the body. In the surrounding weeds were found four twelve-gauge shotgun shells; a few feet away was Foley's car and his revolver which had not been fired. From the relative positions of these objects and the body, it was possible to estimate that Foley had seen his attackers before he was shot, and was about to leap from his auto when he received the charges of

heavy buckshot at short range. He did not die at once, but managed to stagger a short distance before he fell.

While the detectives were busy examining the crime scene, their comrades at the Chicago Lawn police station were busy rounding up suspects and witnesses. One of the first to be examined was Mrs. Ruth Brown who lived across from the spot where Foley met his fate. She stated that four men, three of them above the average size, drove up in a greenish-gray Cadillac sedan, fired their shotguns at the man in the Buick sedan—Foley—and then speeded away.

A messenger was sent to the identification bureau for photographs of "Pollock" Joe Saltis, Earl Herbert, "Lefty" Koncil, and George Kostinek whom the police suspected of being concerned with the crime.

As soon as she saw the pictures of these men, Mrs. Brown exclaimed: "Why, yes, those were the men in the car."

Other witnesses agreed that these were the ones who fired their guns at the man in the Buick. Police squads were at once sent out with orders to bring in the suspects.

Foley's death reminded the police that he was one of two men seriously wounded several months before, in a saloon on South Halstead Street. At that time, detectives suspected that the assailants were Frank McErlande and Joe Saltis, enemies of the Ralph Sheldon gang, to which both Foley and his companion, William Wilson, a retired prize fighter, belonged. True to gangland code, though, the wounded men refused to admit that they knew who shot them or what their enemies looked like at the time of the attack.

That night, three squads were

sent out to visit a questionable resort conducted by Pollock Joe's brother at 103rd Street and Ridge-land Avenue. Nestling under a grove of trees, this place appeared to be nothing more than a quiet farmhouse, but the grim-jawed officers would not have been surprised if one of its windows had been raised to permit a machine gun to beat its tattoo of death in their faces.

The road house proved to be a "wild-goose chase," but the alert investigators noticed that a fire was burning vigorously in the road about a mile and one half to the north. Taking one squad with him, and leaving the others to continue their observations, Deputy Commissioner Stege drove to the fire. When streams of liquid from portable extinguishers choked the flames, it was found that a Cadillac sedan had been abandoned and set on fire to destroy all identifying marks. The deputy quickly concluded that what the crooks tried to destroy must be of value to the police, and sent for a tow car to take the wreck to the automotive detail at detective headquarters for further examination.

Early the next morning, experts of the automotive detail thoroughly examined every spot on the wreck, and experimented with the working of its various parts which were still intact. Suddenly, one of the detectives shouted:

"Look, see this twist in the ignition wiring; that's not the standard Cadillac job! Whoever did that ought to be able to tell who this car belonged to!"

Deputy Stege happened to remember that his men had had a Swedish mechanic in jail whose job was the maintenance and repair of automobiles for Joe Saltis. Thick-set, muscular patrolmen were sent forth to bring in the repairman. At

first, the Swede was afraid to talk, but, after a little persuasion he admitted that he worked in Pollock Joe's place, but denied that he could identify such a badly burned and damaged wreck unless he were shown some unusual feature. At this point in the investigation, one of the officers interrupted.

"Do you recognize this twist in the wiring?" he demanded as he uncovered the ignition lines.

"Sure," answered the mechanic. "That's one of Joe's cars; I put that twist there myself to help me when I had to check up the circuit again; I learned that in the old country. Joe made me do the work; I never stole no car."

This testimony relieved the minds of the police, for their examination of the numbers on the car showed that it had been stolen several months before from an innocent citizen. With the strong statement of recognition obtained from the mechanic, it was now possible to charge definitely Pollock Joe's gang with the murder.

The next step was to find the murderers, but this was far from easy, for the killers had left town as soon as they shot Foley. For nearly two weeks, the Chicago detectives followed false clews that led them into southern Illinois and Michigan, but finally the chase was directed toward the summer resort town of Tomahawk, Wisconsin. From then on, events moved with the speed of the best fiction.

James Sweeney and Joseph Burbank, acting under orders from the chief of the detective division, rented a cottage in the village of Tomahawk, next to one occupied by a noisy gang of hoodlums who bore all the earmarks of Chicago gangsters. Night after night, and day after day, the two officers took

turns watching the movements of their neighbors, but to be certain that they were tailing the right crowd, they returned to the city for another inspection of the pictures on file in the identification bureau. When they returned to their post of vigilance, it was with definite knowledge that their quarry was indeed the death mob.

Even the best detectives must have relaxation; on a balmy evening when every one had left the gang nest, the two sleuths decided that the opportunity had arrived for a quiet walk along the near-by beach. They had hardly reached the lake front when two men in a car drove slowly by and stared at them as though they were looking for some one. The driver of the auto suddenly reached for a gun, but his companion grasped his arm.

"There's a couple of cops from Chi!" growled the driver.

"Naw, you're all wet; they're just some punks on vacation who roost in the shack next to ours," argued the other.

Burbank and Sweeney heard this conversation and started to approach the auto, but the car suddenly picked up speed and disappeared around a corner. The officers looked at one another in amazement.

"Did you notice that license?" asked Burbank.

"Yes, it was an Illinois number, and the driver was Saltis; I believe the other man was Kramer," answered Sweeney.

Burbank agreed with his co-worker that these were indeed two of the gang they were after. Together, they phoned headquarters the number and description of the Cadillac sedan driven by the racketeers. In a few minutes back came the news that the car was regis-

tered under the name of Saltis's wife, and that reinforcements were already on the way from Chicago.

Two at a time, detectives began to arrive in Tomahawk; at the last minute Chief of Detectives William Shoemaker joined the group and held a council of war at the Tomahawk Inn, where he gave detailed instructions to each of his followers, and distributed rifles, revolvers, grenades, tear bombs, and submachine guns to be used in case the murder crowd attempted to resist.

While plans for the attack were still being discussed, a Saltis gunman was seen to pull up in his sedan in front of the hotel, accompanied by a bodyguard. Without waiting for hostilities to start from the other side, the detectives piled out of the inn and surrounded the auto. Lefty Koncil, in the driver's seat, reached for his pistol, but Detective Lieutenant Charles Egan cracked him over the head with his revolver and thus rendered him unconscious. The other crook, Kramer, also reached for his automatic, but Lieutenants Edward Birmingham, Joseph Ronan, and Sergeant McShane pinned the gangster's arms behind his back so violently that he lost all desire for combat.

The prisoners were locked up in the town jail, and the police then proceeded in their cars toward the cottage where they expected to find the rest of the gang. Halting a few hundred yards from the house, they left their automobiles and tiptoed cautiously through the woods. As soon as the place was entirely surrounded, Shoemaker gave the word, and his whole detail poured out of the grove, charged across a little clearing, and rushed into the cottage before the astonished lookouts knew that they were being attacked.

"Three-fingered Pete" Kacsinski,

who was apparently a sentry stationed on the front porch, tried to lift his machine gun, but, before he could fire, it was knocked from his hands. Grabbing him by the collar, Chief Shoemaker marched the frightened thug ahead of him as a shield, and entered a room where Joe Saltis was lying on a bed.

Saltis reached under his pillow, but Shoemaker shouted:

"Cut that out, Joe. If you touch that gat, I'll let you have it!"

Saltis withdrew his outstretched arm, and Shoemaker retrieved the pistol. With a scowl, Pollock Joe turned to Three-fingered Pete:

"What a lookout you turned out to be!" he growled, and then faced his captors again.

"Well, what's the rap?" he inquired.

"How about Mitters?" demanded Shoemaker.

"I ain't talking," replied the gang chief.

Without trying to question his prisoners further, Shoemaker had them manacled together and taken to the jail where they were chained to the others. All four, Saltis, Koncil, Kramer, and Kacsinski were heavily guarded and rushed to Chicago for further examination and probable indictment for the murder of Foley.

On the way into the city, Saltis turned to Officer Burbank:

"If it hadn't been for Kramer, I would have shot you when we passed in our car. I guess he thought you were just a couple of tired business men, but to me you looked like dicks sure enough."

Saltis and his fellow prisoners were cautioned to say nothing further until they had seen their attorneys, unless they wanted it used against them. After that, there were no more outbursts.

The detectives and prisoners had hardly arrived at police headquarters before their lawyers started moving legal machinery to have writs of habeas corpus issued to effect their release. This was the only hope for obtaining the freedom of the killers, for the special grand jury which had indicted them specified that they were not to be released on bonds if captured. Named with the four prisoners as murderers were three others, John "Dingbat" O'Berta, Edward "Big Herb" Herbert, and a man called Darrow, all three of whom were still at large.

Special Prosecutor Charles A. McDonald announced that he was rushing plans for a speedy trial and had engaged the services of two other attorneys, James C. "Ropes" O'Brien, and Lloyd D. Heath. Both of these lawyers had reputations for gaining convictions and for being above the reach of bribers and bombers, but, before the case could come to trial, Lefty Koncil was assassinated by unknown persons, and Kostinek, another of the murder gang, was killed by the police while he was robbing a store, although detectives had failed to pick up his trail previously. Again, gangster justice was quicker and more permanent than that administered by our courts! Crime doesn't pay. If the law doesn't get you, your competitors will!

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A woman in a Denver jail who was convicted of slaying her stepchild recently named her newborn infant after her fellow cell mate.



# SEALED IN ICE

By MARION SCOTT

*In the blackness of the night, he hurled his victim to the elements.*

**A**DAM GANTHER loved gold! Burnished gold of autumn leaves! Amber flame of autumn sunsets, glimpsed through the black trees atop tall Wander Hill. Wander Inn, which Adam owned and operated, was built of warm yellow stone. There were dainty, white curtains with bright-yellow splotches, at the broad shining windows. The wide, low lobby had cream walls, against which copper plates and kettles glowed happily. It was a bright abode, this Wander Inn, atop tall

Wander Hill, and Adam Ganther looked a merry little man.

He was finding life good; taking much from it and giving very, very little, and that only when his keen, unscrupulous brain saw promise of real gain. He was always smiling. His round rosy face, his round bright eyes, and smooth gleaming cheeks, golden red like winter apples, were the exemplification of good humor and a clear conscience.

He wore, summer and winter, soft, well-tailored shirts of creamy chamois, trig-tailored breeches of

yellow-brown whipcord, high-laced boots of pliable yellow leather, and always a tie of rich golden silk. Adam liked that tie. It was gold; in color, at least, and Adam Ganther loved gold. Gold in all things, but basically and overwhelmingly gold in hard, round disks, stamped with the authority of his sovereign government; gold coins that could be studied, admired, counted, and finally stacked in the fireproof metal box which he kept securely locked in the closet in his room.

It was snowing on Wander Hill the night Tony Loretto arrived. Adam stood beside the broad front window, complacently watching the big, soft flakes drift past, filling the cold blue air, like white fur.

Then, topping out on the curling mountain road that ran from the little town of Wanderville seven miles away on the highway up to Wander Inn, came a rattling, bouncing car. It stopped before the inn. The door opened and a stranger got out, paid the driver and turned toward the house.

