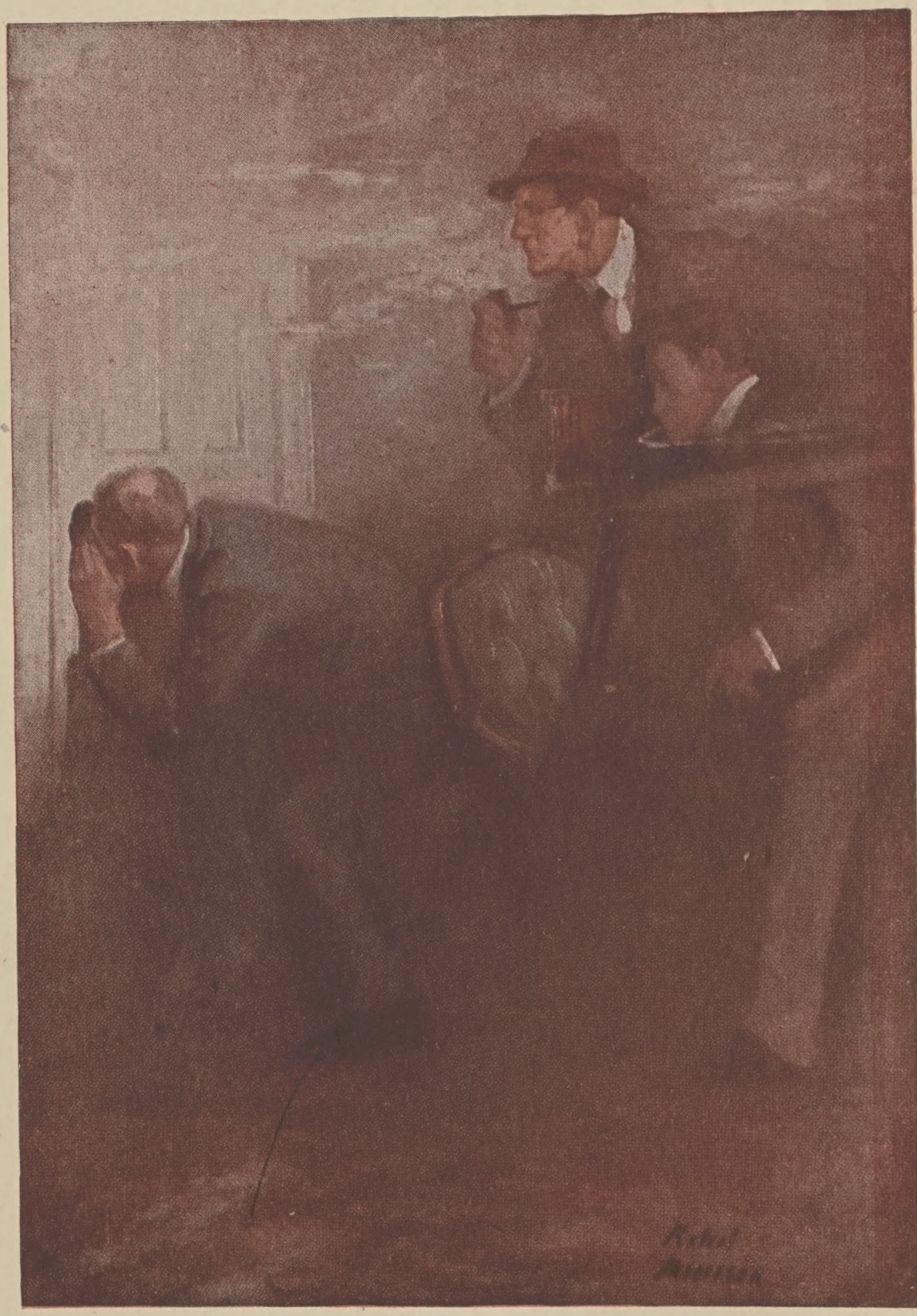
PHILIP DERBY REPORTER

WILLIS J. ABBOT



The other Italian sprang to guard the door.

PAGE 180

Philip Derby, Reporter

BY

WILLIS J. ABBOT

Author of "The Story of Our Navy for Young Americans,"
"Blue Jackets of 1918," etc.

WITH FRONTISPIECE

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1922

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

VAIL-BALLOU COMPANY
BINGHAMTON AND NEW YORK

INTRODUCTION

THE story of "Philip Derby, Reporter" is very largely founded on fact. It has a purpose other than one of mere entertainment, and intermingled with the fiction the reader will find an outline of methods in vogue in a modern newspaper office. It has been my endeavor to draw a picture of the conditions that confront the young man who seeks a foothold in journalism in almost any large city. New York is perhaps the most difficult point for the beginner to get a start, because to New York from all over the country flock ambitious newspaper men, eager for the prizes which are always to be found in the great city. But the conditions which obtain in a New York office exist in those of the cities of the interior.

It is a great question among the older journalists who are quitting the stage as to whether their successors are going to be as they were, graduates merely of the reportorial staff or if they are going to come into the profession with a liberal education obtained in schools of journalism. Most of the editors who were eminent toward the end of the nineteenth century were

men who had reached the editorial rooms by way of the composing room. They knew how to stick type, and in many cases had led the somewhat romantic life of the "tramp" printer, a now vanished figure in American industry. They were scornful of mere college graduates, and knew nothing of graduates of schools of journalism, which are, indeed, of comparatively late establishment. Horace Greeley was perhaps the most eminent of the printer editors, and his comment, by which an aspiring applicant for place once was crushed, that he "would rather have any kind of horned cattle around a newspaper office than a college graduate." is historic.

Julius Chambers, who in the course of his life became the managing editor successively of the *New York Herald, New York World* and the *New York American,* tells this story of the way in which one college graduate at least was met by Mr.Greeley:—

"Entering the counting room, I handed a card containing my name to a clerk, with sublime confidence that Mr. Greely would see me. Reasons for that assurance will soon appear. A long wait followed, after which I was shown up a single flight of iron stairs to the editor's den. An attendant, afterwards known to me as D. J. Sullivan, pointed to a burly, white-

haired man in shirt sleeves, seated at a desk upon which was piled a mass of clippings, letters and 'copy.' After standing for many minutes unrecognized, I heard a shrill, squeaky voice ask:

'Well, young fellow, what is it?' I looked about the room for another speaker than the idol of my boyhood; but it was the voice of Horace Greeley—so harshly falsetto, so unsympathetic, that when the kindly face, round as the moon on her thirteenth night and with its aura of silken white hair, turned in my direction, I barely managed to stammer:

'Mr. Greeley, I came to ask a place on your newspaper. You are a trustee of Cornell University, and I have been graduated there—'

'I'd a damned sight rather you had graduated at a printer's case!' was the outburst, as the editor swung back to his desk. He gave me no opportunity to say that I had been foreman of a composing room and had taken myself through college as a compositor. The great man forgot me then and there. Although I subsequently met him many times, he never identified me.''

But the printer editor has gone his way. He was succeeded by the editor who had attained the higher stages of the profession through hard work as a reporter. Such a one is to-day

the typical editor, and is perhaps as inclined to be scornful of the man who has never held a reporter's job as his predecessor was intolerant of the man who did not know how to set type. But it seems not improbable that he, too, will vanish before the more progressive and better trained type of journalist who will have the foundation given by a college course, topped off with the work of a school of journalism.

These schools are multiplying throughout the United States. The oldest one was established at the University of Missouri in 1907. Aspirants to newspaper work will find in the bulletins published by that school many helpful hints which may be well worth attending. Particularly the pamphlet called "A Newspaper Man's Library," being Number 22 of the Journalism Series issued by the University of Missouri, is well worth getting and reading.

The hero of this story never saw a school of journalism. He was bred in the hard school of reportorial experience. The success that in imagination has been made to attend his patient waiting and earnest efforts may very well encourage youths, who, like him, rejoice in the smell of the printer's ink, the rattle of the presses, and hope in time to be able to conduct a city staff of their own.

WILLIS J. ABBOT

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PHILIP DERBY, REPORTER

CHAPTER I

THE BLACK HAND

In a big, bare room well filled with men working swiftly and silently over great sheaves of typewritten paper under glaring electric lights shielded by green shades, a telephone bell rang sharply. Attention was instant. Clearly it was a place where things were done in a rush, where men "came a runnin'," as they say in the navy.

The man who eagerly seized the receiver was young in years but with a look of wisdom which only deep experience, lacking age, could have conferred. A disreputable straw hat of the vintage of ten years before was perched on his head though the season was midwinter. "Bill" Bowers, city editor of *The Blade,* and his straw hat were objects inseparable in the journalistic mind of that day. When "on the job" the hat was on his head. When enjoying —or suffering—his brief and infrequent hours off the hat lay directly under the roll top of his desk, ready for donning as the first official act

of his night's work. Admiring reporters, usually new to the calling, regarded it with something of the awe with which the soldier of the Empire looked upon the cocked hat and gray surtout of the "Little Corporal." It was a symbol of battle and of victory. When older in the business the reporter professed to be able to tell from the very tilt of that aged, but not venerable, straw whether or not it would be safe to make a "touch" for an order on the business office for advance salary.

Just now the hat was coming in for one of its bad moments. With one hand holding the telephone receiver close to his ear, the city editor rolled and crumpled, with the other, the already shapeless brim until it creaked and crackled in his grasp. At the same time his gaze swept the great dark room in search of something it apparently could not discover.

"Jimmie, there isn't a reporter in the shop," he said through the phone in one of those low, carrying voices that tell of much experience in talking over the wire. "You'll have to handle that story by yourself. Yes I know that you've got to follow the trail over to the Atlantic docks and it's late. Here's what we'll do. You write out the story as far as you've got it. Give all names and facts you can get, seal it up and leave it with the fellow who runs

the big garage on the corner right across from where you are now. What's that? Oh, yes. I know the neighborhood, know 'em all. That's my trade. Now listen. You want to look out for that garage fellow. He's a wop like the man we are hunting. May be mixed up in this affair himself. But you hire a touring car from him and tell him you'll need it most of the night. I guess that will hold him, and he'll keep the copy for us all right. I'll send a boy for it right away. Then you put for the Atlantic docks across the Queensboro Bridge and down through Brooklyn. You ought to get there about the time the first batch of copy gets here. You can phone from the dock if our man is on the ship. It will be too late to write anything. This is some story, remember. Telephone me from the dock, and be ready to go on with the story in the morning without coming to the office. Rush it, old man!''

With a click the telephone receiver was hung up and the city editor turned to make a more careful survey of the room and its few remaining tenants.

The hour was approaching midnight. A dull steady rumble rising from below told that the first section of the paper containing advertisements, markets and early news was

already on the presses. Many of the staff had gone home, and the big bare factory-like loft was only lighted here and there where some late workers were grinding out their "stuff." The room was colossal in size, so that the brilliant lights glowing above the horse-shoe shaped table at which now sat a dozen men silently and absorbedly working over piles of type-written manuscript, failed to carry light to the further corners. Here and there a glowing bulb in a green shade hung over a type-writer at which a man in shirt-sleeves was pounding out words at so fierce a rate that it seemed impossible he could be writing read-able English. In distant corners of the gloom were little centers of light and activity. In one spot half a dozen men were bending over boards covered with white paper so that the gleaming light above threw their heads into bold relief. These were the newspaper artists diligently working up photographs, or sketch-ing out maps for some story in the morning's issue. At another point a partition shut off a bank of loudly ticking machines which were automatically printing the Associated Press report on long slips of paper which from time to time a copy boy cut off and carried to the impatient editors. Bits of bright color, and the gleam of a man's white shirt front, told

of the location of the society department to which reporters were briskly bringing the stories of the social doings of the night, while cheek by jowl the sporting editor was holding solemn converse with a brace of pugilists arranging the details of a prize fight.

From the big central table near the city editor's desk pneumatic tubes extended across the room and cut though the ceiling.

Now and then the sharp thud of a metal carrier dropping into a trough where a watchful boy stood waiting told of the arrival of proofs from the composing room above where scores of men sat before linotype keyboards making molten metal spout into moulds, that the thoughts of the writers below might be cast into type and printed upon scores of miles of paper for the information, instruction, or amusement of millions of people.

Off to one side, in a railed enclosure, scores of telegraph instruments were ticking away bringing to that spot the news of two hemispheres. The editor could talk thence to London or Shanghai at less cost in time than 75 years ago he could have talked with Washington.

The newspaper of to-day is the incarnation of publicity. Instinctively it seems to spurn privacy of every kind. Time was when every dignitary enjoying the title of editor—City

Editor, Sporting Editor, Society Editor or Wall Street Editor—had a private room. Now-a-days the most up-to-date dailies house all their editorial staff in one great room. One highly prosperous paper, The *Kansas City Star,* used to boast that the proprietor himself, a journalist of great ability, had his desk in the common room, his only privacy being such as a distance of forty feet or so to the desk of the nearest worker might assure.

The desk of the city editor of *the Blade* overlooked the whole busy floor. With a shout he could call any one of half-a-hundred workers to his desk. But shouting was in bad form in that office. Swift, steady, systematic and silent work was the rule. Though obviously in haste Bowers now waited until the largest of the boys carrying copy was within earshot.

"Oh, Derby," he said quietly.

The boy turned swiftly. He was about seventeen years old, tall and evidently athletic of habit, with a face that showed both thought and study. He had come to the paper as a copy boy because he had immediate need of earning his own living, and in the hope that he might ultimately get a chance as a reporter, and thus get his foot on the ladder to journalistic success. Often enough he had been called to go on some errand of minor significance.

He was sturdy and trustworthy—a "good pair of legs" as the reporters called him, but nothing hitherto had come of his ever willingness.

"Go up to the corner of Avenue A and 163rd Street. You'll find a garage there run by an Italian named Bertelli. Mr. Holbrook has left a wad of copy with him. You get it and hustle back in a hurry. Take the subway both ways and rush it, RUSH IT."

He turned back to the pile of papers on his desk. Phil started for his hat and coat. His heart was heavy. Nothing but another leg job. Wouldn't they ever give him a chance to show that he was something more than a willing errand boy? Here he was going to the other end of Manhattan to get the copy of a story of the nature of which he had been given not the slightest hint. If they would only give him a chance to go out and get a story himself. He felt abused, discontented, depressed. But he had hardly taken his coat from the locker when he heard the city editor's voice calling him.

"This may be a reporter's job I'm sending you out on, Phil," his chief said as he came up to the desk. "You'd better know a little something about it, 'specially as I am leary of that garage fellow that's holding Jimmie Holbrook's copy for you. The place is right in New York's up-town Little Italy, and we

had a story—all the papers had it—that a fellow named Salvatore up there, a banker, had disappeared. They're always doing that, you know, these little neighborhood dago bankers. As soon as they get a good line of deposits from their fellow countrymen they put up the shutters and slip off home to sunny Italy to enjoy life. But the curious thing about this fellow is that when the news of his disappearance got about and the usual run on the bank was started it appeared to be in perfectly good shape. He hadn't milked the bank in any way, and his clerk has been paying depositors as fast as they come to the counter. If he has skipped he hasn't taken any of the bank's funds with him.

"Now Jimmie who went up there just to write a human interest story about the hysterical women who had been beggared by the failure of the bank finds there isn't any such story, for the concern's O.K. But he's got it in his head there may be a Black Hand story in the affair, and has written some stuff which I want you to fetch while he runs down to the Atlantic basin where there's an Italian ship sailing at midnight. So rush it, and keep your ears open up there for anything bearing on the story. Hustle now."

Phil hustled. As he went running down the

subway steps he reflected that it was not Bowers' custom to give such lengthy instructions to a boy sent out after copy. Had his chance come at last?

"Gee," he ejaculated, "I don't wish Jimmie Holbrook any harm but I wouldn't mind if something happened so I could work up this story myself."

And the clangorous subway that swallowed him up at Brooklyn Bridge had cast him forth five miles to the north like Jonah from the whale's belly before his mind stopped building air castles.

He found Little Italy having one of its frequent religious fiestas. From the tall tenements on either side of the narrow streets hung gay strips of colored cloth while the streets themselves were spanned by wires from which depended glittering electric lights. Smoky naptha torches blazed on the push-carts of the itinerant peddlers drawn up near the curb. Here and there urchins were burning red fire in the gutters, or setting off Roman candles. Up and down the sidewalks strolled the daughters of Sunny Italy in their gayest apparel. Mandolins and guitars and now and then the notes of a distant street piano made the night melodious according to the standards of the neighborhood.

"If this is Little Italy," thought Phil, "wouldn't I just like to see Naples?"

The stage did not seem to be set for any sort of a melodrama, and Phil looked about him for the garage. There it was on the corner. It was the ordinary, commonplace sort of a cheap one-story edifice put together on a lot which some speculative owner was holding for a profit. Several men were lounging about the cavernous entrance where enticing signs offered "free air" to customers who speedily found out that everything else was far from free. Phil had little difficulty in picking out the proprietor, a smiling Italian whose almost theatrical air of authority proclaimed him "the Boss." At almost the first word he understood what Phil was after.

"Si, si, si," he cried, and rushing to his desk produced a large sealed envelope.

"Your friend he leave this. He say take to office. He hire my big car and go in hurry."

"Did he leave any message?"

"Non, non! Only he say hurry, hurry!"

Phil thought vaguely that the man seemed rather in haste to get rid of him but the advice to hurry was proper enough. The night was wearing on and it was his duty to get the copy to the office in time for the first edition. So resisting an inclination to talk with the people

of the neighborhood about the mystery he made for the subway. Half an hour later he stood at the city editor's desk.

"Got it?" growled that dignitary without looking up. "Holbrook hasn't reported yet."

Phil dropped the envelope on his desk and turned away with a feeling that another chance had left him behind when he was arrested by a furious roar.

"What the devil's this?" cried Bowers at the top of his lungs. He held out to Phil a sheaf of papers that he had just torn from the envelope. They were blank save that on one was roughly drawn a Black Hand.

CHAPTER II

THE VANISHED REPORTER

The discovery that the copy boy had brought back only blank sheets of paper with what was seemingly a sinister threat, aroused excitement in the office which was almost instantly checked by the city editor.

"Looks queer," he said. "Maybe that dago garage keeper was just joshing you—maybe it's something more serious. Anyway we'll just keep quiet about this for a time. Don't any of you fellows say a word outside. You better stick around awhile, Derby. We've just time to get the first edition off now, and later we can see what to do."

Thereupon Bowers disappeared into a closed room and busied himself with two telephones. In a few moments he had learned that the ship *Garibaldi* was just casting off, as it was after midnight, that no reporter for *The Blade* was on the dock so far as could be learned, and that the name of Salvatore did not appear on the passenger list, though that fact did not preclude the possibility of the banker's being aboard under an assumed name.

Not particularly surprised by this information Bowers called another number. It was that of Sidney Perkins, managing editor of the paper.

In a metropolitan newspaper there are four editorial excutives in the news department who are, in the order of their rank, the managing editor, the city editor, the night city editor and the night editor. The managing editor is usually the responsible head of the entire news staff. He determines the expenditures to be made in each of the editorial departments, and allots to the city editor, the telegraph editor, the sporting editor and others the amount of money each may expend upon his department. In association with the business manager, who sends him daily a report on the volume of advertising on hand, he fixes the size of the paper which may vary from 12 to 34 pages.

If, as often happens, the newspaper is owned by a corporation, or its owner gives no personal attention to its details, the managing editor is the court of last resort on questions of news policy. He decides whether an eager "query," or offer of news from a distant correspondent justifies ordering 1,000 words by wire, or is to be met with chilling silence. He determines whether a story is to be "played

up'' on the first page, or given a ''stickful'' as two inches of space are called, somewhere inside. He can ''turn the paper loose,'' with special trains, tugboats, or in these days aircraft, an army of correspondents and artists, and a free hand to everybody to spend money like water getting the story into the office.

Judgment of news is a vital part of a managing editor's intellectual equipment. In some it seems to be an inborn quality. With unerring instinct they seize upon a seemingly unimportant bit of information and develop from it a news story that engages the attention of every reader. And it is as much of an art to determine the comparative worth of news stories as it is to fix the market value of a gem.

To a well known New York managing editor came once the city editor in some excitement.

''Here's a first page story,'' he said. ''Man shot his wife in a crowded street car.''

''What carline,'' inquired the chief with professional calm.

''Belt Line.''

''Oh give it half a column on the inside. If it had been on a Madison Avenue car or a Fifth Avenue bus it would have been worth a spread. People are always getting murdered along the Belt Line.''

It was a managing editor of this type that

first laid down the rule that if a dog bit a man it was not news, but if a man bit a dog it was.

Sidney Perkins, now managing editor of *The Blade,* had done about everything on a newspaper that came his way. He had started with a college education, a great advantage to newspaper workers to-day, but found himself for months working for less than the men who had come up from the composing room with no other education than the paper gave. But his sounder foundation finally carried him to the top. He had left the office early in the night, but was within reach of the telephone. It is one of the rudimentary rules of newspaper work that no man of any importance in the organization ever gets wholly out of touch with the office.

Over the phone Bowers briefly outlined the story to his chief. The sudden disappearance of the Italian banker had aroused interest chiefly because his books showed the bank to be entirely sound. Then why had he run away? Or had he been abducted?

Holbrook, the star reporter, had evidently got some sort of a story, for he had reported to the office that he was on the trail of the missing man, and had left a bunch of copy with the garage keeper from whom he had hired a car. But from the moment he had stepped into the

car he had vanished, and the envelope which had been supposed to hold his stuff proved to contain only blank paper with the insigna of the murderous Mafia stamped on one sheet. What was the next step for *The Blade* to take?

"Looks like a pretty story," said the Chief. "Hope the other fellows have nothing more about it than we. What does the City Press say?"

The City Press Association is a coöperative news gathering force maintained by all the papers in the city, and sending its full report to each. It is relied upon for unimportant and routine news, and supplements the work of the papers' regular reporters.

"Oh, they have only the afternoon story of Salvatore's disappearance and the fact that his bank is solvent. They say his family deny all knowledge of his whereabouts, and that his wife is prostrated."

"Well, better dress up their story and use it. See that the fact of Jimmie's disappearance doesn't get out. If the other papers haven't got anything yet we may keep this for our own. Holbrook's a steady fellow, isn't he? Not a rounder?"

"He's a mighty live wire," put in Bowers. "The fellows who have kidnapped him will have

more trouble than those who stole a red hot stove."

"Well, have one man look up his lodgings, and go to his various haunts—he frequents the Andiron Club doesn't he? Better put another man on the garage end of it; have him get solid with the wop that gave the boy the dummy package. But the chances are that he will not find that son of Sunny Italy again. He's made himself scarce by now. But have our man hang around the garage and get all the facts he can. Tell all the boys to keep still. We don't want the police in on this. It's our reporter and our story. Good-night."

Bowers sat down at his desk to think out the mystery. In a moment a boy laid copies of the first editions of the other papers before him. Seizing them eagerly he scanned their columns for the Salvatore story. Ah, there it was. Only a stickful in each paper and none of the mysterious features even hinted at. So far so good. The other fellows suspected nothing more than the story, old to New York, of a foreign banker absconding with his depositors' cash. That the absconder should have abducted a reporter at the same time was a novel feature of which his rivals knew nothing. Well, he'd show them to-morrow. Of course

Holbrook would break away from his captors and come in with the story. But that could not be trusted to altogether. He must put some one on the track of the vanished reporter to give him aid if needed.

Who would be the best man for the work?

Of course Holbrook himself was the best man for a bit of detective work and Bowers found himself smiling at the absurd persistence with which the notion of setting a man to investigate his own disappearance thrust itself on his mind. However with Holbrook gone he'd better take Yates. It was not precisely a police case and he wanted those talkative guardians of the peace kept in ignorance of it as long as possible. Yates would be precisely the man to find out all the police might learn on their own account without giving them the slightest hint of *The Blade's* peculiar interest in the matter.

It was Yates who had won journalistic fame by unraveling the mystery which grew out of the discovery of the headless body of a man, wrapped in burlaps and floating in the East River.

Being headless the police were unable to identify the body—that is, the body being headless not the police. But Yates blundered upon the solution of the mystery by one of those

lucky chances which often lead to a newspaper hit.

He had been at work steadily on the case for almost three days without sleep, and saw little chance of regular rest for a day to come. So, after the fashion of newspaper men in such a situation he betook himself to a Turkish bath, hoping that a steam, a cold plunge and an hour's doze would put him on his feet again. While recumbent on a marble slab undergoing the pounding and scraping that attach to this oriental form of refreshment, he heard two of the rubbers in an adjoining booth talking of the mysterious disappearance of one of their fellows.

"It's six days now Tom's been gone," said one. "Looks queer to me. His pay-envelope's in the office yet, so he can't have quit. I went up to his room the other night, and his landlady said she hadn't seen him for several days, and the room was all dusty as if nobody had been there. He isn't married, and nobody is looking for him. I'd think he'd just thrown up the job and gone off somewhere on a spree, but if he'd gone off on the loose he'd be wanting that money in his pay-envelope."

No more sleepiness for the reporter. Calling to the men he asked the name of their missing friend.

"Did he have any marks on his body you could identify him by?"

"Sure. He worked around here all day with nothing on but a waistcloth, and he had a big mole the size of a mouse just under his right shoulder blade. But why do you want to know?" the rubber asked.

"Oh nothing. I just had an idea he might be somewhere and concealing his identity," said the reporter, who hurried through his bath with a cold plunge that took the place of the sleep he had promised himself. A few minutes later at the city morgue he had identified the ghastly body, and with the clew thus obtained had, within a day or two, run down the criminals implicated in the murder without the aid of the police, and without the news being obtainable by any other paper.

Those are the two chief triumphs of newspaper detective work—to be able to dispense with the police, and to "beat" your rivals.

With this achievement of Yates's in his memory Bowers felt that this was the man for the job on hand. So turning back to the desk he took up the assignment book and wrote on a line under date of the day just coming in.

Yates--------See Mr. Bowers.

A word here about the assignment book.

It is the true nerve center of a newspaper organization. It is the book of fate to the younger reporters for on its notations, day by day, hang their hopes of profitable work, their chief chances of success and advancement in their calling. It is in brief the method adopted in large offices of notifying the score or so of reporters just what their work for the day is to be.

In appearances it is simply a big dated journal or diary, with a page for every day. On these pages, day by day, assistants to the city editor note down under the appropriate future dates such happenings as they learn of as may be worth reporting, or "covering" in newspaper phrase. All the newspapers are carefully read in search of such advance dates. Every reporter bringing in a story which promises later developments reports to the keeper of the book the date on which it is to be continued. The mass of invitations, advance notices, accounts of adjourned meetings that flow into a newspaper office all give up dates for the assignment book. Infinite pains and foresight enter into its composition, and properly maintained it is a sort of chronology of all coming events.

Every morning the city editor receives from his assistant the book written up for the day.

Thereupon he scans the subjects critically and determines what reporter shall be assigned to each. This is one of the tests of ability in a city editor—to so know the qualities of his staff as to always send the right man on each story. A picturesque descriptive writer is little needed at a meeting of The Friends of Foreign Missionaries, and a man with a taste for "high-brow" occasions would do the paper little good at the annual outing of the Mulberry Bend Dancing and Athletic Association.

When the reporters come in at noon and again at 6.30 P. M. the customary hours for reporting on a morning paper—this book is exposed that from it each may learn what is to be his job for the day.

