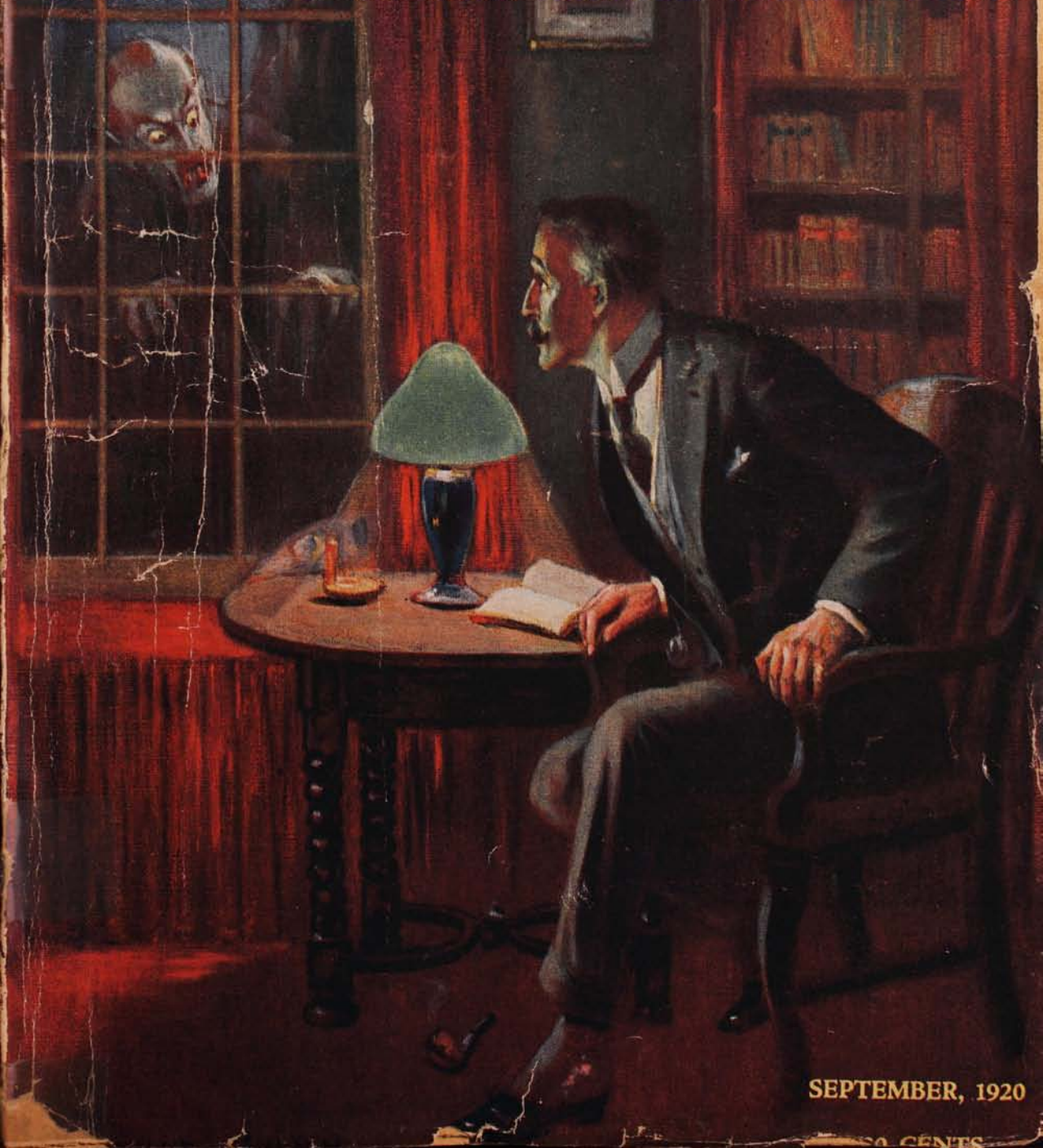


THE BLACK MASK

A MAGAZINE OF MYSTERY, ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE



SEPTEMBER, 1920

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THE BLACK MASK

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"Murder!" whispered the girl, her hand going to her breast.—Page 7

Black Shadows

(A Complete Novelette)

By J. C. Kofoed

CHAPTER I

THE limousine drew up beside the curb. A correctly garbed chauffeur leaped from his seat, opened the door, and stood stiffly at attention as J. Sylvester Jones stepped out. Jones was garbed in a manner that should have made the lilies of the field blush with shame at their shabbiness. From thirty-dollar hat to forty-dollar shoes he was impeccable.

"You may wait, Hawker," he said, in a tone that meant, "Hawker, I graciously give you permission to continue living."

He separated a key from the others on his ring, and languidly ascended the steps of Strickland Guerney's ornate house. It was coming on to dusk, and the great hall was almost dark. Jones switched on the light and looked about curiously.

"Bradley," he called.

A round shouldered, misty eyed little butler came pattering from somewhere in the rear of the house.

"I am astonished at this carelessness, Bradley," reproved Jones. "Where are the servants?"

"Ah, Mr. Sylvester, sir, I'm glad you've come." The old butler pointed a skinny, shaking hand toward the ceiling. "Something's wrong, Mr. Sylvester; I know it in my bones."

"Wrong? What could be wrong?"

"This morning your uncle told all the servants to take the day off. I was feeling rather badly, sir, and I retired

to my room, where I stayed until noon. I went to his study then, and knocked, but he would not answer. Later I tried the door two or three times, but could get no response."

"Nonsense," said Jones sharply. "What could be wrong? You're too old to display the nerves of a Chestnut Street flapper, Bradley. I'll go upstairs with you, and we'll rouse up the old curmudgeon. Probably he went to sleep counting his bank-books."

Together they ascended the wide, oak balustraded stairs. There was a heaviness in the atmosphere; a gloom that permeated everything. The butler shivered. Jones' eyes grew hard. There was no evidence of anything out of the ordinary, but both *knew* that something was wrong.

The door to Strickland Guerney's study fronted the wide stairway. It was a huge affair of age-blackened oak that had been imported from a chateau in Normandy. Jones rapped several times, and called his uncle's name. There was no answer.

"I told you, sir," quavered Bradley.

The younger man stooped and applied his eye to the key-hole.

A limited segment of the room sprang into view; the rows of book-cases against the walls, the untidy table, and the great carved chair that Strickland Guerney used. But it was none of these things that caused J. Sylvester Jones to straighten up, with a little sucking in of his breath.

"Wait here, Bradley," he instructed. "I'll be back in a moment."

He clattered downstairs, and flung open the door to the street.

"Hawker."

The chauffeur—an old-young man, with a sharp profile and blood-shot eyes—sprang to attention.

"Yes, sir?"

"Drive like the devil to the police-station, and bring some officers here at once. Better have one who knows something about locks. We can't batter this door down."

When the limousine had roared up the street, Jones slowly re-climbed the stairs. Bradley was fussing nervously about the hall, straightening chairs and pictures that were already in mathematically accurate positions.

"It's dreadful, sir," sighed the old butler. "I peeped through the keyhole, sir. I could just see the top of his head, slewed around at a most peculiar angle—and it never moves, sir."

"Do you—do you think he might have done himself an injury?" Jones asked.

"If injury's been done he has done it himself. You know the study, sir. There are no windows, in the regular sense; only those iron barred transoms near the ceiling, and no living thing could get through them. And this door, sir—there was only one key, and that Mr. Guerny carried on his watch-chain—"

The tramp of heavy feet sounded in the hallway below. Jones called anxiously, and a portentous file ascended the steps. First came Lieutenant Jamieson, then District Detective O'Toole, Patrolman Bierhalter and finally a wiry, grey-eyed irresistible, known to all the city as Johnny Suggs, son of the owner of the *Evening Star*. Hawker edged furtively on the edge of the procession.

"Well," asked the lieutenant heavily,

"what's the trouble here?" He seemed somewhat awed by Jones' wonderful sartorial display, and Suggs added to it by informing him in a whisper that J. Sylvester was the nephew of old millionaire Guerny.

Jones said, "I'm afraid something has happened to my uncle. I thought it best to call the police immediately."

"You did right, Mister Jones," commented the lieutenant. He laid his hand on the knob of the study door, and rattled it—with no results, naturally. "You couldn't break down this door without a tank. Hey, Bierhalter, get busy on the lock."

"Wait a minute," cut in the reporter, whipping out a magnifying glass. "What do you say if we look this over first, loot? Nobody's monkeyed with the lock. It has been opened and shut with a key, all right."