Adam hurried to open the door. There was the blaze of a roaring fire behind him, gleam of the old copper pots on the wall, pleasant fragrance of cooking food. It was all very inviting and comfortable but the newcomer scowled and answered Adam's cheery greeting with a surly growl, stalked over to the register, glanced at the entries for the last two days, wrote his name, "Tony Loretto, Chicago, Illinois," in a savage scrawl, and asked to be shown his room.

Adam was all concern for his guest's comfort. He didn't have many folks at the inn in the winter, he said, as he carried Tony Loretto's bag upstairs. Deer season opened Monday. Perhaps Mr. Loretto would be shooting. If so—

Mr. Loretto answered shortly that

he was not shooting, spread his long white hands to the blaze which Adam kindled, and deliberately turned his back on his host. Adam regarded him curiously, said that dinner would be served in half an hour, added that he would send Jerry up with more wood, and went out.

He hustled along the darkened hall, humming cheerily to himself, his short plump body seeming to bounce merrily like a fat apple which is rolled downstairs. But he was busy thinking. Who would Tony Loretto be? Some one of importance, certainly. The bag must have set him back forty-five dollars.

And he wore a magnificent diamond. Adam's round cheeks quivered as he thought of that stone. Not the beauty of its gleaming facets, not the expensive setting, but merely how many round, hard gold dollars it represented. He hurried downstairs and back to the bright, warm kitchen. The big range glowed cheerily. There were pans stewing softly on top of it. The appetizing odor of baking apple pies crept from the oven.

Janet was pouring thick, yellow cream into a yellow saucer before the quivering nose of a large black cat.

Adam paused, and his beaming face widened in an expansive grin. His pale-brown eyes, that in certain lights took on a decided yellowish tint, blinked mildly, but Janet Ganther, looking up just then, started guiltily, and made a futile effort to hide the saucer with a fold of her skirt.

Adam said gently: "There is a guest for dinner, Janet."

Janet nodded mutely. Her wide, tired eyes clung in a sort of dull fascination to her husband's face. She stood up slowly, spreading the

skirts of her drab gray dress before the cat and his supper.

Adam, smiling benignly, stepped over, picked up the saucer and calmly emptied the cream into the sink. He set the dish down, then deliberately he lifted his foot and kicked the animal halfway across the room to sprawl floundering in a corner, tail lashing, bright green eyes fixed on Adam's smiling face. Janet pressed a hand across her lips to stifle a sob.

Adam said: "I do not pay for cream to feed that brute. To-morrow morning I shall kill him. Cream costs money, Janet. I have explained that to you before. Don't forget to have supper ready on time." He went out, whistling gayly.

Janet stared after him wordlessly, until the sound of his quick, alert steps had died away, then she crept over, picked up the trembling cat, pressing it hard against her body, while tears dimmed her eyes, to be quickly winked away. Janet Ganther had long ago learned the futility of tears.

She stroked the cat's soft fur, put her thin white cheek against its round head, soothed it with broken, stumbling words until its trembling ceased and it began to pur. Then, moving on toptoe, with head turned over her shoulder, she emptied more cream into the saucer, carried it, with the cat, to a small closet in the corner, put them in and shut the door.

There was a sullen, trapped look in her eyes that had been bright and happy when she married Adam Ganther ten years ago. Her wide, firm mouth was set in a thin bitter line as she came back to the stove and absently stirred the fragrant stew. The back door opened. A man came in, snow covering his thin,

stooped shoulders, clinging to his thin, lined face. He had a high, beautifully molded forehead, wide-spaced dreamy blue eyes. His smile was gentle and rather hopeless.

He said: "Wood's all stacked, Janet. Now I'll help you pare the potatoes.

Janet spoke without turning her head. "Adam's going to kill Tommy Piper in the morning, Jerry."

Jerry Morgan stopped suddenly in the act of pulling off his shabby mackinaw. His eyes rested on the woman's bowed head, her heaving shoulders, and then darkened somberly.

Then he came over, stood timidly beside her. Jerry Morgan was a musician whom the War and bad lungs had all but beaten. He was also roustabout for Adam Ganther at Wander Inn, since four months ago when he had clattered up in his battered little roadster and asked board and lodging in exchange for his work. He loved Adam Ganther's wife with all the strength of him, though no word of it had ever passed his lips. He hated Adam with his eternal smile, his round, cheerful rosiness, covering, as Jerry Morgan knew, a heart as hard as his gold dollars, a nature as ruthless and unyielding as the rocks of the hill he called home.

Jerry said gently: "We'll do something about it, Janet. He shan't kill Tommy. Tommy doesn't hurt anything. You love him. He is all you have."

Jerry hadn't really meant to say that. Janet turned sharply and her wide, deeply blue eyes met his. She put out a hand shakily. He caught it, held it hard in his thin, calloused palm and released it. She spoke very low:

"It's what he eats, Jerry, what I feed him. Think of Adam with his

—gold, begrudging Tommy Piper a dish of cream. Think—”

“Don’t,” he advised. “It doesn’t do any good, Janet.”

“I know. When will you have money enough to go to Arizona?”

He shrugged and looked away. In Arizona lay a chance at health for Jerry Morgan. Life again, his violin! He told her: “It won’t be much longer, Janet. Don’t worry about me. We’ll do something about Tommy Piper. Adam shan’t kill him.”

The cat, having finished his supper, mewed softly for release. Janet opened the door, picked him up, snuggled her face against his ebony fur. Tommy Piper bared shining claws and purred his comfort, all unconscious of his impending fate.

Adam Ganther paused in the act of lifting a big log on the fire and glanced back over his shoulder. The door had opened admitting a flurry of snow, a breath of cold air, and a man wrapped in a long, expensive overcoat, a soft dark hat pulled low over his face.

Adam dropped the log and rose, rubbing his hands. Two guests at Wander Inn on such a night! He was mentally calculating what the double reckoning would be as he advanced.

The stranger set a small bag and a brief case on a chair, removed his hat, slapping it against his thigh, and asked:

“Got any rooms?”

“Certainly, sir, certainly,” Adam beamed as he rounded the desk and turned the register. “Another gentleman happened in a while ago,” he went on cheerily. “Thought possibly he might be up for hunting, but he says not. Perhaps you’ll be hunting on Monday? Plenty of deer this year, I understand.”

The stranger paused with the pen poised. His keen, colorless eyes rested on Adam’s face. He had narrow, hard lips, thin flushed cheeks and a bony, arrogant nose.

“No, I’m not hunting,” he snapped, glancing at the register, then wrote his name, “John Gillispie, Brooklyn, New York.” “I’ll go right up, if you don’t mind,” he announced.

Adam put him in a room at the other end of the hall from Tony Loretto. At dinner, the two gentlemen occupied small tables at opposite sides of the room. Adam, ever anxious to be of service, tentatively suggested to Tony Loretto that he might enjoy the company of his fellow guest, but Tony replied shortly that he preferred to eat alone.

Adam personally served his patrons. Help cost money, and Janet was strong. He studied the two men while he worked at serving them. They intrigued him because they had come from cities, and cities were a lure to Adam. When he had a sufficient store of gold dollars, he would get rid of Janet and take a vacation in a great city. He smiled at the thought. It was a secret, furtive smile, and it grew from the secret thoughts in Adam Ganther’s mind. There were pleasures to be had in cities—for money! Rich food. Costly surroundings. Liquor? Adam didn’t care so much for liquor. It loosened his sense of control, and he fought against that. There were also women. He moistened his thick, smiling lips. Soft, white women, with clinging arms and languorous eyes! Women in costly silks and jewels!

He glanced up and saw Janet crossing the outer hall. He disliked Janet heartily. She was—dull! He could not get her to wear yellow. With her thick, dark hair, her color-

less face, her wide black-fringed eyes, she should look well in yellow. But she would have none of it. He did not guess that Janet, his wife, loathed yellow as much as he loved it. It was the color of her captivity, the sign of her despair. She cringed from it.

Tony Loretto finished first, lit a cigar, strolled into the lobby, and paused before the window. The snow was falling harder now, tossed by a rising wind. Pines on the hill-side back of the inn boomed and swayed.

Adam came up just then, smiling to think that the two gentlemen might be snow-bound and have to stay a week.

"I may decide to go on to-night," Tony Loretto said casually. "How about driving me down to the railroad?"

Adam started. "Why, sir, it is a very bad night. The road is not pleasant."

"Never mind that. How about it?"

"I suppose it could be done. I have a good car."

Adam stifled his disappointment at losing a guest by thinking of the fancy price he could charge for the trip. Tony Loretto straightened and turned toward the stairs. "Well, we'll see," he said and ran up to his room.

John Gillispie had come in his own car. Adam had driven it around to the garage and noted that it was a powerful roadster of an expensive make. Neither man had offered any explanation of how they happened to be at Wander Inn just now. Adam admitted it was none of his business, but, just the same, he was curious.

It was about eight thirty when he mounted the stairs to kindle a fire in his room. Janet had her quarters

downstairs, off the kitchen. He was continually warning her about using too much wood. The range warmed her room sufficiently, Adam considered. He had to pass Tony Loretto's room to reach his own, and, as he moved silently along the carpeted corridor, he caught the sound of a cautious voice the other side of the door. It was John Gillispie's distinctive, rasping tones, and he said:

"Watch your step, Loretto. You won't find me another Farraday."

Adam stopped, eyes wide in surprise. So the two were acquainted. Possibly, they had just decided to spend the evening at cards, but the remark didn't sound casual. It was rather ugly, patently threatening. Adam tiptoed to the door.

Tony Loretto's lazy voice reached him. "No, you're not Farraday." He laughed a little, and Adam's eyes were round and wide. He pressed an ear to the panel. There was silence for a time; then Tony went on:

"The thing to do is to get the deal fixed up and clear out. Your idea about this dump was good. It's deserted, all right, but there's no use sticking around. Tough luck, I had, smashing that bearing just beyond Hillsdale. Had to come over in a tin can. Don't know how I'll get out."

Silence again, while Adam heard the whisper of the snow against a frosted pane in the hall's end.

Then Gillispie said fretfully: "Well, what you holding out for? The price fixed on was thirty grand. I got it here. What's the trouble?"

Adam Ganther dropped to one fat knee and applied a narrowed eye to the keyhole. At first, he couldn't make out anything, then a hand came into his restricted line of vision, a long white hand with a sparkling diamond on the third finger. Lo-

retto's! And Loretto held a small, dark leather bag which he slowly inverted.

For a moment, nothing at all happened, and Adam wondered why. Tony Loretto held the silly little bag like that, poised above the table, puckered mouth gaping. Then a bright stream of red poured from the opening. It ran out in a thin, glittering torrent of crimson light, that dripped to the table top and seemed literally to splash upward in unbelievable sparkling drops of fire. Adam pressed a chubby hand against his lips.

Rubies! Tony Loretto was pouring rubies!

Another hand appeared—Gillispie's. It was taut so the tendons showed starkly. The curled fingers hovered over the stones. Tony Loretto put his own hand over the heap.

"Nice, aren't they, John?" he asked. "Thirty grand was the price, all right, but it cost me something to square that Farraday deal."

"Money to quiet murder? I shouldn't wonder."