This is the reporters' daily lottery. In most large cities the reporter is paid by space, that is so much a column for matter printed in the paper. Upon the nature of his assignment depends to a very great degree his day earnings. "Cubs," as the new reporters are called, are given those assignments which require little experience, and which for that very reason will produce stories requiring but little space. As a result the weekly earnings of the "cubs" are of the sort to test their gameness, and their ability to live on nothing a day. If they prove game enough to stand this test they will

gradually get more productive assignments, which in time lead up to incomes that professional men might well envy.

A typical page of an assignment book reads something like this.

Wednesday, July 27, 1936

Investigation Trade Board .....Brooks
City Hall .....Myers
Hollister trial, get plenty pictures .....Sanders
Go to Sing Sing .....Rice
Van Antwerp wedding ..Miss Cady, take two artists
Anderson murder .....Brooks
Interview Morgan .....Forbes

In addition to the reporters who get their assignments from the book are those who have their regular daily posts, as the man attached to the city hall, the police headquarters man, the ship news reporter, the Wall Street men and so on. But for the bulk of the reportorial staff the assignment book is the announcement of the orders of the day, and they grab for it on entering the "shop" with the eagerness that attends any game of chance.

The note made by Bowers on the book this night was merely a notification to the reporter named that the city editor had some special service for him the nature of which required special directions. Having jotted it down

Bowers pulled on his coat and started to leave.

Phil Derby, who had been watching his movements, stole a hasty look at the book and then intercepted the editor on his way.

"Mr. Bowers," said he rather wistfully, "Couldn't you give me a chance on that story of the Italian? I know something about it, and I've been here a long time without a chance to handle a story. I don't want to be a copy boy forever."

"Well, Phil," was the not unkindly response. "That's a pretty big story for a cub. I was just thinking that with Jimmie gone I didn't have a reporter really capable of working the thing out. So it seems as if it would be a little beyond a youngster like you. And besides, you know, you really don't know anything particular about it. The wop wished off his Black Hand message on you, but that doesn't put you on to the inside of the story. But you're right about being due for some reportorial work, and I'll promise you some assignments next week. Remind me of it Monday."

The editor turned to go. A thought struck Phil. In a more subdued manner he interposed.

"Well, Mr. Bowers, to-morrow is my day off, and if you would not mind my taking a leave of

absence for Saturday and Sunday I'd be grateful. There are some things I want to do, and Monday I'll remind you of those assignments."

"All right, Phil,"said the other good naturedly. "But don't go and vanish like Jimmie," and therewith he was gone.

Phil turned back toward the copy desk. The hard rush of the night was now over. Most of the desks were vacated, though at one a group of men on the late watch sat playing cards to while away the time until "something might break." Phil dropped into a chair and fell to thinking.

It had suddenly occurred to him during his talk with Bowers that while he might not know anything definite about the affair, he at least knew as much as any one else. And he did not believe the reporters were such endowed geniuses that they could solve this mystery any better than he, if he had the time to give to it. With this thought in his mind he had asked his chief for the leave of absence which would give him three days to work on the case.

"I don't see how it will be any harder for me just because I am a copy boy," he thought. "The office wants the story kept quiet, so even if I were a reporter I could not go to the police for help, or tell anybody what I was work-

ing on. So I guess I'll just plug along on my own for three days, and see what I can get. Gee! If I could get the whole story it would jump me right on the local staff without being a cub at all."

He went over to the city editor's desk to look through the waste basket for the stuff he had brought back from the garage. The envelope he found quickly enough, and a roll of blank sheets of paper, but the sheet with the Black Hand Mr. Bowers had locked away in the desk. Phil studied what he had intently.

"One thing is sure, that's not copy paper," he thought.

The paper used in newspaper offices called "copy paper" is merely the ordinary print paper from the press room cut into convenient sizes. Any newspaper man would recognize it at once.

"Now that means that the fellow at the garage has probably got what Jimmie wrote, and substituted this paper for it. If I could get into the garage and get hold of Jimmie's original copy it might help to clear the matter up.

"This thing reminds me of the story of the old darkey that found the mule," he said to himself. "The mule had run away and all the white men in the place had given up the search for it. Then old Unc' Ajax took hold.

In about three hours he turned up at the village store with the animal.

"'How'd you get him so quick?' asked the amazed owner.

"'Well sah, I jest sot down and thought, now if I was a mule and had runned away what 'ud I do? And when I'd got that figgered out I jest went and done it. And here's yer mule.'"

"But somehow," reflected Phil in conclusion, "I don't just see how I can figure out what Jimmie would do if abducted, for he didn't do it. He had it done to him. Guess I'd better go home and sleep on it."

And full of great plans for the morrow he went out into the city streets, deserted save for a few night workers, and the rumbling market wagons from the farms across the rivers bringing in the day's supply of food for the sleeping city.

CHAPTER III

HOW REPORTERS "CATCH ON"

GETTING a reportorial post on a New York newspaper is a little easier than securing a personal interview with the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court but not much. And the job, once obtained, does not for some time pay anything in proportion to the difficulty of winning it. City editors usually give the applicant for such a post the idea that it is the most precious gift at the disposal of man, but once it is given its value, measured by the weekly pay envelope, is not so precious after all.

Veteran journalists who have attained the highest editorial positions, or have even become owners of their own newspapers, often have humorous tales to tell of how they got their first jobs. In most cases they admit that it was through the influence of some personal friend on the staff, pertinacity in seeking the job that beat down all obstacles, or, more often than any other one cause, sheer luck. Men who afterwards rose to the very highest positions on the New York press have often boasted that in

the days preceding their actual apprenticeship they had to spend more than one night on a bench in City Hall park for lack of other lodging while they were fighting for a place on Park Row—as the newspaper center of the metropolis was then called.

In waiting long for his chance Phil Derby had undergone the experience common to most young newspaper men. There is about the profession a certain glamour—a charm that attracts to it more aspirants than can readily find places. Every city editor has a catalogue of aspirants which seems to equal a small city directory, and there is reason for the suspicion that it is seldom looked at but that the man who happens to be on the spot when the need arises gets the job.

Phil had seen this happen more than once in his humble association with the editorial rooms of *The Blade*. He knew how difficult it was for the mere unknown man in search of a job to secure even a hearing with the city editor, and how short and brusque were the responses which such applicants usually received from that potentate. But he knew too how quick was the recognition given in the office to a piece of good work, and how suddenly a reporter might be elevated from the lowly station of a "cub" to the "star" class.

Steady, persistent, accurate and grubbing work counts in newspaper offices as it does in any other calling. But nowhere is the element of luck greater; the chance of enduring success founded on a sudden flash of intuition half so great.

Of course the patient grubber does not always get his reward at once. Chester Lord, long the managing editor of the *New York Sun* at the time of that paper's greatest brilliancy, tells the story of a reporter who encountered a tough assignment at the time of the great blizzard in New York in 1888. A report had come in to the office that several funeral parties had been overwhelmed by the storm and the driving snow out at Greenwood Cemetery and were in grave danger. A new reporter was assigned to the job of looking them up. It was before the days of subways, and the elevated trains were stalled by the storm. The cemetery was on the extreme northern limit of the city. But by super-human exertions the reporter managed to reach the spot, and plunged through the drifts looking for signs of distress. He returned to the office, worn and utterly exhausted after six hours struggle with the storm and with frostbitten feet that had to be thawed out in a bucket of cold water. When he was able to hold a pen

he wrote all the story that the news demanded. It was this:

"During the day it was reported that several funeral parties had been overwhelmed in Greenwood Cemetery. Investigation showed this to be untrue."

A reporter who before the end of his career developed into a widely known foreign correspondent and managing editor of the New York papers tells this story of the way in which accident helps the young newspaper man to get a start:

"To a beginner, opportunity is everything. It came to me quite by accident. On the morning of July 12, 1870, the city editor said: 'Go to Elm Park this afternoon and write a quarter column about the picnic of the Orangemen.' The assignment was given to me, as a novice, only because of its unimportance. Elm Park lay on the high ridge of land between Central Park and the Hudson River, where West Ninety-second Street is to-day. St. Agnes' Church now stands upon its grounds, but at that time neither Columbus Avenue nor any neighboring cross-street had been cut through. The only means of access was by Eighth Avenue horse-cars, and an hour was required to get there.

"I was very young, and when I reached the

park the Orangemen, their wives and daughters took me to their hearts—especially as I was the only newspaper reporter on the ground. I danced with the girls and played ball with the boys.

"About four o'clock, without warning, the wooden gate was burst in and a gang of men who had been at work on the big water-pipes of Eighth Avenue came rushing into the picnic grounds. Stones were thrown and clubs freely used. Many people were struck down. One man, of middle age, seated with his wife and children, was hit on the head with a paving-stone and killed in my sight. Half an hour elapsed before a squad of police appeared and drove the intruders off.

"The 'Elm Park Riot' is a memorable event in metropolitan history.

"The novice knew that he had a highly important and sensational piece of news. Gathering the names of the injured men and women, and securing from the widow her place of residence and all obtainable information concerning the dead man's life, I ran to the Eighth Avenue car line, reaching Printing House Square before the news of the riot had come from Police Headquarters. At that time, no telegraphic or telephonic communication existed between the station-houses and headquarters.

"When told the facts in my possession, City Editor Moore comprehended that he could 'beat the town' if he could get the best out of the only reporter eye-witness to the riot. He dispatched half a dozen men to various points; but they found the park closed and the picnickers gone, sorrowing, to their homes. Only fragmentary statements were procurable at the station-houses in the Bloomingdale region.

"Attentions were showered upon the young reporter that night. I was given a desk in a private room; my dinner was ordered from a restaurant; every encouragement was given to me to write—write, and keep writing. I was told to go on and not to stop. Experienced workmen laid out the story for me, telling me how to 'keep going,' but warning me not to quit. Crudities in my copy were trimmed out; many parts of my work were re-written and expanded. In the final edition of the paper of the next morning I received credit for several columns of matter at $10 per column.

" 'My fortune is made!' I thought. Including the account of the funeral of the Orangeman, in which I walked beside the hearse from Tompkins Square to a grave in Greenwood, my bill for the week exceeded $100."

But to return to Phil Derby and the problems that were engaging him. As he walked

through the brightening dawn several stories of lucky strikes in the newspaper world passed through his mind. There was the classic one of Fred Warner of Boston, who led the police to the scene of a well planned bank robbery and nabbed the safe-breakers, all as the result of wondering why the watchman at the door of the bank did not know the name of the street the bank faced.

Warner was motoring through a suburban town on his way back to Boston about dusk. He was uncertain of his way, but knew that if he could find Washington Street—the extension of the well-known thoroughfare of that name in the city—he would have a direct road. Seeing a man sitting reading behind the steel grating of the front door of a closed bank Warner appealed to him for aid.

"Friend, can you tell me where Washington Street is?" he shouted.

The watchman seemed puzzled for a moment then replied hesitatingly,

"Keep on the way you are going. It crosses this street a few blocks down."

Not doubting his informant Warner drove on, but as he studied the street signs looking for the name of the cross street he was rather nonplussed to discover that it was Washington Street on which he was driving.

For a moment he gave little thought to the matter. He was in a hurry, and on the right road—that was all that interested him but as he drove on alone in his car he began to wonder—and when a reporter begins to wonder some discovery is apt to be made.

"Curious that fellow did not know the name of the street his bank fronted," he said to himself musingly. "He acted as if he belonged there—had on a uniform and a badge all right. In these summer months there's nothing unusual in a night watchman leaving the door open except for the grating and sitting there till the night gets cool. But they don't usually leave a bank in charge overnight to a stranger, and that fellow must be a stranger if he doesn't know the names of the streets. As a rule a night watchman must be personally known to at least the executive officers of the bank, and that means that he must have lived in the town some time. And that fellow hesitated before he answered me at all. Of course I shouted from the car and he might not have understood me—might have thought I asked for some other street."

Meantime his car was speeding on, putting mile after mile between him and the spot about which his vague suspicions were forming. The instinct of the reporter was strong in him, and

steadily suggested that he go back and investigate.

"I hate to go back," he said aloud, "but I've a hunch there's something wrong at that bank. Perhaps the watchman's gone looney, or perhaps that fellow laid the real watchman out and is standing guard while his pals are cracking the safe. It's Saturday night too, the very night that bank burglars choose for operating in the country because they have Sunday to make their getaway before the bank reopens. I suppose I'm making a darned fool of myself, and its going to cost me a lot of time, but I'm going back to look into things."

So saying he swung his car about and started back over the road by which he had come. As he came into the town he slowed up,

"I'll just run slowly by the bank and see if that fellow is still there," he thought.

It was darker now and he moved slowly along the side of the street furthest from the bank. As he drew near he saw that the watchman was no longer in the doorway; the banking room was lighted and he could see his man sitting at the further end, in a sort of cashier's enclosure and still with his paper in his hand. And just then something occurred that made Warner think he had been a fool to spend good

time and 24-cent gasoline running back to look after a country bank watchman.

For just then a policeman came lounging along, stopped at the grilled door of the bank and shouted,

"Hullo, Aleck! Any cooler in there?"

An answering word or two which Warner could not hear came from within, and the officer, seemingly suspecting nothing, passed on his way, looking in now and then at the door of some closed shop, and occasionally trying a lock.

"Well, I AM a poor gink," thought Fred, highly disgusted with the situation and with himself. "Here I come chasing back some fifteen miles to spy on a suspicious character who is on such terms with the police that they call him by his first name. I guess I'll give up this game and go home."

However the car needed some gas and as he turned in at the neighboring station for a supply it occurred to him that he would not get home until late and that he might feed himself as well as his engine. So he strolled along the street to where a great flare of yellow light betrayed the location of an old street car, fitted with tables, chairs and a kitchenette and which under the engaging title of "The Little

Delmonico's" proffered "Quick lunches at all hours."

On the way he passed the door of the bank and looking in again he had a clear view of all the interior that was not cut off by a heavy walnut partition which screened the clerks from the part of the room occupied by customers. No vault was visible, and its door was presumably behind that partition.

"Not very up to date," mused Warner, "The best defense for a bank vault is publicity. It ought to be out in the open, brightly lighted so that the most casual passer can see anything going on around it."

There were not many passers-by at this moment however, and Warner stopped to look at the watchman reading his paper. He was still oppressed by his "*hunch*," his suspicion that something was wrong. He noticed that as his footsteps paused before the door the watchman, who had laid his paper down, picked it up as though to continue his reading. Held thus it practically concealed his whole face and no one looking in casually could have recognized him. The action and attitude were, however, natural enough and Fred would have thought nothing of them had he not suddenly noticed that the paper was held upside down.

"That's queer too," thought Warner. "He's

not reading that paper. Looks like he was just using it for a screen."

His appetite for coffee and crullers began to wane, and the reportorial hunger for information grew once more upon him.

"I'll just stroll around behind the bank and see if there is anything suspicious," he thought.

The bank was a two story brick structure near the middle of a long block, behind which ran a narrow unpaved alley. It was dark by this time and the only patches of light in the alley were from the back windows of the bank and one or two shops in which night lights had been left burning. As Warner peered around the corner into the blackness of the alley, he thought he saw a lurking form in the shadows.

"Looks like a picket on guard," said he to himself. By this time he was fairly well convinced that something was going on, and reflected that if he walked boldly into the alley he would either frighten away the crooks who, he felt sure, were robbing the bank, or would get himself laid out by the picket on guard. Either would spoil the story—and that to a newspaper man is an unforgivable blunder. Little as he liked to do it he sought out the policeman who had seemed so friendly with the night watchman.

"You're crazy in the head," responded that

guardian of the peace contemptuously. "Didn't I just say hello to Aleck?"

"Sure you did, but did you see his face? Does Aleck usually read his paper upside down?"

After some discussion, in the course of which the officer was with difficulty dissuaded from walking "right up to the door and calling Aleck out," the reporter persuaded him to take the story to headquarters only a block away. As a result officers blocked the exits from the alley, and a rush upon the front door of the bank disclosed the true watchman bound and gagged on the floor, while the newspaper reader was shielding from observation a man diligently engaged in drilling the door of the vault. The detection of the robbers was a first page story the next day, and Warner found himself well paid for having followed the trail his suspicions had indicated.

Newspaper annals are full of records of successes based on just such seeming bits of luck. But in fact they are not luck, but rather the result of steady development of the powers of observation. When Sherlock Holmes reproached Dr. Watson for not noting even the commonplace things which he encountered in his daily walks and conversations he was laying down a useful creed for the would-be reporter.

CHAPTER IV

A CLUE IN THE NIGHT

Some years ago a New York newspaper, in its restless search for new sensations, set out to prove that it was virtually impossible to detect a fugitive among the crowds of a great city, even though printed descriptions and newspaper pictures of the individual were available for identification. "The Mysterious Mr. X" was created for the purpose of demonstrating this theory, and incidentally attracting attention to the paper. His part in the enterprise was easy, and not unpleasant. All he was asked to do was to loiter about town, go where the crowds were thickest, be in the Wall Street district at the noon-hour, and in the theater belt at night. Instead of avoiding notice he was to court it, while day by day the newspaper printed pictures of him, the story of his wanderings the day before, and the fact—which would seem to have been calculated to arouse general interest—that whosoever recognized him and tapped him on the shoulder with the greeting "You are the Mysterious Mr. X"

would straightway be escorted to the newspaper office and receive a reward of $50 for his perspicacity.

Now the interesting thing about this experiment was that the man, though heralded more widely than was ever any fleeing murderer, walked the streets of New York for days without detection. He took pains, by eccentricities of garb and demeanor to attract attention. Being provided with a comfortable expense account he frequented spots where individuals were apt to observe each other—fashionable restaurants, the horse-show, the theaters. He strolled much about the newspaper district, and afterwards told with glee of riding in the office elevator of the paper offering the reward, and engaging in conversation two men who must have read the daily story, neither of whom recognized him as "The Mysterious Mr. X." On one occasion he sat in a café, and directed the attention of a stranger to the newspaper's offer, remarking that it seemed an easy way to pick up $50. The man addressed agreed with him, but evidently did not give the matter enough thought to notice whether the affable stranger who had engaged him in conversation resembled the picture in the paper about which he was talking.

The newspaper which made this test—re-

peated afterwards in several cities—did it with the purpose of discovering the chances of a criminal for escape if, instead of fleeing to strange solitudes, he should try rather to lose himself in the great multitude of men.

It was into this multitude that the vanished reporter had been carried. The traditional needle in a haystack offered no more baffling problem to the searcher. He had disappeared at midnight somewhere along a line leading from Little Italy far up town, through the teeming East Side over to the dark and gloomy water side of South Brooklyn. Along that route lay the most crowded quarters of the various foreign colonies, the darkest purlieus of the underworld, the loneliest reaches of the river front. If it were the purpose of the abductors of Jim Holbrook to do away with him, he had himself chosen to travel the way which afforded the safest and most secluded spots for the concealment of the crime. Even New York's Chinatown, with its maze of underground passages planned for the discomfiture of the pursuing police, lay in the immediate vicinity of this route.

These reflections occupied the mind of the city editor of *The Blade* as he strode homeward after the paper went to press the night of Holbrook's disappearance. He was one of the

veterans of the service in New York and his knowledge of the city's purlieus was encyclopedic. Yates, the reporter who had been assigned to the story, accompanied Mr. Bowers on his walk up-town, and as they plodded through the silent and deserted streets the city editor strove to formulate in his own mind a theory as to the mystery and plan for its solution.

"Jimmy Holbrook was all right four hours ago," he said. "We know that, because he phoned me at 11 o'clock and I recognized his voice. Besides the handwriting on the envelope was his, even if the stuff inside wasn't. So what we have to consider is the various things that might have happened to him after he left the garage. It's a district in which almost anything might happen to an ordinary man, but reporters don't often get sandbagged. Either fate, or the fact that they're generally known to be broke and not worth holding up protects them."

"Perhaps he stopped somewhere for a late lunch and was doped," suggested Yates.

"Nonsense! Don't you see that the fact that Jimmy's copy was taken out of the envelope at the garage shows that the garage-keeper was in on the deal whatever it may have been. He knew when the car left his doors just what was

going to happen to Jim. Whatever was done, wasn't done by him for he was still at his shop when our boy went up after the copy, but he knows just what was done. The first thing to do is to find him, and make him talk."

"Easy enough to find him," put in the reporter, "but it's another thing to make him talk."

"That's right too. We can't apply the third degree as the police do, and beat up the poor devil until he tells all he knows and a good deal more. And we can't go to the police to do it for us. Well, it's up to you, Yates. The assignment has been given you."

"Have you any theory to work on?"

"Well, of course it is all part of a Black Hand plot. That Italian banker has been abducted for blackmail. The crooks believed that Holbrook had enough of their story to defeat their ends if it were printed, so they kidnaped him too, and threw his copy away. Simple sort of ruffians, those blackhanders. Jim's original story might have been worth a column, but they've made it worth a page at least—whether we find him or not," concluded Bowers, with a rather darkling suggestion that a dead reporter under such conditions might be a bigger news item than even a kidnaped one.

"Of course I'll get to the garage first thing in the morning. But there's a good chance that that fellow has skipped. Or even if he's there he may not be willing to talk. Then what?"

"Your job, Yates! But you know you are pretty likely to run into a clue by just sticking around the place, or following up the route that Jim started on when he left for the boat. Sometimes instinct or accident helps you a lot on a case like this. Ever hear the story of how Bogart, once city editor on the *Sun*, was in at the death in a murder? No. This is the way John used to tell it:

" 'One day I was walking up Broadway when suddenly a current of news came up from a cellar and enveloped me. I felt the difference in the temperature of the air. I tingled with the electricity or magnetism in the current. It seemed to stop me, to turn me around, and to force me to descend some stairs which reached up to the street by my side.

" 'I ran down the stairs and as I did so a pistol shot sounded in my ears. One man had shot another and I found myself at the scene upon the instant.'

"You'll find that a 'hunch,' as the boys call it, or 'the sixth sense' as they say when they want to be literary, is the thing that makes the successful reporter. You can't tell about it

'til you try. There was the case of the Washington correspondent who heard a politician inquiring about the climate of Lisbon and instantly spotted him as the successful candidate for the post of minister at that city. Out in Chicago once a newspaper man happening to see several important financiers entering a building in the down town district at an hour of the night when that section was usually deserted jumped to the conclusion that they were assembling to consider the case of a national bank which was reported to be in straits. Absolutely forcing his way into their conference he told them he was going to print a story based on his suspicions, and suggested it would be to the advantage of the financial community if they told him the exact truth. They kicked pretty vigorously, and declared that if he printed a word they'd get him fired. In the end however they gave up, the story was printed, the bank failed and its president was sent to the pen. If the newspaper sense had not led the reporter to wonder why the president of the biggest bank in Chicago was wandering around the financial district at midnight the *Tribune* would have lost one of its historic beats."

"All of which is very interesting," said Yates, "but I'm not confident of getting a

hunch that will set me on Jimmy's trail. Did you ever think how easy it would have been for those fellows to shanghai him? If he drank at all I'd figure that was just what might have happened. As it is he might have tried to get into the confidence of those fellows by drinking with them, and they might have doped his drink even if it was a soft one. Once this was done they could dump him into the hold of any outgoing ship with or without the skipper's knowledge. They probably figured that if their drive on the banker could be kept out of the newspapers for a few days he'd give up the hush-money they are after."

"Yes, that's true enough. We used to get some bully good stories of shanghaing in the days when New York bay was full of sailing ships waiting for crews. The trade isn't so profitable in these days of steam. But I don't believe they ever shanghaied Jimmy. What's more I don't believe they've thrown him off this job. Unless you get busy and find him, he's likely to turn up at the office in the morning with the story of his own abduction and scoop you. So you'd better get busy. Here's my corner—good-night."

The city editor turned off into one of the brown-stone canyons which at that time served New York for residence streets. The reporter

continued his way up town. At Union Square, being somewhat chilled, he turned into an ancient street car which had been made over into a sort of peripatetic eating-place and demanded coffee. It was a regular resort for him daily when the grayness of dawn was just beginning to redden at the eastern ends of the cross town streets. Often he brought up a first edition, fresh from the press, and gave it to the sanguinary looking Italian who earned an honest living by selling doughnuts and coffee to newspapermen, street cleaners, policemen and other toilers of the night.

"Anything doing to-night, Luigi?" he inquired as he clambered on a stool in front of the doubtful counter. "Can't you dig up a good story for me? I come in here every morning and buy your sinkers, and stake you for a paper, and you don't ever give me a tip. I know there are plenty of things doing down in Little Italy that you could tell about, but you don't. Come on now. What's the latest in Black Hand circles?"

The Italian started as though struck by a chance shot, but recovered himself quickly, grinning.

"All the Black Hand stories in your newspaper offices—we have nothing like that in our places. It's what you call the fake isn't it?"

"Fake nothing. About four-fifths of you Italians are paying tribute to that crowd to-day. Probably you do it yourself. I heard once that they sent out word to places like yours that if you didn't put up $5.00 or so a month they'd come round every now and then and smash your windows. I don't see any broken panes in your windows. Guess you put up the five all right."

"Yes, you Americans! You always talk about Black Hand. You think only Italians hold people up for graft. Now I tell you. I do get letters like that. So does everybody like me doing business all night on the streets. But from Italians? No. Sometimes from gangs—just street boys who say they smash my windows, or tip over Mike's cart, or steal Pete's bananas. What then? Talk to police—your American police? He do nothing unless we give him a tip. Cop on this beat have supper in my place every night, and never pay nothing. Is he what you call dago Black-Hander? No. He's a Mick. Pat his name is, but nobody ever says anything about what he does. Only to-night he was here—sitting where you are now and somebody hollered 'Murder!' outside. A big car going by, three men fighting inside, window glass breaking, and driver stepping on gas so go like the wind. Think your cop try to

catch it. Not much. He look from the plate of beans he was eating and laugh. 'Some one got a sucker in that car,' says he. 'No use for me to bother—I'm busy here.' "

"Say, what time did that happen?" interrupted Yates, losing all interest in the question whether the Black Hand or the police were the biggest grafters.

"Oh, about twelve—maybe one o'clock. Terrible noise. Car coming down from north on Madison Avenue—somebody smash the window, and holler like blazes. Went down into Bowery."

"Man's voice, I suppose."

"Oh yes—cuss like thunder too."

"How could you tell there were more than two people in the car?"

"I ran out when I first heard the noise. Come, I'll show you. See right there under electric light I thought the car was going to run up on side-walk. It made a big turn all of a sudden, but driver swung it into middle of street. When it was close by the light I could see that two men were holding one fellow down on the seat. It all over in a minute, and I got back in time to give that cop some more beans."

"All right, Luigi. You surely lead a lively life. I guess I'll go over and look at the track that car took. There might be a story in it."

Nodding good-night to the Italian the reporter walked a few feet to where Madison Avenue crossed Fourteenth Street. It was now daylight, but even at night the spot was brightly lighted and he could readily see how keen eyes could have made out what was going on in a car on that thoroughfare. A few splinters of broken glass gave testimony of the Italian's story that he heard a breaking window as the car sped by, but the smooth hard asphalt retained no traces to show the course it had taken. Yates considered his problem carefully.