Jamieson, who prided himself on looking after the fine points of every case, flushed because he had not thought of that himself. With extraordinary gruffness he ordered Bierhalter to "get busy." It required ten minutes of concentrated effort on the policeman's part before he flung open the door.

There was the stuffiness of decay in the chamber—the nameless, creeping horror that is always present when death comes by violence. Solemnly the little party crossed the room and looked at the figure in the carved chair.

It was that of a man of sixty, big paunched and heavy lipped. Strickland Guerny had been known as a connoisseur in all that pertained to the appetites, and his face was that of a gourmand. There was a half snarl on his face, and a revolver lay on the floor below the drooping fingers of the right hand. His left fist rested on the table edge, and gripped the study-key. The fine silk of his shirt front was caked with dried blood.

Jamieson, his pique forgotten mo-

mentarily, was once more the calloused police official. He touched Guerney's pasty cheek, lifted the right arm, dropped it heavily, and crinkled the blood clotted shirt between his fingers.

"I ain't no doctor, but I can see this man's been dead at least three hours. Say, what do you know about this?" He turned suddenly on the trembling Bradley.

"N-nothing, sir, except what I told Mr. Sylvester, sir."

"What was that?"

"This morning master gave the servants a holiday, but I stayed in my room because I wasn't feeling well. At noon I knocked on his door to find out if he required lunch, and he told me to go to the devil, quite harshly, sir. That was the last time I heard him speak. Twice afterward I knocked, but received no answer. Then Mr. Sylvester came, and he sent for you. There is only one key to the study, sir, and—and Mr. Guerney has that in his hand."

"How is it you didn't hear the shot?"

"My room is downstairs, and there were several closed doors between."

The lieutenant grunted, and then looked at Jones. "Can you add anything to that?"

"Nothing of value, I'm afraid. My uncle and I were on the best of terms. I usually called on him twice a week—Monday and Friday—"

"This is Thursday," Jamieson shot out.

"I know it," retorted Jones, with some asperity. "I had intended leaving for New Haven tomorrow, and I wanted to see Uncle Strickland before I left. What are you trying to do—shoulder the crime on to me?"

The lieutenant hastily denied that any such idea had been in his mind.

"But we gotta clear up every point, you see. Now, where did you spend your time this afternoon?"

"I left the Hotel St. Regis, where I

have my apartments, at one o'clock, and drove through the park until two-fifteen—yes, I'm sure it was two-fifteen, for I had an appointment with Miss Daisy Graelis, of the Bohemian Follies, at two-thirty. We went to the Ambassadeurs and danced until four, when I escorted Miss Graelis home. It was after five when I left her, and I came directly here. That accounts for every minute of my time."

"I guess it's all right," said Jamieson. He drew his detective aside, and questioned him in a whisper.

"There ain't nothin' to it at all," snorted O'Toole. "It's a dead open-an'-shut case o' suicide. There's a thirty-eight calibre gun, with one cartridge fired. The door was locked an' no way o' getting into the place without a keg of dynamite. Why, Loot, this is the easiest thing I ever see."

Jamieson sighed with relief. "You're right, Marty. Ring up the coroner's office, and have them send a man up. I'll leave Bierhalter here to look after things. What's the matter, Mr. Jones? You're white as a sheet."

The dandy nodded. "I'm frightfully upset—shock, you know," he admitted. "If you don't mind I'll wait downstairs for any questions you may want to ask me."

"Pretty tough on him," said Jamieson, when J. Sylvester Jones had gone.

Johnny Suggs, who had been examining the room, and particularly the table and floor, with keenest interest, said:

"Oh, do you think so? He is Guerney's only relative, and I understand that he will inherit everything the old man left."

The lieutenant looked up quickly. He had a profound respect for Johnny's shrewdness, and there was something in the reporter's tone that shot a shaft of suspicion into his brain.

"You don't think Jones did this?" he demanded.

"Do you?"

"No, I don't. It's suicide, all right. What else could it be? Here he is, locked in his own room with a gun—it's his gun, all right, for you can see his name on that plate on the butt."

"I saw it," said Suggs dryly.

"Then, what the devil do you mean?"

Johnny picked up a sheet of paper from the table. It bore the legend, "Strickland Guerney—1822 Mammoth Building," and a few lines of scratchy writing, addressed to the Curio Company of America, requesting the price of a collection of weapons used by the Dayak head hunters. It was dated at noon that day.

"Doesn't it suggest anything to your mind?" the reporter asked.

Jamieson scratched his head, read it over again, and looked puzzled. "I can't say it does," he admitted. "You don't think any of these Dayak birds did this—"

"Certainly not." The slight shrug of Johnny's shoulders indicated vast disgust with the official police. "Why, lieutenant, *this letter was written by a left-handed man!*" He turned to Bradley. "Mr. Guerney was left-handed, was he not?"

The butler nodded.

"Then," said Suggs triumphantly, "if Mr. Guerney committed suicide, how did he manage to shoot himself, drop the revolver on his right side, and pick up the key with his left? Suicide? This is murder, lieutenant, you can bet a year's pay on that!"

CHAPTER II

In the private office of the *Star's* owner, Johnny Suggs told his story.

"I've checked up on Jones' story," he concluded, "and everything is just as he said. The manager at the St.

Regis, Miss Daisy Graelis, and the head waiter at the Ambassadeurs, as well as his own chauffeur, can account for every moment of his time that afternoon. It is possible that Bradley, the old butler, committed the crime, but I don't believe it. He's the mildest creature that ever walked. Lieutenant Jamieson arrested him, of course, but if you'll give me the chance, dad, I'll prove that he had nothing to do with it."

The elder Suggs elevated his heels to the desk-top, and looked out at the murky wrack of sky.

"It's good stuff," he said approvingly, "and will make a corking story, but what about the finish, Johnny? We want to find out who committed the murder—and you're no detective."

Johnny flushed. "Crime detection isn't a secret art," he protested. "Anybody with the wit and patience can do it. Give me a chance at it. These boneheads like Jamieson and O'Toole will never catch the murderer. I saw what they missed once. I may be able to do it again."

"You're a regular William J. Burns-Holmes, aren't you? If you can find out who killed Guerney in a locked room, with no known mode of egress, they ought to make you police commissioner. But we won't build any triumphal arches until you do the job. Go to it."

Johnny sprang to his feet and cracked his heels together.

"I'll do it, all right."

Highly elated, he descended to the street. It was eleven o'clock, and he was tired from his chase about town, verifying Jones' story, but he had no desire to go to bed then. As a matter of fact, he intended going back to the Guerney residence and conducting a minute investigation of the dead man's study. He had not seen all he wanted to see that afternoon, and as the house

had been locked, he would have all the opportunity he desired if he could effect an entrance.

A taxi was standing by the curb. Johnny climbed in and gave the chauffeur his instructions. In a moment more he was whirling along the brilliantly lighted street, on the first lap of his search for Strickland Guerney's murderer.

Three blocks from his destination, Suggs left the taxi. A policeman was lolling in front of the house of death, so Johnny gave it a wide berth, and entered the alley behind. It required only a moment to scale the fence, and feel his way through the darkness to the kitchen window.

Anticipating his course of action, the reporter carried with him a chisel, a jimmy, and an electric torch. In the utter blackness of the yard he did not dare use his torch, for fear a roaming policeman might see it. So, depending on his sense of touch, he felt for the window, chisel in one hand.

When he found it a sudden cold streak went up his spine. *It was open three inches from the bottom!*

There was someone in that house. Suggs did not doubt it for a moment. He was positive it was not the police, for they had secured the key to the front door. It was either the murderer come back to the scene of his crime, or some house-breaker, who had followed close on the news of Guerney's death, and hoped to reap a harvest. Johnny was not armed, but he shoved the window higher, swung his leg across the sill, and climbed in.

The house was horribly still. Suggs framed the kitchen wall with a circle of light, and stepping very cautiously, reached the door and peered into the dining-room. No one there. No one in the butler's pantry; no one on the first floor at all.

Was there anyone in the room where

Strickland Guerney had met his death?

Very softly Johnny began the ascent of the wide staircase. Then, as he strained his ears, he heard the rustle of a skirt and the soft, smothered whimper of a frightened woman. He shrank back against the wall and waited.

A bar of light crept out of the darkness and rested on the age-blackened oak of the study door. It wavered, as though the one who held it was nervous. And then, into that bar of light was stretched a woman's hand—a slim, marvelously white hand that fitted a key into the lock!

Bit by bit the reporter edged up the stairs. He had noticed where the electric light switch was located on his first visit there that afternoon, and it stood him in good stead now. His hand felt along the wall until it touched the button, and then he flooded the hall with dazzling light.