Tony still had his hand over the rubies. His wrist bent as he leaned forward. "Speak easy, John. You wanted Farraday bumped as much as I. A two-way split is better than a three—"

"But I didn't shoot him. You did."

"Easy," Loretto said again. "Easy, John. Fifty grand's the price now. It cost me fifteen to—"

"You double-crosser! I'll see you in—"

"Well, if you don't want to play, it suits me." Tony Loretto's fingers scooped up the red stones.

Gillispie's hand caught his wrist. There was a muttered curse. The hands jerked apart, and the crimson drops on the table scattered. Then

the hands disappeared from Adam's sight.

There was the sound of a blow—a muffled cry.

Gillispie choked.

A chair crashed to the floor. A man cursed raspingly above the thud of floundering bodies; then to Adam's straining ears came a soft dull plop, a strangled moaning scream. Silence!

Adam Ganther, crouched there on his knees, eyes focused on that tiny opening into the room of murder, lost count of time, of conscious thought. He was no longer Adam Ganther, proprietor of Wander Inn, Adam, who loved gold and always smiled. He was a stranger to himself—a man whose thick, soft body quivered at the thought of murder. His mind was suddenly wrenching from its groove of petty meanness, into a wide sweep of criminal awareness. Murder for rubies! Murder for money! Murder for gold!

Suddenly, he was on his feet, thick knees bent as he backed soundlessly away, eased to the stair head, turned and stumbled down. He paused at the foot, gazing at the warm yellow lobby, the rows of gleaming copper kettles. Snow whispered at the panes. Wind hooted in the pines. Here it was warm and still—warm and safe. He reached the fire, crouched above it, holding out fat, shaking hands. His little yellow-brown eyes crept stealthily round the room.

Rubies! A fortune in red stones, upstairs now. In the possession of a murderer! John Gillispie? Tony Loretto? He didn't care. He only cared about the stones, about the round yellow dollars they would bring. He had to think, to plan. Somehow, this should be turned to his benefit. He considered many things. A price for his silence? That

presented difficulties. He might become too deeply involved. Suppose he were offered a paltry share. What was that compared to the whole thing?

He pressed a shaking hand across his mouth. He seemed to think in a whisper. Kill the—murderer! Steal the stones! Fix things to look just as if they had done for each other!

But there might be accomplices, some one who knew of the rendezvous at Wander Inn, that Tony Loretto had brought the red stones, John Gillispie, the thirty grand.

Upstairs, a door closed gently. Steps approached the stairs, hesitated, came on. Who was coming down? Tony Loretto? John Gillispie? Whoever it was would have that sack of red stones, thirty grand in cash.

Tony Loretto stepped into the light. He wore his overcoat and hat, carried his bag. His long, narrow eyes rested on Adam, hunched in the chair by the fire. He said:

"I've decided to clear out, landlord. Ready to run me over to the station? There's a train at midnight, isn't there?"

Adam was on his feet, smiling, and rubbing his hands. Suddenly, all his worries had disappeared. He saw his way clearly.

He replied: "Yes, sir, there is the *Limited* at twelve twenty-seven. We can easily make that."

"Good. Can we start right away?" Tony Loretto was lighting a cigarette, and his long, white fingers were perfectly steady. Adam studied those fingers as he explained that he would get the car out immediately. Loretto had just killed John Gillispie in a quarrel over red stones, and his fingers were steady. The fact encouraged Adam. Steady fingers after murder. It was some-

how comforting, as though, after all, murder was not so dreadful.

He hustled away to make preparations for the trip.

As he came in through the kitchen door, bundled in a big fur coat, hatted and gloved, Janet stepped out of her room, facing him. She wore a faded bathrobe over her cotton flannel nightgown, and Adam thought it very unattractive. Her cloudy hair hung in two long braids either side of her thin, colorless face. The neck of the bath robe was open, and her strong, beautiful throat pulsed with the throbbing of a big vein.

She said slowly: "Adam, you cannot kill Tommy Piper to-morrow. He is all I have. I love him. I will give him the food I would otherwise eat myself. He will cost you nothing. You cannot—kill—him." Her voice broke slightly. She gazed at her husband desperately. The threatened destruction of a plump black cat had come to assume gigantic proportions to Janet Ganther. If Tommy were killed, Janet would be completely lost. If she could not prevent it, she would never realize her dream of freedom from Adam. Tommy Piper, alive or dead, represented salvation or endless bondage.

Adam's lips shut tight. What was this fool woman doing here yammering about a cat when he had other things to think of? He answered impatiently:

"Shut up about that cat. I have always hated him. In the morning, I shall certainly kill him. He eats too much. He is useless; besides, my dear Janet, he is—black." Adam smiled when he said that and Janet shrank back, one hand pressed to her throbbing throat. "If you had shown the good judgment to get a —yellow cat—" Adam laughed softly and buttoned his glove. "I

am driving Mr. Loretto to the station," he explained carefully, so Janet would be able to testify to that fact later. "It is ten fifteen. You should be in bed. Enjoy your pet to-night for to-morrow he will die."

He left her standing there, staring after him with bleak fury in her eyes. He gave her no further thought. He wasted no emotion on the doomed Tommy. Adam rather enjoyed killing things. Helpless things, that is. A man? He hadn't killed a man—yet.

Janet did not move until the sound of the car had died down the trail; then she crept back to her cold room, gathered Tommy Piper into her arms and pressed his fur against her face. Deep, tearing sobs wrenched her body. Her fingers tenderly curled round the animal's soft body.

"No," she sobbed. "No! He mustn't kill you. He must not do it. He—shall not!"

And in a woman's desperate determination to make one last stand not only for the life of the creature she loved but also for her own ultimate salvation, was born that moment, potential destruction for Adam Ganther.

It was a bad drive. Whirling sleet frosted the windshield, clogged the wiper, blurred the lights. The heavy tires skidded and slithered on the narrow precipitous road. Cold bit through the glass. The wind was a whirling fury in the darkness of the mountain night.

Adam Ganther was a good driver. Tony Loretto discovered that on the first turn and paid no further attention to him. He leaned nonchalantly back in the seat, his face a cold white stain in the darkness of the car. Adam glanced at him occa-

sionally. Mostly, he kept his eyes on the road, his thoughts steady.

His plan was quite well perfected. He mentally rehearsed the story he would tell to Abner Spears, on his return to the inn, when, ostensibly he discovered John Gillispie's body in Room 12, and summoned the law.

"These two gentlemen arrived tonight," he would say. "They did not seem to be acquainted, but later in the evening I heard them quarreling. Mr. Loretto asked me to take him to the station. No, he gave me no explanation. I thought it strange, but who am I to question my guests? I left him on the platform at Wanderville. It is evident, after discovering Mr. Gillispie's body, that Tony Loretto was running away from murder."

"What time is it?" Tony Loretto asked.

Adam glanced sharply at his companion, then looked at his wrist watch. "Fourteen minutes to eleven. Plenty of time, if we don't have any trouble." His eyes were probing at the storm-blurred dark. He knew the road to Wanderville from long years of association. Snow couldn't hide it from him. The point he wanted was just ahead where the road crawled up over Green Pine Pass. He shifted gears, clutched the wheel, nosed the car up—up—

With a muttered exclamation, he reached for the brake. "Too bad, sir," he said. "Rear tire's flat."

Tony Loretto cursed. "Likely the tough traction," he said. "Keep her goin'. Let's see!"

The car heaved up on top and stopped. "No use," Adam declared. "It's down. Won't take me any time to change, especially if you'll give me a hand. Hate to ask it but you—"

"Oh, sure," Loretto agreed wearily. "Where's the jack?"

Adam was dragging it from under the seat, along with wrenches and pliers. Tony Loretto rounded the car and knelt down in the snow, adjusting the jack. He grunted and cursed as he worked. Adam came back, puffing from the whipping wind, paused behind Loretto. Loretto wiped snow from his eyes, flattened down, frowning at the fat, bulging tire.

"You're crazy, guy," he cried angrily. "This tire's all right."

Possibly, some acute sense of danger warned him just then for he struggled up, turned, and Adam looked straight into his suddenly widened eyes in the faint glow of the tail light as he brought the heavy wrench crashing on his temple. The only thing he later remembered of that moment was the way the light went out of Loretto's eyes. Blink—and they were dead. Just two blank windows staring at him. That was all. Loretto's eyes died before he did. He struggled futilely in the snow for a moment or so, then he was quiet, too, and there was only the banshee wind moaning a requiem there on Green Pine Pass.

Adam Ganther dropped the wrench. Then slowly he extended his hand and studied his thick, strong fingers. Gradually, his little eyes stretched, and slow terror darkened them. The fingers were shaking like aspen leaves in a high wind. They dangled from his hand like fat, writhing snakes, quivering—trembling.

Well, what did steady fingers indicate, anyway? Merely a difference in nervous organization. Tony Loretto's fingers had been unshaken after murder. Adam Ganther's trembled. What did it matter? He drew on his gloves and started to work.

Loretto's body was very heavy.

Adam tugged and strained to get it to the side of the road. He knew exactly what he was going to do. Simply shove it over the edge, let it roll and crash down the mountain side to the waters of the Wander, a hundred and fifty feet below. There it would lie, safely sealed in ice, until the spring thaws, four months away. By that time—Adam grinned in the dark—he wouldn't have much to worry about. But before he sent Tony Loretto to his grave, there was something else to do.

He shot on a small flash in the shelter of his overcoat and, after some difficulty, found what he wanted: the little sack of red stones, a wad of thick, crisp bills, inside Loretto's money belt. Noisily, he gulped as he transferred them to his own pocket. Bills to be carefully and meagerly changed into gold coins, stones to be hoarded until some distant time when he would go to the city and lay plans for selling them!

Standing up, he wiped his hands on his wet overcoat, squinting down into the dark of the canyon. Here at this point, the hillside was practically unobstructed by trees or shrubs. Loretto's body would ride free.

He bent down, rolled it once or twice to gather momentum, then gave it a shove! He leaned over, listening. It rolled softly in the thick snow. There was the occasional click of a broken branch, dull thud where it struck a stone, then silence ruffled by the whispering snow, the soushing pines.

Adam cut off the car lights and started after the dead man. He would be sure, very sure, that he reached the water. He floundered and sprawled down the snowy declivity, making not nearly so neat a journey as Tony, and brought up

beside the brawling little stream, panting with exertion.

Tony Loretto's body lay just at the edge, head dangling in the half-frozen water. Adam crouched beside it a moment, mentally reviewing his plan, seeking for possible weaknesses. By morning, the stream would be frozen hard. The snow would obliterate any tracks of that double journey down. When search was made for the murderer of John Gillispie, there would be no trail to mark his grave.

Adam snapped on his flash, shot it over the sluggish, icy water, and nodded in satisfaction. Just the place he had mapped out. A nice deep pool that would hold the body past the first thaw. The light slid from his numb fingers, thumped to the ground, and tilted up, illuminating his cold, red face. He jerked it up and glanced around feverishly. There were no eyes to see, here in the heart of the winter night, here beside the tumbling Wander. No one lived near. There was a little-used wagon road on the other side of the stream. But it didn't go any place except to old "Hermit" Cleek's shack, and Hermit never left the place. Yet perspiration oozed cold on his body. Breath caught in his throat as he snapped the light off and crouched there, glaring at the dark.