"Jim may have been in that car," he thought. "If he left the garage up at 163rd Street soon after he telephoned, he would be getting along here just about the time Luigi says he heard the scrap. Now he naturally would come straight down Madison Avenue as there is no traffic there late at night. Bowers said he was going over to the piers at South Brooklyn. If he planned that he could either cross the river on the Queensborough Bridge at 59th and keep on down the Long Island side of the river, or come on down to one of the lower bridges. That would bring him past Union Square and into the Bowery just as this car was running. Wonder what started the row! Perhaps he began to get suspicious when they ran by 59th Street without taking that bridge, and tried to

give them orders. When they refused to obey he tried to get out. I'll bet that started the row.

"Now, let's see. It's daylight. I've had a bite to eat and I think I'll just work my way southward toward Mulberry Street where the wops live and see if I can run up against that car. If they took Jim into any of the Italian haunts down there they'd have to leave the car outside. The district isn't so very big—I could walk all through it in an hour."

And thus, full of eager speculation, Yates turned into the Bowery and walked toward the down-town Italian colony. He reflected that the solitude of the streets at that hour would make the quest easier. By day these highways in the congested tenement house district are crowded from curb to curb, lines of push carts on either side helping to block the way. But at four in the morning few people were out, and at a glance one could take in the entire length of a street in that narrow section of Manhattan Island, and see clearly whether any vehicle stood in it. Passing Bleecker and Houston Street with a swift examination Yates turned into Mulberry Street. He had gone but a little way, glancing sharply to the right and left as he crossed intersecting streets, when a thrill came over him. Drawn up before a

dingy tenement half-a-block away stood a closed automobile—the only vehicle of any sort in sight in that deserted section. Yates made for it at once. If it only had a broken window, he reflected, the quarry would be in sight. Sure enough when he came near enough he saw that one window was broken out.

"Wonder if I could get in?" he thought. "Perhaps I might find a clue of some sort," and acting on the thought he started to turn the handle when a rough voice demanded to know what he wanted, and a swarthy man, who had been half-lying across the back seat showed a somewhat threatening face at the window and demanded to know what he wanted.

"Oh, the car looked sort of bunged up," said Yates, keeping a safe distance, "and I thought maybe there'd been an accident."

"Well, there ain't been no accident yet, young feller," responded the inmate, "but there's likely to be one if you keep meddling with things that ain't no business of yours."

"No harm done," said Yates, and then trying to smooth things out he continued, "You see I'm a reporter and I thought maybe there was a story in this car."

To his astonishment the man seemed to be panicstricken by his words.

"Reporter!" he shouted, clambering over

the back of the seat to the driver's place. "Well, if you don't get out of this pretty quick you'll be a dead reporter." And thereupon pressing the accelerator and throwing off his brake he sped away, leaving Yates staring after him.

"Looks suspicious," reflected that youth. "He doesn't like reporters and if he had a tussle with Jimmy Holbrook I don't blame him. Well, I've got the number of his car anyway. Wonder if I could get any line on what he was standing out here for."

So thinking he turned to the door of the tenement before which the car had stood. Within was the usual narrow hall, with a grimy stairway leading up into darkness only slightly relieved by a few slender flames of gas. In the early morning all was silent, and though Yates stole steadily up to the top floor and back he heard nothing suspicious. With a sigh of relief he emerged, breathing in the fresh air in great gulps after the fetid atmosphere of the tenement.

"Well, I'll just remember this place, and try again when there's some life in it," he said to himself. "Now if I'm going to be sleuth around the garage and the bank later, I'd better get a bit of sleep." And puzzling over the little he had discovered he made his way home.

CHAPTER V

IN LITTLE ITALY

Early morning found Phil on his way to Little Italy. There had been slender sleep for him during the night despite the late hour at which he had turned in. The task he had set himself so occupied his mind that it was with difficulty that he could stop planning long enough for slumber to overcome him. But in the brisk air of the winter's morning he was soon as alert and eager as though he had had a regular plowboy's sleep.

"Now that I've tackled this job," he said to himself, "How am I going about it? The first thing of course is to get solid with the people at the garage and look about a bit, and see if I can get hold of Mr. Holbrook's copy." Phil had too much respect for the missing star reporter often to call him "Jimmie."

"I might be able to get some sort of a job in the shop if the fellow who gave me the phony envelope does not remember my face. I can drive a car, all right, and on a pinch could overhaul one. But I would not dare to ask that dago guy for a job. He'd be onto me in a minute.

Then I suppose some of the reporters from the office will be snooping around there, and if they recognized me it would be all off. But in some way I've just got to get into that garage, and get in to-day before they clean out all their waste paper."

Pondering over his problem he climbed the elevated railway stairs and set out on the northward trip. From the car window he looked down upon streets that, so far as their denizens were concerned, might have been slices taken from Naples or from Genoa. In the chill winter sunshine the people of the tenements thronged the streets, the curbs of which were lined with pushcarts piled high with vegetables, meat, fruits, scraps of bright cloth and all sorts of salable "notions." The Italians who have come to our country have brought with them many of the habits of their early homes. They live out of doors much as they did in Italy and for much the same reason—their tenements being too crowded and squalid to make indoor life pleasant, and sunshine affording cheaper heat than coal at New York prices. It is cheapness too that keeps the pushcart market in operation, for with no rent to pay the small merchant wheels his petty stock from place to place and retails his goods free from what the business world calls "overhead charges." In

many sections of New York these curb markets give an air of European gaiety to the drab and monotonous streets in which they are maintained.

Descending from the elevated Phil began to formulate his plan of campaign.

"I'll sneak up to the corner opposite the garage," he thought. "And see if the big fellow I saw the other day is on deck. I'd better keep an eye out for reporters too. Some of them might know me, and it would be difficult to explain what I am doing here. Now supposing the man I saw is there again? He'd be almost certain to recognize me, for he must know what a trick he played on me. But then, did he play the trick? How do I know that he knew what was in the envelope? But anyway I hope I'll not run up against him for it would surely lead to trouble."

By this time Phil was near the spot where the garage stood. Pulling his hat over his eyes, and turning up his overcoat collar he took up a station on the corner diagonally across from it. Two men were working on ladders with some sort of a sign that they were trying to place over the door. Phil watched them with little interest.

"Some new high mark for the price of gas," he thought.

But just then the sign swung into place. It read

THIS PLACE HAS CHANGED HANDS

"And a good job, too!" thought Phil at first, as he recalled the trick that had been played *The Blade* by the retiring proprietors of the shop. But then he began to wonder just why the change, and the eagerness of the new people to make it known.

Did it mean that the smiling Italian he had seen the night before had dropped out? If so it would be safe for him to go openly in and ask for a job. The sign gave him every excuse for doing it. A place in new hands should surely want some new workers. After reconnoitering carefully and assuring himself that his acquaintance of the night before was not visible he crossed the street, and approached the office of the garage. Before entering he looked warily about him. There was no sign of his smiling but treacherous friend. Whether the two or three men loafing about had been part of the former staff Phil could not tell for he had noticed only the man who had been so insistent that he should hurry away. An alert

young man, clearly an American, seemed now to be in charge.

"Do you need any helpers?" asked Phil approaching this individual.

"Well, only a handy man around the place, to clean up, wash cars and look out for people as they come in. You look pretty well dressed for that sort of work. Do you know anything about a car? Did you ever work in a garage?

"I've got my best clothes on," said Phil answering the first objection first. "You give me the job and I'll dress for it. I'm not afraid of rough work. I can run a car, clean it, and know enough about an engine to fix up any ordinary trouble."

"All right. Hang up your coat and try to get this place cleaned up. I bought it last week from a couple of Italians, and they never cleaned an inch of it from the time they sold out until I took possession. Queer bunch they were too."

And the man turned away, grumbling. Phil wanted to ask why the former owners of the place were a queer bunch, but thought it unwise to put any questions at the moment. Besides, cleaning up the shop was just the work he wanted. Perhaps he could find out where the waste paper was thrown, and in it might be Holbrook's missing copy. Throwing off his

coat and waistcoat he hunted a broom and went to work with a will. Hardly had he begun his task when he heard a familiar voice in the office and looking in saw Yates, *The Blade's* best reporter, at least best with Holbrook missing, deep in conversation with the manager of the garage.

It was no part of Phil's plan of action to let any of *The Blade* people know what he was doing on his brief leave of absence. Accordingly he took himself to the very back of the big garage, and began working hard among the cars which shut him off from observation. He would have liked to know what information, if any, Yates was getting from the garage keeper, but after all that could wait. Whatever else Yates might find out about the case Phil did not want him to find out that *he* was working on it. So he kept in the shadow of the cars, and found plenty of dirt to keep him busy.

"It wasn't because of any fear that they might be brought up by the police because of the Holbrook matter that made the Italians quit last night," he reflected. "For the boss says he bought the place a week ago. But the fact that they sold out then, shows that they had some scheme in mind that would compel them to leave the neighborhood. Wasn't that

scheme the blackmailing of Salvatore by Black-Hand methods? Perhaps he stood out against all their threats, and they concluded they would have to make their bluff good by abducting him. Then Jimmie came out here and got onto the story and these fellows learned in some way that he was on. When he came to rent a car from them what was easier for them than to put a trusty in the car and carry Jim off to some hiding place?

"Jiminy crickets!" the excited boy almost shouted out loud. "I'll bet they have Jim and Salvatore locked up in the same place. If I can find one I'll find the other. Hello, sir! Yes, coming sir."

There had come a sharp call from the boss out in front. Laying aside his broom Phil went up for orders. He saw his employer eying a somewhat begrimed closed car with doubt, while he was protesting concerning its condition to a swarthy Italian who had evidently just brought it in.

"Well, I don't suppose there is anything to be done about it now," he said, "but when I told Pietro that he could use a car on his last night I didn't suppose he would keep it out all night, and bring it back looking as if it had been in a battle. What the dickens happened to you anyway? Look at that panel. Looks

as if somebody had tried to kick it out. And one window is broken, and the linings all torn. Were you fellows giving a red wine party down in Mulberry street in these days of prohibition? That's a nice looking car to bring back. I don't believe it can be made to look decent without going to the shop for repairs."

Phil listened eagerly. Was this his clue? The man who had just brought the car in was an Italian. The car had been out all night, as the boss had said. It looked as if there had been a struggle in it. Before he could attempt to plan a course of conduct the boss told him sharply to take the car back into the garage, and see what he could do toward making it presentable. Then the two men went into the office. Before obeying orders Phil took a long look through the glass partition at the man who had brought in the car, that he might know him again in case of need. He was obviously an Italian, but not the man who had given Phil the envelope, nor had he been with the loungers about the shop when Phil had been there the night before.

Secure again in the back of the shop the boy began to take all cushions and other movable parts out of the interior of the car. It was the first work necessary for giving it a thorough cleaning. But Phil had something quite dif-

ferent in his mind. He was now certain that in this car Holbrook had been carried off, and that he had not left it without a savage struggle.

"Perhaps he dropped something in the fight," thought Phil. "Perhaps even he left something purposely as a tracer, just as in the days of Indian warfare captives used to drop bits of paper, or break off twigs along the way so as to leave a trail for their rescuers."

Holbrook, if he had indeed been in the car, had not bethought himself of quite so romantic an expedient as all this. But nevertheless as Phil thrust his hand into every crevice in the upholstery, and under the floor covering he did find an article that proved that the missing reporter had at some time been there. For wedged closely in between the edge of the seat and the body was a stump of a pencil bearing on it the name of *The Blade*—it being a not uncommon practice then for newspapers and other institutions using pencils in large quantities to have their names stamped upon them.

It was evident now to the excited boy that the lost reporter had in fact been in this car, and that before leaving it there had been some sort of a fight. Not only was the window broken, but the upholstery was scratched as though whoever left that car had been dragged

out by main force while clinging to everything that would give a hold.

"I'm getting close," said Phil to himself.

But just how close was he?

Holbrook had undoubtedly been in that car, and probably had been involved in some sort of a violent affray in it. But who were the other parties to the struggle? And where had they left the reporter? And above all, why had they kidnaped him at all?

Phil was not so deep in his consideration of these problems but that he could see out of the corner of his eye that his new employer was looking in his direction.

"Here, this won't do," he said to himself. "I don't want to get bounced and I guess I'd better do my thinking without interrupting my work. But I'd like to know who the fellow was who brought the car back, and what happened to it."

The chance for getting a line on these points came sooner than he expected, for while he was polishing the outside of the car and doing his best with a little wax to cover the scratches that marred it, the keeper of the garage came up to survey his work.

"Nice trick those dagoes played me," he said as he looked ruefully on the condition of the car. "That car was in perfectly good

shape when I bought this place. It was all right yesterday afternoon. Pete, the fellow I bought the place from, told me he had a customer who might keep it late, maybe all night. My contract was to take over the place and all it contained at midnight, and he offered to pay for the time the car should be gone after that time. But I said no—we garage keepers might charge the public for everything and then some, but we mustn't profiteer on each other. He was too foreign to see the joke but he was quick enough to understand that I wasn't going to charge him anything. Now I guess he's put the joke on me. That car might have been running on that road from Paris to Verdun where they smashed things up so during the war. I guess it will cost me $25 to get it into shape again."

"Couldn't you make the fellow who brought it back pay for it?" ventured Phil. His employer seemed so talkative that he thought he might try to get a little information on the subject that was keeping the wheels of his mind whirling like a dynamo.

"What, him? Oh, he couldn't pay for anything. He was just a driver for Bertelli, the Italian I bought this place from. Perhaps I might get something out of Bertelli if I could find him. But he's many a good mile from

here by now, and I don't know in what direction. There was something queer about that crowd of wops. They sold me this place for about half what the fixtures and stock were worth, and got nothing for the good will. They wouldn't take a check either, and I had to come up with the money in hundred dollar bills. When I took it over late last night I asked Pietro what would be his address if any mail came or anybody asked for him. He just grinned.

"'No address,' he said. 'Nobody want me—I want nobody. Go away early in morning. Go back Italy soon, week or two. No matter where I'll be till then. Tell anybody I'm dead.'

"Well, it was no business of mine. I got a bill of sale that protects me against any creditors, and if the police want him why they'll have to do their own findings. And by the way, I wonder if the police won't be looking for that bunch?"

His face grew thoughtful. Phil watched him eagerly. Perhaps what he had in mind would have some bearing on his own great problem.

"You saw that fellow talking with me just before this car was brought in?" continued Giddings. "Well, he is a reporter. He was looking for Bertelli. Seemed to think he might

know something about the disappearance of an Italian banker of this neighborhood, and was much disappointed when I told him Bertelli had disappeared too. He wanted to know if I had rented out any car late last night, and By George! I forgot all about this one that had been rented before I took hold. He asked all sorts of questions about Bertelli, his habits and his friends, but I couldn't give him any satisfaction.

"The place was advertised for sale one day last week. I came to look it over and the bunch were so eager to sell that I couldn't get away until I'd signed papers and made a deposit. Then last night, just before twelve, I came in and took possession and Pietro quit. There does seem something queer about the rush he was in to get away, and now that car coming back in the shape it is in looks as if there had been some sort of crookedness afoot. I wonder if they carried off the banker in that car? I've a good mind to telephone the paper and tell that reporter about it."

This was exactly what Phil at that moment did not want done. Quick as a flash he saw the way to delay any such action.

"No, it couldn't have been the banker," he said, "for you say that the car was rented about eleven last night, and Salvatore's disap-

pearance was told in the afternoon papers. Those fellows may have been mixed up in it however, and got a lot of money out of the banker, and been on some sort of a spree in which the car got pounded up. Anyway the reporter will probably be back in here if he keeps on investigating the story."

"Yep. I guess you're right," responded the other, and went back to the office. Phil turned again to his work.

The car was by now in pretty good shape, except for the broken window, and as Phil replaced the cushions and floor cloths he felt that it was unlikely that any other clue to its missing passenger could be concealed in it. The pencil found had satisfied him that Holbrook had been in the car, and the thoroughness of his search left him no hope that the missing copy was to be found there. So he hurried to get through with that job that he might go through the waste paper that was piled up in a corner of the disorderly and neglected garage. Betaking himself to that corner Phil now began smoothing out and piling up the paper with a view to making it into neat bundles that might be sold to the junkman. Most of it was old newspapers, or coarse wrapping paper in which supplies had come for the shop. All the time he worked Phil was on the alert for the

gleam of white copy paper, the sort which a newspaper man would have used. He unfolded and straightened out every pile of crumpled newspaper or brown paper until he was getting near the bottom of the pile.

"Wonder if they burned it up?" he thought. "But that's not likely. A man like Bertelli would not be apt to think a bit of newspaper copy very important. But hello! What's that?"

In pulling to pieces the pile of waste paper he had uncovered an ash can, half filled. From the top of the ashes protruded the corner of a sheet of white paper. Perhaps Bertelli had intended that Holbrook's story should go to the furnace after all. Carefully excavating Phil exhumed from the ashes a crumpled bundle of white paper covered with writing. It had clearly been folded to go into an envelope, and some one had torn it straight down each of the two folds. Stealthily Phil thrust it into his pocket hardly daring to look at it. He could not empty the ash can, as it was ready for the collector of ashes, but wheeling it into a corner where he could not be observed, he rolled up his sleeves to the shoulder and thrust his arms into the ashes, twisting and groping with his hands until he was convinced that there was no more paper concealed. Then he

put the can back in place and went on with his work.

He was convinced that the manuscript he had thrust in his pocket was the missing copy of the lost reporter. But at the moment he did not dare to stop his work to make a careful examination. It was drawing near nightfall, he had been interrupted in his work several times, and the boss had a right to expect that the cleaning job would be finished before he quit for dinner. So with his brain awhirl Phil plied mop and broom and shovel until he began to see the end of his work ahead. Giddings, the new owner, had gone out in front of the garage to look over a car with a customer, and Phil thought he might at least steal a glance at his treasure. Slipping it out of his pocket he smoothed it out.

It was clearly newspaper copy, but what was at the moment most important was a note addressed to the editor on the first sheet, after the fashion of reporters when sending a story from a distance they wish to call the attention of the office to some matter not directly connected with the stuff to be printed.

In this case a corner had been torn from the sheet so that part of the message was wanting, but Phil was able to read in the badly blurred pencil writing this much:

"For Mr. Bowers— Here is Salvatore story as far as I can get it for first edition. Think I am on trail of man. He is not leaving country, but is a prisoner. Hope to find him to-night. Will phone you misleading message as I don't want the wops around here to think I'm on. Will not go to dock, but shall leave car at er str and look into ce , ut rry."

There it ended. Many of the words toward the end of the note were so blurred that only one or two letters could be made out, and so large a piece had been torn from the corner of the sheet that it was possible that fifteen or twenty words had been thus obliterated, although it might have been but one or two.

"Gee!" said Phil to himself. "It looks as if I had a cipher to work out when I get done my job here."

CHAPTER VI

THE NEWSPAPER COUNCIL OF WAR

"WHAT about your lost reporter, Bowers?"

The speaker was Sidney Perkins, managing editor of *The Blade*. The editorial council was in session on the afternoon after the disappearance of Holbrook, and the staff was getting ready to concentrate its effort on the solution of that mystery.

In most large city newspapers there is held every afternoon a council of the principal editorial executives. It is usually convened about 5:30, the time at which the day staff retires to leave the conduct of the paper to the night men. Ordinarily there are present the managing editor, and night editor, the city editor, and night city editor, the head telegraph editor and sometimes the editor in chief.

The topics discussed cover a wide range. In some papers the council is made the occasion of a careful comparison of that day's edition with that of its rivals with a view to determining whether there has been any marked superiority in any one of them.

In the offices of a number of newspapers

published under one ownership is displayed this notice:

"Please sum up your paper every day at the evening conference and find out wherein it is distinctly better than the other papers. If it isn't distinctly better you have missed that day. Lay out plans to make it distinctly better the next day. If you cannot show conclusively your own paper's superiority, you may be sure the public will never discover it."

At a conference of this nature the next morning's paper can, as a rule, be laid out, although of course some sensational occurrence, late at night, may spoil the whole lay-out. But ordinarily the city editor is able to tell with reasonable accuracy what will be his big stories for the night. The telegraph editor is able to forecast the importance of news coming over the wires from Washington, and other distant news centers, and the essential features of the department news, such as sports, society and the stock market are fairly well known.

After the managing editor has indicated the manner of treatment of the various news features all sorts of topics connected with the paper come up for discussion. At this meeting naturally everybody was alert for the subject of the missing reporter. Bowers told the

story as far as it had gone, and produced the scrap of paper bearing the sketch of the Black Hand.

"I got hold of Yates early this morning and he is on the ground trying to find the man who drove the car that Holbrook went off in," he said. "But he phoned me about noon that the garage had been transferred to new owners at midnight last night, and that the new man claims to know nothing about the fellows that quit. The new owners are Americans, and it looks to me rather suspicious that the Italians should have sold out so suddenly after this story broke, and made themselves scarce. There is some connection between their action, the disappearance of Salvatore and the vanishing of Holbrook. We have got to unravel the connection. If you don't mind, Mr. Perkins, I'd like to hold the thing away from the police for a few days. If we make the slightest application to them for aid the other papers will get in on the story. I believe we can work it out in our way."

"Well, that's all right from the standpoint of the paper," responded Perkins, "But what about our reporter? You know as well as I do that the Black Hand gang are a murderous lot. If they thought our search for Jim was going to lead to the discovery of their main

works they might put a knife in him, or drop him off a dock. It's all right to nurse a news story, but we can't entirely ignore the danger to our reporter."

"You don't know Jimmie," said Bowers with a laugh. "If he could pass on this question right now he'd say 'For the Lord's sake keep out of this and let me run it. I'll risk the wops, and I'll bring back a story that will make the *World* and the *American* turn yellower than ever with envy.' That would be about his attitude. That boy will take care of himself anywhere, and if that bunch of kidnapers won't wish they had abducted a grizzly or a devil-fish in place of Jim I'll miss my guess."

"Well, if you are sure about it have it your own way. But I suppose you are not trusting wholly to Jim's escape with the story. What are you doing at this end?"

"The story," responded the city editor, "naturally divides into two parts—the disappearance of Salvatore, and the subsequent abduction—as we suppose—of Holbrook.

"Now the Salvatore case involves his business, his family, and the possible part that Black Handers may have played in it. Yates is out on the business end. He will interview the one clerk in the bank and get a full state-

ment of its condition, supplementing this with a story from the bank in which Salvatore kept his money. You know that in a financial way these little neighborhood banks, catering to a distinct nationality, don't amount to much. Salvatore had perhaps $200,000 on deposit, and never had a cash reserve in his vault of over $10,000. He did business with the Brookside National that cleared for him, and advised him on loans and investments. We have a full statement from them, showing him to have been a methodical and trustworthy man. His account with them was perfectly good, and the confidence he had established was such that they saw his bank through the little run of the last three days which followed the discovery of his disappearance.

"Now as to his wife. Yates saw her this morning, and tells me over the phone that he doesn't quite know what to make of her. He is confident that she is hiding something she knows, but whether to protect her husband from publicity, or because she is in terror of some secret danger he cannot be sure. She is an Italian, little affected as yet by her residence here, and has all the nervous excitable manner of the Latins.

"She tells Yates that a man who, from her description, must have been Holbrook, fright-

ened her yesterday by asking all sorts of questions about her Toni. She thought he was an enemy trying to find Toni to put him in prison. So she wouldn't tell him much. As a matter of fact Yates doesn't think she knows much to tell. She did say though that her Toni kept getting letters that seemed to worry him much. Whenever he opened one, she said, he would stamp his foot and pound the table with his fist, and swear—Holy Mother! How he would swear. One day he showed one of these letters to Pietro who kept the garage. Pietro looked very grave, and seemed to be trying to get Toni to do something that he did not want to do. In a few minutes the two men went over to the garage and Toni stayed there a long time. Right in the middle of the day, too, and Toni never left his bank during business hours. He was so careful. But he stayed away a long time that day and when he came back he was so gloomy—even melancholy, and could not eat the fine ravioli she had for his luncheon.

"Yates says she is confident that no domestic troubles led to Salvatore's disappearance. His wife seems prodigiously proud of him, and inclined to boast of his greatness, after the Italian fashion. Thinks he is a banker after the Pierpont Morgan type, and is worried for

fear that envious rivals are plotting against him.

"After getting all he could out of the wife Yates went over to the garage and—"

"Hold on," interposed Perkins, "Did he try to get any of those letters that had bothered Salvatore so much?"

"Yes, he tried, but the woman said that the only ones he opened in her presence he burned at once as if he was afraid to have them on him. What he did with the one he took over to the garage she couldn't say."

"All right. Go ahead."

"Well, all Yates could learn at the garage was that the man now in possession—fellow named Giddings—bought it a week ago as the result of an ad. He says the wops turned over possession to him at midnight, and left no word as to where they were going. He is a little suspicious that there was something that made them fear the police, for they were so anxious to get away that they sold him the place for half what it is worth. He's promised Yates to keep him posted if anybody comes to inquire after them, or if they themselves turn up."

"This Salvatore woman? Where does she live?"

"In a typical Italian tenement up above the

bank. Has two children, one a girl of about seventeen; the other a young boy.''

''And that's every bit of information we have?''

''That's all.''

''Hum. The story certainly is much up in the air. Well, it's your business to get it. Handle it your own way. But I think if you haven't cleared it all up by Sunday—this is Friday—you'd better put the matter in the hands of the police. I hate to ruin a possible exclusive, but we must not leave Holbrook without help too long. Now as to the local end of that Washington story—''

And in a moment the attention of the conference was diverted to other news features, and the plight of Jimmie Holbrook was forgotten. But not for long. In the midst of the discussion Bowers' assistant called him quietly away, and his voice was almost immediately heard at the telephone in the adjoining city room.''

''*Hello.* Yes. This is Bowers, city editor of *The Blade.* Yes. Holbrook? Yes. He's our man, what about him? What do you mean? Who are you anyway? No, of course we will not promise anything to a person we don't know, calling up from an unknown number. Oh, I guess *The Blade* knows how to take care of its own people. Why don't you come in and

see me about it, or give me your address and I'll send a man up? What's that? A warning? Don't make any threats. Hello! Hello! Hello! Oh, Central, can you tell me what number just called me? You can't? It was a pay booth somewhere in Manhattan. All right."

And hanging up the receiver with a bang Bowers rushed back to the conference which he found eagerly awaiting his report of the conversation of which only one side was audible.

"What do you think of it?" he exclaimed. "That was some one who claims to know where Holbrook is, and is trying to bluff the paper."

"How so?" asked Perkins composedly. "Give us the details."

"Baxter just called me to the phone saying there was some one on it who had my name and would not talk with anybody but me. When I got there the fellow at the other end—who had a strong foreign accent—wanted to know if a man named Holbrook was with *The Blade*. When I said yes he said that Holbrook was in serious trouble and could not come to the wire himself but wanted to ask me not to print anything about him or about the Salvatore case. I demanded to know who was talking, and the fellow refused to say, but went on to warn me that Holbrook was in a position where great

harm would come to him if the paper gave any publicity to the facts which Holbrook had obtained.''

''Wait a minute,'' interrupted Perkins, ''Did he put it in that way? Did he talk as if he knew that Holbrook had been investigating some case, and that we were in possession of the facts that he had gathered?''

''He certainly did.''