With a gasp of fright, the woman straightened up and turned. Her soft, fair hair fell about her pallid cheeks, and the graceful gown she wore was spotted and torn from her trip over the fence and the kitchen window-sill. Even in that startling moment Johnny commented to himself on her wonderful beauty.

"Who are you?" she whispered.

The reporter smiled. "I was just going to ask that question of you."

"Who are you?" she repeated tensely. "What are you doing here?"

"My name is John Suggs, and I happen temporarily to be a wage slave of the *Evening Star*. You see," he said, with a careless wave of his free hand, "I was at the district police station when the news of Mr. Guerney's murder arrived—"

"Murder!" whispered the girl, her hand going to her breast. "Murder! I—I thought the papers said it was suicide—"

"So the police thought at first," Johnny sighed. "They are shockingly unobservant. But I found that he had been murdered. Did you do it?"

He took a sudden step forward, and pointed his finger at her accusingly. If he had expected her to show fright or fear he was disappointed. The girl straightened up, and a hot color flamed in her cheeks.

"I?" she cried. "You are insane. *I am Mildred Guerne—Strickland Guerne's daughter!*"

Johnny laughed. "My dear young lady, please—if you had merely stated that you knew nothing of this affair I should have been inclined to believe you. But it seems to be a pretty well known fact that Mr. Guerne was a bachelor, and has no relatives except a nephew—J. Sylvester Jones."

"It's a lie—a lie! My mother was the daughter of a British resident among the Dayaks in Borneo. Mr. Guerne came there on a hunting expedition, and married her. They lived together for ten years—then he deserted her. Mother never gave up the search for him. She died in Singapore a year ago—and she urged me to keep seeking him. I traced him to this city. Two days ago I met old Bradley, who had cared for me when I was a child in Borneo. He promised to help—"

"And so Bradley took an impression of the lock, and had that key made for you?" said Johnny, with a rare flash of inspiration.

"Oh!" She shrank against the door's age-blackened panels.

"Didn't he?"

A tear stole from under her lowered lashes. "Y-yes."

The reporter took her hand gently. "My dear Miss Guerne," he said, "please don't think I'm utterly heartless. It is my business to find out who committed this crime. I don't think you did—I *know* you didn't. No one

in their right senses could look at you for a moment and believe you guilty of a cold blooded murder—even of such an old reprobate as Guerne seemed to be."

"I—I really didn't," she said brokenly.

"But, don't you see that, circumstantially, the case looks rather black against you? Personally, I don't believe in circumstantial evidence. I wouldn't convict a cat on it even if pussy still had the cream on her whiskers. Courts of law and juries look on those things differently. As the matter stands, you had a motive in seeking revenge—you are the only other person besides Mr. Guerne—to our knowledge, at least—who had a key to this door. Please don't cry. Can't you see that I'm trying to help you—to find a method of defense? Have you any idea who might have killed your—your father?"

She hesitated.

"Tell me," Suggs urged, "even if you have only the barest suspicion. We must get to the bottom of this matter."

"J-Jones," she said.

"Jones? I checked him over every minute of time from noon until six o'clock, which covers the period in which Mr. Guerne was last known to be alive, and the moment the police arrived here. What makes you think he is guilty?"

By this time Mildred Guerne had entirely regained control of herself. Johnny admired her for that. The position in which she found herself would have developed more than incipient hysteria in most girls. He could see that the marvelously white hand that held the key was steady once more. Her voice, when she answered, was clear and low.

"I am making no accusations, Mr. Suggs. I do not know Mr. Jones personally. But I did learn how he ingra-

tiated himself with my father, so much so that he was named in the will as the sole heir. From all accounts, he is a typical man about town—a selfish, pleasure-seeking idler. He lives at the St. Regis, owns a limousine, has a chauffeur—yet he is desperately in debt and his bank balance is less than a hundred dollars. Certainly that would seem to indicate that he would have an interest in my father's death."

"From whom did you learn all this?"

"From Bradley," she said defiantly.

"I see," mused Johnny. "Yes, that would be a motive. If he did do it—Now, Miss Guerney, there is just one other thing that I want to ask you, if I may."

"What is that?"

"Why are you here tonight?"

"I am looking for the will. Jones has no right to that money; he will only squander it in the cabarets, anyway. My mother's people are desperately poor. They have been good to me, and I intend seeing that they are made comfortable with my father's money. I don't care anything about it for myself. I am young, and can work—" She threw out her beautiful arms in a gesture of defiance.

Johnny took the key from her. "Well, we might as well go in the study. You may find what you want—and so may I."

He fitted the key in the lock—and found the door unlocked! It was pitch dark in there—a velvety sort of blackness that one could almost feel. Suggs turned his flash on the walls, and located the electric switch. This time, when he turned it on, there was no gush of light, but the lamp on the study table winked into being.

Then Mildred Guerney screamed; a blood chilling sound in that great, dark house. Johnny sprang to her side, his eyes following the pointing line of her finger.

A man lay face down on the carpet. His clothes were of the latest cut, though crumpled and torn in places. A dark wet spot shone on the carpet by his chest.

Suggs knelt, turned him over, and looked into the dead, staring eyes of J. Sylvester Jones!

CHAPTER III

WHEN John Suggs reached home that night—or morning, rather, as it was verging on four o'clock—he sat down at his desk, with paper and pen, and summed up the evidence against the three suspects:

First: J. Sylvester Jones. He had a motive, as he was reported to be the sole heir of Strickland Guerney's wealth. On the other hand he lived at the most expensive hotel in the city, and seemed to have considerable money, despite his lack of a balance at the bank. There was no real evidence against him.

Second: Bradley, the butler. There was no definite motive, though he might have committed the crime for Mildred Guerney's sake. The strongest link connecting him with the murder was the fact that he was the only known person in the house at the time of Guerney's death. The fact that he openly admitted this, when he might have easily gone out and established an alibi, was a point in his favor.

Third: Mildred Guerney. Her motive could have been revenge, though she was not of a type likely to harbor that sentiment. According to her story, however, she had ample cause to hate the old millionaire. The fact that she possessed a key to the study door was certainly a damning bit of evidence against her—

When he reached that point Suggs tore up the paper in disgust. He had searched every inch of the study without finding a single clue that would aid him. If Jones had killed Guerne, who, in turn, had killed Jones? If he had not, who had?

After finding the body of Jones in the Guerne study, and failing to locate a scrap of evidence that would incriminate the killer of Guerne or of Jones, Johnny had taken Mildred away from the house of death. She had not found her father's will, so both were in a despondent frame of mind. The girl was staying at a modest little hotel uptown, and she promised to telephone the reporter if anything of importance occurred.

Lying back in his chair, eyes closed, Suggs tried to logically put together the small bits of knowledge he possessed into a comprehensive whole.

The theory advanced by the transcendent detectives of fiction—that no human being could enter a room without leaving some clue to his identity—Johnny found to be fallacious. There was not the vestige of a clue in Guerne's study. And why should there be? The murderer had probably slipped into the house—if he was not one of the household—quietly walked upstairs, opened the study door and killed Guerne as the latter sat in his chair. It could only be by the most colossal luck that the killer would drop some identifying bit of personal property, and he had not done so. There had been no rain or snow to make convenient footprints.

Deduction, as practiced by Holmes and Dupin, was all very well, but even those masters had to have some concrete clue from which to argue. There was not a single one for either the Jones or the Guerne murder, yet they were evidently joined by a connecting

link. It was inconceivable that it should be otherwise.

The figures of Jones, Bradley and Mildred Guerne filled Suggs' mental vision. His perspective of the case was clogged by their bulk. One of them had very likely committed the crime. Then Jones was killed. Bradley was in prison, and so eliminated from that angle of the case. But Mildred had been in the house—had been there before Suggs made his unexpected appearance. *And she possessed the key to the study door!*

Was Mildred Guerne the double murderess?

Every fibre of Johnny Suggs' being revolted at the thought. He thought of her pallid face, clear cut as a cameo, and framed by the crown of soft, fair hair. It was the face of a pure, warm hearted girl—and one utterly incapable of such a crime. It was on her slender shoulders, though, that the black shadow of suspicion lay most heavily.

At dawn Johnny gave up the problem temporarily, washed and shaved, and slipped out of the house without awakening anyone. He took a car downtown, and had breakfast at an all-night restaurant of the lunch-stand variety. It was dim and gray in the city—a gloomy, foreboding morning, with a shroud of fog creeping in from the river.

The reporter lit a cigar, and having nothing particular to do, strolled over to the *Star* office. The city room was empty save for a sleepy figure curled up in one of the chairs. Suggs' foot-falls aroused it.