Was that a breaking twig just to the right? Did something stir against that snowy bush? Had he caught a stifled cry? Was there a suddenly bated breathing?

Gradually, his frenzy left him. Nerves—that's what it was. Nerves and trembling fingers. He stood up, shoved with all his might, and the body of Tony Loretto sagged heavily on the edge of the stream, then rolled over, and splashed down to oblivion.

In the hour after midnight, when the storm had somewhat spent its fury, Adam Ganther came back to Wander Inn. He was numb with cold, sick with weariness, but deep in his little, glinting eyes lurked a tremendous satisfaction.

He had driven on to Wanderville, up to the station, sauntered inside to chat with the agent for a few moments, also to leave Tony Loretto's bag. Of course, the agent had wanted to know what brought him over. Adam had told him! A guest, a rather mysterious guest, who suddenly decided to leave. The chap was outside now on the platform. Likely be in soon. Well, Adam had to be getting back. He had another guest.

He talked on a little while longer until the agent at Wanderville knew all about the two gentlemen who had arrived at Wander Inn that night, appeared to be strangers, yet who had quarreled upstairs in No. 12. Adam felt well satisfied with his work. He had a witness to the fact that he ostensibly delivered Tony Loretto at the station. When Tony didn't show up, when the murder of Gillispie was discovered, when the search started, it would seem logical that Tony Loretto had simply faded from the picture, and the hunt would be on.

The fire had died down in the lobby, but it was cheerfully warm after the savage night outside. Adam took off his snowy overcoat and hat, padded over to the fire, and threw on wood. He was humming gayly to himself. He felt very happy. He was also hungry. He decided to get Janet up to make him some coffee and sandwiches. But first he would hide what he had stolen.

He dropped to his knees, inserted a hand around the curve of the fire-

place mouth, and gently removed a loosened brick. In the cavity thus revealed, he slipped the bag of rubies and the roll of bills. Minutes passed. Adam's smile deepened.

A woman screamed! Adam whirled, stumbling against the warm side of the fireplace. Who? Where? His glance lifted. The second floor? Janet?

He leaped for the stairs and mounted them three at a time. He was trying to reason with himself as he climbed. She had sprained her ankle. She had stumbled in the dark. But what was she doing up here? Why was she prowling around?

The door to Tony Loretto's room was open. Light streamed out into the dim hall. Janet stood just inside, leaning against the wall, staring wide-eyed at the body of John Gillispie sprawled on the floor. He had been shot directly through the head.

Adam stopped abruptly, and a sigh of relief half choked him. The thing had to be discovered. This was better than for him to find it.

"What's happened?" he asked. "Who—killed—him?"

His eyes met Janet's and slowly widened. She had on her coat and hat. Snow was running in little rivulets from the hem of her skirt. Her shoes were sopping wet. He caught her hand and pulled her toward him.

"Where have you been?" he asked softly. "What journey did you make to-night?"

Her eyes closed and opened slowly. She looked at him, and there was tremendous happiness on her face. He noted that it was thin, frozen white—almost as if she were dead and had lain for hours in the snow, but she was smiling, quietly, serenely, almost gayly.

She said: "I have been out after wood. I came up here for extra blankets, in the closet at the end of the hall. This door was open. I looked in as I passed. I saw him."

She began trembling, shrinking back, closing her lips with the tense pressure of her cold, steady fingers. Adam noticed how steady her fingers were.

"He's dead," she whispered. "Dead!"

The front door slammed downstairs. Feet sounded on the floor. A voice called:

"Hello, hello! Anybody home?" The voice of Abner Spears! Sheriff of Wander County!

Adam Ganther stood motionless, staring at his wife. He wasn't thinking of the dead man on the floor, the dead man in the icy waters of the Wander, of the fortune in money and stones, hidden in the fireplace. He was thinking that Janet was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She was alive, vital with beauty. It shone through her thin, graceful body, transcending the ugly gray things she wore, erasing the weariness of her face like a clear white flame. And she was smiling. She was laughing. There was joy all about her.

She pushed past him, calling over the banister: "Up here, Uncle Abner. Come right along."

Abner came and with him Jerry Morgan. They were snow-covered, blue with cold. Adam shoved his shaking hands into pockets and tried to smile, though he sensed that this was not the time for smiling. The two men clumped up the stairs, snow falling from their shoulders, stopped just at the turn of the hall, blinking at him.

He said: "Don't know how you got here so soon, Abner. I was just getting ready to call you. There's

been a murder. At least, I suppose it's murder."

He stepped aside and motioned to the room. This was the way he had planned it, the way he had decided to tell the sheriff what had happened, but there was a false note some place. He decided it was Janet. She shouldn't be standing there in her coat and hat, smiling in that wonderful, radiant way. There shouldn't be that look of rapt happiness in her eyes. Jerry Morgan didn't belong in the picture, either, except as background.

Abner Spears darted one lightning-quick glance at Janet, fixed his deep-set wise old eyes on Adam, and stepped into the room. They all stood at the door, watching him. Jerry Morgan was visibly trembling. He coughed once or twice harshly. Janet's hand went out, touched his shoulder, and dropped. Their eyes met, held. They both smiled.

Abner Spears squatted down beside the body of John Gillispie, rose, brushing at his knees. "Doc Pearson," he said. "That's who he is. Don't know what name he used here. That's his real one. Doc Pearson. I got a circular on him day before yesterday. Cleverest fence in the business—wanted in half a dozen places." He stroked his short, bristly beard thoughtfully. "Where's his partner?" he demanded. "Blaze Ranny? He ought to be around. They worked together. Ranny is wanted for bumpin' off a guy named Farraday month ago."

"Possibly, that is the man I took to Wanderville," Adam broke in. "Tall, dark chap, well-dressed, good-looking. Gave his name as Loretto—Tony Loretto."

"Yeah," Abner agreed slowly. "Sounds mighty like Ranny. Where is he?"

"I suppose he's on the west-bound

train by now," Adam said. "I left him—"

"Under the ice in Wander Pool," Janet said clearly. "That's where you left him, Adam Ganther. That's where you hid him after he was dead. Oh, I saw you. I was there. Your flashlight dropped and I saw your face. I guessed what you had done. Jerry was with me. He saw, too. He went for Abner. I came back. I came up here to be sure—sure that the man was gone. I thought you might have killed them both. Maybe you did. Maybe you killed this one first. That's something I don't know."

"No," Adam cried shrilly, face splotchy with insane fear. "Loretto killed him. Shot him. They were quarreling over—"

"The Ormsby rubies, by any chance?" Abner cut in sharply. "The two of them, Ranny and Farraday, stole 'em. They were to sell 'em to Pearson. They weren't quarreling over the Ormsby rubies, were they, Adam?"

Janet Ganther laughed clearly, softly, happily.

"Yes," she said. "That is why Adam murdered the man—for the rubies. He *would* kill for rubies. He has hidden them in the fireplace downstairs."

Adam cried out brokenly. He said many things—foolish, babbling things to which no one listened, as Abner dragged him downstairs. He cringed against the fireplace, rubbing his hands, stroking his yellow tie, and told them they were mad, crazy. He hadn't killed any one. He hadn't—"

"Shut up," Abner Spears said curtly as he removed the brick which Janet indicated, groped for and found the leather sack, the thick roll of bills. Only when Abner emptied the rubies into a hardened palm,

did Adam realize that he was lost; and a blind, killing fury gripped him, shaking him, while he screamed his defiance.

Some time later, he was sitting in a chair, handcuffed, blood streaming from a cut on his temple where Abner's hard old fist had quieted him. He cringed, whimpering with spent fury.

Gradually, he realized that Janet, his wife, was speaking. Her voice, like that odd smile he had noticed upstairs, thrilled with happiness. She was saying:

"I caught the spatter of light on the road. I was down in the bottom of the canyon. Then something came rolling down. It stopped almost at my feet. I—felt—of it. It was a body! I knew Adam's car was up there on the road, I know the motor. I tried to run, but I was too weak with fright. Presently he came. I didn't know it was Adam then—not for sure, not until the light dropped and I saw his face. I watched while he rolled the body into the stream. Jerry was with me. He went for you, Uncle Abner. I came back. I was hours getting here. I think the storm, the snow and—"

She stopped, breathing unevenly. Her eyes were a clear starry dark, beautiful beyond belief. "I heard Adam come in," she went on. "I wanted to look at him, see if he looked different. Do you understand?" The appeal was to Jerry Morgan. He nodded somberly. She continued: "I thought, after murder, one couldn't look the same, not really. It would show."

"Yes," Abner Spears said. "What else, Janet?"

"Nothing. I stood there in the shadow at the end of the room. I saw him hide things in the fireplace. Then I came upstairs and found

this. When you mentioned rubies I—"

Abner said with his thin, one-sided smile: "Well, folks, there'll be a nice reward comin' your way on this. The rubies are worth a lot of money."

Adam Ganther whined in sudden, unbearable rage. Of course, they were worth a lot. He had known that. That was why he had murdered to possess them, and now they would take them from him. They would send him to prison where he would never see gold again—gold of autumn leaves, of autumn sunsets—gold of hard, round coins.

"It's your fault," he screamed, shaking his manacled hands at his wife. "You're to blame. What were you doing in Wander Canyon on a night like this? How did you happen to be prowling?"

She bent down, putting her face close to his. His smiling cruelty to her, his physical and mental dominance of her, years of petty meanness, days of bright, shining torture which he had inflicted—all were suddenly fused into a searing flame of hate that scorched at last his monumental conceit, his stupendous self-love.

She reached down, not taking her eyes from his face, lifted something from the floor, and held it out directly in front of him. A sleek, purring, green-eyed cat of glossy black!

"Tommy Piper," she said very, very softly. "I was taking him to old Jason Cleek in Green Pine Gulch so you wouldn't kill him. Jason would have kept him for me. I put Tommy in a basket and we started for Jason's. Jerry insisted on taking me in his car as far as the road was passable. We were going to walk the rest of the way. That's how I happened to be out on such a night. That's how I was prowling

in Wander Canyon. If you hadn't begrimed Tommy Piper his cream you—”

Her white face twisted. She began to cry, soundlessly, terribly, backing from him, holding the wriggling cat close against her face. Jerry Morgan put an arm around her shoulder, and stood there silently, looking at Adam Ganther.

Adam stared dully at the hateful,

somber cat. He'd always hated black! It made him think of— graves, of ugly hidden things. He loved gold! Bright-yellow gold! His straining eyes wandered aimlessly over the room, stopped on a bright flame that shot up the darkened fireplace mouth, in a leaping tongue of clear, vivid yellow. He moaned suddenly and buried his face in shaking, manacled hands.

### VACATIONS FOR PRISONERS

**I**T is generally thought that when prisoners go to jail they go on a forced vacation of a kind. Some of these prisoners work more than they have ever done in their lives—the work they are required to do in the prison.