''Well, then, that shows that whoever called you up did not know that Jimmie's copy had been taken from that envelope, or else Jim has made him believe that he had sent the substance of the story to us in some other way. It indicates that while they have Jimmie, they think we have the story, and are trying to bluff us into silence by threats against him. But what else did he say?''

''He lost his temper when I said we would not make promises that way, and he swore if we didn't we'd never see our reporter again, and would not like to know what had been done to him. I warned him not to make any threats, and he ended up by saying that this was the last warning, and if I wanted to know who it was from it was sent by the Black Hand. Then I got mad but was cut off almost instantly. Central says it was a call from somewhere in Manhattan. That's the story.''

And Bowers sat back in his chair, crumpled his old straw hat, and nursed the wrath the unknown messenger of menace had aroused.

"You are still confident of Jimmie's ability to take care of himself?" asked Perkins.

"Never more than now. He's made that fellow think we know all about what has been done with Salvatore and who did it, and they are probably scared to death now lest we bring a police raid down upon them."

"Then what do you propose doing?"

"Well, when a man warns me not to print a thing, I usually want to print it right away, and make it twice as offensive to him as had been planned. But this case is different. We really haven't anything to print. We don't know what became of Jimmie's copy, whatever he may have made the man think about it. But if we don't print anything that fellow will think he has scared us out, and that I don't like."

"Wouldn't that be just the best thing to have him think?" put in Perkins. "If he sees the paper to-morrow with not a word in it he will probably think he has us scared and will come up with some other proposition, which will give us another chance to nab him. Better make a virtue of a necessity since we really haven't anything to say, and keep silence."

"Well, I suppose that's true," responded Bowers grudgingly, "but I'd like to be able to print the news that we had that bullying ruffian who called me on the phone behind the bars. I have one consolation however. We will get them yet, and in the meantime I'm certain that any Black Hander that got Jimmie Holbrook got a pair of black eyes for himself."

CHAPTER VII

THREADING A MAZE

Secure in his own lodging that night Phil took out the roll of paper at which he had snatched hasty glances during the day and began to study it with care. It was a straight-away, clean-cut story of the sort which Holbrook knew so well how to write. The essentials of the whole story were in the first paragraph.

There was no exaggeration of statement or of literary manner—not the slightest effort at fine writing. The reporter had a story to tell, told it and stopped. Little was left for the men on the copy desk to do. They are the editorial workers—most of whom have been reporters in their day—who read over the stories turned in by the reporters, correct their English and punctuation if that be necessary, cut them to the space the city editor indicates, or expand and rewrite them if the original writer has failed to make the most of his subject, and write over them suitable headlines. They scan each article narrowly for any state-

ment that may be libelous, and if there appears to be anything that suggests inaccuracy in the reporter's story use every endeavor to corroborate each statement of fact.

The copy readers' work is perhaps the most trying of any detail on a newspaper. Usually they are veterans of the profession who for one reason or another have had to abandon the more active out-of-door work of the reporter, but they must retain their "nose for news," their instinctive scent for inaccuracy, and their appreciation of a good story. They are responsible for the headings put on articles, and to a great extent for the measure of display accorded them. A "strong copy desk" will go further toward making a uniformly good paper than almost any single element in its staff. It cannot be said however that this fact is generally appreciated by newspaper managers, and as a result the copy desk is seldom sought by those having the force and the ability to do outside work. On a large city paper there will be from eight to twelve men on the copy desk, and their work, beginning about 6.30 P.M. lasts through the night.

In the offices of the great organization of newspapers already quoted a list of instructions for reporters and copy readers is posted, some parts of which will show the rules,

observance of which had helped to make Jimmie Holbrook into a star reporter:

"Make a paper for the nicest kind of people —for the great middle class. Don't print a lot of dull stuff that they are supposed to like and don't.

"Omit things that will offend nice people. Avoid coarseness and slang and a low tone. The most sensational news can be told if it is written properly.

"Talk as a gentleman should. Be reliable in all things as well as entertaining and amiable.

When a wrong picture is brought in by a reporter, or a wrong picture is used, through lack of care or neglect; or when grossly inaccurate statements are made by a reporter or copy writer, such reader or reporter will be asked for his immediate resignation.

"Do not exaggerate. Care must be taken to state accurately the truth. If an $800,000 transaction is described do not call it a million dollar transaction. If someone dies leaving two million, do not say he left ten million.

"Make the paper helpful and kindly. Don't scold and forever complain and attack in your news columns. Leave that to the editorial page.

"Be fair and impartial. Don't make a paper for Democrats or Republicans or Independent Leaguers. Make a paper for all the people and give unbiased news of all creeds and parties. Try to do this in such a conspicuous manner that it will be noticed and commented upon.

"Please be accurate. Compare statements in your paper with those in other papers and find out which is correct. Discharge reporters and copy readers who are persistently inaccurate.

"Don't allow exaggeration. It is a cheap and ineffective substitute for real interest. Reward reporters who can make the truth interesting, and weed out those who cannot."

Holbrook's copy as Phil studied it complied with all these requirements. It was incomplete of course, being intended only as the introduction to the more sensational story which the reporter had hoped to get when he rented the car and started for his unknown destination. This was the story Phil read and laid aside with regrets that the writer could not have set down just one more fact—namely the spot he headed for when he left his copy with the keeper of the garage:

"Antonio Salvatore's Banca d'Italiana at 247 East 163rd. St. is closed. Antonio is miss-

ing. His Italian neighbors and depositors discovered both facts three days ago, and started a run on the bank fearing that their deposits were missing with Toni. But in 24 hours it was demonstrated that the bank was perfectly sound, and that the missing banker had converted none of its assets to his own use. The Brookside National Bank, with which he carried his reserves, made an investigation, assured itself of the soundness of the institution, and sent one of its men over to assist the man whom Salvatore employed as cashier, teller, and bookkeeper in meeting the run. This action restored confidence and yesterday, the third day of the run, as much money was deposited as was drawn out.

"But Antonio is still missing. In the snug apartment above the bank Mrs. Salvatore sits surrounded by sympathetic friends and tells the little she knows about her husband's disappearance.

" 'He was always a good family man,' she says. 'Do not these beautiful rooms with all those lovely pictures of the saints show it? And his children—two of them—he was devoted to them. Always taking the boy, Little Luigi, to the pictures, and the girl— Ah, she was older, she was seventeen now and had others to take her to the pictures. But they were de-

voted to their papa, and desolate because he had gone away.

" 'It was frightful the first day he was away. Ah, those neighbors! How quick they were to imagine the worst about him. They came running to the doors of the bank, pushing each other out of the way, crying aloud for their money and calling Toni—my Toni—a thief. Of course the money was there. I knew all the time it would be. If I had my way Carlo, the cashier, would not be taking any of it back now those beggers were pleading with him to do so.

" 'Why did he go away? Ah, signor, if I but knew. Figure it for yourself. He was always a home man. He liked to be with me and to go out with his daughter and the boy. His bank was all right. He had taken no money not even from his own account. What could he have gone for?'

"The clerk in the little bank who serves as cashier, teller, bookkeeper and janitor seems devoted to his missing boss. Whether he is the more distressed over his absence, or more proud that the bank has been shown to be in excellent shape and its head freed from the slightest suspicion of dishonesty is difficult to tell. But he has a theory as to the reasons for the flight which he sets forth with many shrugs

of the shoulder, whisperings, and dark and obscure hints of things he dare not tell. It appears that for some weeks past Salvatore had been getting letters which clearly distressed him but which he showed to no one. At first they came only semi-occasionally, but in the last week before his disappearance one came in each mail. His clerk was easily able to recognize these missives by the coarse grade of envelopes used, and the rudely scrawled address. At first they had not seemed to worry the banker much, although he carefully burned each one after glancing at it. But latterly he had seemed to be enraged, and sometimes terrified, by the steady persistence with which they came day after day. The last one that came before his disappearance he tore into small fragments instead of burning it as had been his custom, and threw it into the basket by his desk. When he failed to appear the next morning the clerk took the torn scraps and pieced them together.

"'Ah, Signor,' said the clerk, lowering his voice and looking fearfully about as though suspecting some lurking listener, 'there was no writing but only a drawing of a Black Hand. It is the sign of the Mafia, the terrible bandits of my own country. I fear they have taken Signor Salvatore and are holding him for ran-

som. Or perhaps he may have threatened to betray them. If so they kill him with knife, or throw him in river. They are terrible people, and it is better to do as they demand. But the Signor was always so bold and so sure of himself. He defy them and now where is he?'

"That is the general question in Little Italy —'Where is Salvatore?' Some group of men knows all about it, but the Mafia keeps its own counsel, and the family of the missing man fear the worst."

That was the end of the story as written by Holbrook, but the note to the editor with which he prefaced it indicated that he had expected to add some details after his trip to the part of the city which he had named in that almost illegible communication. Phil sat and studied the story and the note thoughtfully.

"I wonder if I ought to take this down to the office?" he said to himself. "Jimmie wrote it for the paper, and it belongs to *The Blade.* But it doesn't tell anything that they haven't got already. Bob Yates has been working on the case all day, and has seen the same people that Jim did. This copy won't be of any advantage to them now.

"But the note to Mr. Bowers? Well, that's different. Let's study that a little."

And laying the crumpled paper out smooth he began a diligent scrutiny of the blurred words as if he hoped to read something between the lines.

"Now the first part of that is clear enough. Jim wanted the man where he phoned to think he believed that Salvatore had skipped and was probably on that Italian ship that sailed last night. So he phoned the office to that effect, using some public phone where everybody might hear. Then he rented a car and probably told the driver to take him to the dock, intending to slip out somewhere down town and make an excuse for not going the whole way. All that seems reasonable enough, though if Jim was so shy of the garage man he ought to have been wiser than to leave his copy there for me. Perhaps he thought the boss was all right, and was only suspicious of the driver he took along.

"However that's not the important thing now. What do these blurred words mean? If I could figure them out I would have an idea at least of where Jimmie started for. I'll just copy them out and put the original away where it won't get rubbed any worse than it is.

" 'WILL NOT GO TO DOCK BUT SHALL LEAVE CAR AT ER STR AND LOOK INTO CE UT RRY'

"That's the end of it and it's some cipher. Judging from the way the paper is torn there could not have been room for more than ten or twelve letters after 'RRY.' "

And again Phil plunged into a brown study. In a moment his face lighted up.

"Well, I can get something out of the end of it anyway. That 'RRY' is probably the last syllable of Mulberry Street. I think that runs through the downtown Little Italy, and it is likely that Jim thought he might get a line on the missing man down in the bunch of tenements and little shops. That seems reasonable. Let's call that word 'Mulberry.'

"Now what comes before it.—'UT' Well that doesn't suggest much to me. It is so close to the word 'Mulberry' however that there is no room for anything between them. So it is probably the end of a longer word. How long a word?

"Well, if that 'ce' before it is the end of a word there is just about room for three or four letters. Let's think now."

"A word of five or six letters ending in 'ut.' There's 'shout.' But that wouldn't make any sense. Nobody's shouting in this case. It's only too quiet. 'Spout? Snout? Krout?'—this is a wop case, not a Dutchman's. 'Flout?' Nothing doing. Gee, I wish I had a rhyming

dictionary. What other words end that way? That's about all— Golly, there's 'about!' That might work: 'About Mulberry.' That is he was going to leave the car about there. Aha, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, I'm getting into your class.

"Well, let's keep on. What word is it that ended with that 'er?' That's not so easy. I wonder if there is any street crossing Mulberry with a name ending in 'er'? There's 'Doyer' but that's too far south. I can't remember many of the names down there, though I've chased through that region often enough to find reporters and get their copy. How late is it? I believe I'll take a run down there now.

"But first let's take another look at the cipher. That first 'str—' undoubtedly means 'street.' So the stuff as far as I can make it out would read,

" 'Will not go to dock but shall leave car about —er street and look into —ce about Mulberry.'

"There's space for a name before the word 'street,' and for several letters, more than a single word, before that darned '—ce.' Wonder if that last might not stand for 'place.' It might mean that he was going to drop into somebody's place about Mulberry Street.

There are places enough around there of every kind, Heaven knows. Well I'm not doing so bad with my indoor detective work, but I think I'll go and have a look over what the papers call the scene of the crime."

So putting on his overcoat Phil headed for the subway. All the way downtown he racked his brains for words ending in "ce" for he was not more than half satisfied with "place" for the missing word, and still in doubt as to the other street. At Astor Place he left the car and turning southward plunged into the densely populated section of New York's East Side.

It was not precisely another Little Italy into which he now entered. Rather was it reminiscent of the clatter of tongues at the Tower of Babel. At one time given over almost wholly to the Irish who formed the bulk of our immigrants prior to the Civil War, this region changed its dominant nationality every ten years. The Germans first crowded out the Irish, and they in turn fled before the advancing hordes of the Italians. In each instance it was the nationality that was willing to live in a little worse quarters, with a little more overcrowding and with more squalor which gradually elbowed out its predecessors. The Italians, used in their home cities to crowded quarters that made the worst of our tenements

seem roomy to them and accustomed to life on the sidewalk when their rooms were either too hot or too cold, found what seemed to them comfort in tenements against which the Irishman rebelled, and which the German endured only until he could do better.

But our Italian citizens were not long left to have it their own way. Before long Roumanians and Albanians, Poles and above all Russians began coming in by the tens of thousands from countries that had not been able to support them even in abject squalor. They were willing enough to crowd eight in a room which would house but two Irishmen or four Germans. Landlords, nothing loth, raised the rates to accord with the additional numbers the tenement would hold, and the Italians like the Germans and the Irish before them moved up town where the crowding was not so great —though to the eyes of one used to the ways of the smaller American towns they seem packed in even there like matches in a box, and with equally great chances for an explosion.

The streets which Phil was now treading that winter's evening were lined on either side with four and five story buildings, the ground floors and area ways of which had been made into shops while up above two and four room

flats housed swarming multitudes. It is probably the most densely populated quarter in the known world, for while some of the swarming sections of Asiatic, and especially East Indian, towns give the impression of greater congestion their hovels are but of two or three stories while in this imperial city of the United States the tenements rise to a height of five stories and are filled with people, sometimes six or more to a room.

The shops below, particularly those furnishing food for the quarter, have a strange and foreign look. Curious cheeses, some green and grey with clinging mold, some packed into bladders and taking the shape of their containers, all exceedingly odoriferous with a fragance which only a trained nose can either appreciate or endure, make up the entire stock of many stores. Others are given over to spaghetti, macaroni and the ravioli dear to the Italian heart. Others display olive oil and strange exotic cakes of a sort to which the American eye is unaccustomed. The push carts in the streets offer fried fish in oil, big round fat chestnuts imported from Italy, gaily colored caps and neckerchiefs, glassware and crockery, nails and screws, books of the cheaper sort with a large assortment of "Nick Carter" done into Italian, ancient shoes cobbled for new

users, and along the sidewalks stroll men with bundles of second-hand clothes over their arms with which they strive to fit possible purchasers among the passers-by.

In the distinctively Italian quarter the push-cart market carries a higher type of wares than where the population includes the Russian and Balkan peoples. The display of goods to tempt the thrifty people of the more eastern states of Europe is one to amaze the American mind. The street market that centers at the corner of Rivington and Orchard streets is one not exceeded in picturesqueness by any in Poland, or in the towns of Russia before the days of the soviets. Three miles at most from the brilliant shops of Fifth Avenue this section of Manhattan is as different from that which is visited by the ordinary up-town New Yorker as the ghetto of Posen is from the palaces of Paris.

Innumerable coffee shops lined the streets on which Phil was watchfully walking, rooms glaring with yellow light and filled with tables at which sat men sipping coffee and talking, playing dominoes or reading foreign papers. Long before prohibition became the established law of the land these coffee shops flourished in this section of New York to the almost total obliteration of the American saloon. For, al-

though we are apt to think of foreigners as wine-lovers, the people of the Balkan states who furnish much of the population of this section of the metropolis are more devoted to their coffee and tea, and make of the little shops furnishing these harmless beverages the same sort of social meeting places that the saloons formerly were.

"I wonder" thought Phil as he walked along the street peering into one after another of these, "whether one of these is not the place Jimmie was going to look into before calling up the office. They look like pretty good hunting grounds for conspirators of any sort. So far however there are mighty few Italian joints observable, and this mystery is all drawn with a fine Italian hand.

"But what a search for a needle in a haystack this is. I read in a magazine article the other day that some of the blocks in this district house eleven thousand people. What chance have I got of finding Jimmie in a human hive like that? If they grabbed and gagged him in that car, and carried him up into a back room of one of these tenements, or down into one of those cellars he couldn't be found by a thousand police with search warrants. I'm certainly up against it, unless luck is on my side

as it was with Bob Yates the day he took that bath.

And just at that moment Phil was scarcely able to repress a shout. Luck was clearly with him for a little way at least, for there in plain sight in one of the coffee shops, talking excitedly and seemingly oblivious to all their surroundings were the smiling Italian who had owned the garage, and had given Phil the Black Hand missive, and the chauffeur who had brought back the damaged car that morning.

CHAPTER VIII

ON A SHARP SCENT

Phil shrank back to the corner of the window where he could view the interior of the room, without himself being visible in the dimly lighted street. There was no doubt about it. He had by lucky chance hit upon the only two men who could be at all under suspicion of having a hand in the disappearance of Jimmie Holbrook.

But now he had found them, what was he to do?

The problem perplexed Phil, and for a time he lost something of his self confidence, and wished that some of the more experienced reporters were there to advise him.

But of two things he was certain. He could not go into the café to confront the two Italians, for one of them at least would be likely to recognize him. Nor could he desert his observation post in search of help. If he did the quarry was pretty sure to get away, and Phil thought that in thus stumbling upon them he had all the luck he had a right to hope for in his case.

There was a big policeman sauntering down the block but Phil was mindful of the desire of Mr. Bowers to handle this matter without the aid of the police so he turned resolutely from that possible source of help.

It was getting bitter cold in the street, and the crouching boy began to envy the two Italians bent over the table, in the warm room with cups of fragrant coffee steaming between them. He danced a bit to keep the blood stirring in his veins, and seeng the stand of a vendor of roasted chestnuts near by made a hasty rush and bought a pocket full to warm him inside and out. But he was not cheerful at the thought of a long vigil. He thought the men looked so very comfortable that they were liable to sit for hours.

"That big fellow with the grin," said Phil to himself, "must be Pietro, for that was the name that Giddings gave to the man he bought the garage of. The other fellow is the one that brought back the car. I'll bet they know exactly where Jim and Salvatore are. There's nothing for me to do but hang around until they go out and then shadow them—if I don't freeze first. Wish I had one of the fellows here to stand guard while I get some hot coffee. But there's no use of thinking of that. I wonder if I went in and took a seat in the back of

the room they'd notice me? Might hear what they were saying too. But thunder! they'd talk in Italian so that won't work. I'll just have to stick it out here unless that cop comes and makes me move on."

To avoid this complication which might readily happen to a person loitering on a street on a bitter cold winter's night with no visible purpose, Phil tried to move about as much and as far as possible without losing sight of the door whence the men he shadowed must emerge if they wanted to leave the café. Every three or four minutes he would pass directly in front of the window and look boldly in to assure himself that they were still there. Seemingly they were arguing rather heatedly about something, and once Phil saw Pietro bring down his fist on the table with a bang that set the little cups before them dancing.

"Getting hot about something," mused Phil. "Wish I was."

"Oh, crickey! They're going to have supper. There's the waiter with a big plate of sandwiches. Can I stand it out here while they eat for another hour? But hold on. The waiter is taking the stuff away. Hello! He's making a bundle of it, and pouring coffee into a big bottle. Bet my last dollar they are

getting some supper to take to their prisoners. Here's my chance."

Intensely excited Phil peered through the window until the men rose to come out, then slipping across the street he hid in a doorway to watch them unobserved. At the door they looked up and down the street then turning to the right made their way along through the crowd, stopping now and then to exchange greetings with some one. Evidently they were well known in the neighborhood. Around the second corner they turned, and Phil followed hastily just in time to see them turn into the open hallway of a dark tenement two or three doors from the corner.

"Now what?" he asked himself. "I can't go in after them. They'd simply catch me and add me to their list of prisoners. I've got no ground to call in the police for a search. Besides Mr. Bowers wants this kept out of the hands of the police. I'll watch awhile and see if anybody shows at the windows. There are two windows of a big room just lighted up. Perhaps they went in there. Down go the shades! What about shadows? Wouldn't it be gorgeous if I could see Jimmy's shadow on the shade with one of those wops handing him a sandwich? That would make a human interest story for your life."

But dreaming in this fashion did not get Phil very far. No shadows appeared, it was getting late, the crowds were thinning out and the chances of his being taken for a suspicious person were growing fast.

All of a sudden he saw a man run down Mulberry Street to the corner and fling open a fire alarm box, turning in an alarm. The shrill ringing of the bell in the box quickly gathered crowds who came running from every direction. Heads were thrust out of windows and boys and men came tumbling down the stairs of the crowded tenements.

"Now watch them come," thought Jim.

While others watched for the coming of the engines whose clanging bells could already be heard in the distance, he kept his eyes on the tenement into which the two Italians had gone. From door to window he turned his gaze nervously watching lest the face he sought should appear in the window, or the form of one of the Italians dash out of the door.

The crowd was dense at the intersection of the two streets, and it appeared to Phil that the fire was in one of the tenements on Mulberry Street but so near the corner that the crowd extended into the Street on which he stood. Moreover some of the engines were coming

down his throughfare, so he was clearly in the thick of it.

"It isn't in my house, worse luck," said Phil. "If it were Pietro would have to let his captives out. But it's pretty near. I shouldn't wonder if the tenement it is in backed up against this one. If it does the firemen will make them clear everybody out. Lucky I've got my fire badge here. Maybe I'll get a chance to get into that place after all.

"Hello, there they come!"

The two Italians came running out of the door of the tenement and joined the crowd in Mulberry Street awaiting the coming of the engines. There was a lively scurry in the crowded street. Push-cart men began racing down the roadway to find places of refuge from the fire department's apparatus which with shrieking sirens and clanging bells came rushing to the alarm through the crowds which scattered on every side at their approach. Nothing but a field battery swinging into action can compare in dramatic effect with the dash of the New York fire department through a congested thoroughfare to the scene of an alarm. Old-fashioned folk may find something lacking nowadays since the magnificent horses which formerly drew the engines, and seemed

to take a positive pride in their spectacular work, have been supplanted by motors. But even at that the sight of these great shining engines, or the long and seemingly unwieldy hook-and-ladder trucks, rushing pell-mell down a narrow street, thronged on either side with wagons and pushcarts fleeing for dear life to the curbs, and the police rushing ahead to clear the way has in it something to stir the blood and set the pulses leaping. The charging field battery goes into action to take life—the fire department makes its races to ward off death.

Phil saw the two Italians leave the front hall of the tenement and then, much to his satisfaction, the police drew a cordon about that section of the street to keep the crowds back.

"That's good luck for me," he reflected. "I've got my fire badge and can get through the lines all right and perhaps the police will keep those fellows out. I guess I'll just take a look around the corner and see how much of a blaze it is."

Fumbling under his overcoat he took out the metal badge with which all reporters are furnished by the police authorities and which entitles them to pass the lines of the police at fires, disasters or other occasions which draw crowds requiring police regulation. Putting it on his outer coat he nodded to the patrolman

who was keeping back the crowd and went down the middle of the street to the corner.

"Wow!" he exclaimed in surprise. "Some fire!"

The two lower floors of a five story tenement were blazing briskly. The shop on the ground must have contained some sort of inflammable material despite the fire ordinance to the contrary, for it was a seething furnace of flame and from it and the windows immediately above dense volumes of black smoke were belching forth. From some of the windows higher up men and women in all stages of night dress were frantically waving their arms and shouting in a vain endeavor to make themselves heard against the roar of the engines which rumbled like gigantic cats purring in content. The firemen were already busy. Streams were pouring upon the flames on the ground floor, and men were clambering up the ladders to the windows where the affrighted people were crying for aid.

It was a scene entirely familiar to Phil who had had more than once to run to fires to bring the copy of the reporters assigned to cover the disaster.

In newspaper offices it is well known that there is no event so difficult to report in a complete and workmanlike manner as a great

fire. Everybody on the ground who is in a position to know anything is too busy or too excited to answer questions. The picturesque description of the scene, if it happens to be an unusual one, is easy enough, but the reporter finds himself obliged to find out the names of the owners of perhaps three or four buildings which are blazing merrily with no owners present. The tenants are usually too much concerned with their own affairs at that moment to stop to satisfy a curious questioner. Then there is the insurance to be reported—how much and in what companies. At midnight with a block blazing and people frantic with apprehension of their loss it is no easy task to find just the right man to tell you all about the insurance. The cause of the fire can generally be learned from one of the Fire Department captains. The ownership and the insurance figures usually are obtainable from the insurance patrol which attends all fires. But if in his search for these data the reporter finds his job further complicated by a gallant rescue of life, or perhaps a fatality or two, he finishes his night's work with a very lively sense of having had a man's job to do and having been lucky if he has done it well.

Phil, however, had but little time to-night to observe the stirring scene before him. He saw

quickly enough that there was not likely to be any loss of life, for the tenements stretched the length of the block in an unbroken line, and all that the people who were cut off by the fire below needed to do was to go to the roofs and walk away to a building the fire could not reach. For those who lost their heads, and were too frightened to take the easy way of escape—there always are such at every fire—the firemen with their ladders, and their nets to catch those who might jump were fully prepared.

It seemed clear too that the fire-fighters had the situation well in hand and the flames were not likely to spread. This was something of a disappointment to Phil who thought that if the building in which he suspected the men he sought were concealed should be threatened the firemen would compel the opening of every room. But there was to be no such luck, so leaving the fire department to its fight he turned back to the open hallway of the suspected tenement. This and the sidewalk before it were now seemingly deserted. The people had run to the scene of the fire, and the police were now keeping the street clear for the engines two of which were rumbling away on opposite corners, while the long trucks of two hook-and ladder companies filled the middle of the street.

Reaching the door Phil entered.

It was the typical narrow, dark and dirty stairway of an east side tenement. Black, greasy stairs, with a handrail that seemed slimy to the touch, led from floor to floor, and on each landing three or four grimy doors gave access to the rooms beyond. The landings were narrow and dark, despite the flames of gas, unshaded and turned low, that burnt feebly on each floor. Along the walls a streak of grime told of the incessant rubbing of dirty hands or shoulders as the tenement dwellers made their way through the gloom.

"Tough place to be kept prisoner," thought Phil, "but I should say it was tougher still to live in all the time."

He was puzzled now as to what should be his next step. On the four floors of the tenement there was literally nothing to give him a hint as to what door to try in his search for the missing men. All were equally dark and forbidding. Stooping with his ear to the keyhole he tried at two or three to learn whether there were any sounds within to guide him. But all was silent. Either the tenants were all out watching the progress of the fire, or they were asleep for it was now midnight. Cautiously he tried one or two of the doors. They were locked, and it was with rather a sense of relief that he found them so, for it was a place clearly tenanted by rough,

if not lawless people and what might happen to him if he walked boldly into a room where he had no business and was caught was not pleasant to imagine.