"H'lo, Johnny," he husked, reaching mechanically for a cigarette. "What 'n the deuce are you doing down here at this time o' night. 'F I was the son of the boss of this paper I wouldn't work at all—" He lapsed back into somnolent desuetude.

"Oh, you wouldn't?" repeated John-

ny, with keen sarcasm. "I like Palm Beach and yachts and joy parties as much as you do, but you see me working, don't you? You'd do it, too, if he was your governor."

"By the way," the other man woke up suddenly. "A note came in for you about eleven o'clock; laying on your desk over there. It's from Bradley, the butler who's been held in this Guernev murder mystery. Friend of yours?"

Suggs picked up the crumpled envelope, with his name scrawled on it.

"Who brought it?"

"A hard looking bird—one of the guards, I guess."

Johnny ripped open the envelope, and read:

DEAR MR. SUGGS:

Probably the peculiarity of this will strike you at once. I feel that you are a friend. If you would do me a favor, when you hear of my death—and I feel that the end is not far—will you have my body disposed of as was that of Gustave Edmonson, who wrote "The Psychology of the Working Classes"?

With many thanks for your keenness,

Respectfully yours,

JAMES R. BRADLEY.

The reporter stared at the note.

It might as well have been a jumble of unintelligible gibberish so far as he was concerned.

Then two lines in the letter seemed to spring out in bold faced letters:

"*The peculiarity of this will strike you at once*" and "*Many thanks for your keenness.*"

The mild eyed old butler was trying to send him a cipher message!

Now, Johnny had gained valuable experience with codes during his service in the Intelligence Section of a famous combat division in France. He had learned to read ciphers of many kinds. So, tired and aching as he was, he sat down at his desk, and tried to unravel this one.

After an hour of concentrated effort, Suggs decided that, if it was a code, it

was too cleverly done for him to solve. The letter was so short that it gave him no opportunity. This reference to Gustave Edmonson and his book threw no light on the subject. "The Psychology of the Working Classes" was in the *Star's* library. Johnny brought it out, read over the contents page and skipped through the volume, but it carried no suggestion to his mind. It was dull and prosy in the extreme and the possibility that it might have any connection with the double murder in the Guernev house seemed rather far fetched.

At eight o'clock he called up Lieutenant Jamieson: "Anything new develop, Loot—in the Guernev case, I mean?"

"New?" howled Jamieson. "I'll say there has. Now, listen, Johnny. I'm giving you this first of all, because you've helped me in the past and, anyway, I want due credit with your dad for giving his paper first crack at it. Soon as I get done talking come down to the Guernev house. I'll be there by the time you arrive."

"All right. Shoot!"

"There's been big doings down there last night. Patrolman Duffy was on special duty in front of the place. He's a good, sober man, and he swore that he wasn't a hundred yards from the house all night. Every hour or two he walked around through the alley and looked things over from the back. He didn't see a light or hear a sound up till three-thirty. At that time Duffy was standing by the Guernev steps, and he heard a shot from inside.

"Well, he rapped for assistance, broke a window and climbed in. He saw a light upstairs and tore up there hell bent for election. The door to the study was open—"

"Open?" interrupted Johnny, "I thought I locked it?"

"What?"

"I said I thought *you* locked it."

"I did, but open it was, and the furniture was smashed up generally as though there had been a scrap—"

"What?" Suggs was thoroughly surprised now. When he was in the study only a few hours before this occurrence everything had been in apple-pie order. And now—

"I said everything was broken up," the policeman said peevishly. "This damned 'phone's out of order, and you can't hear anything right. Chairs broken up, pictures busted loose from the walls—the room smashed generally."

"Come on, get to the finish," urged Suggs. "You're not telling a short story with a carefully arranged climax. I want to get all the dope for the sheet."

Jamieson's hoarse laugh rumbled over the wire. "We found a dead man in the study. You're a clever lad, and quite an amateur detective yourself, but I'll bet you can't guess who it was."

"I've got a ten-spot that says I can," said Johnny, touched in his pride at the policeman's dig at his sleuthing propensities.

"You're on. Who was it?"

Suggs braced himself for the bellow that would come through the receiver.

"J. Sylvester Jones," he said.

"Oh, no," laughed Jamieson. "You thought I was a dummy when I suggested that it might be one of those Dayak fellows who croaked Strickland Guerne. Well, there isn't an acre of green in my eye, son. Patrolman Duffy found one of those Dayaks in Guerne's room, with a bullet hole drilled through his heart!"

CHAPTER IV

UTTERLY amazed at this turn of events, Johnny sketched what had been told him to his sleepy compatriot, and

that gentleman, galvanized into instant life, began hammering out the story on his typewriter.

"Better let the old man look it over," Suggs suggested. "He's interested in this Guerne affair, and wants to keep his finger on it. Better call him on the 'phone, tell him what's happened and that I've gone up to the house to look things over."

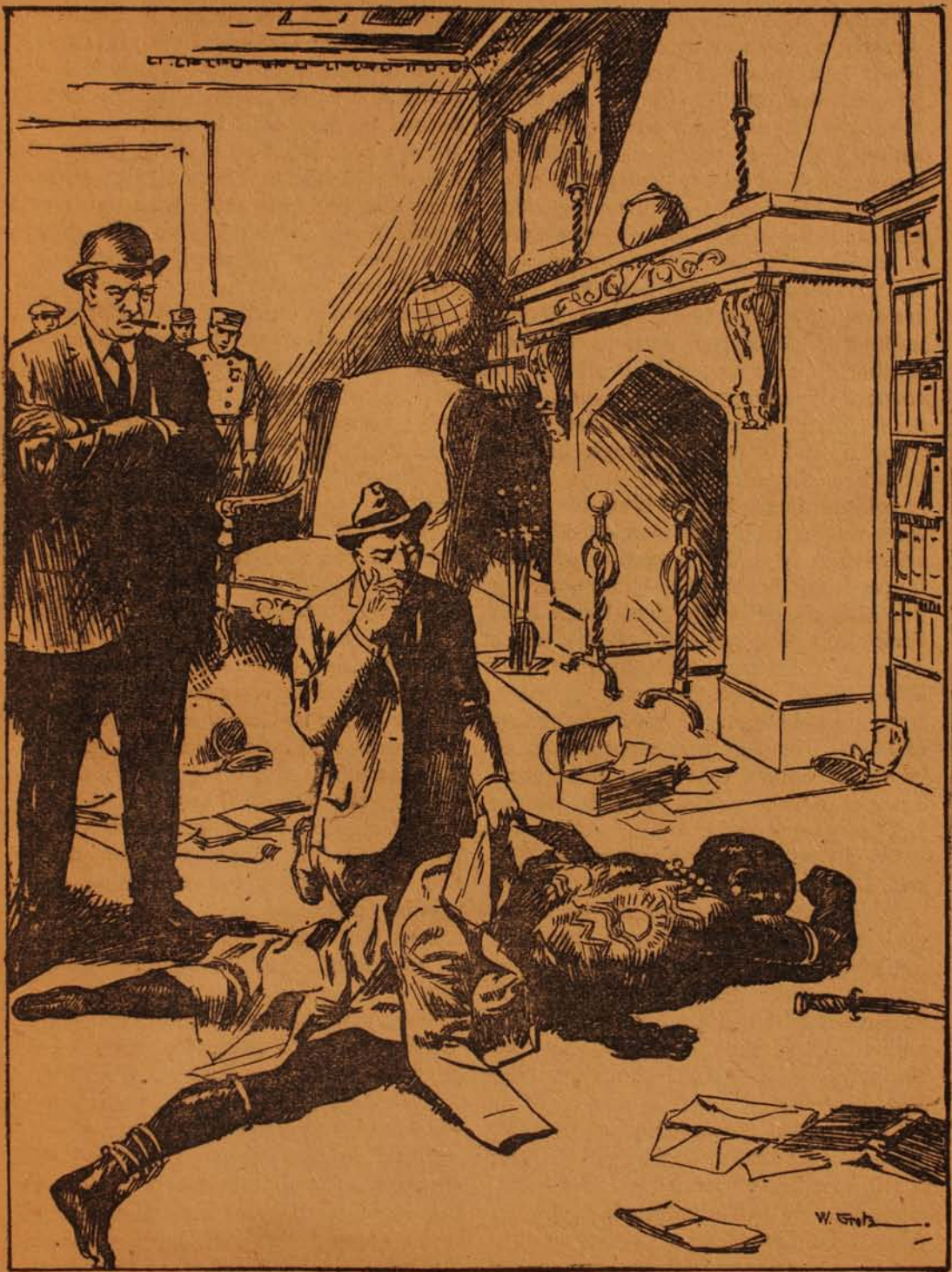
Johnny was lucky enough to get a trolley without much delay. And every rumbling foot of the way he kept asking himself what had become of Jones' body? What malign influence was behind these repeated killings? He thought of his father's words, "Don't build yourself any triumphal arches until the job is done." The governor was right, as usual. Anyone who solved this mystery deserved a triumphal arch, at that.