In the new Spanish republic, it was said that Spain's most prominent woman lawyer has interested herself in the living conditions of prisoners. This has resulted in better food and accommodations. Her latest suggestion for the inmates is that they should have occasional vacations away from the prison.

In Next Week's Issue of

Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine

### THE FINAL PAY-OFF

*By H. M. S. Titus*

Unwittingly, he fell into a web of his own making, and, while he tried to wriggle free, his cruel tormentors beat him down all the more relentlessly.

### STEALING INNOCENCE

*By M. I. H. Rogers*

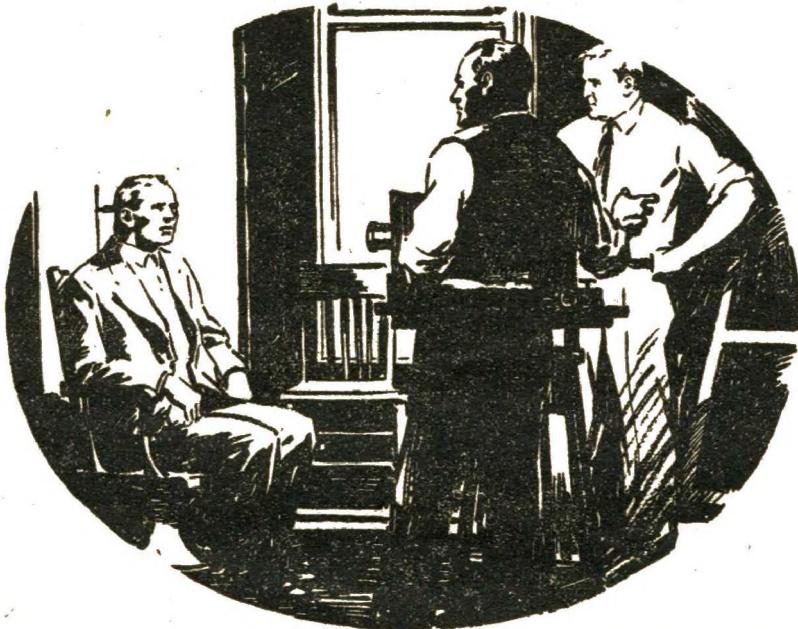
Victims of unscrupulous kidnapers, they saw that their only chance lay in playing the game of these marauders.

Also Features by

Christopher B. Booth

Marion Scott

And Others



*Identification of criminals by means of photography*

# MUGGING THE MOBSTERS

By **CHARLES E. CHAPEL**

LIEUTENANT, U. S. MARINE CORPS

**A**N enterprising sheriff in the old days of the far West adopted photography for a hobby and took pictures of all of his prisoners. So pleasant was this pastime that he found it lots of fun to "mug" his men from every angle. Finally, one of the inmates of the jail escaped to parts unknown and showed no inclination to return; rewards nailed to hitching posts for a hundred miles around failed to return the runaway; something had to be done: In desperation, this valiant peace officer, who was far ahead of his age and genera-

tion, conceived the idea of sending messengers to all neighboring sheriffs and constables with sets of photographs of the wanted man, each set showing him with and without a hat, in profile, full view, three quarters view, full length, and bust; if there was any other way to take pictures, the sheriff wanted to know about it.

For a few days, there was no response to this praiseworthy effort, but finally there arrived a mud-spattered rider on a foam-flecked steed. Coming up to the courthouse at a trot, he threw the reins over the

hitching post, dismounted, and came panting up to the sheriff with this letter from the sheriff of the adjoining county:

DEAR BROTHER SHERIFF: I have received the photographs of the seven escaped criminals. I have captured and jailed six of them and am hot on the trail of the seventh. What shall I do with them?

Signed. SHERIFF SLOCUM  
of Cow County.

Fortunately, photographs are better to-day than they were in the tintype era, but there is still ample opportunity for improvement. The saying that "the camera never lies" does not apply to police practice, for any one knows that retouching, improper exposure, abnormal lighting, or careless developing may result in producing a picture which does not resemble the sitter in the slightest.

Even a skilled photographer who can make lifelike pictures, may fail to accomplish the best results if his portraits are produced under different conditions than those made in other bureaus. Standardization is just as important in police photography as it is in finger-print classification methods, for success in identification always depends upon uniformity of execution.

This principle is well-illustrated by a case which came under the observation of Lieutenant Edward F. Burke, of the Rochester, New York, police department. A young Italian who had passed counterfeit money in a department store in 1926 was not arrested until 1928. At the time the offense was committed, two women witnesses were shown a photograph of the criminal which had been taken in 1920, and they both stated emphatically that that was the man. When the case came to trial, the two women were asked to point to the counterfeiter;

one of the ladies selected a court reporter, and the other picked out a bailiff as being the counterfeiter. Naturally, identification of this sort was worthless; it was finally necessary to prove identity by means of finger prints.

Lieutenant Burke was convinced by this experience that police photography should be placed upon a scientific basis, and that the first step was to secure a foolproof camera which would enable a photographer in Seattle to produce identically the same results as one in St. Louis.

When Lieutenant Burke approached other police officers with his idea, they heartily agreed that there was too much variation among police pictures in the matter of posing and exposure. What they wanted was not a studio portrait with its flattering features, but a clear, sharp, distinct print which would show plainly every wart, scar, pimple, and mole on the face.

In his eagerness to find a perfect apparatus to accomplish this purpose, Lieutenant Burke sought the aid of manufacturers of photographic equipment. Under his direction, they evolved a machine called the "photorecord," in which the elements of lighting, lens speed, and other qualities, complemented each other and resulted in clear-cut prints without requiring skill on the part of the operator. All he has to do is seat the prisoner, turn on the lights, press a button, and the front view is taken; he then orders the subject to turn to one side, shoves over a lens board, presses a button again, and he has the profile; both views are on the same negative which measures only four by five inches.

Burke points out three advantages of the apparatus which he has

helped to perfect. The first is that lighting arrangement is regulated by two large ground-glass screen reflectors, which illuminate the subject from the sides, and which diffuse the light evenly to prevent squinting, or other tendency to give an abnormal facial expression. No matter what the surrounding light condition is, the machine takes the same picture.

The second superior feature of this equipment, according to Lieutenant Burke, is that exposure time and focus are fixed and standardized so that there is no chance to make an imperfect photograph, no matter who takes them, or where they are made. The swivel chair in which the subject sits is screwed to the floor in a fixed position according to a diagram furnished by the maker; when the prisoner's head rests against the headrest, he is in perfect focus. That portion of the apparatus containing the camera is also fastened to the floor, and the camera itself is foolproof with its fast "f.4.5 lens" that requires no adjustment.

The third quality of the photorecord emphasized by its sponsors is its simplicity; you can take a harness bull off the streets and make him the official photographer in less than ten minutes, with no loss of efficiency in the identification bureau. If he knows enough to throw a switch and push a button, he possesses all the knowledge required on this job.

The first photorecord ever made was exhibited at the annual convention of the chiefs of police, in Atlanta, Georgia, in June, 1929; the second one manufactured was shown at the annual convention of the International Association for Identification a week later. Its reception by both organizations was

so overwhelming that it is now practically standard equipment all over the United States. Even Japan, Cuba, Venezuela, and Great Britain have units installed in police departments, jails, reformatories, and schools for the mentally deficient.

Police departments have long recognized the value of taking accurately focused photographs of accidents, riots, and public disturbances for the purpose of later recognizing the participants and witnesses; but, until the recent development of precision equipment, a picture of any identification value was a curiosity.

Hans Gross, the famous professor of criminology in the University of Prague, has referred to three classic examples of the value of photography in criminal cases. The first is that of the riots in Brussels when a royal princess was married. Several young men who were arrested as participants pretended that they were only innocent bystanders, but a policeman who saw an amateur photographer snapping the fracas from a window, promptly confiscated the camera and had the negatives printed and enlarged. The result was that the pictures showed the prisoners with their mouths open in the act of shouting, and their arms brandishing clubs; their attorney promptly advised a change of plea to "guilty."

The second illustration of this subject concerns the assassination of our own late President McKinley. When he appeared at Buffalo, a moving-picture camera caught every movement as he gave his speech, shook hands with the crowd, and greeted his friends. When the films were shown on a screen a few days later, they proved to be a valuable means of identifying the murderer, for, out of the great mass of milling

humanity that gathered around the president, the only one who stood out distinctly was Czolgosz.

The first views showed the president mounting the platform and beginning his oration. Before him a sea of faces was uplifted in friendly interest, for McKinley was always a popular man with the people. Suddenly, a rippling movement in the crowd told of the efforts of some one to plunge through the line; pushing and crowding, punching and gouging, a grim-faced man made his way toward the speakers' stand in spite of the obvious dislike expressed by those he jostled in his advance. When he had almost reached the rostrum, he paused and turned toward the camera for a few seconds, and then resumed his fight to get near the president.

A second time, the ruffian faced the camera; this time, his face registered determination and anger. In his efforts to get nearer, his hat was knocked over his eyes. He straightened his headgear and looked wildly about to see if he could locate some one whom he expected to be present. The cold eye of the lens recorded all of his actions, and recorded them for posterity. With the help of these films, the criminal investigation department was able to learn whether or not Czolgosz was helped by accomplices.

Professor Gross's third story of photographic identification happily deals with an acquittal. An Englishman had quarreled with a Brazilian friend in Rio de Janeiro, but, on the following day, the two went for a sail in the harbor on their tiny yacht. That night, the Englishman returned without his native friend, with an explanation that he had lost his life by falling from the masthead to the deck.

No one believed this story, and,

when it was discovered that an oar was missing from the craft, it was soon rumored that the Englishman had probably killed his companion by striking him over the head with the oar. For a few days, it seemed as though the Englishman was headed for the grave, but a passenger on a steamer who had taken a picture of the yachting party found a dark spot on the negative; on closer inspection, it was found that this was the body of the Brazilian falling from the masthead. When this photograph was produced in court, the prisoner was released and he found that he now had as many friends as he had had enemies after the disaster.

To-day police departments need not send to Europe for their photographic equipment; they have their choice of a number of American-made cameras that fulfill every requirement. Accurate focusing, direct vision that permits the user to see a full-sized image on the ground glass in the hood, a focal plane shutter which gives speeds up to 1-1000 part of a second, and a high-grade lens—these are the necessary qualities of a police camera, which must enable the operator to bring in good pictures no matter what is the unfavorable condition.

The day of the lone-wolf criminal is largely gone; the crook to-day is either too cowardly or too ignorant to rely upon his own efforts; he must run with the pack or he won't have enough courage to run at all. For this reason, police departments have found that it is to their advantage to equip themselves with professional studio cameras which are used to take both "stand-up" and group photographs.

Where these group pictures are taken, it has been found that wit-

nesses are often able to pick a criminal's photograph out of a large collection by comparing it with those of his confederates taken on the same film. Even if the other members of the gang were not seen, there is a distinct gain from using the group picture since most men display a more natural expression on their faces when they are in the company of their associates.

Two other types of cameras are employed by up-to-the-minute identification bureaus. One is the finger-print camera; this is familiar to most followers of police progress on account of its foolproof construction and simplicity of operation; it is necessary for the operator to do nothing more than place the apparatus directly over, and firmly against, the surface carrying the finger print; pushing a lever does the rest.