How long he might prowl in safety, protected to some degree by the police lines which kept the tenants of the tenement from returning, he could not guess. It was not reasonable to imagine that the legitimate residents would be kept out long. As he pondered he climbed from floor to floor, listening at the doors he passed, and scrutinizing them for anything that might give a hint of the nature of the people sheltered behind them. He was on the third floor when he heard voices and the heavy steps of men coming up the first flight of stairs.

What to do now? He tip-toed softly onto the last stairway leading to the top floor. If the newcomers followed him that far he was lost unless he could invent a plausible reason for lurking about those hallways. It was true that probably scores of people used those halls, for the tenement was crowded like an ants' nest, but his clothing would quickly arouse the suspicion of any who might encounter him, while if he were challenged in Italian he would have no way to answer, and all the denizens of the house were clearly of that nationality.

He kept going upward, and the footsteps be-

low continued to ascend. He was now on the top floor, and the two men halted just below him. He could not tell whether they were getting out keys to open one of the rooms on that floor, or had stopped for a conference before ascending to the top. If they continued to come up he would infallibly be detected unless there might be a ladder and scuttle to the roof by which he might escape. But while he was looking furtively about for these means of salvation the low voices below ceased and he heard the fumbling of a key for the lock.

Moving quietly to the bannister he looked over. As he suspected the two men were the ones he had seen in the café, and before that in the garage far uptown. They were unlocking the door to the front room of the tenement, and even as he watched them it swung open. From his station he could not see into the room, but it was evident that if any light were burning within it was turned very low. In an instant Phil heard a firm voice speak up in English.

"So you're back. We didn't know but that you intended to leave us tied here to burn with the house."

"You lucky," responded a gruff voice with a decidedly foreign accent. "What we care if you burn. You know too much. That other

fellow got to come up with the goods, with the money, or something worse than burning up will come to him."

Phil heard a suppressed groan.

"What do you fellows think you are," continued the first voice which had a familiar sound to the listener in the hallway, who meantime had crept down the stairs and taken a position close to the crack of the door. "You can't put a thing like this over in New York. This isn't Naples you know. Probably Toni's wife has got the police after you already, and if you've got her too scared for that my paper will be raking out every slum in Little Italy for me just as soon as it finds that I am definitely gone. Don't you monkey with the press, Pietro my boy. You needn't think you've got me scared. You are the fellow that's in bad. I shouldn't wonder if *The Blade* had a man right in this building now."

The accuracy of that chance shot made Phil in the hallway gasp. It was evidently Holbrook talking and to the young aspirant for a reporter's place it seemed as if some superhuman quality of second sight had enabled the veteran newspaper man to come so close to the fact. Evidently the Italian himself was startled for jumping to his feet he pushed the door close to with a bang. Phil heard the rattle of

a chain within, then the murmur of voices in a conversation which, strain his ears as he might, he could not make out.

"What next?" thought Phil who had shrunk into the darkest corner as he heard the man make for the door. He stole along the hall to the low-burning gas jet and looked at his watch. "It's after one o'clock. Probably after eating their supper that crowd in there will go to sleep. The Italians will take turns in standing guard, so that even if I tried to make Jim hear me it would do no good.

"Now the question is whether I'd better go straight to the police, rush down to the office and get some of the night staff to come and help me, or go home for a few hours rest and take this up on my own hook in the morning.

"As to the police what could I say? This case has not been reported to them, and the roundsman would not be justified in breaking down that door just on my say so. Besides Mr. Bowers doesn't want any police help. It's been only twenty-four hours since Jim's disappearance and I guess we can give another day to working the thing out.

"Then as to going to the office for help. I suppose if I do that they will phone up to Mr. Bowers, and he will be very pleasant about it,

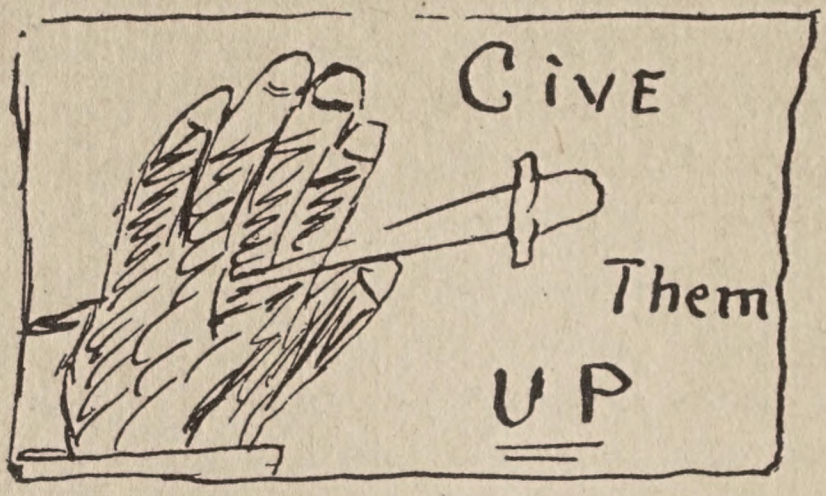
and say that I am a bright boy, but that it's too big a job for a man not regularly on the staff. And then he'll put Yates or somebody on the story who'll make the rescue, write the yarn and get all the credit. I guess I'll just try a few hours more of work by myself."

"No, sir! I'm not going to let any one else in on this. I've found Jimmie and Salvatore and it's my story. The thing is to get them out without the police or anybody else helping. Then when I come to write the story Mr. Bowers will be sure to put me on assignments. I wonder if I dare go to my room now for a bit of sleep? The men might move during the night but it isn't likely. They're safer here in the heart of Little Italy than they would be anywhere else. All day in that garage, and this watch down here have made me dead tired. If I'm going to get anywhere with this thing I've got to get some sleep and go at it with a fresh mind.

"Say, I wonder if I couldn't give them a little scare that would worry them for awhile. That wop jumped mighty quick when Jimmie said there might be a *Blade* man in the building. Why not give them a dose of their own medicine?"

Thereupon, seeking a place under the gas-

light, Phil held a sheet of copy paper against the grimy wall and with a soft pencil sketched on it the following sinister design:



"There," he said approvingly, "Not such a fine piece of drawing perhaps but quite as good as those fellows scare their victims with. I guess that will hold them in the morning. Meantime me for bed."

And fixing the warning poster securely upon the outer panel of the door Phil left the tenement and made for home. As he passed the door of the coffee shop he saw a sight that made him start, and shrink back into a concealing shadow. For there, lurking, as he himself had been an hour earlier, was Yates, of *The Blade,* peering into the shop window, and now and then glancing at a picture he carried in his hand.

"What can this mean?" asked Phil anx-

iously. "Has Yates got onto the same trail that I have found, And what's that picture he is carrying? I don't want to divide this with him. It's me to beat both the police and Yates if I want to get any reputation out of this. I'd better slip away before he sees me." And he slunk swiftly around the corner and started for his room uptown.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE TRAIL OF PIETRO

THE day after the disappearance of its star reporter the office of *The Blade* was as much in the dark as to the reason for his vanishing, and the place in which he might be hid as at the outset. No one on the staff had any idea that Phil, the mere inconspicuous copy boy, was in any way interested in the affair, or was making any investigation into it. The work of running down the story had been instrusted to Yates, and after twenty-four hours of investigation he had reported no progress. Indeed if the mutilated manuscript that Phil had discovered had been in the possession of the city editor it would have told about all that Yates had been able to discover with a day or more of effort.

"This Salvatore woman," he said to Bowers in making his report Friday night, "has shut up like a safe with a time lock on it. Evidently she has been terrorized in some way. Her manner shows clearly enough that she is still worried to death about her husband and has no

idea of where he is being hid, but seemingly she does not want any search made for him nor any sort of publicity given to his absence.

"I told her that we would print his picture and offer a reward for information concerning him and she fairly went into hysterics.

" 'No! no! no!' she cried, 'they would kill him surely. You do not know those terrible people. They kill as easy as they eat or drink. I have seen them in my own country, and they are doing the same things over here. If Toni had only given them what they demanded! Surely it would not have ruined us. He would have had enough left to live on. Now they have got him, and the money is no good to me.'

I asked her what she proposed to do, if she was so afraid of the police or of our aid. At first she was stubborn and would say nothing. But at last I got her to say that she expected the fellows would send her a demand for ransom and that she would get the money from the bank and pay it. She seemed to believe that the cashier who is some sort of a relative of Salvatore's would let her draw any sum against the banker's personal account."

"Do you think the demand has been made yet?" asked Bowers.

"I am confident it had not been up to the time I left her about five this afternoon, but I

am almost equally confident that when it is made she will conceal it from me. Her whole idea is to pay the blackmail and keep everything secret. I shouldn't wonder if when the payment is made and she gets her Toni back again she would try to get him to skip out for Italy on the next boat."

"Well, what is your line of work now?"

"I have young Lang working with me on the case, and I've posted him at the bank to keep watch on every messenger that comes in there, or goes up to the apartment above. He is to take special heed of any effort to leave or carry away a note. He went on when I left about five, but I think I ought to have another man to take up the watch at midnight. Those fellows don't do their work by day, and it will take three of us at least to keep the place shadowed. Lang has been told all I know about the case, and will follow any man who sees Mrs. Salvatore, or who has any sort of a suspicious conference with the cashier. Luckily the man from the Brookside National is still there. I took him into my confidence and he will tip off to Lang any effort to draw a considerable sum from the Salvatore account. Couldn't do anything with the regular cashier. He is more afraid of the Black Handers than Mrs. Salvatore herself.

"But I'll tell you, Mr. Bowers. There really ought to be some one up there to help Lang. Suppose he saw his man. If he left long enough to phone me he might lose the scent. On the other hand if he went off in trail of the fellow the watch on the bank would be broken and we would not know what would be going on."

"Quite right," said Bowers, "I'll send another man up right away. But were you able to learn anything more about Jim?"

"Nothing that I did not report to you over the phone. Both the cashier and Mrs. Salvatore remember him well. The cashier says that he stood at the customers' desk and wrote for a long time. That must have been the story which he thought he was sending down to us. Then he was seen to walk over to the garage. That is the last I can learn about him. If he left the garage it was no doubt in a car, and the men who were there that night have vanished. It seems likely that the same crowd that is holding Salvatore is holding Jimmie as well but we have no proof of it."

"All right. We've got to remember that this thing must be solved in the next twenty-four hours or the chief will call in the police. He doesn't like the idea of leaving Jim Holbrook without assistance for so long a time.

I'll bet Jim is having the time of his life, and will come back with a story that will make people sit up. By the way, suppose you look through the morgue and see if we've got any clippings about that fellow Salvatore. You might run through the clippings about the Black Hand too, and see if there is anything to identify the people mixed up in this affair with any earlier occurrence of the same sort."

"The morgue" is the rather gruesome name given by newspaper men to the collection of clippings of daily occurrences that is carefully kept up in all well managed newspaper offices. The name, of course, comes from the fact that these clippings are most frequently referred to for the purpose of preparing obituary notices of eminent citizens at the time of their death. Indeed in the case of the more eminent such obituaries are kept prepared and brought carefully up to date every now and then by the keeper of the morgue in order that they may be all ready for the printer the moment the news of the regrettable demise reaches the office.

But the uses of a newspaper morgue are far more various than its name would indicate. It is a looseleaf encyclopedia brought daily up to date; a current history of the world's doings

including innumerable happenings which the normal historian would ignore but which may at any time be given a new, if passing, importance; it is a gallery of portraits both literary and pictorial, for a well kept morgue will not only have brief biographies of every one in whom the public may take even a vague interest, but will have a collection of published portraits as well.

In a large morning newspaper office three or four men are kept constantly busy keeping up the morgue and responding to demands for the matter in it. Every paper in the city of publication is read carefully, and usually one or more papers of national standing published in other cities. Weeklies and magazines also are scanned especially for descriptive articles about persons or places. The utmost care however is given to the paper published in that particular office. This is read by an expert who marks every article in which appears a name of either person, place or thing about which there is the slightest chance of future interest. He marks every editorial bearing upon a subject of general dispute so that if a year later the able editor wants to indulge in the favorite pastime of reprinting "what *The Blade* said on this subject," and thereby prove his superhuman foresight, a reference to the

morgue will at once produce the article sought.

In some newspapers the clipping and filing of these articles is supplemented by their entry in a book or index by consulting which one can find the exact date on which an article on, for example, a new air-ship was published in the paper indexed. At least one newspaper prints and sells such an index to its own files, and it has proved of great value to investigators in many lines. As a rule however the newspapers content themselves with clipping the important items and filing them in heavy envelopes in accordance with a system of classification which enables the morgue keeper to turn direct to the topic sought. There is no better occupation for the leisure moments of the young newspaper man, or the youth who expects to enter the profession of journalism, than the establishment and maintenance of a clipping file of this character. It will not only be educational in itself, but it will in the end be a collection of great value to him in later life. Many individual files have been collected which had a value of thousands of dollars.

Now the possible value of the morgue in a case like this of Salvatore lay in the chance that in it might be found some reference to earlier troubles of the same sort in which the banker might have been a figure, or some story

of a prior Black Hand plot the methods of which might suggest that its participants might be the same men who had abducted the banker. So entering the railed-off partition that constituted the morgue Yates sat down at a table in an alcove surrounded by shelves filled with classified envelopes.

"Gimme what you have on Salvatore, the Black Hand and anything that might identify a wop banker," said he to the keeper of the morgue whose alert and cheery air did not harmonize well with the name of his occupation.

"What's the story, Bob?" asked the latter as after a few moments search he dropped a number of manila envelopes on the desk before the reporter.

"Oh, a banker named Salvatore has disappeared and there's reason to suspect that he's being held for a ransom."

"Something like that old case of Petrozzi, the millionaire junkman, eh?"

"What was that? I don't remember it."

"Oh, that was nearly ten years ago. I was a copy reader then, and remember the story. I'll look in a minute and see if we've got anything about it. The morgue wasn't kept so well then as it is now under my able management."

Both youths grinned. The speaker continued.

"This man Petrozzi was one of these industrious and saving Italians who come over here to make a stake, and go back to the old country, set up a wine shop and live in luxurious idleness ever after. He was getting there all right too. He began going about the east side with a burlap bag over his shoulder and buying as much junk as he could carry to the selling place. By and by he got a push cart, then a wagon with a quadruped that it would be base flattery to call a horse, then he began buying from the fellows who went about with burlaps bags as he had in his earlier days. Then he bought more wagons and hired fellows to run them. Finally he leased a vacant lot way up in Harlem and used it to store the junk which kept coming in increasing quantities. He had begun to be known at his bank by this time, for though his borrowings were small they were always paid promptly and his balance was quite as big as those of people who lived in much more ostentatious fashion. A little shack in one corner of his junk yard, made out of the junk itself sufficed for him, and he lived there alone doing his own cooking. With borrowed money he bought the land he was using at a time when that part of Harlem was not easy to get at, and lots were cheap. Not many years later the east side subway was put through

and Petrozzi awoke to find out that the people of the city who paid for that subway had made him richer in a night than he had made himself by all his years of hard work and pinching economy.''

''Here, hold on,'' said Yates, ''what's this you're giving me? A lecture on how to get on in the world without economy or hard work? I've got work to do right now, and if anything encourages economy it's the wages paid on this *Blade.*''

''Well, no matter. What I was going to tell you was that nobody had bothered Petrozzi when he was poor and looked it. He never had time to look otherwise, but when the news began to get around Little Italy that he was in fact very rich his troubles began. And the most serious of those troubles was the raid made upon him by blackmailers—they didn't call them the Black Hand then. They sent mysterious men to threaten him as he lay in his shack at dead of night. Messages demanding the payment of hush money were delivered to him in the most amazing ways—sometimes he'd find them in the junk he'd bought, sometimes they were tacked to the door of his hovel so he would see them when he opened up in the morning. Coffins, stilettoes and jagged clubs were the favorite illustrations for these letters, I

remember. I was covering the story for the old *Star*.

"I'll say for Petrozzi that he was game. Either that or he cared more for his money than he did for any evil thing that might befall him. He just shrugged his shoulders, took the letters as they came, tore down the posters, and bought a sawed-off shot gun which he used to keep loaded and standing in the corner of his shack. He got a snappy little mongrel dog too which he kept with him, and which ought to have been sure to give the alarm if anybody tried to approach the place. Nevertheless one morning old Petrozzi was found to have disappeared."

"Ever find him?" asked Yates, who meantime had been going through the pile of clippings before him.

"Yep. The police ran his abductors down. It seemed that the old fellow had told the cops about the affair, and they had picketed his shack to catch any one who might approach it. But the matter must have leaked somehow, for that very night the old fellow was seized on a dark street as he was coming home, gagged, bound and tumbled into a closed wagon. He didn't have any chance to use his gun. While the sleuths were crouched behind piles of junk in his yard waiting for the conspirators, those

fellows struck and got away with their victim. They took him to some back room in a tenement down in Little Italy and kept him there with nothing to eat, and making threats against his life until he finally weakened. He gave up $20,000, going to his own bank, under guard and not daring to say a word as he handed in the check and got the currency. Then they took him back to his prison, and thence to a train, releasing him in a small town up state with dire threats as to what would happen to him if he ever tried to find his abductors.

"The old man tried to live up to his promise of silence, but the police abused him almost as much as the criminals had until they made him give up all he knew. You see he had put them on to the affair before the actual abduction occurred. In the end an Italian detective—the same fellow whom the Mafia afterwards killed over in Italy where he had gone after a fugitive—ran down the gang, and two were convicted on Petrozzi's testimony. He was scared to death, and lived under police protection until he could sell all he had and go back to Italy."

"That's something like this case I am at work on," said Yates reflectively "although Salvatore has been more secret about his troubles. The police aren't onto it yet. Say, if you've

got an envelope with that case in it let me look at it will you?"

The other went off and soon returned bringing the envelope.

"Here you are," said he, "Petrozzi case, jury convicts. Tomasso Conti and Pietro Benda get six years. Say, with good conduct allowance they would have been out just about three months. Wonder if they could have been mixed up in this affair of yours. You know old habits like that are hard to break."

"Let's look at those clippings," said Yates. "Pity the case wasn't big enough to justify the papers in printing pictures of the accused then. But somehow I've heard the name Pietro in this case somewhere. Who used it? Whose name was it? Not the cashier's, for the mistress called him Carlo. What other man did she name? By George, I have it. She said that once when her husband got a threatening letter he took it over to the garage and showed it to Pietro. And that garage keeper disappeared the same night that Jim did. It looks to me as if I was hot on the trail. Much obliged old man. I'll not need the rest of the clippings."

And mightily excited Bob Yates was speedily on his way back to the city room with the first good clue that had come his way.

CHAPTER X

A POLICE DETECTIVE HELPS

"HELLO," said the city editor as Yates came up to his desk, "you look as if you had got on the trail at last."

"Well, it's a mighty faint scent but maybe it will lead us to the game. I found out this morning that the keeper of the garage who rented Jim the car in which he disappeared was known in the neighborhood as 'Pietro Bertelli' and in the morgue I find a story of a blackmailing scheme in which a fellow named 'Pietro Benda' was convicted and sent up for six years. I figure that he would have been out about three months, and that is just a little longer than the time that Salvatore has been getting those threatening letters."

"Hm! Rather a delicate and elusive scent isn't it? Pietros are about as thick in Little Italy as Pats are in what we used to call Little Dublin—it's gone now—and you wouldn't think anyway that a man just out of Sing Sing would turn immediately to the same trade that sent him there. Was there any picture of this Pietro?"

"No. I suppose the case was not considered very important then. They only stole a banker not a reporter, so the papers did not get excited."

"That's right. The world could get along with fewer bankers but we can't afford to lose any reporters."

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it perhaps a little raise of salary might keep *The Blade* from losing me."

"You're a humorist. You know we only talk of raising salaries on the 29th of February with leap years barred. So forget it, and tell me what you are going to do with this shadowy trail of yours."

"It looks to me as if we'd have to go to the police. Oh, don't be in a hurry. I don't mean to tell them the whole story, about Jim and all the rest. But at least we can find out whether they have kept tab on this Benda fellow since he came out, and whether any suspicion has been aroused of his going back to his old ways. They might know whether he took up the business of running a garage—since I bought my flivver I have come to the conclusion that Black-Handing is an honest and benevolent occupation compared to keeping a garage. Anyway I might be able to get some sort of a description of the original Pietro at

police headquarters and see if it corresponds with what I have been able to learn about this fellow. It won't be necessary to explain just what I have on my mind."

"No, it won't be necessary to explain, but you won't be out of Mulberry Street before those fellows will be at work shadowing you, and using every device to find out what you are at work on. They are mighty jealous of newspaper invasions of their field, and while they haven't always the time, or the brains, to catch crooks themselves they are busy as bees in their efforts to head us off from catching them first.

"But I'll tell you what to do. You go up to Mulberry Street and find Fred Mather. Tell him the whole story and make him understand that I want to have it kept quiet for at least one day more. He has been doing police for us so long that the coppers look on him as one of themselves. He can sit down to a game of pinochle with a batch of headquarters detectives and learn all they know before anybody has had time to lose fifty cents. It isn't impossible that he may know something about this case in the records for he has been doing police for twenty years, and his memory on anything that ever came up at Headquarters is more serviceable than any morgue I ever saw. You go up and see him, and if you get another lead

there phone me. To-morrow is Saturday, and I'd like a bully good story for the Sunday paper. Besides the chief has said that if we can't solve this thing by Sunday it must be given over to the police to handle. Rush it."

With that password of the newspaper ringing in his ears, Bob "rushed it" to the street, and was presently on his way through one of New York's most picturesque, though most squalid, sections toward the great gray stone building in which are housed the executive offices of the Police Department.

In the language of the streets, of the underworld, and of all who have anything to do with that mysterious stratum of New York's society Police Headquarters is known simply as "Mulberry Street." In that thoroughfare which at its lower end is given over to crowded tenements housing mostly Italians, the Department has been located for many years, first in an ancient but spacious building of red brick, but latterly in a granite edifice that hides more romances than ever attached to any feudal castle of the dark ages.

Fred Mather, the police reporter whom Yates sought, had been assigned to headquarters for almost a quarter of a century. Prior to taking up the reportorial work for *The Blade* he had been like Phil a messenger, or copy boy whose

duty it was to bring to the office the copy written by *The Blade's* man at headquarters. In his earlier days there had been no telephones, and everything had to be rushed at topmost speed from the reporter's room in Mulberry Street to the editorial rooms on Park Place. Under the conditions existing to-day the police reporter instead of writing his story would telephone it in, often sending the merest outline of the facts, leaving the "rewrite men" in the office to make a readable story of it.

This modern system unquestionably results in a great saving of time, which, especially in the case of evening papers, is a vital necessity. Often the news of some event reported to police headquarters will be set forth with substantial accuracy in a paper printed half a mile away before the desk sergeant has fully finished noting it on the blotter. To papers issuing regular editions every hour, and keenly alive to every chance for an "extra" the telephone is not merely a great convenience but is almost a necessity of life. It is difficult to see how they could be published without it. But newspaper men of the older generation deplore this system even while they admit its many merits. For it has put an end to the well written story of police happenings—and not all police news is the news of crimes by any means. A morn-

ing newspaper man in Mulberry Street does occasionally get an opportunity to tell with some degree of literary skill the story of the amazing chapters of human life that are enacted before the eyes of the police of a great city. Some of the most notable of our writers of fiction served their apprenticeships in the dingy reporters' room opposite to old headquarters in Mulberry Street. Some found so much of fascination, and so many opportunities for usefulness in the service there that they never left it, repelling all suggestions of the more dignified and profitable positions of editors, and remaining to the end of their days police reporters by choice. They were close to the daily life of that great common people of whom Abraham Lincoln once said "God must love the common people; He made so many of them."

The name of one of these devoted police reporters is indelibly imprinted upon the history of Mulberry Street and its vicinity.

Jacob A. Riis was a Dane who came in youth to the United States to seek fortune. Fortune he never found, if by fortune we mean great sums of money and release from the task of earning a livelihood. But he found something higher and better, and found it right in the reporters' room of the old Mulberry Street head-

quarters where he sat as a reporter for more than 25 years.

Some men might have found in the endless tales of human misery, frailty and sin that came hour by hour into that grim and noisome clearing house for crime nothing but an excuse to look out upon the world with cynical and cold indifference to this spectacle of widespread human degradation.

Not so Riis. He became first of all a good reporter—so good that time and again his paper—*The Sun* in its days of greatest brilliancy—repeatedly offered him promotion, and none the less rejoiced when he declared his purpose to stick to the work which he could do best, and in which he had already begun to discern the opportunity of service to mankind. His daily task was to write truthfully the story, let us say, of some shocking crime committed in the filthy and overcrowded tenements that then stood in Mulberry Bend, and the now vanished Five Points. He did the task, and wrote his story well and with a trained eye to the needs and the demands of the newspaper reader for details—even shocking ones. But back of the crime which he described he saw a greater crime; a crime of which all the people of New York were equally guilty; the crime of letting children grow up in these crowded and

noisome tenements, where scenes of drunkenness and outlawry were of every day occurrence, where dirt and filth were as much a part of the "homes" as the very flooring or the plaster on the walls. He saw the crime of permitting grasping landlords to compel multitudes of their fellow beings to live under conditions which would revolt swine.

The evil that he saw he combated as the thoroughbred reporter would attack it—not by argument or by editorial denunciation, but by a plain, straightforward and vivid statement of the facts. Day after day he described the foul and squalid tenements, with their dark and unventilated rooms, their total lack of sanitary conveniences, their insufficient supply of water, their dark and filthy halls the lurking places of crime, their backyards filled with garbage and inviting a pestilence. He told the story of the life of children brought up in so corrupting an atmosphere, and showed how little chance they had to develop into anything except criminals, or weak and diseased charges upon the charity of the town. He kept persistently at it in the columns of his newspapers, a true "voice crying in the wilderness." At last his stories attracted attention. A magazine editor sought them for his publication. They were put into a book, and then into a series of books. The

interest of Theodore Roosevelt, then rising to prominence, was enlisted. The conscience of the community was aroused and the work of the reporter began to bear fruit.

As a result of this work tenement house laws were enacted which corrected the most crying evils which he had depicted. The worst of the slums were done away with. "Five Points" which had been for almost a century New York's center of wretchedness and crime disappeared before broad new streets which were cut through at public cost. Where Mulberry Bend was with its fetid tenements is now a spacious park with a playground for children well equipped with athletic apparatus. The "dumb-bell" tenement is outlawed and is rapidly disappearing, and, while life in the congested district is still hard enough and squalid enough, its conditions are vastly ameliorated. And it is due above all to the work of the man who all his life was content to remain a police reporter—Jacob A. Riis.

Through the park still crowded with youngsters and up Mulberry Street Yates walked until he came to the great granite police headquarters. Here he prowled around looking for Mather who had "done police" for *The Blade* for nearly twenty-five years.

In a big room off of which opened doors lead-

ing into private offices, and in which a sprinkling of police uniforms mingled with the clothes of civilians who were loafing about with apparently nothing in the world to do, Yates found Mather. The police reporter, smoking an ancient and not over-reputable corn-cob pipe, was sitting with his feet on a table, and apparently swapping stories with a burly man in plain clothes whose cold hard face suggested long familiarity with the rougher side of life. Seeing Bob he cut short his story and came over.

"What's up?"

"Bowers wanted me to talk with you a little about that matter of Holbrook."

"He isn't ready to let the police in on it yet, is he?"