Twenty minutes later he reached the Guerne residence, and was admitted by Lieutenant Jamieson himself.

"Come upstairs and take a look at the study," the latter invited. "I'll admit this has me buffaloed. Just where this brown skinned baby horns into the picture is beyond me. Now, if it had been Jones—as you guessed—we might have been able to fix up a story that would jibe with the facts, you know, but this—" He shrugged his shoulders. "Bradley must have been mistaken about only the one key. The study door was open, and I know that I locked it before we left."

Johnny nodded. He had locked the door himself with Mildred's key at one o'clock that morning. The appearance of another one relieved him, for it shifted the shadow from the girl. Between one o'clock and three-thirty the possessor of the third key—who was probably the murderer they sought—had entered the house. Who was he?

The reporter and the police lieutenant walked upstairs.



Johnny knelt beside him, his keen eyes roving over the wonderfully developed body.—Page 14

A man lay on the study floor, almost directly on the spot where J. Sylvester Jones had sprawled when Suggs discovered him earlier in the morning. He was a Dayak, finely developed physically, and from the tattoo marks on arms and shoulders evidently of a chief family. He wore five silver leg rings and a bead necklace for ornaments, and a cheap overcoat in deference to western customs. His head had been crowned by a peculiar bit of Dayak millinery, decorated with a hornbill feather, but it had rolled off into a corner. A parang, or short sword, with a beautifully carved handle, was gripped in his fist as though he had been awaiting an assault.

Johnny knelt beside him, his keen eyes roving over the wonderfully developed body and the section of floor immediately beside it. Quite possibly this was the man who had killed both Strickland Guerney and J. Sylvester Jones. If he was, who, in turn, had killed him? Certainly not Bradley, who was in jail. Very improbably Mildred, whom he had escorted to her hotel, an hour's ride from this place. Then it was someone who had not as yet been suspected.

"Well, what do you make of it?" asked Jamieson.

Suggs rose, walked across the room, apparently following a trail that was invisible to the lieutenant's eyes. He stopped before the fireplace, in which no fire had been built for months, examined it carefully, glanced up the chimney, and walked back to the Dayak's body.

"I've found a few things," he said, "that you probably overlooked. In the first place, there hasn't been any struggle here. All this smashing up has been done for effect. If there really had been a struggle between this Dayak and a man powerful enough to give him a battle do you think that he would

still have held the parang in his hand in that way? The way I read it is this: The Dayak came into the room, all ready for action, and was shot down before he was able to make a move. It isn't possible that, if there had been a fight that knocked over all this furniture, that this light table with the lamp would have survived. No, the place was carefully wrecked *before* the Dayak was killed."

Jamieson grunted. "Why *before*?"

The reporter's voice grew sarcastic. "Do you imagine anyone could have wrecked this place and made a get-away between the time the shot was fired and Duffy arrived?"

"Why the devil should he wreck it at all?"

"Ah, that's the question. The only reason I can see is that the murderer was searching for something. He tore things up regardless in looking for it."

"Well, he was disappointed then," grunted the lieutenant. "We took everything of value—papers and money—over to the station when we left."

Johnny could have kicked himself. "I'm certainly the prize cheese detective of the world," he told himself. "So Mildred and I—" he already called her that in his thoughts—"wasted all that time looking for something that was in Jamieson's safe. I should have known that much."

"Anything else?" demanded Jamieson.

"Oh, yes. Quite the most important of all. And it's going to prevent you from collecting that ten-spot from me."

"What do you mean? You bet that we would find Jones' body here."

"And so you will." He rolled the Dayak's body to one side. "Look at that blood spot. Too far down to have come from this savage's wound. Someone else was killed in this room before Mr. Dayak. There are two drops of blood between here and the

fireplace. I looked up the chimney and caught a glimpse of something. I'll wager that you'll find Jones' body jammed up in there."

Jamieson, Detective O'Toole and the two patrolmen made a rush for the fireplace. In ten seconds they had demonstrated the truth of Suggs' statement, and the soot-smearred, twisted body of the late dandy was stretched beside that of the Dayak.

They looked at him with far more respect than they had ever exhibited before.

"I'll take my hat off to you, Johnny," the lieutenant admitted. "Now tell me who did it. I can't afford to lose out on this case after letting Mullaney make a clean get-away last month."

The reporter laughed. "I don't know."

"You're holding out on me," complained Jamieson.

"No, I'm not. I really don't know enough to help you, but I hope to add a little to that knowledge by this afternoon. When I do I'll let you know, you can gamble on that. I'm not trying to build up a reputation with the force. All I want to do is get solid with my dad. He never had a very high opinion of my abilities, and I want to prove to him that he is wrong."

"I'll have to be covered up a bit until something breaks. What is your paper going to say?"

"Oh, we'll fix that up all right," the reporter assured him. "The *Star* will have a story full of glittering generalities, giving all due credit to the foxy police, who found out that this apparent scrap was a frame-up."

"All right," agreed Jamieson, slightly mollified, "but for heaven's sake, let me know as soon as anything breaks."

"Sure thing."

Johnny used the telephone in the hall to call up the paper. His father was in the office, having come down imme-

diately at the news of the developments in the Guerney case. The older man listened quietly, then asked:

"Have you any clues at all?"

"Well," said Johnny guardedly, "maybe yes and maybe no. I'm going after something right away."

"Keeler tells me that you received a cipher note from Bradley. Have you figured out what it means?"

"No. I believe it is too short for a message, and I am hopeful that another part will come soon. Until it does I am going to follow out some ideas of my own. By the way, dad, Lieutenant Jamieson wants you to cover him up until something breaks."

"Of course."

Johnny rang off. It was his intention to go to Mildred, and find out from her if she had been accompanied by the Dayak as a servant, and if he had taken up her quarrel and been killed in following it out. That seemed very likely. He might have murdered Guerney and Jones, but Suggs could not understand who, in turn, had killed him.

It was rather too early to call on Miss Guerney. Considering the late hour at which she had retired it was quite possible that she had not yet arisen. So Johnny left the house, bent on walking to the little uptown hotel.

The sun had chased the fog back to the river reaches, and it was delicious in the open after breathing the death-ridden atmosphere of the Guerney house. Suggs threw back his shoulders, and strode along at a good pace, keenly enjoying the exercise.

He received something of a shock when he inquired at Mildred's hotel, only to find that she had left an hour before.

"You Mister Suggs?" asked the clerk, after volunteering the information.

"Yes."

"Well, she left a message for you. Prob'ly thought you'd be here pretty

soon. 'Tell 'im,' she said, 'to come to 2738 Phillips Street right away.' I guess it's most goshalmighty important. Oh, thanks."

Johnny sprinted out into the street, hailed a taxi, and ordered the mahout to drive at top speed to the Phillips Street address. There was no use trying to figure out in advance what this sudden change of base meant—except trouble for Mildred.

They arrived at their destination in extraordinarily quick time. Suggs paid off the chauffeur, and reached the front door in approximately three seconds. It was open, and he went in.

From the upper floor he heard Mildred's voice sound in fright and protest. Johnny went flying up, with the speed of a ten-second man. When he reached the landing he saw her struggling in the arms of a tall, black-bearded man. At the sight a flood of anger and passion welled up in the reporter. He had only seen her once, but that was enough. Her beauty and courage had captivated his heart, in spite of the black shadow that hung over her.

The girl saw him, called his name, as her assailant tossed her back and faced the door.

Johnny flung himself forward with the silent ferocity of a beast. Though far smaller than the other man, the desperation of his attack more than made up the difference. His fists lashed against Black-beard, who was broad and thick and solid on the ground. They drove the latter's head against the wall panelling with a force that would have stunned a weaker man.

Instead, it seemed to spur Black-beard into action. He clenched Johnny around the middle and buried his bushy face against that young gentleman's chest. But the reporter blocked him off with sharp elbows and drumming fists. He realized that he would have small chance at close quarters. His

only salvation lay in keeping clear of those ape-like arms.

The big man drew back, panting heavily, then lowered his head into the shelter of his left shoulder and rushed again. Johnny leaped nimbly aside, but slipped out a lagging foot, and Black-beard went over it with a crash that stunned him. The reporter was atop him instantly, his thumbs sinking into the great muscles at the side of the neck. The paralyzing pressure stopped the fellow's breath—made him choke and beat the air feebly.