To take interior views of places where crimes have been committed, many police departments use a camera which has many vertical and lateral adjustments that permit it to swing in any direction and take a picture at any angle. Generally, it is made to take two or four negatives on an eight by ten-inch plate, but size of print is not so important as accuracy of the lens, and variability of the frame.

Experts in police photography

usually suggest that the first purchase for a small bureau should be a finger-print camera; the second requisite is a photorecord for "mugging" suspects; the third choice is usually a speed camera for taking clear scenes outdoors, and the fourth is a studio camera for taking interiors.

No mention has been made in this article of the photography of questioned documents; that is a subject in itself. A police department or sheriff's office in a community where funds are low can use their finger-print camera to reproduce small areas on disputed papers, and they can even use their photorecord by fastening the articles to be photographed to the headrest on the subject's chair. Both of these methods will do for ordinary, rough work, but investigations requiring accuracy demand different equipment.

The greatest value of a modern identification bureau is the psychological effect it has upon the minds of crooks. When they learn that a city has adopted progressive methods, they will prefer to conduct their operations somewhere else, for none of them like to be arrested, "mugged," finger-printed, and then broadcast to every State in the Union. They all love publicity, but not the kind that the police prefer to give.

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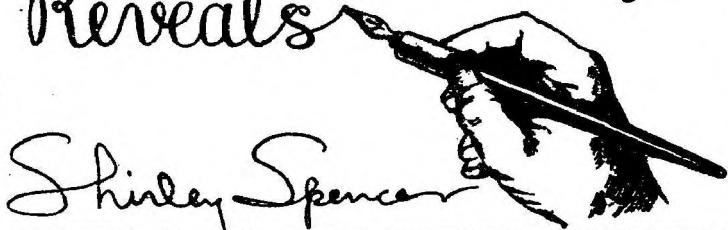
#### ONLY A DRUNKARD

**A** MAN, thirty-four years of age, was recently arrested in New York City on a charge of drunkenness. He admitted that he had been arrested and convicted of drunkenness twenty-six times in New York and had served altogether about six years in jail. He also admitted that he had been arrested eleven times in London. Because he volunteered this information, his twenty-seventh conviction netted him only six months in jail.

# What Handwriting Reveals

Conducted

By



If you are an employer and desire to place your employees in the positions in your office or factory for which they are best fitted; or if you are just about to step out into the world to earn your own living; or if crimes involving handwriting have been committed in your community; or if you want to know the characters of your friends as revealed in their chirography—send specimens of the handwriting of the persons concerned to Shirley Spencer, Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., and inclose a stamped, addressed envelope. Shirley Spencer will analyze the samples submitted to her and will give you her expert opinion of them, free of charge.

Also, coupon—at end of this department—must accompany each specimen of handwriting which you wish read. If possible, write with black ink.

All communications will be held in strict confidence. When permission is granted, cases will be discussed in this department, with or without the illustrations. Of course, under no circumstances will the identity of the persons concerned be revealed.

Every care will be taken to return specimens of handwriting, but it is to be understood that Miss Spencer cannot be responsible for them.

M. A. M., California:—No, it is true that I can't help your character, but you can! You say that you have had success within your grasp four times, only to lose it each time. That suggests something wrong with you, doesn't it? Let's analyze the situation. You evidently have the force and will to carry you over obstacles, to draw people to you and energy and vitality enough to climb up. Yes, these qualities of force are all shown in your writing. Note the long, combative *t*-bars, the heavy, forward leaning pressure. Those angular formations and the speed behind the pen tell of intelligence and energy.

What then can be the trouble? A little excess of these qualities. Remember the words that Shakes-

peare put into the mouth of Macbeth about ambition o'er leaping itself. I'm afraid that your headstrong ways, your temper, combative ness, and impulsiveness cannot be checked at the right moment and you lose what you have gained through lack of calm and cool judgment. Let your head rule you more.

*the last year I ha  
to have doubts  
Vocation I have &  
with. Can I not  
success in a diff*

Don't be too much influenced by others, but you would work better with some one who could manage

you just at the time you have worked up so much steam that you can't see ahead clearly.

BILLY, Missouri:—Thank you, Billy, for your confidence in my ability. So my occupation appeals to you! Would you like to read and answer all the letters? I assure you that it is quite a job.

You seem to have made up your mind to study law, so you don't need me to encourage you in that. I think you ought to make a good lawyer after you have matured and studied.

*debates, etc, and I fully p  
Calling. Am I right?  
seen egotistical? Does the  
any vivid personality?*

Yes, egotism is shown in those large lower loops. Your very heavy pressure, showing strong materialistic appetites, and the forward slant tell me you are magnetic—also those long *t*-bars bear that out. Your tall upper loops, especially on the *d* are signs of idealism and high standards. You have considerable to work out in your character because of your impulsive, passionate nature, but you have strength of character which will win out. You are very changeable and uncertain at the present time, but that is natural when one's character is forming. Being very stubborn, you don't take kindly to new ideas and advice but once you accept an idea you are all for it.

B. R., Maine:—Thank you for wishing me a pleasant summer. I wish I could have spent it down in

your part of the country for Maine is my home State and I think it is a perfect summer resort.

*have plenty of t  
So am submitting  
for your analysis  
you may I'll be  
gone fast ( .  
not accuse me*

What an adventurous person you are! See those flying, curving *t*-bars with some of them a loop and far-flung stroke? These last are called the vagabond strokes by the French graphologists. Your thoughts must be busy going places and doing things, even if you are tied down to a routine job, as I judge you are.

You have a very quick mind, lots of imagination, and a sense of the dramatic. Occult matters attract you, so that if you can't go exploring personally you have lots of mental adventures. The slant and speed of your writing together with the heavy pressure shows you are ardent and impulsive. You love to talk but are fairly secretive about your own affairs and can look after your own interests.

M. J. C., Washington:—So my frankness amazes you! But you like it and want more so I feel justified. Those who heard me over the radio didn't get an impression of a scoldy, severe crank, I hope!

I didn't know all young men had dark pasts! Are you sure? I'm sorry that yours "popped up" and caused you to lose some one very dear to you, but I'm afraid that you will have to expect that. I, of course, cannot look into the future to tell you whether or not that will happen again, but from my knowledge of the world I should say that ones past

is always popping up at the least unexpected moments—good, or bad.

*Miss Spencer writes  
you are a  
frankness—but I  
to know that a  
person in this  
is frank.*

It seems to me that your passion and appetites are what have led you into trouble. These are strongly shown in your thickened down strokes that are in such contrast to your light strokes and especially the *t*-bars. Temper and impulses are not checked or kept in control. I think the navy is a good place for you to learn discipline and you should try to study while there for some trade. There isn't anything in your script to indicate any special talent, except perhaps mechanical skill that might be developed. You are very sensitive, so I hope my frankness hasn't hurt you but will help you.

F. G.—Don't be discouraged because you haven't found yourself this year and made your mark in the theatrical game. You may never really "find yourself," even though you become very successful on the stage. There is always a very insecure feeling that can never be quite downed in back of the flickering lights of Broadway and Hollywood. It is part of the life.

As far as personality and ability go, you have them both on your side. Your long, sweeping *t* bars show a magnetic personality and great ambition. You are emotional and sympathetic, very generous and

likable. You have energy and courage. I don't like to see the tendency to a downward slant in your letters because that means you are giving up a little and letting depression creep in to sap your vitality. Just banish that and keep up your very fine spirit. Better times must be somewhere around the corner, and, when that corner is reached the stage will surely benefit, too. Try demonstrating beauty production or a selling job in the meantime.

*Handwriting have  
chance for success  
missed. Perhaps y  
me, "Actress off  
out of the game ove*

Thank you for your devotion to my department. I'm sorry that I am such a bear or so forbidding that an aggressive person like you had to work up courage to write me. Wasn't it really procrastination? You see that is there in your writing, in spite of all the signs of will. A bit of indolence and a desire to have a comfortable existence with enough appreciation to keep you inspired is all there in your strokes.

#### Handwriting Coupon

This coupon must accompany each specimen of handwriting which you wish read.

Name .....

Address .....

# UNDER THE LAMP

## By GERARD HOLMES

This department is conducted by Gerard Holmes, for those of you who like puzzles. If there is any particular kind of puzzle that you prefer, please tell us, and Gerard Holmes will do his best to give it to you. Also, won't you work on a puzzle of your own, send it in, and let the other readers wrestle with it?

Answers to this week's problems will be printed in next week's issue of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine.

All letters relative to this department should be addressed to Gerard Holmes, care of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

**W**E will start off the evening with a crypt by J. L. McShane, 715 Atlantic Street, Stamford, Connecticut, who hopes that it will give you a good tussle. Here goes!

1. LMONPQ RNUVQ RQ-  
WWORXQU, AYVWMX  
VZ RCVUQ, LNUWQV-  
ZM RNUVQNMWB  
RNX RCDOQ HUQD  
YVZPQQ. RNWLUVX  
RCNJYX. RQNUX  
RQZKVRXM.

Any oil left? Try this one by Thomas Burra, 2601 Quebec Street, Vancouver, B. C., who knows his liquids.

2. NFGBCDE OCULBLGJ  
CEROLAB XECJBZZB,  
RGBYB-A B-YBEZSB,  
RLGXRFX, ILYYBO,

P B E B A C R Z C E B, X O J F  
D G B B E R S X G Z G B-  
L J B.

Frank E. Murphy, 121 North Francisco Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, sends us an ad. taken from a Florida newspaper.

3. "FWTUYRIN AMTLW-  
CRKNOON, KSOF  
LWEWLNOON, PSOQ-  
FNTNOON, AWOFNO-  
ON, XWECRENOON,  
WTUXREQFNOON,  
AMOTRQNCCWEN-  
OON." SO YNNIY OR  
ANOFN "NOON" NEW.

Stephen Reynolds, Troy-Lane Apartment Hotel, Sixty-third and Troy Street, Chicago, Illinois, is responsible for this long-division problem. The answer is a ten-letter word. Use the 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0-letter arrangement.

4. A I I Q) U L Q N E R H (A E I I  
E U U A

—  
H Q N U E

H L L R S

A E L E R

A R S I I

A R Q E H

A R S I I

E Q R

*Answers to Last Week's Puzzles.*

Composed by one of our regulars, John Wilmot, Wanwatosha, Wisconsin.

1. Pragmatic propagandists preaching prohibition practice prevarication. Prosecutions preface persecutions. Proved practical? Nit!

A contribution by P. H. Larrabee, 30 Jefferson Street, Bangor, Maine, the fan who often sticks you.

2. Haughty Hottentot tutor taught tot not to fight. Ought tiny tot to have fought for naught?

A poetical sister fan, Isabel Murdock, 6233 Newell Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, breaks forth cryptically.

3. You need your money  
And I need mine.  
If we both get ours  
It will sure be fine.

But if you get yours  
And hold mine, too,  
What in the world  
Am I going to do?

James I. Kell, Worden, Illinois, is responsible for this long-division problem.

4. DISCOURAGE.

**PUZZLE FANS' HONOR ROLL**

Send in your answers to each week's puzzles, ye fans, and watch for your name on our monthly Honor Roll.