"No, but we need a little information which he thought you could get without letting the police on to the whole thing."

"All right. Shoot."

Bob told him the story as far as it had developed and produced the clippings from the morgue dealing with the Petrozzi case.

"What we want to find out," said he, "is whether this Pietro Benda stayed in New York after being freed, whether the police kept an eye on him, and what they know about his doings."

"Uh-huh. Wait a minute."

Mather disappeared through one of the doors. In a few minutes he came back with a rather faded photograph in his hand.

"Here's the picture of Benda taken at the time he was sent up. You don't happen to know what your man looked like do you?"

"No, never saw him. Jim saw him all right but we can't find Jim. Can't I take that photo up to the garage and see if the present keeper—fellow named Giddings—recognizes it?"

"They won't let us take it out. It belongs in the rogues' gallery. They'd give me an officer to take it up to the garage for identification but in that case we'd have to let them know what we are working on. I'll get the photographer to make me a print of it. It won't take long and in the meantime we'll look up Joe Mora who knows most of these Italian criminals. It's as much his business to be friendly with them as it is ours to know how to spell. Let's see. It's about seven o'clock. Joe is likely to be at Frangetti's spaghetti house. Had your dinner yet? If you can stand a Dago feed of spaghetti and chicken we might go over there?"

"Sounds good to me. Let's go."

Mather took the picture to the photograph

room with a request for another print and in a few minutes they were threading their way through the crowded sidewalks of Mulberry Street towards its intersection with Hester, at that time the most typically Italian section of all New York. Had they but known it they passed directly before the door of the coffee shop in which Phil a few hours later was to discover the two Italian suspects, and they walked within a few yards of the squalid tenement in which Holbrook and his fellow victim were even then locked up. Some thought of this kind suggested itself to the experienced mind of Mather for he waved his arm up at the crowded rows of tenements on either side of them, and remarked. "How easy it would be for them to hide our men away right here within a stone's throw of police headquarters. These Italians stick together against all outsiders, and even if any other tenants were suspicious of what might be going on a hint that the Black Hand was mixed up in it would keep them all as silent as turtles. That's where the police have the best of us in a search of this sort. If I told the man we are going to see now just what we suspect he would go into every one of the buildings in which any one lives at all suspected of irregular ways of earning a living, and search every room. Without a warrant?

Sure. It's illegal of course, but the police don't stand much on legal technicalities with the people in this district. They know these fellows have no comeback, and they smash doors and make raids about as they see fit. It gets good results often, but I must admit that it doesn't seem right to show these foreigners that our officers of the law are ready to violate the law. But here we are."

They approached an area way a foot or two below the surface of the street. The front of the basement was painted a bright blue, and lace curtains, the cleanliness of which contrasted brightly with the general grime of the street, hung in the windows. Gilt letters proclaimed the cheery looking spot to be "FRANGETTI'S SPAGHETTI HOUSE," and a gentle hum of conversation and clatter of dishes greeted them as they pushed open the door and entered.

Originally the basements of two connecting houses the place had been extended by roofing over the backyards and making a sort of rustic pavilion of the space so enclosed. Lines of tables with neat napery and shining glassware filled it all except where stood the cashier's desk on one side, presided over by a plump and smiling brunette, and a huge chimney on the other banked high with a hard coal fire, be-

fore which on slowly revolving spits some thirty or more chickens were roasting, tended the while by a fat and jolly chef in white apron and cap. From this great "rotisserie" arose an appetizing odor that made Bob Yates think of things more intimate than his vanished friend, while the glowing bank of coals served the double purpose of browning the chickens, and making the air of the room pleasantly warm for two chilled wayfarers.

"Some lively little eat-shop," remarked Mather as Bob, who was new to the place, stopped to gaze curiously at the roasting fowls. "Frangetti says he sells from two hundred to two hundred and fifty chickens a night here. If you ever tried to keep chickens you will understand that that means some good sized poultry yard to supply them. As one chicken is furnished for each four guests you can get an idea of how many people eat here. There's never any change in the bill-of-fare. Soup, spaghetti, chicken, block of ice cream, small coffee. That's the layout. Price one dollar. I remember when it used to be sixty cents,—and with some stuff they called wine at that. The Italian frequenters raised considerable ruction when the prohibition law cut off the wine, and some of them bring their own bottles from home now. But they are getting fewer

and fewer, and the boss says his business is bigger without the wine than with it. People who used to pick up free lunch at the saloons have money enough to come here now I guess. Yonder's Joe Mora with that bunch over there at that big table. He always keeps in touch with the people of this section and is as friendly with those who are crooked as with those who are straight—unless one of them happens to be wanted down at the headquarters, then it's a quick trip for him. You know the only way these police detectives can get along is by being friendly with very crooks they have to detect, and treating them like companions unless they are under immediate suspicion. There. I've caught his eye. He'll be over to our table in a minute."

The two kept on with their meal, and in few minutes a burst of laughter from Mora's table told that he was coming away with one of his stories left for a memory. Presently he loomed up over the table at which the two reporters sat.

"Sit down, Joe," said Mather. "My friend Yates of *The Blade* is hunting for a man you may know. I told him you knew every Italian that had landed in America since the day of Columbus?"

"You always were good at the telling, Fred.

I'll bet the fellows down at the office have to rewrite everything you send in if they don't want the old *Blade* to read like a fairy book. Well, Mr. Yates, glad to know you even if he did bring you. Who are you looking for? If he likes spaghetti Chianti better than Irish potatoes and whiskey I probably know him. It's my business to keep up with these wops, and I'm one myself and proud of it."

"Did you ever know a man named Pietro Benda?"

"Sure. 'Smiling Pete' we used to call him before he went up the river for doing an old banker out of $20,000 on some sort of a Black Hand play. We've got his picture now in the gallery. I saw him the other day, up Harlem way and he's just as smiling as ever. Came out of the pen about four months ago and says he's going straight now. Had some sort of an auto repair shop, he said, and I told him it was a tough business to keep straight in. I'd like to see him get along on the level though. He's a good fellow even if he has done time."

Yates could scarcely conceal his excitement.

"Did he tell you where his shop was?"

"Up on Avenue A near 163rd Street. What are you fellows interested in him for? Trying to put something over on us poor coppers I suppose. He's done something crooked that

you know about, and instead of coming to us guardians of the law and telling us all about it you come and pump us of all we know, and then go find your man on our information, and your editor fellows write articles on how much better detectives reporters are than the police. I ought to drop you both and not give you another bit of information. But this boy Fred is almost as good as a copper himself, and being as you're a friend of his I'll tell you that Smiling Pete comes down nearly every evening to meet up with his friends in a little coffee shop on this street near Mulberry. He'll probably be there to-night about eleven. Do you want him pinched? No. That's good. I'd hate to send him up again. Well then, good night boys. Always come to the police when you newspaper babies get into trouble."

"Feels his oats pretty well, does Joe to-night," remarked Mather as the detective lounged away and found a place with another crowd. "But he surely knows our man. What do you want to do about it now? You can be pretty sure that whatever you do Joe Mora is going to have his eye on you. He is just as eager to avoid being scooped by a newspaper as we are to get the scoop for ourselves."

"I think," said Yates, "that if I can get the print of that portrait now I'll take it up to the

garage and see if Giddings can identify it. Then I'll come back downtown and look for that coffee shop he spoke of. How late are you at headquarters?''

''I'm on duty until twelve-thirty. If you have need call me up. Better come up now and get that print. If in the course of this job you get an Italian stiletto in your back you can have the comfort of knowing that I'll write the story of your noble death for *The Blade* in a way that'll make you wish you were alive to read it.''

CHAPTER XI

A REPORTER'S EDUCATION

The shrill, insistent demands of an alarm clock awoke Phil at six o'clock Saturday morning. The summons was by no means a welcome one. He had been up late the night before, but even more than that his mind was attuned to the habit of late hours both night and morning. The morning newspaper man is much more accustomed to seeing the sun rising from its bed before he seeks his own, than to getting up at sunrise. Phil was not unacquainted with the appearance of the streets of Manhattan, empty and cheerless in the cold gray of a winter's morning, but he had ordinarily seen them thus on his way home to a warm bed after a hot supper at an all-night restaurant.

So this morning the call of duty was hard to respond to. But suddenly his mind leaped into consciousness with the recollection of the last thing seen the night before.

"Now where the dickens did Bob Yates get the trail that took him down to the coffee shop on Hester Street?" he thought. "And what

was that picture? He kept looking at it and then into the shop as if he was trying to pick out some man there who resembled it. Of course he's been to see Mrs. Salvatore, and may have a picture of Toni from her, but he couldn't expect to find an abducted banker playing dominoes cheerfully in a café. Maybe he has got a picture of Pietro, but if so where could he have found it? One thing's sure. If I'm going out on this I have got to be up and doing."

Meanwhile he was hastily splashing his face with cold water and slipping into his clothes.

"Oh, bother!" he exclaimed. "What am I going to do about that job at the garage? If I go back there I must put on some older things. The ones I had on yesterday made the boss suspicious of me. But do I want to go back? I don't see just what there is left for me to learn there. If there is any place the men I am hunting for will avoid it is that garage. My place is down around that tenement on Hester Street—by George! I never thought of it, but of course that—'er'—in Jim's note is the end of the word 'Hester.' That makes his note read: 'shall leave car at Hester Street and look into place near Mulberry.' The place is the café. Jim didn't know its number but gave his location so he could be traced if anything hap-

pened to him. Wise old guy, Jimmie! He hasn't been a New York reporter for fifteen years without learning that there are some dangers in the trade."

By this time the boy was dressed and ready for the street. At a corner newstand he bought a copy of *The Blade* and scanned it eagerly with the zest of a born newspaper man whose newspaper must always come before his breakfast. Nothing appeared about the Salvatore case, so Phil had the satisfaction of knowing that at least it had not been solved in his absence. As he sat in a white tiled restaurant consuming coffee, and the cakes which a man in the big window was diligently cooking on an electric griddle, Phil went over in his mind the present state of affairs, and what he had to do in order to get his friend out of the clutches of the Italians and have a story ready for the next morning's paper.

"I know where the men are," he said to himself, "or at least I know where they were at midnight. Now I could go down there, and pound on the door, raise a ruction and call Jim's name so that he would know that someone was looking for him. But it's a rather tough joint, and the chances are about even that instead of getting Jimmie out I'd get myself in. Or I could watch the place and when

I saw the two Italians go out go up and break in the door, or at least get into communication with Jim. But there's no certainty that they would both go out together, and if they did they would probably leave their men gagged so they could not talk to me, unless I broke in. Besides if I did that we would probably not catch the kidnapers and that would spoil the story. Any violence in that house while they were away would be reported to them by way of warning. There are too many of their own sort there to risk that.

"It looks to me as if I'd just got the opening move of this puzzle. Well, anyway, I can be thinking it over as I go downtown. So far as Giddings and his garage are concerned they've seen the last of me. He's welcome to the pay for yesterday's work."

So thinking Phil made his way to the Subway and in that roaring, rattling, rumbling cave of gloom made his speedy way down to Worth Street where he emerged into the clear air of a winter's morning. Going east he soon came to Mulberry up which he walked to the corner of Hester. He was now at the scene of his last night's vigil. The street in front of the half burned tenement was still roped off, and a solitary policeman kept the few idle passers-

by moving on. Walking to a point opposite the building which he had entered the night before Phil scanned the windows on the third floor front. That was the room the men had entered the night before, and he wondered whether they had yet opened the door and been confronted with his warning poster. There were no signs of life about the windows, although other men were coming out of the hall and going off to their work. If the dingy old red brick tenement were indeed the scene of a crime it was about as commonplace a one as could be imagined.

"I'm fairly stumped," said Phil.

There seemed nothing to do for the time but to hang about the neighborhood and see if the two Italians might not put in an appearance. "They will probably come out before long and go over to that café for their morning coffee," he thought. "If they were workingmen they would be up by this time, but I suppose Black-Handers don't have to keep early hours."

By way of killing time he put his police badge on his coat and walked over to chat with the policeman.

"Any lives lost last night?" he asked.

"No, most of the people got out over the roofs, but one or two were scared and had to

jump. The boys got them in the net, though. It was a right lively little fire while it lasted. What's your paper?"

"*The Blade.*"

"So. Bully good paper. Always a good friend to the police. By the way one of your fellows was here about two o'clock this morning, just as I come on post. Nice fellow he was too—gave me a couple of good cigars that I'll smoke when I go off duty at ten. Name of Yates. You know him?"

"Bob Yates? Certainly I know him. He's one of the best reporters on Park Row." Phil's manner was much more cheerful than his reflections were. Had Yates given the story away to the police? Or had he gone so much further with it as to leave Phil hopelessly in the lurch? He'd try to find out more before getting discouraged.

"What was Yates after up here. The fire story?" Phil spoke with an accent of indifference which he was far from feeling.

"Oh no. There wasn't nothing in that fire to make a story out of. Your friend seemed to be sort of bugs on this Black Hand business we hear so much of in Little Italy. Asked me if I knew any men who were mixed up in that sort of business, and whether I had seen anything around here night before last that looked

like a man being dragged out of an auto by violence. But I couldn't help him. I'm Irish as ye'd guess and the wops around here don't take me into their confidence. We get on all right, and they move on when I tell them, and clean up their places if I tell them about a hundred times. But they don't take me out to no spaghetti dinners, nor ask me in to any of their christening parties. Did yez ever see an Eyetalian christening? These fellys in a one room tenement will pile on more things to eat than the big bosses in Tammany get at a sheriff's dinner."

The burly officer seemed rapt in thought of the extent of the hospitality of the Italian families on the joyous occasion of a christening and Phil had to move diplomatically to get him back to his subject.

"Why do they put an Irish cop on a beat where there are nothing but Italians?"

"Oh, I guess they don't want us to get too friendly with the wops. Ye see the Eyetalians is great for secret societies of all sorts, and it's almost impossible to get a policeman who's a dago himself that won't get tied up with one of these societies and give more time to protecting the members of his lodge than to running down the crooks. So they puts us Irish on here knowing we won't get too thick with the

people we have to watch. Oh, we're all good friends, particularly with the kiddies. Some of these little dago boys is bright as a flashlight. By the way I've got a boy of my own—about 15 he is now and in high school. I was thinking I'd like to get him in newspaper work. How does a felly go about it to get a job as a reporter?"

Phil smiled somewhat grimly as he reflected that this was precisely the question he had been vainly trying to answer for his own benefit for some months. But the big policeman was so friendly that he determined to give him all the information he could.

"Well," he said, "that's not the easiest question to answer, or the easiest thing to do. If you were trying to get a job as reporter you would think that the papers never hired anybody that had not had several years experience, and you'd wonder where they found all the men of experience if greenhorns could never get a start. But a good many fellows come into New York after serving their apprenticeship on papers in smaller cities. Some have been editors of their little college papers, and some have been country correspondents for the city papers and have made acquaintances in the offices that way. Then a lot come in as a result of having

some sort of a pull or personal acquaintance with the owner, or one of the big fellows on the paper. They all pretend that this isn't done, but it is all the same. Then there are some who begin as copy boys, or errand boys in the office and gradually get to doing small reportorial jobs. That's the way I began."

Phil did not think it necessary to explain that he was still in that preparatory stage.

"Now that sounds to me like the best way," said the policeman eagerly, "and how much might a new reporter get a week?"

"Mighty little," responded Phil with some bitterness. "It all depends on the kind of assignments the city editor hands out to him. You know we are paid by space—that is we clip all the stuff we have printed in the paper, paste it in a long 'string' and turn it in at the end of the week. We get so much a column for matter printed. Sometimes you will work hard enough getting the facts of a story to make a column out of it, but the paper may be crowded that night and the copy desk will cut it down to two or three sticks, and you'll get perhaps a dollar for an all day's job. I knew a copy boy once who was getting fourteen dollars a week. He worked and planned to get a reporter's job, and after he got it his earnings averaged about

four dollars a week for the first four weeks. But he made good and is getting big money now."

"And sure, how much does one of your fine reporters, a man like the felly that talked to me the other night get?"

"Well, a good reporter makes good money. On space he may get to running up bills of $100 to $125 a week. But when he gets up to that figure the managing editor begins to take notice and tells him that he will have to take a salary thereafter—say $100 a week. Then it's up to him to decide whether the certainty of $100 is better than the possibility of making a good deal more, with the chance that the office will compel him to take the salary or quit. A newspaper isn't published for the profit of its employes, and shifting a strong space man to a moderate salary is one of the favorite ways of saving money. They never put a green man on salary. Make him pay for his own apprenticeship you know. When he gets to know the ropes the question is merely if he's strong enough to fight efforts to economize at his expense."

"Say, there's tricks in all trades, isn't they? And the felly what has to work for somebody else usually gets it in the neck. But even $100 a week sounds mighty good to me for just going

around and looking up interesting things and writing something about them. Say, if you had a boy and wanted him to be a newspaper man what would you make him learn?"

"Everything," said Phil with a laugh. "Of course I don't mean exactly that, but there isn't any kind of knowledge from tango to trigonometry that a reporter doesn't once in awhile feel the need of. A newspaper man has to know something about everything, and it is the unfortunate fact about his calling that it seldom leaves him time to learn any one thing thoroughly.

"But if I had a dad who was a policeman I'd learn more from him to begin with than I ever could from school. I'd make him teach me all about the department and its methods, and all about this enormous mysterious city. Why you see and hear about things enough every week down here in this crowded foreign section to make the fortune of a writer. But so far as school is concerned, I'd make my boy learn how to write clearly and tersely—and the very best way to learn that is to read good writers and to try every day to write an account of something that interests you. You can't write well without constant practice any more than that big copper who put the shot further than any competitor in the Olympic games in Copenhagen

last year could have done it without practice and keeping everlastingly at it. And he ought to learn shorthand too—not too much but enough to help in making notes of things he sees and hears. Why do I say 'not too much?' Well, I'll tell you. A man who has a thorough knowledge of shorthand has a good career open to him—but not on a newspaper. He may get to be a court, or legislative reporter, or he may become secretary to some big man or corporation if he looks out for employment of that class. But on a newspaper he will find himself getting sent to banquets, meetings, investigating committees and that sort of thing and being shut out of the general assignments which give to the true reporter a knowledge of the world that makes him valuable in any post. If I knew shorthand I'd use it and with great advantage to myself, but I wouldn't let the office know too much about it.

"Then languages. The ability to speak any one of those which are common among our foreign residents multiplies the value of a reporter by two. History, particularly that of the last twenty-five years that nobody has yet put in a book, is useful too, and a smattering of law as well. Of course if a man wants to work up into one of the Departments like Wall Street,

the dramatic, music or art, sports or politics he has to specialize on those features of life."

"And the poor gossoon I've got!" cried the officer in mock dismay. "Sure you'd have him studying things till he was gray before he asked for a job."

Phil laughed.

"Perhaps I was a bit too comprehensive in my list of things a reporter ought to learn. But cheer up. Mighty few of them have ever taken the course I recommend. Most of them are still learning, and it's one good thing about my calling that we don't ever quit learning. Reporters may go broke—in fact that's the common state of most of us—but at least they don't get rusty."

"I was a thinking," said the friendly officer, "that when me boy comes out of school ye might help him to get a start as copy boy—was it ye said?"

"Sure I will, if I'm on the job still and I think I will be. My name's Phil Derby and you'll probably find me at *The Blade*"—"hope it will be as the star reporter by that time," continued Phil sotto voce to himself.

"Yes," he continued as an idea occurred to him, "I will certainly do that for you if you

remember to ask me, and now I want you to do something for me."

"Aha, young felly, that's politics. That's just like old Tammany Hall. You help me and I help you. Well, what is ye want now? Shoot."

"You see that tenement about three doors down Hester street? Yes? Well up in the room in the third floor front are a couple of fellows I want to ask a few questions. They won't like the questions, but they are things *The Blade* wants to know. It isn't a police case, and I can't ask you to leave your post and go up there with me, but it would make me more comfortable, and would take away that feeling of a knife stuck in my back if I knew you knew that I was up there and were keeping an ear open for anything that sounded like a fight. Let's see. It's about nine o'clock now and you said you went off duty at ten. Suppose I drop into that coffee shop a minute and have a hot cup. You can't join me? No? Well, then when I come out I'll go over to the tenement and give you the high sign as I pass. I am going to the third floor. If the fellows aren't there, or I can't get in I'll come right back and report. If I stay and you hear any racket for the Lord's sake come a running. And if everything is quiet and I don't come

back before you go off just come up there and see if anything has happened to me."

"Well I suppose that's all right. I'm not supposed to stand around here and help nice young fellys to get into trouble, and from what you say I guess there may be trouble mixed up with this. Don't you want a plain clothes man to go up with you? I could phone to headquarters and have Joe Mora here in a jiffy, and he knows every wop in the ward and makes them eat out of his hand. No? Well, all right. I like to see a lad with pep and you've got it. If it's real trouble ye get into there don't be too slow about making a noise. Them Eyetalians is mighty quick with a knife and I don't want the felly that's going to get my young Tom a job laid out first."

"Don't worry about me," laughed Phil, and started off for the coffee shop. He had in his mind the outline of a plan for rescuing his friend and saving the story as well, and needed a few minutes free from the kindly talkativeness of the big policeman to formulate it.

CHAPTER XII

THE ENEMY WEAKENS

MEANTIME in the room extending across the front of the Hester Street tenement a drama was being enacted which it would have given Phil keen enjoyment to witness.

The room itself was barely furnished with a tattered rug on the floor, a cheap dining room table and a few chairs as its main articles of furniture. A dark alcove, almost the full width of the main room, opened to the rear without window or other means of ventilation. In it were a pine bed, a dresser littered with dirty articles of clothing, and a chair or two. In the front room was a greasy gas stove which indicated that the tenants had been in the habit of cooking thereon, though at this time it was burning for the purpose of doing its insufficient best to heat the apartment.

Three men were in the front room, one of whom was securely fastened to the chair in which he sat. From the bed in the alcove came sounds of inarticulate groanings, occasional oaths and prayers commingled, and the rus-

tling of a heavy and restless body. The two men who were at liberty were sitting at the table studying with bent and wrinkled brows a piece of paper which seemed to be greatly disturbing them. The only person of the three visible who seemed to be at all in a cheerful mood was the one tied to the chair, and his gaiety seemed to only add to the gloom of the others.

This was of course Jim Holbrook, who, except for a somewhat rough and stubbly chin and clothes sadly in need of a valet's attention, showed no serious signs of having been a prisoner to the Black Hand for two nights. If he was at all worried by his situation he carefully refrained from showing it. On the contrary he was railing at his captors in a tone of gay jocularity that did not seem to sit at all well on their Italian nerves. As they pored over the mysterious paper and conferred in hushed tones they seemed a very different pair from the two whom Phil had seen enjoying their coffee the night before.

"Well, my fine Italian friends," cried Holbrook laughing at their air of worry. "You don't seem to like the taste of your own medicine. Why should you be bothered because somebody tacks up a Black Hand on this beautiful villa of yours? Perhaps it's some of

your own pals. Maybe they're hungry for that $10,000 you thought you were going to get out of our friend Salvatore in there."

At this the noise of commingled prayer and blasphemy from the bed in the alcove grew notably louder.

"Just listen to him. He doesn't like the thought any more than you like that picture you are looking at. Who do you think sent you the valentine? I thought all Italians were artists, but if I couldn't draw a simple thing like a hand with a dagger through it better than that I'd hire a scene painter to do it.

"You Italians are a sloppy lot of conspirators anyway. Here you've got Salvatore who has a lot of money and you don't know how to get it away from him, and you've got me who never had any money and you don't know how to get rid of me. You know there isn't much sense in stealing a man just for the sake of stealing. What good am I to you here? You've only stirred up against you the most dangerous enemy a crook or any other kind of a man can have—the press of New York. When the police come along and pick you up, as they will pretty quick, you'll have every paper in New York hollering for you to be made an example of. It's up the river for you guys for ten years each at least."

"Aw, you shut up," shouted the larger of the two Italians rising from the table and approaching Jim threateningly. "Plenty of ways of getting rid of you. There's a knife in the heart, and carry you out in a trunk if we want to."

"Quite so. And a little death house at Sing Sing instead of ten years at that up-the-river resort for you, eh? I know well enough that you won't do anything of the sort. That paper posted on your door tells you that somebody knows what is up in this room. You don't believe any more than I do that that notice was posted by any of your people. They would not have said 'Give them up.' Some Yankee did that. Most likely some man from my own office who's onto you and watching you right now. What you fellows better do is to plan for your own getaway. What'll you give Salvatore and me if we'll promise not to squeal?"

"No getta fresh," growled the second of their captors. "We lock you in here and go out."

"He was about to suit the action to the word when he let up the blind to the window and looked out.

"Carramba! Pietro. Look quick! Zee poliss! And that boy talking with heem. You know heem? No? He is the boy you gave the

letter to the other night. Next day I see him around garage. He is track us.''

''Come away from the window,'' said Pietro supporting the words with a pull at his shoulder. Pull the blind. Now quiet. I want to think.''

Holbrook who had observed their trepidation, but had heard only the last words regarded them quizzically.

''Yes, let him think. He needs it. If he doesn't think to some purpose now he'll have ten years up the river with nothing to do but to think. What did you see out the window, Pietro, old sport? I'll bet it was *The Blade* staff of photographers waiting to take pictures of you when I haul you out. That's the way you'll go if you keep me tied up here much longer. And old Salvatore too. It's a shame to treat him the way you have. You ought to give him $10,000 for the worry you've given him. Come on. What's money between friends?''

''I have thought, signor. You are a fool. The other man is a coward. Why should we be afraid of either fools or cowards? You talk much, but what have you said except to make the josh as you Yankees say?

''We have you here, locked up among our friends. Nobody here will betray us. Our

friends would not, our enemies dare not. But we would be fair. Let that crying donkey over there give us a check for $5,000—half what we asked him. When we get it cashed we free you both—not here. No. You would print the story too quick. But with some friends we take you a little way to the country and turn you loose. It's a fine day for the country. Now what you say, Salvatore?"

"Oh, I'll give any—"

"Keep still, Salvatore. It's you are the fool, not me as this Dago bluffer has just said. Don't you give these fellows a thing. They think they've got us, but we've got them. Somebody's on their trail as that sign posted on their door last night shows. They dare not kill us as they threaten, and they can't play the game of starving us into surrender as some fellows like them did with an old junkman some years ago. Hullo! Does that surprise you, Pete? Maybe you were one of those fellows. But no, that's not likely, for they were sent up for long terms and would hardly be out yet. But that game can't be played on us for starvation takes a long time, and believe me you've got to wind this thing up in twenty-four hours or you'll feel the sharp edge of *The Blade.* Don't promise him anything, Salvatore—that is, unless you see the way clear to get-

ting out of the promise as you Italians usually do."

With the curtain drawn so that he could look through a slit at the edge without exposing himself to view outside Pietro had listened to Jim's talk with impatience. The reporter was giving him a very bad half hour. But for his bracing influence Salvatore would have surrendered long before. Moreover the Italian was shrewd enough to know that the search for Holbrook would be far keener, more determined and directed with greater ability than any that might be made for his original victim. He had watched the manner of Mrs. Salvatore during the days when his confederates by a succession of threatening letters had aroused a nameless dread in the banker's household, and he was certain that after two days of anguish over the fate of her husband she would gladly give up any blackmail that he might demand. But with this nervy, jeering newspaper man at his elbow all the time he could hardly compose himself to think out the remainder of his campaign, while it was clear enough that Holbrook's influence with the banker was sufficient to prevent that abject individual from surrendering at once. The more he pondered the less the situation was to his liking. After a moment he beckoned

his confederate to take his place on watch at the window, and drew a chair close to that in which Holbrook was bound.