Mildred ran to his side. "Come, come," she whispered. "Oh, quickly. We must get away from here—"

He looked up at her, the old irrepresible light dancing in his eyes. The touch of her hand on his shoulder thrilled him.

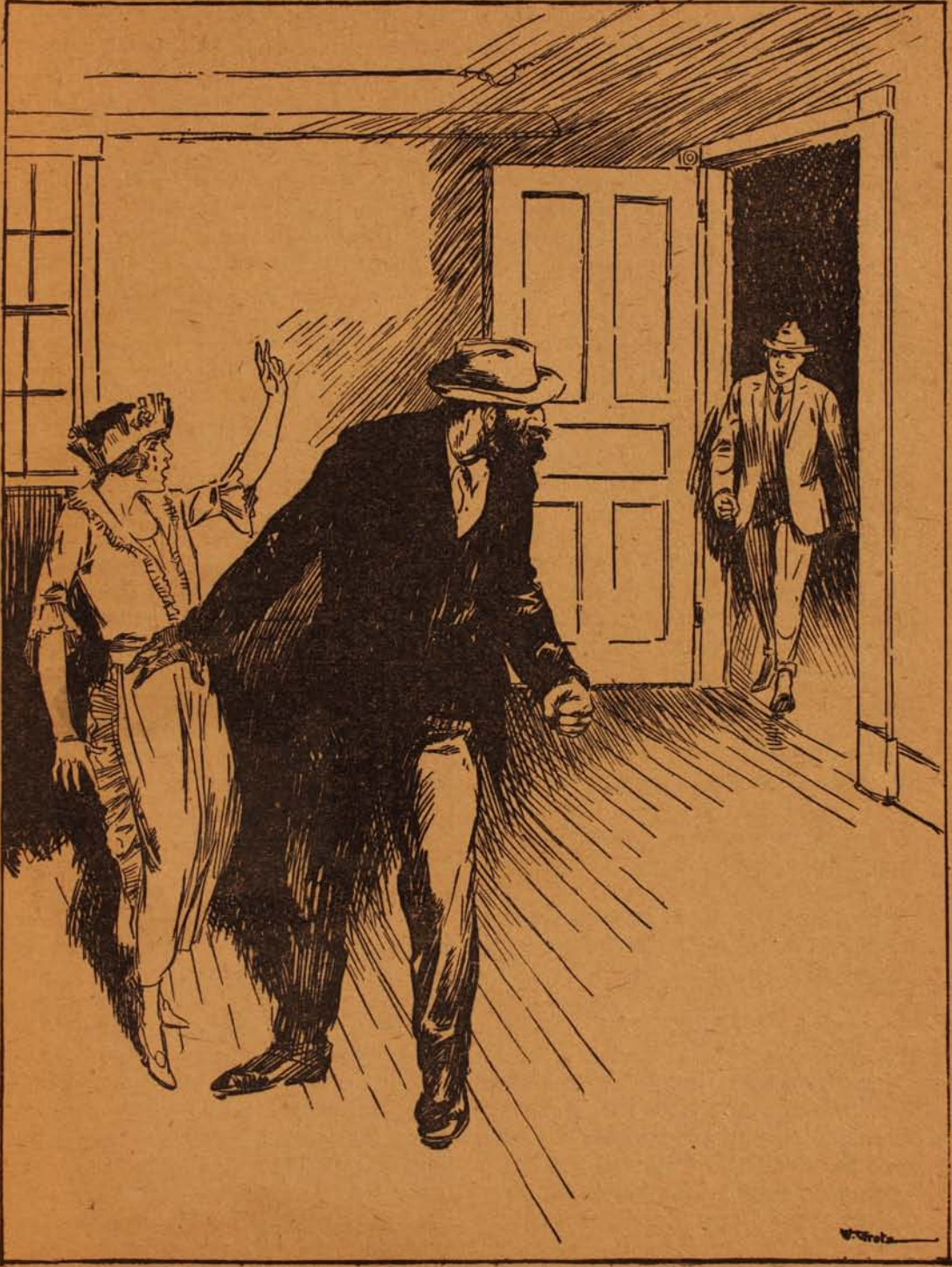
"I think we'll turn this fellow over to the police first," he said gaily. "These few punches have not been punishment enough for him."

"No, no. It is impossible. Come."

So Johnny rose, and with a contemptuous glance at Black-beard, walked downstairs with Mildred.

Once again out in the clear sunshine the wonder of this affair grew on him. He felt just the reverse of Wilkie Collins' famous detective. That gentleman was so used to doing big things that the little ones escaped him—like a senior wrangler, who has forgotten how to do quadratics, and has to solve problems of the second degree by the calculus. Johnny felt like a youngster who has never learned mathematics and has been ordered to do a most intricate problem. The twists and turns of this Guerney case he knew would make him gray-haired before his time.

"Will you please tell me the meaning of this, Miss Guerney?" he implored. "Every step becomes more difficult. We found J. Sylvester Jones dead in your father's study at one



The girl saw him, called his name, as her assailant tossed her back and faced the door.—Page 16

o'clock this morning. At three-thirty the officer on the beat heard a shot, entered the house, and found the room wrecked, and a big Dayak lying dead on the floor. Jones' body had been crammed up the chimney. Do you know this Dayak? What were you doing in this vacant house? Who was that bearded man? I think at times that I see a light, and then matters become more foggy than ever."

The girl considered. "The Dayak was probably Tama Aping, who swore to revenge himself some day on my father. He was different from most of his people—sullen, vicious to the core. Yes, he is the only one I can recall who would spend these years in a search for an enemy."

"It really doesn't help us much. Granting that he killed Mr. Guerney the problem of his own death and Jones' is just as puzzling. But what were you doing in *this* house, Miss Guerney?"

"The house belonged to my mother, Mr. Suggs. The black-bearded man had been watching me. I wanted to get away from him, and I came here, thinking I had shaken him off. Instead, he was close on my heels, forced his way in and seized me."

"Why?"

"He—he said he was a detective, and wanted to arrest me for the murder of Strickland Guerney!"

CHAPTER V

JOHNNY'S heart jumped with a sudden throb of fear. How had the police secured intelligence of Strickland Guerney's daughter? If they had, and knew what cause she had for hating him her arrest was only a matter of a few hours. Now, this detective—the reporter closed his eyes for an instant, trying to place those features in the gallery of his mind. Detective? Why, the man

was Black Allen, a gunman of more than local renown! Undoubtedly some one was interested in having Mildred Guerney put out of the way, and that person, Suggs believed, was the murderer he sought.

With a word to Mildred, the reporter ran back to the house. If the thumb-screws were put on Black Allen, he might tell who had hired him, which would save a lot of time and trouble. Johnny had left him in the house because he believed, as the girl had, that the fellow was a detective. Now he was anxious to find him. But Allen, having enough of Suggs' punching ability, had disappeared.

The reporter explained the situation to the girl, and together they returned to Mildred's hotel. Johnny waited in the lobby while she packed her things. Then he chartered a taxi, and had them taken to another hostelry in an entirely different section of the city. This would throw the Allen contingent off the track for awhile at least.

Once more back on the job, Johnny's mind harked to the supposed cipher message Bradley had sent him. What necessity was there for it? The butler could just as easily have sent for him and told whatever he wanted. There was no need for mystic flub-dubbery.

The reporter's anxiety to unravel the tangle, and find out who had killed Guerney, Jones and the Dayak chief increased with every passing moment. Though he had no very high respect for the gentlemen in the municipal detective office, he admitted that they sometimes stumbled on the truth through sheer persistence. And he was very much afraid that in their blind fumbling around they would lay hands on Mildred Guerney. Though Johnny was sure that she had not committed the crime, he knew that the police would be harder to convince. Besides, if he could lay hands on the murderer of Strickland

Guerny these attacks on Mildred would cease.

The reporter stopped at Fifteenth Street to wait for a car that would carry him downtown to the prison where Bradley was held in durance. While he waited a glittering Rolls-Royce limousine purred up to the curb. Hawker, chauffeur for the late J. Sylvester Jones, turned his little bloodshot eyes on Suggs.

"Mr. Suggs, sir, is it not?" he asked, with the soft deference of those who fetch and carry for the rich. "I'm in a bit of a corner, sir, and seeing you yesterday at Mr. Guerny's house, and hearing so highly of your capabilities—begging your pardon, sir—I've come to you for a bit of advice."

"Fire when ready," said Johnny good humoredly.