**COUPON**

**How to Solve Cryptograms and Long-division Problems.**

If you would like to have the above information please fill in coupon and mail it to Gerard Holmes, care of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York, and full instructions will be sent to you free of charge.

Name.....Address.....

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

# Headquarters Chat

**T**WO very beautiful young women—girls—having decided that money is life's most valuable gift, determine to get it at any cost. So they "marry it." The money that they marry, is represented by two middle-aged men, who not only possess the "necessary" in large quantities, but are also persons of high social standing.

Now, while these two young women realized that it would cost them something, in one way or another, to marry these middle-aged gentlemen, they had not the slightest idea that the cost would be so great, or that the price they'd have to pay would be of such a disastrous and terrifying nature.

These two girls become "Brides Of Crime"! And that is the title which Elizabeth Sanxay Holding gives to her story which tells about the marriages of these two young women, the consequences which followed these marriages; consequences that were not only disastrous to them, but to many others.

"Brides Of Crime" begins in the next issue of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, and it is one of the most thrilling, most absorbing detective stories you have read in all your life, be your life on this earth to date, long or short.

Elizabeth Sanxay Holding, to our way of thinking, comes as near being the best writer of detective stories as any one—man or woman.

May we urge you not to miss the first installment?

It is always interesting for us, and we are sure that it is also interesting for you, to get little side lights, personal slants on favorite authors.

John D. Swain is certainly a favorite author with most of you. We have just received a letter from Swain, and we think that you will find it entertaining. Here it is:

"DEAR BOSS: Thanks for yours of some days ago. My last story in Detective Story Magazine had a big sale locally. Hope it went well in the country at large. If you won't be offended, I will say that I think your office slipped a little when, in retitling it, it was named "Hard-boiled Hick." Somebody there was allured by the alliteration! No man who has served on the Texas Rangers and the Canadian Northwest Police, and has been a prospector, can safely be called a "hick" save by long-distance telephone; and I should want to be on a very, very long-distance one indeed! The matter is trifling, because my story character was imaginary and cannot go gunning for you with his .45.

"I was rather swell-headed the other day when I received a mail from a little stranger, an extremely pretty and fashionably dressed Chinese girl, now a junior in one of our colleges, majoring in English. And here let me say that her English

quite knocked my own cockeyed. It seems that she had got hold of a copy of Detective Story Magazine containing that story of mine, 'Squeeze,' pitched among Boston Chinese; through one of her professors, she had obtained my address, and the first time she motored out near here, she took occasion to call, to tell me how much she and some of her Chinese student friends liked my yarn. Told me it was true to Chinese character and life in (America), and the kid had even fetched a copy of 'Squeeze' to me, with numerous penciled notations expressing her agreement with various characterizations and descriptions.

"She pointed out to me very tactfully one or two slight errors. These had to do entirely with 'names.' For instance, I had named my young Chinese girl student *Martha Washington No.* She told me that the Chinese never name a child after a departed great personage; it is very unlucky! If they do for some extreme reason use such a name, they always add a belittling one, like 'doggie' (in Chinese, of course) hoping the evil spirits will not molest one holding so ignoble a middle name. She also said that *No* was more Japanese than Chinese.

"To show you how clever this girl is, I asked her: 'What equipment is necessary for an American author who wishes to write salable Chinese stories?'

"She grinned impishly, and replied: 'Judging by most of those I have read, three things are essential: a few visits to a chop-suey place, a diseased imagination, and a passion for inaccuracy!'

"After that, I could only go out and pluck for her my most spectacular dahlia and present it to her as she reentered her smart roadster. (It wasn't really my dahlia; it was

my wife's. But she happened to be away for the afternoon. It gave me time for a nice alibi).

"Thought this might interest you since it was you who bought 'Squeeze,' and maybe some day there will be enough Chinese-American readers to make their feelings worth while considering.

"I have seen one or two pleasant commendations recently in your Detective Story Magazine from readers, and one that was signed only by initials left me even in doubt whether I should make an anonymous bow to a masculine or feminine admirer. Does an author ever get so darned old or successful that he doesn't care a whoop whether anybody likes his stuff or not? There are, of course, writers who set out deliberately to shock and repel their readers; but even they are seeking a sort of left-handed popularity. Pugilists who are for some reason hated by the fans always draw big gates, because the fans are always hoping to see them knocked bow-legged! It is stark indifference that kills us all, I guess.

"I hope that neither in office, club, or at home, do you ever receive any indifference."

Listen here, D. G. McDonald, here's a "dozen," represented by Alvin A. Bentley, 3744 West Euclid Avenue, Detroit, Michigan, who can't see too many stories by you:

"DEAR EDITOR: This is to thank you for your notices of stories by D. G. McDonald. There are in this office as many as a dozen who don't want to miss his stories and look forward to them. We want more of them, and you can't give us too many, and we hope that you will run them as often as you can."

# MISSING

This department, conducted in duplicate in Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine and Western Story Magazine, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable. Because "copy" for a magazine must go to the printer long in advance of publication, don't expect to see your notice till a considerable time after you send it.

If it can be avoided, please do not send a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that these persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

New readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

**WARNING.**—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home." It ceters, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

Address all your communications to Missing Department, Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

**NUMER, NAVY LEE.**—Was in Sacramento, California, when last heard from. Would like to hear from you. Please write to "Virginia" Bud Perkins, Route 5, Washington, Iowa.

**KERWIN, R. B. (DICK).**—Dad's health is failing, and he wants to return your property. Important that you communicate at once with Ed, care of this magazine.

**NEWMAN, MYRA HUSSFELT.**—Known as Buster. Blue eyes and light hair. Was in Salt Lake City, Utah, when last heard from. Will any one who can assist me in locating her, please write to Lucille Edwards, Box 658, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

**WHITE, STUBBY.**—Lost or stolen when he was five years old. Has been gone sixteen years. Has light hair, blue eyes, and a large birthmark on back of neck and head. Any one knowing of a young man answering this description, who is seeking his parents, will confer a favor by writing to Mrs. Blanche White, Rapid River, Michigan.

**GOODSON, RUSSELL.**—Last heard of in Walla Walla, Washington. Has three sisters, Hazel, Gladys, and Rosalie. Will he or any one having information as to his whereabouts please write to B. A. B., care of this magazine.

**WILLIAMS, JAMES A.**—Forty-three years old. His wife's maiden name was Fay Marie Wiedman. They had one child, born at 121 East West Street, Louisiana, Missouri, nineteen years ago. Information wanted by Haskell Clay Williams, 1208 Beach Street, Flint, Michigan.

**MULLEN, MAY.**—Of Houghton, Michigan. Lived in Detroit for some time. Last heard of in Stroud, Oklahoma. Her address appreciated by Mabel Howson, 8687 Brace Avenue, Detroit, Michigan.

**MELVIN, FRANK.**—Believed to be in or near Oakland, California, at present. Attended high school in a small town in Iowa during 1928. Would appreciate hearing from any one having information about him or his whereabouts. Please address Private Milton Whiteside, Company E, Twenty-first Infantry, Schofield Barracks, Honolulu, Hawaii.

**MANSFIELD, BEECH R.**—A cable-tool driller. Last heard from in Ada, Oklahoma, in April, 1931. Word from or about him will be thankfully received by his wife, Darlene, care of this magazine.

**MCCLURE, MACK.**—Left my home in spring of 1926. He was a traveling salesman for the Lion Leather Co. I regret all, and want him to come back or to write to his friend, V. E. L., care of this magazine.

**ROSE, CLARENDA.**—Last heard from in Paris, Texas, about twenty years ago. Was adopted by a family whose name I do not know. Any information concerning her will be highly appreciated by her brother, Russell T. Rose, Hartman No. 1, Richmond, Texas.

**MCCULLOUGH, HARRY.**—Formerly of Brookville and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Worked in the grape harvest at Fredonia, New York, and at Farrel's Farm. Was at one time salesman for a Philadelphia biscuit company, and had been advertising agent for Northwestern Yeast Co. Any one knowing his whereabouts, or any of his relatives or friends, please write to me. C. A. Fellows, 2432 Forest Park Avenue, Hillside, Maryland.

**HUNT, GEORGE.**—About six feet tall and weighed around two hundred pounds. Formerly resided at Hog Island and Sunship, Chester, Pennsylvania. Worked as railroad detective for the New York Central at Ashtabula, Ohio. Will he, or any one knowing his whereabouts, please write to Robert MacWinters, Maple Street, Salina, New York.

**CLARK, H. L.**—Barber by trade. Six feet three inches tall. Dark hair and eyes. Last seen two years ago at 332½ South Olive Street, Los Angeles, California. Information appreciated by his mother, Mrs. H. Clark, Ward Courts, San Angelo, Texas.

**DAVIS, MRS. THOMAS, nee PEARL PROVOST.**—Last heard of in Palatka, Florida. Missing since 1916. Would be grateful for any information concerning her. Mrs. Joseph Virdnals, 1808 Presque Isle Avenue, Marquette, Michigan.

**ROWE, JOHN J.**—Last heard of fourteen years ago, when he lived near Chula Vista and Rising Sun, California. At that time he was raising polo ponies. Any one knowing him or his present address, please write to his daughter, Helen Rowe, care of this magazine.

**CLINE, ALICE C.**—My mother, who came from Canada when she was fourteen years old. She married my father, John J. Cline, in Paducah, Kentucky, in 1887. Later she married Herman Welt, also of Paducah. Would like to hear from any one having information about her relatives. Kindly address Helen Rowe, care of this magazine.

**ANDERSON, ERNEST.**—About five feet six inches tall. High forehead, sandy hair, and light-brown eyes. Carries himself very erect. Weighs around one hundred and forty pounds. When last heard of, in December, 1930, he was at Malta, Montana, and was driving a 1929-model Chevrolet coupe. Any one knowing him or his whereabouts will do me a great favor by writing at once to Mrs. Adora Anderson, Columbus, North Dakota.

**SANDRIDGE, WILLIE, nee GRACE BELMONT GORDON.**—Daughter of Mrs. Bertie Gordon, of Staunton, Virginia. She was married in Washington, D. C., in November, 1904. Has since resided in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Spartanburg, South Carolina. Owned property at Stevensburg, Virginia, and was heard from there in August, 1905. Nothing has been heard from her since 1910. Willie or Grace, if you see this, write or wire me at once. Mother passed away in April, and dad is lonely and often speaks of you. For his sake, get in touch with me. There are lots of things to explain, and wrongs done you before I was born to be righted. Address Mrs. F. T. Drew, 306½ North Mulberry Street, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

**CRIPPEN, ANNA OTT.**—Professional actress. Permanent resident of New York City. An old friend and fellow professional would like to know your address. Please write to Mrs. J. Stephen Gemmill, Route 2, Allen's Lane, Rock Hall, Maryland.

**BATLER, NELSON.**—Formerly of Rensselaer and Amsterdam, New York. Friend of Wesley Mason. Please write to Mrs. Joseph Mason, R. F. D. 1, Box 304, Clinton Heights, Rensselaer, New York.