"I was wrong, Mr. Holbrook," he said in a low voice and in what was meant for a conciliatory manner. "You are not a fool. At least I am going to give you a chance to show that you are not one."

"Bless you for those kind words, my host. But what sort of a villainous scheme are you going to put up to me now? You aren't so olive-oily for nothing."

"Mr. Holbrook, that man Salvatore is a verra rich man. He does not work for his money like you and me. You chase the news, you work hard writing it all out, you up late at night and running about all day."

"That's right, Pietro, and sometimes I run into mighty curious places and people. But what of it?"

"This Salvatore man he is a banker, and what is banker, Mr. Holbrook? Why he is a man who takes your money and my money, and say he keep it safe for us. And then he lend it to other people and make them pay him for using our money, and sometimes he lend it even to us and make us pay for the very money we let him have for nothing. He don't have to work hard like you and me—"

"Say, just speak for yourself, Pete, I'm not kicking about having to work too hard. Why, you've just given me a two days' holiday, and after I write the story about your arrest and sentence to Sing Sing the paper will be so grateful it will let me go to Europe. I'll see Naples before you, Pete."

"Si! Si! Signor. Have your little joke if you will. But Pietro Bert—I mean Pietra Benda—has to work hard for his money. When I wash up the motor car, or mend the old engines the banker just sit quiet in his bank reading *L'Italia* until somebody come in to give money for nothing, or to pay him for the use of other people's money."

"Well, you've surely got novel ideas of the business of a banker, Pete. You must have made speeches for Billy Bryan back in '96. But what did you start to call yourself just now? Pietro Bert—and then you stopped. I've an idea I heard something once about a fellow Pietro Bertelli who got into trouble some years ago. You him? Masquerading eh?"

"Ah, non, no! A little excited, that's all. You are so funny, Signor Holbrook. Suppose you let me do the talking. I make you one gra-a-and proposition. Is it not so?"

"All right. Shoot in your grand proposi-

tion. Only I don't want to talk about anything that leads me up to the door of the Tombs."

"Surely not, Signor Holbrook. You are a gentleman. A man of letters is it not? But have a little reason. You need money. I need money. We all need money except these bankers who take all our money without working for it. Now this man in there. He will do what you say. He was afraid of me, and would have given me $10,000 if you had not come along and spoiled it all. Why you do that, signor? What is it to you if that fat pig save his money or give it to me? Your story better if I give up than if not—is it not so? But what is that little story to you if you can make easy money joining me?"

"Joining you on your way to the penitentiary, do you mean? I'm not for any excursion of that sort. Reporting is a hard enough job, but it's a mighty sight better than making shoes for several years under lock and key."

"Oh, don't be foolish, signor. Why should we be caught?"

"Because you're caught already."

"Ah, you joke again. Caught only by you. Now I give you great chance. You tell this fellow he better give up—what you call it in English? Come across? You tell him you

save him $5,000 by getting us to take half what we meant to get from him. Then I give you one thousand and Alessandro and I divide the rest. We skip. You never see us again. He will be grateful to you. He will always remember how you saved him half his money. You get thousand dollars for being troubled these two days. Better than writing a story, hey? Now I go out, and you talk with heem."

"Like thunder I will. Look here, you Camorristic, Mafiastic, Black Hander, what do you think I am? A crook like you? You'll find out very differently before long. Save old Salvatore some money? I'm going to save it all for him. Not because I think very much of him. He's a cowardly old idiot rolling about on the bed in there and ready to grovel before you bandits. I don't care if he hears me. But his wife's a nice woman and his daughter's a peach and I'm going to see to it that you don't take the bread out of their mouths. And I'm going to see you either sent up the river, or a fugitive from the country without any of that old man's money to pay your way. Just remember that, Pete."

"You think so, do you?" sneered the other now thoroughly angered as his failure to secure the reporter for an accomplice became

evident. "You think you do very fine big things, hey? But first you've got to get out of here. How about that? You remember the bunch that pulled you out of that car the other night? Oh, you talked just as big then, and you put up one good fight I will say that. But they handled you, and here you are tied to a chair with Sandro there and me on guard. Suppose we just leave you here, and take the old man along with us somewhere else. Plenty places down here where friends will be glad to see us and keep their mouths shut. You get very hungry before any one find you, and the old man he give up his money quick with you out of the way. Perhaps a hot poker or the thing you smooth horses with—corrie comb isn't it—might help him to make up his mind quick. We'll get the crowd and move him after dark. You stay here and think about it till then. Now Sandro and me, we go over and get some hot coffee for us."

"Allow me to get it for you," said a strange young voice breaking in on the colloquy. All turned swiftly toward the door which had been quietly opened. On the threshold stood Phil grinning broadly.

"I'm here, Mr. Holbrook," he said in the most matter of fact way.

Jimmie returned the grin with interest.

"Sorry Phil," he said. "My copy's not quite ready. Would you mind waiting a moment for it?"

CHAPTER XIII

HUNTED DOWN

Dazed by this unexpected apparition Pietro dropped heavily into a chair and sat staring stupidly at Phil who stood in the door a smile on his face but with an air of obvious determination. The other Italian let fall the window shade from behind which he had been keeping watch on the policeman across the way, and moved over toward his chief. The two showed in their faces amazement at this sudden discovery that they had been detected and that their plot was on the verge of defeat.

Holbrook kept up for the benefit of his recent jailers his attitude of gay refusal to recognize any menace to himself in the situation at any time.

"I suppose the office wondered why it didn't get the rest of my copy," said he to Phil in the most matter of fact way. "But you see the hospitality of my friend Pietro here—meet Mr. Bertelli, Mr. Derby—was so insistent that I really had to give up literary work for a day or two. You never saw such a host, Phil. He

literally has not left me a moment to myself, and he has become so fond of me that just before you came in he was offering to take me in on one of his big business enterprises. I hope you'll come to know him better, Phil. He'll make your fortune. We are only gettin $8 a column on *The Blade* now and this genial philanthropist has offered me a thousand dollars for just a few minutes work. Maybe if you'll be good to him he will take you into his syndicate."

Bertelli's smile had by this time given place to dark scowls. He rose to his feet and confronted Holbrook threateningly.

"You keep your mouth shut now. I'm tired of all this noise from you. Think yourself out of this scrape, do you? Well, I'll show you. Quick, Sandro."

And at the word he seized Phil in his arms while the other Italian sprang to guard the door.

"We'll just tie this fellow too," said the leader as he forced Phil back against the wall.

The boy made no resistance, a fact which somewhat surprised the Italian who had noted his adversary's sturdy build and had anticipated something of a struggle. Holbrook, too, who had instinctively strained at his bonds at the first sign of a fracas, wondered why so

husky a youth should submit so tamely to assault.

Phil speedily put doubts at rest.

"If you are wise you won't try that game," said he quietly.

"Oh, you think so, do you? Sandro, bring me another bit of rope."

"Before you do it, Sandro, look out of the window and tell your pal what you see out there!"

Sandro hesitated a moment and then at a nod from his chief raised the curtain a little.

"The poliss again," he said in a warning tone. "He looking this way, at this very window."

Pietro growled out an unintelligible Italian oath, and looked in Phil's face without releasing his hold upon him.

"You see," said that youth cheerfully. "I wasn't fool enough to come up here without providing for my getaway. The cop's a friend of mine, and he knows I'm here."

"Well, what of it? He's over there, you're here. How you going to get him, hey?"

"He'll come a-runnin if I let out a holler, and you can't be quick enough to stop me before I cry out. Let go of me now or out comes a yell."

"Good boy, Phil," cried Holbrook. "If he

gets you by the windpipe before your whole yell is out I'll finish it up for you. Say, Pete, I used to be yell-master at our college games."

The Italian dropped his hold on Phil but gave him a shove that sent him to the side of the room furthest from the window. Then leaning against the door so that none might get at it he contemplated his prisoners malevolently.

"You fellows just try to give an alarm and I'll spoil your faces before the cop can get here. If I've got to be taken I've nothing to lose. The police got my record already. I'll get it heavy enough from the court anyway—won't be any worse if I get even with you for spoiling my play."

"Got your record, have they, Pete?" said Jim mightily interested. "What for?"

"You guessed it before. I'm Pete Benda. Just out about tree monts. Police get me on this case I get ten years sure. Don't you think I'll let them get me easy. If you holler Sandro and I will cut up your faces anyway. Won't cost any more than to get caught as it is. See here," turning to Phil. "Can't you call off your cop so Sandro and I can get out? I offered your friend a thousand dollars to stand in on this deal, but he's afraid. More fool he. But what do you want to get us into trou-

ble for? We didn't hurt you, and except that we keep him all night we haven't hurt your friend. Ask him. And we haven't hurt Salvatore either—only scare the sense out of him. He didn't have much anyway, no more than most bankers. Now why not let us skip? Hey?"

"Now look here, Pete," broke in Holbrook. "You can just let me handle this thing. Phil there's young yet, and hasn't had the experience with fellows like you that I have. You've tried to put over a rotten game on that poor Italian fellow in there, and what you planned to do with me if I'd been easier to handle I don't know. Now you say you've done time for a trick like this once before. How do we know you won't try the same thing over again if we wink at your getting away now? For you can't get away unless we say so. Isn't that a fact, Phil?"

"That's the fact, and it may interest him to know that my agreement with the officer down there is that if I don't come back to report to him by ten oclock, when he goes off duty, he's to come up here and smash in the door."

"How the devil did you know which room we were in?" growled Benda.

"I was watching when you came in last night

from the coffee shop with those bundles of grub. I was looking over the rail from the floor above.''

''So you're the fellow that stuck that sign on the door are you? What did you want to do that for?''

''Oh, just to let you see that you didn't have any patent on the Black Hand picture. Did it scare you?''

''Scare them, Phil!'' cried Holbrook in glee. ''You ought to have seen them when they brought it in this morning. Sandro's face would have been as pale as a ghost's if he hadn't been too dirty for the pallor to show through, and as for your friend Bertelli—beg your pardon, Signor Benda, late of the Palazzo Sing Sing—well he studied that poster as if it were another warrant for the delivery of his body to the warden. But say Phil, you've got to learn to draw better if you're going into that line of business. I couldn't tell whether it was a Black Hand with a dagger through it, or a bug of the kind that keep us company here stuck through with a pin. Anyway it feazed our friend here so badly that he wanted to quit right away, and offered me that thousand to help him out. Say Pete, don't you think you might just as well untie my arms now? It

isn't keeping me tight now that's bothering you, but how to get loose yourself."

With a grunt of acquiescence the Italian stooped and cut his bonds, and Jim rose, stretched himself luxuriously, and began to sing in a low tone:

Blest be the tie that binds,
Dum dum de iddle dee,
The fellowship of kindred minds
Like Peye—ee—tro and me:

"What time is it now, Phil? Oh, here's my own watch. Of course Pete didn't take it. He's no piker. Pocket books and watches are not his game. All he wants is the entire capital of the bank. Well, it's nine-thirty. Do I understand that we receive the police at ten?"

"That's the hour set," responded Phil. "You see the officer goes off at ten, and volunteered to stop in as a mere friendly accommodation."

"Does he know the whole story?" asked Holbrook, speaking low, so that the Italian might not hear. "That you knew these fellows had Salvatore and me here under duress, and were trying to blackmail Salvatore?"

"No. You see Mr. Bowers wanted this kept from the police so as we could work up the

story ourselves, and get a scoop on it. So he gave the assignment to Mr. Yates. I haven't any business to be here at all. You know I'm only a copy boy, Mr. Holbrook, so I couldn't get the regular assignment. But this is my day off and I thought I'd see if I couldn't do a little sleuthing on my own."

"So. And a very pleasant idea you have of a day off, Phil. You've come pretty near getting your face slashed up, or pounded out of shape by these fellows. I suppose if that's what you pick for a pleasant day off, on a week's vacation you'd go somewhere where you could be starved to death, or buried alive. Base ball or the movies for my days off. But I suppose you wanted to be your own movies."

"No, but you see, Mr. Holbrook, I want to be a reporter. I've been a copy boy too long now. And Mr. Bowers is always promising me a chance and forgetting all about it. So I thought when I brought down that Black Hand from you—"

"Hold on. What's that about a Black Hand from me? You mean my story of Salvatore's bank?"

"Oh, of course you wouldn't know." And therewith Phil told Jimmie the tale of the lost story and the mysterious Black Hand. The reporter turned in wrath to Pietro.

"You know I ought to turn you over to the police for just that. To steal a reporter's story! The meanest crook wouldn't do that. It's meaner than stealing candy from a kid. But what the dickens did you go and stick that Black Hand stuff in the envelope for? If you did not want the story to reach the office you could have told Phil that I'd forgot to leave it, and then I'd have been the goat. Instead of that you go and put up a play-acting stunt that gets the office excited and sets the whole staff chasing you. That's the trouble with you Italians. You always think of doing something dramatic. What did you do it for? Just tell me that?"

"Well just for the fun. I think of the man who get the envelope. He open it in great hurry. He think he get big story from his, what you call it Star reporter? And what he find? That the Italian Black Hand have made monkey of him. Aha! I laugh. That worth the trouble. Besides I could not let you go on hunting for Salvatore. Sometime you find him, tell the poliss and all off—just like that."

"So being afraid of my finding Salvatore you get your gang to jump on me in that moldy old bus, tie me up and bring me where I would never have thought of looking for Salvatore. And now you've got us both, and don't know

what to do with us. And I've got you and don't know what to do with you. How long before that cop will be dropping in here, Phil? About twenty minutes? Then we've got to think quick."

He beckoned Phil and the two went into the back room, from which Salvatore emerged looking pale and worn.

"Ah, signore," he pleaded. "Can you not rescue me from these men? I know what they can do. I have seen it in Italy. Do not try to punish them but let me pay all I can and go free. I cannot pay all they ask—it would break my bank, but I am willing to pay much. Let me tell their chief that I will pay."

"Oh, quiet down, Toni," answered Holbrook in a not unfriendly tone. "It's just such cowards as you that make this business of extortion among your people possible. Don't worry. You shall not be hurt, nor shall you have to pay anything. Don't promise to pay anything to those fellows while my friend and I have a little talk."

"Now Phil," he continued in a low voice. "If we let this thing come to a head now, and turn these fellows over to your friend when he comes up here in ten minutes the story will break at once and the afternoon papers will get it."

"But he doesn't know the story," said Phil. "I only told him that I was coming up here to look up a matter, and that some Italians might get ugly so that I wished he would come and get me out if I didn't report in good shape."

"Good boy. You handled that just right. Now let's think what to do. Of course you can go out and tell the cop everything is all right. Then he will go away none the wiser. But that leaves us alone with these fellows. We could handle them easily enough except for the fact that they are armed, and besides this rookery is full of their friends. That's the kind of a risk we have to take every now and then in our business however."

"They haven't any use for us anyway," said Phil. "That fellow Bertelli or Benda, or whatever his comic opera name may be, must be pretty well persuaded that his game is up, that he can't get any money from Salvatore, and that the chief thing for him is to save his own skin."

"Yes we might play on his fears; tell him, for instance, that if he will let Salvatore go you will go down and tell your friend the policeman that you don't need him. We can assure him that we'll not betray him to the authorities and he will be confident enough that he can

terrorize Salvatore into silence. The only question is whether he would take our promise as worth anything.''

''But ought we to make any such promise. These fellows have committed a crime and were only prevented from accomplishing it by you and me. We're in the place of two detectives. Do we want now to connive at the escape of the criminals we have caught? Isn't it our duty to have them arrested and punished?''

''Well, yes and no. Our immediate duty is to our paper. Of course if these fellows had actually done a serious wrong we ought to give them up. But all they've done is to throw a scare into some wops, give me an interesting experience and that's what reporters live for, and give you a chance to earn a reporter's job. Besides we know them now, know their methods and their haunts. If another job like this is tried on we can show the police how to get the crooks. Come on now. Time's short and I'll show you how to save our story.''

Returning to the front room, Holbrook spoke to the two Italians who were gloomily watching the policeman through the shaded window.

''Well, you fellows. Your game is up. You know it, don't you Pete?''

Pete grunted incoherently and shook his head.

"Yes, you know it well enough, but you hate to admit it. In five minutes that officer you are looking at will be pounding at this door. If we tell him what you have been doing in the last forty-eight hours he'll have you in the hurry wagon headed for the Tombs and Sing Sing in no time. You know what you are likely to get after that other job you pulled off. Now there are just two ways you can keep us quiet. One is to kill us before the cop gets here. But that would make a terrible mess and he'd be sure to catch you, and you'd have something worse than holding up a banker to answer for. So I guess you'll agree with us that that won't work. The other way is to make a deal with us."

Pietro's face brightened perceptibly. He took a step toward Holbrook with beaming eyes, and a countenance full of hope.

"Ah, si, Signor Holbrook. I was sure you would not be a fool. That thousand. I will make it a little more to take in your friend here."

"Climb down, Pete, and forget it. There's no thousand for me and no crooked money for you. That's the first part of our deal. Now don't look sulky and cut up rough. You're beat. Here's your medicine. This boy, Phil, will go out now and take Salvatore with him.

He'll stop to talk with the policeman and tell him everything is smooth and pleasant up here and he won't be needed. You can swear Salvatore to secrecy on some of your queer Italian oaths—chop off the head of a chicken? No, that's Chinese—and let him go. I know you can keep him as still as a busted phone. He'll go home. Phil will go to that coffee shop and bring us up some breakfast—you haven't fed us yet and I'm ugly on an empty stomach. Then we'll talk the rest of it over while we drink our coffee. What do you say to that, Pietro?"

"I give up my man and get no mone? Think me a fool?"

"You'll be worse than a fool if you don't. You'll be a convict. You might as well take your medicine. How do you expect to get away with a cop due at the door in three minutes?"

"How do I know that boy not give whole thing away to cop when he goes out?"

"You've got me here for a hostage. Watch out of the window and if after Phil sees him the cop doesn't go off his beat up the street you'll know he has played you false and can skip out the back way—and do me first if you want to."

"But—"

"I said three minutes just now. There are only two left."

"Well, verra well. But I go with Salvatore and the boy. Sandro stay here and watch you till I come back. You there!" and he jerked his head with an ugly look toward Salvatore who pale and trembling joined him in the back room. After a moment's intent whispering on the part of Pietro, and earnest protestations from the terror-stricken banker, they threw on coats and hats and went out. Watching from the window, which he no longer took the trouble to keep shaded, Jimmie saw them go up to the policeman, to whom Phil spoke while the two Italians held aloof. Then they walked on down to the corner and turned into Mulberry Street. He turned to his guard.

"Sandro, do you know what a sucker is?"

The Italian looked vague.

"Oh, why don't you ginneys speak a civilized language? He's the goat you know. The sucker is the fellow who holds the bag while the other guy gets away with the stuff. Understand that? No? Well do you understand this?"

And therewith he drew the door wide open and motioned the other to leave. But the Italian made no move.

"Listen now. Your pal has skipped. He won't come back. First thing you know the police will come and arrest you. Aha, you understand that. Police! Prison! That's for you. Why don't you run away?"

With a grin of comprehension the Italian caught up his hat and dashed down the stairs. Watching from the window Jim saw him look warily over toward the spot at which the policeman had been standing, and then run down the street in a direction opposite to that taken by Phil and Pietro.

"I guess that ends it," said Jim. "Now when Phil comes back he and I will get together on the story."

But had he been able to look into the coffee shop at that moment he would have been less confident that his carefully laid plans to hold the story for *The Blade* exclusively were going to work.

CHAPTER XIV

AN UNDESIRED AID

At the door of the coffee shop the three men parted, Salvatore with many protestations of eternal silence starting for his home. The other two entered the shop and sat down at a table. Phil ordered coffee for both and Pietro, in Italian, supplemented the order with a demand for coffee in a bottle, and some bread to be taken to the prisoners he had left behind.

Phil was fairly exultant. The mystery that had perplexed older heads than his at the office had been solved and by his efforts alone. He had the complete confidence in the ability of Holbrook that the cub feels for the star reporter, and he felt certain that even had he not come to the rescue Jimmie would have wriggled out of his captivity in some way. But all the same he was glad that it had been left to him to actually ferret out the hiding place of the kidnapers and the missing reporter. To begin with he was sure it would promote him to the reportorial staff at once. Perhaps he would even be allowed to write part of this story, al-

though Jim as the star actor would probably write the greater part of it. He remembered the stolen story by Holbrook now at his room, and wondered if the writer would want it when he came to write the greater story of his abduction and rescue. Then suddenly Phil remembered Yates. What about his efforts? He was certainly on the trail in some way for Phil had seen him peering into the window of this very shop, and the policeman had told of talking to him about the Italian colony.

Phil began to wonder whether by any chance Yates had got further along with the story than he, and whether on his return to the office, which he had planned for that afternoon he would be greeted with the chilling direction, "Go tell Mr. Yates what you have. He's in charge of the story."

It was not a cheering reflection for Phil but he speedily put it out of his mind with the thought that whatever Yates might have learned on the outside he had found neither Salvatore, the abductors, nor Jim Holbrook. For they had all been under Phil's observation all day, and he knew they could not have been seen by any one without his knowing it. So he felt that the best end of the story was his.

While the Italian across from him gulped the steaming coffee Phil hardly sipped his so

engrossed was his mind with the pictures he was drawing of his triumph. He planned that after turning the two culprits loose, with the certainty that they could be had again when wanted, he and Jim would make their way to the office and show up about the time of the afternoon editorial conference. The picture was vivid in his mind. They would arrive just as Mr. Bowers would be forced to confess that he and his staff had been unable to unravel the mystery. Probably the managing editor would get impatient by that time, and would curtly order that the matter should be turned over to the police. At that juncture Phil would appear arm in arm with Holbrook, and they two would tell the story of the star reporter's abduction and the copy boy's successful search for him. It was a beautiful picture, and Phil was deep in his enjoyment of it when a hand was laid on his shoulder and a voice said,

"Hello, Derby. What in the world are you doing here, and with that crook above all men?"

Phil turned hastily. Pietro started angrily to his feet. Behind the former stood the reporter Bob Yates with a puzzled expression on his face.

"Do you know that fellow is an ex-convict, Phil, and that I believe he is mixed up in the

disappearance of Jimmie Holbrook? What are you lunching with him for?"

Phil was too dazed for a moment to reply, but the Italian was blazing with rage and made as though he would spring at the newcomer.

"What do you mean by calling me crook? Who are you anyway? Get out of my road. I don't want to talk with you."

"Not so fast," responded Yates, blocking his path as he strove to push past. "I've got some business with you. You can answer me a few questions right now."

"I'll answer nothing. I don't know you. I've got to take this up to a friend." He grasped the bottle of hot coffee more as though he intended using it as a weapon than as if it were part of a friend's breakfast.

"You stay right here! What I want to know is WHERE IS JIM HOLBROOK OF *THE BLADE,* THE REPORTER YOU ABDUCTED?"

"Aaah, that damn reporter," ejaculated Pietro sinking into his chair with an air of combined rage and disgust on his face. Phil roared with laughter. The solemn emphasis of Yates's inquiry and the Italian's intense disgust struck him as funny, knowing as he did that the mystery was solved and that Holbrook was safe and ready again for action.

More perplexed by Phil's laughter than by the curious expression of the Italian Yates stared at the two a moment.

"Maybe you'll talk when I tell you that I'm a friend of Joe Mora?" he said. "And if that isn't enough perhaps you'd like to tell me something about this excellent picture of yourself," and he pulled out and displayed to the Italian the print he had taken from the Rogues' Gallery.

"Joe Mora!" gasped the Italian and fell back into his seat. Yates turned to Phil for light.

"What in the world is the meaning of all this?" he demanded. "You know of course that Jim Holbrook has vanished. You were the boy that brought the stuff that had been substituted for his copy. Mr. Bowers put me on the story, and working it up I find that a fellow named Pete Benda who went to the pen once for Black-Handing was the garage keeper who gave you the phony copy. So I start to find this bird Benda and here I find you having breakfast with him as pleasant as you please. What's your little game? Maybe you know where Holbrook is?"

"Well I do, if that's any satisfaction to you," said Phil somewhat nettled at the tone the other had seen fit to take.

It was now Yates's turn to drop into a chair in amazement.

"You do? Why don't he come back to the office? See here, young fellow I don't know just how you got mixed up in this but you are likely to get into trouble. I've got the police with me, and though I haven't said anything definite about this affair they know that I'm working on something important and I've only to say the word to get the detectives out after you. This man you're with is well known, has done time already and the police will be only too glad to get something on him."

"Oh, don't get excited," said Phil. "Come down off your high horse! I've been working on this matter same as you have. The only difference is that I found Jim last night and have got him safe around the corner. Come along and we will let him settle this. Look's as if everybody on *The Blade's* staff was going to horn in on this story I thought I had got for myself."

"But who put you on the story? You're not on the city staff."

"No, but I thought I'd see what I could do on my own on my day off. I just wanted to find out how smart you stars are anyway. And I found Salvatore and Jim while you fellows were running around in circles."

"In circles, eh. Didn't I get on the track the very day I was put on the story? I was watching this joint the greater part of last night for your friend there, and if he'd shown up he'd have been in the Tombs by now."

"Yes, that's just the trouble. Mr. Bowers wanted this thing worked out without the police, and you've put them on."

"Oh, no, I haven't. All they know is that I was looking for an Italian who seemed to answer to the description of Pietro Benda, who had done time. They don't know why I wanted him."

"All right," said Phil, "and they don't know I found him either. Perhaps we can keep the story for an exclusive. At any rate, come along and I'll show you where we left Jimmie, and this man's accomplice."

So turning out into the sharp winter's morning they made their way back to the tenement and climbed the stairs. Pushing open the door without ceremony they entered. The room was empty.

CHAPTER XV

UNTANGLING THE SKEIN

PHIL turned in amazement to Yates.

"We left Jimmie here not twenty minutes ago," he said, "together with a wop that Pete called 'Sandro.' They were to wait until we came back with the coffee. We took Salvatore with us when we went out, and turned him loose. I suppose Pete here made him promise by all that is holy to keep quiet about the whole matter. What's become of Jim I can't guess. The man we left with him couldn't handle him alone, and so far as I know none of the other people in this tenement are mixed up in this affair. Have you got any notion what happened, Pete?"

"Me. Non, no! I mighty glad that reporter gone anyway. He spoiled my whole game. And I don't care what he did with Sandro. Sandro a fool anyway. Just as big fool and coward as that banker. Now the jig is up. Everybody gone. I go too."

And he turned as if to leave the room.

"But here! Hold on!" shouted Yates.

"What about this, Phil? Are we going to let this fellow go now that we've got the goods on him? You run for a cop while I hold him."

"Yep, and have him booked at the station at twelve o'clock and the whole story given to the evening papers? Not much. There's been too much work done by *The Blade* on this case to divvy up with the rest of Park Row particularly with the Evenings. Better let him go Mr. Yates. The police can find him again when we need him. We've got his measure and we know his hangout. When the story is ready to break we can put the police on if we see fit."