"Isn't there any place I can take you, sir?"

"Well, I'm going down to the prison—"

"Prison?"

"To see Bradley, Mr. Guerny's butler."

Hawker wagged his head hypocritically. "To think that whited sepulchre should kill his master. It is almost unbelievable."

"Do you believe it?"

"Of course. He was the only one in the house at the time. But you are going to the prison, sir. If you will ride on the seat with me I can explain myself on the way down, sir."

So the reporter sprang nimbly in beside the over-groomed Hawker, and the big machine leaped away with the satisfied purr of a giant cat.

"It is a most peculiar situation, sir," began the chauffeur. "You see, I was in the service of the Jones family for years. When Mr. Sylvester went for himself I followed as valet and chauffeur—the establishment being a small one, do you see, sir? He thought very

much of me if I do say it, and his family having passed away, he made a will leaving everything to me."

Johnny turned a pair of brightly suspicious eyes on Hawker, who returned the gaze steadily for an instant before swinging it again to the street.

"It develops, sir," the chauffeur continued, "that Mr. Sylvester left practically nothing. His bank balance is almost non-existent. This car and his other personal belongings must go to satisfy his creditors. It is very sad—how close he was sailing to the wind, sir."

"That makes it rather hard for you," observed Suggs. "But why are you telling me?"

"I'm distrustful of lawyers, and I had to talk about it with someone. Here is the strange part, sir." The chauffeur whirled the car around a corner and threaded his way through a maze of traffic at a speed that was a testimonial to his cleverness. "I understand that my master inherited all of Mr. Guerny's vast fortune. Many a time Mr. Sylvester told me of his expectations. So, naturally, I expect to receive the money that would have gone to him—"

They had reached the gray, forbidding walls of the prison, and the Rolls-Royce came to a stop before the gates. Johnny descended, but hesitated a moment, one foot lagging on the running-board. He had an idea, and he wanted to see more of Hawker.

"I think I can do something for you," he said. "As soon as I am free, I'm coming to see you."

"You can find me at the St. Regis garage, sir."

Johnny's eyes met the little, bloodshot ones in a meaning glance.

"And you," he added, "can do something for me."

With a careless nod, he strolled toward the warden's office.

It was quite natural that Suggs should know the warden of the prison. It was equally natural that the warden should be glad to do a favor for a newspaperman and the son of one of the city's most influential men. When Johnny asked to talk with Bradley the warden—supposing it to be an ordinary interview that was desired—assented, and led him to the old butler's cell himself.

The wistful little man was reading his Bible, but he laid it down, and rose as Johnny entered. There was something pathetically small and dusty about him—so much like a once-loved toy that has been relegated to a far corner of the closet—that Suggs felt very sorry for him. He said a word or two about being sad to see him there. Bradley responded gratefully.

The warden considerably withdrew out of earshot.

Suggs said, "I received that message you sent me, but couldn't make head or tail of it, so I came here to get the thing straight from your own lips."

Bradley looked at him in a confused sort of a way. "I—I don't know what you're talking about, sir."

"There's no need for mystification or melodrama," said Johnny impatiently. "I want to help clear this matter up. You shouldn't be here, but there are others who should. *Most of all I want to help Mildred Guerney!*"

He thrust his face close to Bradley's, and uttered that phrase with the utmost emphasis of which he was capable.

The butler's chin dropped; his mild blue eyes distended.

"Don't you see, man?" the reporter whispered tensely. "I want to help her. It is quite possible that the police will hear of her shortly. Tell me whatever you know. It may help."

Bradley sat down on the cot, and wrung his hands. "I don't know a thing, Mr. Suggs, I swear to God I don't! Except that I made the impres-

sion of the lock on his study door for her. I *did* sleep most of the afternoon, and I don't know what happened during that time—"

"Did Mr. Guerney really give the servants the day off, or did you?"

"He did."

"Why?"

"I had told him Mildred was coming to the house. He was afraid she would make a scene, and the servants would hear it."

"What was the meaning of the message you sent me?"

"I never sent you any message, sir."

Utterly exasperated, Johnny turned to the door. He could not understand why Bradley should deny having sent the note, if he really *did* send it. If he had not, who had, and why was the old butler's name signed to it? The reporter jerked his note-pad from his pocket, and laid it before Bradley.

"Write a few lines on there," he requested, "and sign your name. I want to compare it with that note I received this morning."

The butler did as Suggs commanded. He seemed so utterly wearied that his power of resistance was burned out. Johnny pocketed the note, said a cheerful good-bye, and went down the corridor with the warden. He felt like a man in a labyrinth, striving desperately to reach the center, only to find himself as far away as ever. The center he sought was the solution to the triple murder in the Guerney house. His initial incentive, to spur up his father's regard, had been supplanted by another. He wanted to scatter the black shadows enveloping Mildred Guerney, and regain for her the fortune that was rightfully hers.

Johnny headed at once for the *Star* office. Things were in full blast there, and no one paid any particular attention to him as he dived at his desk. The letter he had received that morning was

flattened out under an ink-well and another lay beside it. This one was unsigned, and merely bore the words, "Page ninety-two, paragraph three."

He opened the first letter and read it again:

Probably the peculiarity of this will strike you at once. If you would do me a favor, when you hear of my death—and I feel that the end is not far—will you have my body disposed of as was that of Gustave Edmonson, who wrote, "The Psychology of the Working Classes"?

Johnny grinned. The second note cleared up in an absurdly simple way the puzzle the first one had created. His correspondent wanted him to read page ninety-two, paragraph three, of "The Psychology of the Working Classes." He called for a copy-boy and sent him for the book—the one he had consulted that morning having been returned to the library.

Then he laid out the two notes. Despite the brevity of the second one, it was easy to see that the chirography was identical with that of the first. Then Suggs flattened out the paper he had requested Bradley to write. It was identical with that of the other two notes!

Why had the old butler denied writing them?

The copy-boy came back presently with Edmonson's masterpiece. Johnny seized it eagerly, and opened it at page ninety-two. In paragraph three he found this:

"The newest type of family servant is the chauffeur, and he presents a most absorbing psychological study. He is usually a step ahead of the other servants mentally, and, in consequence, becomes more valuable or more dangerous as his character is inclined. I recall quite vividly the murder of Mr. Farnsworth Lee by his chauffeur—a man of—"

Johnny threw down the book with an exclamation of delight.

"Hawker!" he said to himself, "Hawker!"

CHAPTER VI

THAT letter brought to a head the vague suspicions that had been germinating in Suggs' mind. But, after all, proof was needed to link the chauffeur with the triple murder. Without it the black shadow would still hang over Mildred Guerney.

Before leaving, Johnny stopped in his father's office. The elder Suggs leaned back in his swivel chair, and surveyed his son.

"Well, my boy," he asked cheerfully, "how is the Sherlock Holmes business coming along?"

The reporter sat down on his father's desk and grinned at him. "If you think I have been idle you've another guess coming, governor. That scoop we have on the murder of Jones and Tama Aping is worth the time I've spent on the case, isn't it?"

"Without question. Have a cigar, and consider your salary raised a dollar a week. But I'm interested in the detective side of the case—your system of solving criminal mysteries. Have you deduced anything today?"

Careless of his father's chaffing, Johnny sat swinging his legs, his eyes fixed on some papers on the desk. Then he looked up, square into the other's eyes.

"Yes, I have deduced something, dad, and if it isn't asking too much I'd like an explanation from you. Why did you send me those two notes, and sign Bradley's name?"

"How, may I ask, did you connect me with that incident?"

"You have an old letter of Bradley's there on your desk, and a sheet of paper covered with imitations of his chirog-

raphy. You are something of a handwriting expert, so it wasn't hard to guess. But what is the big idea?"

The older man tossed away his cigar and laughed.

"You are doing so well on this, son, that I wanted to help, yet still keep you puzzled. I thought you would be able to follow that rather broad clue of mine, but I didn't want you to know that I left it. Have you seen Bradley?"

"Of course. The old fellow was all fussed up when I wanted to know what his message meant. He hadn't any idea of what I was talking about."

The editor of the *Star* chuckled. "I suppose so. There isn't any doubt in my mind that he is not implicated in this affair. When things are cleared up I'll take care of him. Now, I want you to go out and check up on Hawker. No doubt he has what he thinks is a puncture-proof alibi. I suspected Hawker when I learned that he had a bank balance in excess of one hundred thousand dollars. That was sufficient proof that he isn't an ordinary chauffeur. So far as I know, he had no motive in killing either Guerney or Jones."