**FISHER, JOE.**—Oil-well driller. Left MacConnellsville, Ohio, some time ago, and went to Oklahoma. Please write to William MacLean, 133 South Madiera Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

**BRUNELLE, THEODORE.**—Usually called Ted. Last seen by his father two years ago, in Montreal, Canada. Any news concerning his whereabouts will be gladly received by his brother-in-law, A. Belanger, Hudson, Ontario, Canada.

**WEST, BUD.**—Please write to your daughter, Mrs. Bonnie Porter, care of L. O. Porter, Route 2, Gilmer, Texas.

**MCCUE, BOYD.**—Native of Washington. Please communicate with Ed Henken, Columbia, California.

**SPOILER.**—Would like to hear from any relatives or friends of the late Robert Slade Spoiler. Please address Ruth Spoiler Grice, 1761 East Forty-first Street, Los Angeles, California.

**HART, ALTA, FAY, and VINCE.**—Old friends of mine. I last heard from Alta when she was living in Oakland, California. Fay was attending college. Any one knowing their whereabouts, kindly get in touch with Mae Alexander, 709 West Sixty-sixth Street, Los Angeles, California.

**LYNN, BILLY.**—Billy boy, if you should see this, get in touch with me at grandmother's. You are all I have now. J. L., 266 Valley Street, South Orange, New Jersey.

**LYNN, WILLIAM GEORGE.**—Formerly of Dayton, Ohio. Left school at Winchester, Kentucky, February 3, 1930, and was in Dayton till February 10th. Nothing has been seen or heard of him since then. He is nineteen years old, weighs one hundred and seventy-five pounds, is six feet one and one half inches tall, and has wavy auburn hair. It is thought that he may have gone into some branch of the United States service under an assumed name. Any one knowing anything regarding him, kindly get in touch with his mother, Mrs. Jennie Lynn, 266 Valley Street, South Orange, New Jersey.

**RASTUS, WESTON.**—Please write to your anxious sister, Mrs. Bonnie Porter, care of L. O. Porter, Route 2, Gilmer, Texas.

**JANUS, STANLEY.**—My brother. About twenty-eight years old, tall, with dark-brown hair and brown eyes. Left home in Virginia, Minnesota, eight years ago, seeking employment. Our father, Jacob Janus, died in a Duluth hospital, but my brother could not be located at the time. Later our mother remarried and moved to Hibbing, Minnesota. She is very anxious to hear from her boy, as her health is gradually failing. Any information whatsoever will be deeply appreciated by Josephine Janus, care of this magazine.

**POLAND.**—It is reported that a wealthy railroad owner of the West, who died in April, 1929, left his estate to the heirs of his mother, Mary Poland. Newspaper notices were published at the time of his death, requesting heirs of Mary Poland to register and prove their claims. Will any one having any knowledge whatsoever of these facts kindly get in touch with Oscar W. Poland, 812 South Hughey Street, Orlando, Florida.

**MILLER, OTTO.**—Left Dickinson, North Dakota, about five years ago. He is twenty-five years old, about five feet ten inches tall, weighs around one hundred and seventy pounds, and has dark-brown hair and eyes. Believed to have been in Medford, Oregon, during winter of 1930-31. Information as to his present location will be welcomed by his brother, Ed Miller, care of E. W. Laird, DuBois, Idaho.

**KATHERINE and ANNA RUTH.**—Please write to C. B. Lorry, care of Mrs. Comer, 728 Copeland Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

**ATTENTION.**—We would like to hear from some of our old buddies who served with us in Company C, Twelfth M. G. Battalion, in 1918. Please address Baldy J. Craven and Bronko A. H. Copeland, U. S. V. B. Hospital No. 72, Fort Harrison, Montana.

**SPENCER, WILLIAM E.**—Even if you are sick or in trouble, please write to me. Helen (Willie) B. Fisher, 8329 Pritchard Place, New Orleans, Louisiana.

**HARRIS, JIM.**—Five feet seven inches tall. Weighs about one hundred and thirty-five pounds. Has blue-gray eyes and black hair. Left home in May, 1931, and has not been heard from since. Information greatly appreciated by Mrs. D. E. Harris, Route 10, Box 116, Booneville, Arkansas.

**FLANDERS, HALFORD G.**—Cannot go on without you. Everything is forgiven. I still love you. Please write at once to settle property. R. E. F., 216 Juanita Way, San Francisco, California.

**RAGINSKI, WANDA.**—Last heard of in Chicago, Illinois, in 1931. News of her will be gratefully received by her brother, Stephen Raginski, 628 North Seventh Avenue, Iron River, Michigan.

**CHESTER, MR. and MRS. PAT.** and children, ELSIE, DOROTHY, and LILLIAN.—Were in Illinois, New York, when last heard from. Would very much like to hear from them, or to learn their present address. Please write to Laura Jane Gilbert, Van Ness Court, 1126 1-2 East Seventh Street, Los Angeles, California.

**DENT, CHARLES F.**—Was in St. Anthony's Hospital, Wondhaven, New York, in January, 1925. He is a French-Canadian by birth, and was an air pilot overseas with the 375th Air Patrol. Will he, or any one knowing his present address, kindly write to Laura Jane Gilbert, Van Ness Court, 1126 1-2 East Seventieth Street, Los Angeles, California.

**MILLER, EFFIE.**—Last heard from in Chicago, Illinois. Please write to James, The Studio, Florence, Arizona.

**HOLLENBECK, FRED M.**—If you see this, drop me a line for old times' sake, please. Explanations if I hear from you. Maxine Scott, 885 Park Avenue, Springfield, Illinois.

**SEALSKE, EDITH, nee CLEMENS.** and children, DANIEL and ROBERT.—Last heard of in Sioux City, Iowa, about seven years ago. Information as to their whereabouts appreciated by Jewel Sealske, 259 Moonachie Avenue, Moonachie, New Jersey.

**SWIFT, HARLEY.**—An old friend is anxious to locate you. The cause of the trouble and misunderstanding of five years ago has been explained at last. F. finished what you started at Erie. She is to be married soon. Please write to Beulah, at Eaglehurst, or come home. Everything is O. K. She has good and important news for you. If you prefer, you can send me your address by writing to B., care of this magazine.

**HOWDEN, JAKE.**—Believed to be in Idaho or Montana. He is about fifty years old. His relatives would very much like to hear from him, or obtain news regarding him. Please address Fred O. Howden, 2622 Blundea Street, Kookuk, Iowa.

**LUNG, ARTHUR.**—Any information concerning him will be greatly appreciated by his son, Archie Lung, McAlester, Oklahoma.

**FRANK, J. M.**—Believed to be with the Marines. Widmer has left for Santo Domingo. Karam is dying. Harder no longer cares. I need you so. Please write to Carmen Sanchez, care of Hotel Ba-Ta-Clan, Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

**GALL, HELEN.**—Was placed in St. Joseph's Foundling Home soon after her mother's death about sixteen years ago. Will any one knowing her present whereabouts please notify Joseph J. Gall, Quakertown, Pennsylvania.

**DOWD, EDWARD.**—Left home January 10, 1931. His mother is ill, and asks that he write to her. Little Catherine wants him to come home. Information welcomed by his wife, Mrs. Nellie Dowd, 451 South Broad Street, Trenton, New Jersey.

**SHUBERT, JAMES.**—Of Nelson, Missouri. Last heard of at Beaman, Missouri. Please write. I have valuable information for you. Pearl Gibson, Route 11, Box 78, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

**SPENCER, JOHN AUBERT.**—Electrician by trade. Formerly of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Worked in Tonopah and Manhattan, Nevada. His last address was 526 South Maple Street, Los Angeles, California. Important news awaiting him. Write to Wallace, 151 Broadway East, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

**PREDOM, JOANNA and JUANITA.**—Left home thirteen years ago. Information welcomed by their brother, John C. Freedom, 12 State Street, Montpelier, Vermont.

**SCOTT, LIZZIE MAY.**—My dear sister. Will any one knowing her whereabouts kindly notify Mrs. Alice Scott Hawkins, Route 7, Jackson, Michigan.

**BULLOCK, JOHN.**—Last heard from in Tacoma, Washington. Your niece would like to get in touch with you. Please write to Janet Neil Shevlin, 217 West Fourth Street, West Frankfort, Illinois.

**NEIL, ALLEN.**—Was in Vidor, Washington, working at the N. P. depot, when last heard from. Your sister needs you. Please write to Janet Neil Shevlin, 217 West Fourth Street, West Frankfort, Illinois.

**CROSS.**—I was born December 10, 1909, at Baltimore, Maryland, and was adopted by Mrs. John D. Teteron. Would like to hear from my mother, Mary Cross, or from any one knowing of her whereabouts. Write to William M. Teteron, U. S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut.

**WARD, JACK.**—A plasterer by trade. Formerly resided in Mitchell, South Dakota. About fifty-five years old. Will any one knowing him please write to Ted Ward, care of State Belt Railroad of California, Pier 27, San Francisco, California.

**CHRISTIAN, MRS. W. V. or FANNIE.**—When last heard of she was at Mason, Texas, and was going to Arizona. Her brother would welcome any news of her. Please address Lee A. Cardell, Route 2, Midlothian, Texas.

**FOSTER, JACK.**—I am no longer at 114 West Grand Street, Hastings, Michigan. I am working, but I want you to come back. Please write to Pauline Shoemaker, care of C. Moll, R. R. 2, Zeeland, Michigan.

**FIGG, EDWARD M.**—Last heard from in 1929, when he served with Company E, Fourteenth Infantry, Fort Davis, Canal Zone. Would like to get in touch with him of any one knowing his present address. Marlton Semer, 250 Weis Street, Buffalo, New York.

**KOWALCZYK, LILLIAN.**—Lived in Greenfield, Massachusetts, until 1928. Later moved to Springfield. Has one younger sister. Any news regarding her or her sister will be greatly appreciated by Fritz, care of this magazine.

**GRADY, MR. and MRS. MORRIS.**—Last heard of in Clovis, New Mexico, in August, 1929. Information as to their whereabouts will be appreciated by Arthur and Irene, care of this magazine.

**HARRINGTON, DOUGLASS.**—Six feet tall, weighs about one hundred and sixty pounds, has brown eyes and dark-brown hair. Manual laborer. Any word regarding him thankfully received by L. Douglass, 403 Lansing Street, Utica, New York.

**VAN CLEVE, EDW.**—Wherever you are, please write or come home. Not knowing where you are is killing me. Mother, 6101 West Bosco, Chicago, Illinois.

**KEARNY, GEORGE.**—Believed to be in Gary, Indiana. Formerly of National, Maryland. Write to your ocean schoolmate, John E. Thomas, 1714 Central Depositors Bank Building, 100 South Main Street, Akron, Ohio.

**ETTINGER.**—Dearest, why don't you come home? I still love you more than anything, and can't live much longer without you. You have my forgiveness, and all else, too. Please let me see you soon, or write to Babe, Box 87, Fields Landing, California.

**DURIEU, FRANK E.**—About fifty years old. Last heard from at Oshawa, Ontario, Canada. Was in England during World War and served in Canadian Forestry Corps. Information appreciated by Phil, 9 Honley Road, Lewisham S. E. 6, London, England.