"You talk mighty big," sneered Pietro. "How you think you going to hold me if I want to go? You got no cop standing on the corner waiting call now. Suppose you get outer way of this." And therewith he showed an ugly knife as he walked swaggeringly toward the door.

"That's a pretty good card, Pete," said Phil composedly. "But it wouldn't win if we wanted to keep you here. You aren't dealing with a frightened little money lender now. Reporters go up against uglier things than that in their work. But you might as well go. We can get you when we want you."

"Yes," chimed in Yates. "I know just the man to find you. He got me that picture I

showed you. Look out or we'll put Joe Mora on your trail."

At first enraged, the Italian bared his teeth in a contemptuous grin.

"Ah, Joe Mora! Si, si, si. You ask him if he want to take in Pietro Benda for this job. You learn something. Carramba! I'm done. You newspaper men maka me seeck. But I beat you yet. That fat banker not yet done with me. But no more reporters, no, non!"

"That's right, Pete," said Phil laughing. "Don't try any more jokes with Black Hand messages on a city editor. If you hadn't tried to be so funny you'd have had Salvatore's ten thousand and might be on the way to Italy now. Still there's one consolation. You'll have your name and perhaps your picture in *The Blade* to-morrow."

The Italian snarled at the two and slunk out. Then Yates turned to Phil inquiringly.

"Well, of course you have gone further in this matter than I have. What's your idea now?"

"It looks to me as if we were going to have to divide this story up among the three of us—that is if I get a look in on it at all," said Phil a little bitterly. "What has become of Jim I can't guess. He was to have waited for us here, and Pete left that other Italian to guard

him although I knew well enough that if Jim wanted to get rid of him he would do it. Whatever led him to move out he has got the story on his mind—you and I know him well enough to know that. Probably he saw a chance to pick up a new line on it and had to jump without notifying me—he didn't know you were on the job at all. Why wouldn't it be a scheme for us to pick up the loose ends of the lines we have got and meet at the office to-night and put it all together in one story? Jim is almost certain to be there then. If he isn't we can consider what to do."

"That would be all right except I'm afraid the office has put a deadline on further delay on this story. Bowers told me that the old man had given him until to-night to find Jim, and that if we'd not succeeded by then it must be given to the police. He was afraid something might happen to Jim. He did not know that chunk of nerve."

"Well how would it be if we worked up the rest of the story and reported at five, just when the editorial conference is in session? I think we'd be safe in figuring that Jim will turn up there about that time. I don't believe he's been abducted again for this room does not look as though there had been any sort of a scuffle. My guess is that he got rid of the dago, and

that then something occurred to him that he wanted to look up and he went out on the job at once."

"What more do you want to get on it?"

"Well, I've got Jim's original story up at my room. Oh, I didn't tell you about that. I got a job up at the garage where they played that game on him, and while sweeping out I found his copy in the waste paper. It covers the story of Salvatore's disappearance in good shape, and there was a torn note that enabled me to trace Jim down here. Jim may want to use it. Then I would like to get a story out of the keeper of the coffee shop about the two men if he knows them. That's about all I need to get, but of course I'll write the story of the time in the room after I had tracked them down. As I have to go up to my room after Jim's stuff I might as well go on up to Salvatore's house and get the story of his reception by his family and neighbors. I guess the whole neighborhood will be burning red fire—that is if they are not all too afraid of the Black Hand."

"That sounds all right. I'll go on back to police headquarters and get the story of that fellow's record. Perhaps if I can pick up Joe Mora again I can get some human interest stuff out of him. But the big end of the story is

your's, Phil. You have certainly handled it well for a man who isn't even a cub yet. It ought to put you on the staff right off, if Bowers is the man I think he is. By the way, you mustn't feel peeved because I was a little suspicious of you at first. It did look queer to see a *Blade* man sitting at a table with the kidnaper."

That afternoon, the regular afternoon editorial at *The Blade* was on. It was being held an hour earlier than usual since the day was Saturday and the size of the Sunday editions of most city newspapers is so great that they plan to go to press an hour or so earlier with their first editions in order to get the great bulk of the printed matter out of the way. In New York, Chicago and some other centers of highly congested districts, the supplements, or miscellany sections of the papers have been sent out by express days before so that the country newsdealers will have time to sort out the huge mass of reading matter in time for Sunday delivery. Early news sections called by such picturesque names as the "Bull-dog," the "Cannon-ball" and the like are made up with a Sunday date line and sent off often as early as Friday night. It is because of the exaggerated size of the Sunday papers, and the enormous pressure of advertising upon them that

the true journalist regards them as in actual worth the worst papers of the week.

Theodore Roosevelt, who would have been a great journalist had he not been a great statesman, estimated the Sunday paper at its true worth. When he had anything to say to the people he carefully held it for publication until Monday morning when it would not be lost in a mad melange of "ads," "comics," and "Sunday specials."

Accordingly this Saturday afternoon the conference was under way at about four o'clock. The managing editor, Mr. Perkins, was as usual in command.

"What's the telegraph outlook, Mr. Lee?" he asked of the head of the telegraph desk.

"Well, Washington schedules 1,500 words on cabinet possibilities, 1,000 on federal action to correct the housing shortage and the possibility of some federal indictments of the heads of building combines, and a story about Senator Blackhurst getting mad and raiding the White House because the President's secretary was out at lunch. The Senator thought he could get information from the President himself about a bill of his waiting signature."

"Good stuff. Especially the last. Play it on the first page. If we don't get anything bigger locally the likelihood of federal indictments in

the housing business may be worth a three column head on the first page. I'd rather have a good local story however. What's in sight by cable?"

"Long special from Paris about Germany refusing to disarm and French apprehensions because of it. A. P. story[1] from Geneva on heavy expenses of the headquarters of the League of Nations. Some good special stuff from Landon regarding the growth of the labor party in England and the chance of a labor ministry."

"Hum. We'll have to soft pedal on the labor stuff. Just now labor isn't any too popular with the owners of this paper. But splurge on the Paris despatch. Give it a number one head on the first page. France stands well with us. Better carry the League story on an inside page. Now what have you got in a local way, Bowers? What about your lost reporter?"

"I've got a corking good immigration story from Ellis Island that's worth a head, and there is the continuance of the fight with the police department over the crime wave. But my lost reporter is still lost. Yates, one of our best men, is out on the search for him and I'm

[1] "A. P." is the office phrase for the Associated Press, the great coöperative newsgathering organization.

expecting a telephone call from him every minute."

"Let's see, I think it was two days ago Holbrook disappeared wasn't it?"

"Yes, and you gave me until to-night to find him without the aid of the police. I haven't given up hope yet, but if Yates comes in without anything to report I will put the matter in the hands of the detective bureau. You know we aren't any too strong with the police just now. We've been pounding them pretty hard on the prevalence of crime in the city."

"You don't suppose they are holding up our reporter somewhere to get even with us?"

"Well, they'd be quite capable of it if they knew of the situation, but I don't believe they know anything about it. I told Yates to sound them out around police headquarters and report anything suspicious. Ah, I hear his voice out in the city room now. Suppose I have him come over and report to us all. Oh, Yates, look in here."

Yates came over through the big room to the corner in which the conference was being held. He was closely followed by Phil at whom the others looked with some impatience. "Anything you want, Derby?" asked Bowers in a tone which indicated that unless there was something very special wanted he had no busi-

ness there. But Yates spoke up in response.

"I brought Phil Derby over with me, Mr. Bowers, because he knows more about this case than I or any one else. He has done the dandiest bit of detective work on it this office has ever known."

"Fine," said Bowers, "but before you give us the whole story, where is Jim Holbrook?"

"We don't know," responded both the others in unison.

"Don't know? Then why do you come around here talking about detective work? Yates you were sent out to find Holbrook and for nothing else. Have you come back to report failure?"

"No sir, at least not exactly. I found him—or rather Phil did, but he went and disappeared again."

"Now what the dickens do you mean by that? What is he? A Vanishing Man, like the fellow in the story? Have you actually seen him?"

"Yes sir—that is Phil has."

"Phil has? Phil seems to be the whole thing in this story. I thought I sent out a star reporter to cover this case and it seems that a copy boy is the whole cheese. Suppose you tell us about it, Derby."

"Well sir, I found Mr. Holbrook tied up in a tenement house room with two Italians mount-

ing guard over him. Salvatore the banker was with them. Mr. Holbrook persuaded one of the Italians to let Salvatore go, and while I went out with the two to fix it with my friend the policeman Jimmie and the other Italian disappeared."

"Well, that's a fine muddle. Phil, if you try to write your story the way you tell it you'll have a hard time getting your stuff past the copy desk. What two did you go out with? How could you fix it with the police? How did you ever find Jim to begin with?"

"Suppose you let the boy tell his story from the beginning in his own way," interposed the managing editor. "And how did he get out on the story? Did you have any instructions to cover it, Derby?"

"No sir. You see it was I that the Italian at the garage worked with the phony bunch of copy. That made me mad to begin with. Then the next day was my day off, and I thought that if I could work up the story in my time I might get some credit in the office for the job, and get my promotion to the city staff. I'm getting pretty big for a copy boy."

"I see, and what you did was done on your day off, and wholly at your own initiative? That's fine. Now tell us what you accomplished and how."

"Well sir, I went back to that garage and got a job cleaning up and general handiwork. While I was at it I learned that the dago had sold out the place and skipped. A car came in that had been out all night and I was given the job of cleaning it up. It was all scratched and the glass window broken as though there had been a struggle in it, and I learned that it had been rented the night before to an Italian. Soon after I found in a pile of waste paper the copy of the article which Mr. Holbrook thought he was sending down to the office. With it was this note to Mr. Bowers. You can see, sir, it was pretty badly torn up."

Phil handed the fragment to Bowers who tried to read it out loud:

"*Dear Mr. Bowers:* Here is Salvatore story as far as I can get it for first edition. Think I am on trail of man. He is not leaving country, but is a prisoner. Hope to find him to-night. Will phone you misleading message as I don't want the wops around here to think I'm on. Will not go to dock but shall leave car at er str and look into ce ut
rry."

"Yes," said Bowers as he ended his effort to read the fragment out loud, "that does seem

to be rather incomplete. How did you make anything out of it?"

Phil went on to explain how, through his knowledge of the streets of the lower East Side, he was able to recognize in the disjointed letters and parts of street names in Little Italy. His discovery of Pietro and his accomplice in one of the coffee shops he frankly laid to mere luck. As he went on with his story and told of his shadowing the men to the tenement lair, his enlistment of the policeman's interest, and his final discovery of Salvatore and Holbrook in captivity Mr. Bowers looked at him with increasing interest, and might have been seen to give the managing editor a significant nod as much as to say "He'll do."

"A mighty fine piece of work," said Mr. Perkins enthusiastically when the tale was told. "And how did you happen to run upon this boy's trail?" he continued turning to Yates.

"Why I went up to headquarters and saw Frank Mather who found a picture in the rogues' gallery that corresponded with one I got out of our morgue of an Italian who was mixed up in a case of this sort some years ago. He put me next to a central station detective, one Joe Mora, who told me that the picture was a likeness of a fellow who had been running a garage up town, and that I'd find him at a cer-

tain coffee shop. I shadowed the place at night without finding him, but when I came back the next morning he was there having breakfast with Phil. Maybe you think I was not puzzled. But there was nothing for me to do. Phil had the whole story as he has told you."

"Good work but—" said Bowers with a prolonged pause after the "but" that left the two experienced members of his staff no doubt but that he was going to qualify his applause with some biting criticism, "but I don't see that you've got anywhere. You found the kidnapers. Where are they? Locked up? You found Jimmie. And where is he?"

"Oh, I'm right here, Mr. Bowers," broke in a voice at this juncture. All turned in excitement. Jimmie Holbrook was standing just outside the group. And with him was the Italian whom "Smiling Pete" had called Sandro.

Perkins looked from the newcomers to Bowers rather quizzically. "You seem to have your city staff back again," said he. "Perhaps you'd better put a ball and chain on some of them now. Is the melodrama played out, Mr. Holbrook? Perhaps you'll give us the last act now."

"Yes," responded Holbrook. "I suppose that Yates and Phil there have given you the

earlier part of the plot, so I'll concentrate on the denoument."

Turning to Yates he said,

"You know a plain clothes man named Joe Mora, don't you Bob?"

"Sure, he helped me in this case."

"Helped you, did he? Well how much did you tell him about the case?"

"Not a word. I only asked him if he knew Pete Benda, and he put me on to the fact that Benda and Bertelli were the same."

"He didn't know that you suspected Pete of being the mover in the abduction of Salvatore?"

"Not unless he suspected it from my questions."

"All right. Now Phil, what became of Pete?"

"He quit us when Yates and I returned to the room and found you gone. Yates wanted to hold him, but I said that I was sure you could find him when we wanted him."

"Quite so. Was Joe Mora's name mentioned by him? Did he make any threat of appealing to him?"

"No, but hold on. Mora's name was mentioned, but not by Pete. It was Yates who brought it in telling Pete that we could get Mora to look him up if he tried to escape."

"Yes, and what did Pete say to that?"

"Why I remember now he laughed in a queer way and rather defied us to get Joe Mora to do anything at all in this case."

"I thought so," said Holbrook with satisfaction. Then turning to Mr. Perkins he went on.

"Chief, this has turned out to be something more than one of the common cases of attempted blackmail by a lot of Italian crooks. You know that story is one that crops up every few months in New York. And while I might be glad to figure as a hero in a big story the mere fact that the conspirators tried to head off detection by abducting a reporter isn't the big thing. Under some conditions that might make a story worth while. But this one is bigger than that. For this thing reaches right into the police department. It fits in with our fight against the crime wave and police inefficiency. For I've got absolute proof that Pete Benda was only an unwilling tool in this matter; that he was trying to live straight and clear his old record, and that he was forced by police persecution into the commission of this new crime. And further I can prove that the official who dragged him back into his old evil ways was the man to whom Bob Yates was referred for information as to all that was going on in Little Italy—the plain clothes man Joe Mora."

"That's the stuff," exclaimed Bowers in enthusiasm. "Chief, you were saying you'd like a good local story for the first page. Here it is. A full four column spread and with plenty of pictures. I told you that Jimmie would come out of this with a story that would make the other fellows sit up and take notice. How did you get the goods, Jim?"

"Phil probably told you that I sent him with Salvatore and Pete out after coffee when Pete had agreed to let the banker go. I was alone with Sandro, who showed very quickly that he had little desire to go further with the affair. As soon as I said a few words to him about quitting his pal and getting away he grabbed his hat and disappeared with so much alacrity that my suspicions were aroused. So, being free, I grabbed mine too and followed him. He never looked around once and I was able to follow him undetected to a sort of restaurant they call a spaghetti house, a great resort for the Italians of that quarter. I see you know about it, Yates. He went in and I stopped for a time in a doorway nearby hoping he might come out shortly. I knew I could not go in after him as he would certainly have seen me. As luck would have it, he came out in a moment or two, and with him a burly man whom I recognized at once as Joe Mora—

the "fly cop" as they call it of the Italian quarter. They stood for a moment not ten feet from where I was hidden, and I could make out that Mora was berating him violently in Italian for something he had done, I could see that Sandro was trying to explain, and that from being suppliant and servile he gradually become as angry as the other. Of course I could only guess at what was being said, but after a heated exchange Mora pulled out a bunch of bills and fairly threw one or two at the other. Then he walked away. Sandro stood for a moment red with anger, and shaking his fists at the retreating figure. Then, with a shrug of his shoulders, as if determined to make the best of it, he stuffed the money in his pocket and turned to go. Then I determined to take a chance. Stepping out in front of him I pulled open my coat, showed my fire badge which I was sure he would take for an officer's star, and said,

"You made him come across, did you Sandro? Now you've got to come with me to the big chief."

"He was scared stiff. At first he made as if to take to his heels, but I hung onto him as if I had him under arrest. Then he began to beg, and said the whole thing was none of his doings. I had begun to suspect something of the sort already. So I told him that if there

was anything he could say to get him out of the scrape he'd better tell me, and that unless he could put up some sort of a defense he was in a bad way. I told him that I felt friendly to him because he had not abused me while I was a prisoner, and that I felt sure he was acting only under compulsion of Benda. At that he made a sort of muttered protest from which I gathered that there was some man higher up than Pietro. This of course interested me and I led him on to tell his story.

"It appeared that he had been an old friend of Pietro Benda, and when the prison doors opened to let that worthy out Sandro met him and took him home. His own record had always been clean. He had been a hard working laborer doing whatever might come his way and saving up a little money as these Italians will. His friendship for Pietro was like that of a dog for his master, and his one idea was to keep him from further trouble with the law, and get him started in some reputable business. While the other had been in the pen the automobile business had attained its present state of importance, and Sandro, working around garages, had picked up some knowledge of that business. He accordingly suggested to Benda that they buy a garage with his savings.

"Pietro at first refused. I rather think he

thought he could get along without much work, but pretty soon he began to have trouble with people who knew of his criminal record. This fellow Mora continually hounded him, going to his employers and warning them that they were giving work to a former convict, holding him up on the street in a way that made people suspect that he was in disfavor with the law, and in general making it hard for him to earn an honest living or to associate with honest men. When Pietro protested Mora hinted that he would let him alone if he would undertake some enterprises which the detective said would put money in both their pockets. The Italian did not know enough to make complaint at Police Headquarters. To make a long story short the whole scheme of blackmailing Salvatore was planned by Mora and Benda was forced to carry it out under threat of being arrested and rearrested on all sorts of flimsy pretexts. Mora prepared the warning letters that gave the banker so much apprehension and his family so much agony. Mora devised the scheme by which he was lured into a place where Pietro and his confederate could seize him and keep him for ransom. Sandro was kept in the work by his affection for Pietro and his determination to see him through. He told me that many times he had it in

mind to end it all by putting a stiletto into the detective, and on my word I think if he could have caught him about the time I was talking to him he'd have done it then. But I persuaded him that his best course was to come down here with me, and tell the story to you gentlemen and let us determine what course shall be taken to bring the detective to justice without bringing any more trouble upon his two unfortunate victims."

"A good job from start to finish," said Perkins approvingly. "I don't suppose your other Italian friend standing back there understands enough English to keep up with our conversation?"

"Oh, no. He can keep up with you if you go slowly but he isn't up to rapid fire conversation. But of course he knows in a general way what I have been telling you. I told him that we would look out for him, and protect both him and Benda if they would stand by the story he told after we printed it—for I suppose you are going to print it?"

"Print it! I should say we are. Now chief," continued Bowers turning to the managing editor, "this is my notion of how this story should be handled in the morning. We'll start off with the flat charge that the police department is honeycombed with crooks, and that

some of its most trusted officers have been planning and conniving at crime. Then we will go ahead with the story of the conspiracy against Salvatore, tell of the long continued campaign of threatening letters culminating in his abduction. We will follow this with the story of Holbrook's experience when he sought to ferret out the criminals and then the steps by which young Derby here found the place of his confinement. And we will wind up with the proper description of the way in which the banker was returned to his family, and a confession extorted from one of the criminals implicating Joe Mora, the police plain clothes man. Of course we must get a statement to-night from Mora and from the Police Commissioner if he will talk. If I might make a suggestion I should think the topic a good one for an editorial on the deplorable state of the police department."

"That is all right, Mr. Bowers, but I suppose you know that for the present at least the force of your story depends entirely upon that Italian out there. You will no doubt get Benda in time and make him talk, but meanwhile don't let this fellow get away, or be where the police can intimidate him."

"I guess I'll just put him in charge of the men who found him," responded Bowers with a grin. "You Jimmie and Yates and Derby will

be responsible for your wop. Keep him to sleep with you, and don't let him out of your sight. And you three must get up the story. Holbrook, you'd better take charge of it."

"I think Phil ought to do the greater part of it, Mr. Bowers," said Jim earnestly. "He did all the real detective work."

"I just said that you were to handle the story," said Bowers. "That doesn't mean that you are to write it all. You can make Phil write all of it you want, and if I know you lazy young reporters as I think I do you will make him do most of the work. But just remember that this is a big story and has to be handled in a big way. I want you to send it to the copy desk practically ready for the composing room. That's what we keep stars like you for, Jimmie. So no soldiering now. And rush it! Rush it!"

The three young men left the conference, and went back to a group of desks provided with typewriters where they began in the phrase of the newspaper shop to "Block out the story."

"I'll write the lead," said Holbrook, "and then we will divide up the story among us. Just wait a minute will you, while I pound out the first paragraphs":

He sat hunched up for a few minutes before

his typewriter in an attitude of intense thought, then suddenly fell upon the unfortunate instrument with both hands, battering away at it with the clamor of a machine gun. In a brief time he calmed down and dragged from the battered machine a sheet bearing the following story:

"Antony Salvatore, an Italian doing a banking business at 247 East 163rd. Street was found yesterday by reporters for *The Blade* imprisoned in a third story tenement room on Mulberry Street by agents of the Black Hand. Salvatore had disappeared three days ago. At first it was thought that he had absconded with funds of the bank, but examination of his books showed all in order. His wife, who seemed terrorized, admitted under close questioning that he had been getting menacing letters and that she feared he had been abducted for purposes of extortion. A *Blade* reporter working on the story was abducted by the same criminals and held until other reporters of this newspaper, working without aid from the police, tracked them down and released the prisoners. The facts discovered by these reporters leave no possible doubt that certain members of the police force are in league with this particular band of criminals at least."

"There Phil," said Jim pitching the copy over to Derby. "That's the essence of the story in the first paragraph. Now I want you to take up the story at the very beginning. Use as much of that old copy of mine as you can. Tell how Salvatore began getting the menacing letters weeks ago; speak of his depression and the anxiety of his wife; go on with the details of his disappearance and lay stress upon the excellent way in which his bank had been managed so that it stood the run. Then tell of my abduction and the manner in which you found both me and the banker. No names of course. Just a reporter for *The Blade.* We don't get any personal advertising in this business. You carry the story right up to the point at which we permitted Pete to go.

"Then, Bob, you'd better tell of the discovery of Benda's picture in the rogues' gallery and of your meeting with Joe Mora. Give his talk about Benda as much space as possible so as to show how thoroughly he knew this type of man and his record. You'd better write the first part of your story right away, and then go out and find Mora, tell him what we've got and give him an opportunity to clear himself. He'll probably be ugly but you will know how to handle him. It's about dinner time now and you'll probably find him at that spaghetti

house. Keep your story well inside a column.

"A column and a half for you, Phil. And by the way, send down to the restaurant and have something to eat sent up for our friend Sandro. Don't let him out of your sight. We'll just keep him here until the paper is off the press, and then I think I'll take him up to my hotel and get a room for him. He's got to live with us until we get this thing before the grand jury.

"Now I'm off to see the Police Commissioner and ask him what he thinks of one of his pets working in with the Black Hand and even being the organizer of one of their plots. Maybe the old bird won't squawk! He's been inclined to sneer at the fight *The Blade* has been making on corruption in the Department, but I guess he will take this thing seriously enough. So long, boys. Send your copy straight to the desk and tell them to save proofs for me. I'll be back about nine, and will stop on the way out and tell the art department what pictures we want. So long. In the words of the eminent Bowers—Rush it! RUSH IT!"

Long before Phil had finished thinking, and writing a few words, scratching out, pondering again, and once more addressing himself hesitatingly to the machine in his painful attempt to compose his first story Yates had finished

his stunt and was off for the job of telling Mora that he had been detected in his crooked work. There were groans and sighs from the spot where Phil sat toiling, and the Italian who sat nearby, cheered with a bunch of comic supplements to look at, may have thought that the youth who was trying to tell the story of the crime was suffering more than he who was implicated in it.

In due time Holbrook came back, dropped into a chair and wrote silently and steadily for an hour, calling from time to time for a copy boy to take his copy to the desk. Phil who had not quite finished his own job, sat thinking how fine it was to be himself writing instead of running at the shrill call of "copy."

"Gee, but I won't say it's a cinch yet," he reflected. "This writing isn't as easy as Jim makes it look, or nearly as easy as reading the stuff in the paper."

Phil was just beginning to appreciate the force of the writer's maxim—"Easy writing makes hard reading."

The night wore on. Yates came back with his story. Mora had broken down, confessed everything and said he would resign from the force the next day. The proofs of the early copy began coming in, and Phil looked fur-

tively over Jim's shoulder as the latter cut and slashed away at them.

"I wish he'd tell me why he is cutting that stuff," thought Phil, as he saw large wads of his most cherished rhetoric scornfully thrown out. Or I wish I could even get a look at the proofs, and see exactly what it is that he objects to."

But reasonable as the wishes were they went ungranted. The capable and veteran newspaper editor cannot always, even if he has time, explain the motives which lead him to cut this or that. Brevity is always a reason, but there are others which seem to be instinctive with the trained editorial mind, and which only experience enables one to understand. Phil stood now only at the threshold of that experience.

"Well, the job's done," said Jim with a sigh of content as he called a boy to take the last proof. "Phil, you wrote a good story, for a youngster. Perhaps in fifteen or twenty years you may make a good reporter. There. Don't get peeved. You really have done a good job, and there isn't the slightest doubt in my mind that Bowers will put you on the staff regularly to-morrow. I'm so sure of it that I'll buy the supper to night at the Pewter

Grill on our way up town. We'll wait for the first editions, and go up there taking Bob along. You'll find a bunch from the other papers there. What do you say?"

Say? Phil couldn't say it. To sup at the Pewter Grill in the hours when the gray was just beginning to break over the roofs of the city to the eastward, to see the crowds of night workers of every class coming in for their late suppers, to mix in the Olympian society of the stars on the local forces of *The Blade's* rivals! That was "Paradise enow" as old Omar would have said.

And when an hour later, he started with the two reporters out of the almost deserted city room his cup seemed running over for in his hand he carried a first edition on the first page of which appeared HIS STORY under these impressive headlines:

DETECTIVE INVOLVED
IN BLACKHAND PLOT

Trusted Plainclothes Man Compels Ex-convict to Return to the Practice of Crime

---

ITALIAN BANKER ABDUCTED IN EXTORTION PLOT

Reporter Working on the Case Held Prisoner by the Black Hand Until Rescued by Associate

---

Police Commissioner Aghast—Detective Joe Mora Tries in Vain to Explain Complicity in the Plot and Will Quit Force.

And yet glorious as the windup of the night seemed it gave to Phil no such thrill as came to him at noon the next day when, after a sound morning's sleep and breakfast at twelve, he hastened to the office and looked timidly at the assignment book. There, amid all the names of journalistic luminaries and memoranda of the fields in which they were to revolve that day, he saw this long-awaited note:

Derby— Follow up Salvatore case. See Mr. Bowers.

And on the Bulletin board, whereon the high displeasure and lofty approbation of the editors were occasionally set forth, he read this placard.

In pursuance of its policy *The Blade* compliments Mr. Philip Derby upon the excellent reportorial work done by him at his own initiative and without direction in running down the abductors of his colleague James Holbrook. The city editor wishes to direct the attention of reporters to this achievement, and expressly to call to their attention the fact that it was a piece of original and voluntary service. Mr. Derby is added to the regular reportorial staff to-day.

Signed:

WILLIAM F. BOWERS,
City Editor.

THE END