"Yes, he had," Johnny asserted. Then he repeated the story Hawker had told him an hour ago. "Now, I've mapped out a plan to catch him napping. If you'll co-operate with me I think we can put it across."

When he had finished his explanation the elder Suggs whistled. "It sounds good to me. I'll get busy on my end. Now you chase out, and check up every minute of his time."

Johnny followed instructions, but at the close of his investigation found himself up against the same blank wall that had blocked him when he checked up on Jones' day. The other chauffeurs at the St. Regis had played poker with Hawker until Jones had summoned him. That was at ten minutes to one, and the car had been marked out of the garage

five minutes later. The traffic officer, on duty in the park that afternoon, distinctly remembered seeing the Rolls-Royce at about one-fifteen. He knew Mr. Jones personally, and that gentleman stopped and gave him some cigars. The reason that he remembered the time was that Jones asked him, saying his watch had stopped and the clock in the car was broken. Cursed a bit at the carelessness of the chauffeur in allowing it to happen, too.

Miss Daisy Graelis reiterated her statement that Jones had arrived at two-thirty, and that the chauffeur was with him. She did not see Hawker again until four, when he returned to the Ambassador for them. However, the manager of a poolroom across the street from the hotel stated that Hawker—who was an old customer of the place—had taken a table at three o'clock, and had not left until five minutes to four. That accounted for his time just as J. Sylvester Jones' had been accounted for.

Johnny puzzled over that. He was certain there was something in plain sight that he should see—something that would let him get a hand on Hawker. And suddenly it popped into his mind. Why hadn't he thought of that before? It was just as evident at first as it was now.

Now, if his plan to force a confession from the chauffeur—assuming that he was guilty—succeeded, everything would be all right. If Hawker really had killed Strickland Guerney he had left no clue, and he knew it. On the other hand, every murderer has a restless conscience—nerves that may be startled into betraying him. So Johnny felt fairly hopeful.

He called Mildred Guerney on the telephone, and outlined his plan to her. The girl—who had come to trust him implicitly—agreed to every detail. Then Johnny paid a visit to Hawker at the

St. Regis garage, after a flying visit to the *Star* office.

The crooked-nosed chauffeur took the reporter to his room, and asked him what he wanted.

"I'll tell you," said Suggs. "I'm up against it. If my father knew that I was up to my ears in a stock-market tangle he'd kick me out of the house. Naturally, I'm not anxious to pass up the prospects of inheriting his money. But I need something to tide me over right now."

"Why come to me?"

"Because you can help me."

Hawker began to worry a creased bit of paper, stealthy eyes on the floor. He was studying Johnny's mental capacity, trying to figure out, too, just how far he would go. Finally he shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know what you mean."

The reporter hitched his chair a bit closer. "Yes, you do. I happen to know that you have a hundred thousand dollars in the Cathedral National Bank. I want a slice of it."

"Can you advance any reason why I should give it to you?" Hawker had dropped his servile air, and spoke out with a sharp assurance new to him.

"Several of them, but there is one in particular that will interest you."

The chauffeur's blood-shot eyes narrowed, and his fingers drummed uneasily on the arm of his chair.

"What is it?"

"Your alibi," explained Johnny carefully, "is apparently everything that could be desired. The police take it at its face value, anyway. *But what were you doing between the hours of one-fifteen, when the traffic policeman recognized you in the park, and two-thirty, when you drove Jones to Miss Graelis' apartment?*"

Hawker sprang to his feet with a sharp cry of anger, but Johnny did not shift his slouching position in his chair.

"There is no need for melodramatics," he said. "You know what I mean."

"What do you want?"

Ah, the cat was out now! Suggs did not move, but the muscles of his face relaxed, and he drew a deep, silent breath.

"Fifteen thousand dollars."

"You are high priced."

"Oh, very," returned the reporter, with a swagger.

"And what could I expect in return for that?"

"Listen: If the police ever think of that lost hour they'll be down on you quicker than a thousand bricks. You have a chance to get old Guerney's money. There are just two obstacles. The first one I've just mentioned; the second is Guerney's daughter. She is in the city."

He had expected the chauffeur to be astounded. Instead, Hawker merely scowled, and said, "I know it."

"You know it? What are you going to do about it?"

Hawker blinked at him. "If you expect to get any money from me you'd better make some suggestions yourself."

"I can keep the thoughts of that dun-derhead, Jamieson, turned away from you entirely," Suggs asserted; "that is, if I get the money."

"What about this Guerney girl?"

Johnny looked at Hawker with a coldly impassive face. "There is only one thing to do, isn't there?"

"Yes," said the chauffeur desperately. "We'll have to put her out of the way."

"We?"

"Yes, you, too. You don't trust me, and I don't trust you. So far well and good. Everything's even, and no one hurt. But, if we do the job together, one can't hold the other up."

Johnny pretended to consider. That offer, of course, was the one he had been attempting to get out of the chauffeur. The reporter knew something of psychology. He knew the state Hawk-

er's nerves would be in when he came to do this cold-blooded crime, and, with proper coaching, the man would tell enough to place the noose around his neck. Suggs had an inborn hatred of falsehood, but the remorseless requirements of the profession he was temporarily following forced the deception he was practicing. To lie in the line of duty is sometimes a disagreeable necessity—and this was for Mildred.

"Will you do this?" asked Hawker.

"And I'll get the fifteen thousand?"

"Of course."

"All right," said Johnny slowly, "but I can't understand why you didn't do something yourself when you knew she was in town."

Hawker scowled. "I sent Black Allen out to trap her, but someone butted in on the affair, and gave Allen a handy beating. The girl got away, and is hiding somewhere. It will be necessary to find her first."

"I know where she is."

"You do?"

"Of course. What kind of a reporter do you think I am? I've kept track of everyone in this case, first and last. Here's my plan. Do you know where 2738 Phillips Street is?"

Hawker nodded.

"The house belonged to Guerney's wife, and now, of course, belongs to the daughter. I'll get her there by a fake note, and then—well, it isn't pleasant to talk of those things."

"What time do you want me there?" asked Hawker.

There was a sound of light footsteps in the hall.

"Paper," cried a piping, juvenile voice. "*Evenin' Star.*"

"At twelve; on the dot," said Suggs hurriedly, opening the door. The newsboy thrust in a folded copy of the sheet, which Johnny passed over to Hawker. "At twelve, don't forget." And he disappeared down the stairway.

While he was striding along the street, chuckling to himself, the chauffeur was staring dumbly at the great, black headlines that blazoned forth his financial wreckage:

CATHEDRAL NATIONAL BANK CLOSES ITS
DOORS — LOOTED BY OFFICERS IS
REPORT—NOT A DOLLAR WILL
BE REALIZED BY CREDITORS

CHAPTER VII

SUGGS called up the *Star* office, found that his father had gone home, and immediately followed him there. Dinner had been served long ago, and his mother and sisters had gone to the theatre. The master of the house was in his room, dressing. Johnny went up at once.

"Well," asked the owner of the *Star*, shaking out his dinner jacket and lying it across a chair. "How did your wonderful scheme work out?"

"Immense. We have him trapped, I think. Regard your son, old war horse. He's a criminal. I engaged in a conspiracy with Hawker—at his own suggestion, mind you—that we put Mildred Guerney out of the way. He is to meet me at 2738 Phillips Street at twelve o'clock tonight. I am supposed to have lured the girl there. Gad! what a cold, calculating devil he is."

"What about that single copy of the *Star* that I had printed, telling of the failure of the Cathedral National Bank?"

"It was delivered just as I left," laughed Johnny, "and if I know anything of human nature it will be the final, jarring punch that will make Hawker reckless of consequences. He'll talk—and an uncontrolled tongue has been the downfall of more criminals than all the detectives in the world."

The older man finished brushing his hair, and picked up his waistcoat. "It

was a clever idea, son, but I would like to get that paper back again. The bank is as solvent as it ever was, but if that fake notice ever came to the attention of the president I would find myself the defendant in a suit for damages. However, it's in a good cause, so I won't worry about that. Have you explained matters to Miss Guerney?"

"Yes."

"And she is willing to carry out her share in the affair?"

"Of course."

"She must trust you implicitly, son. I know that you are no Don Juan, but she is an unsophisticated girl. Be careful."

John's cheeks began to burn, and he gave his father an uncomfortable look. Silence fell, and he sat down, his boyish face resting on his hands. The elder Suggs looked at him curiously, and began to change his collar.

"Do you—ah—love her?" he asked.

"Yes. What do you think this case means to me? I am not a professional detective—the trapping of the man who killed that selfish gourmand, Guerney, and Jones and the Dayak means nothing to me except that it will lift the black shadow from the girl I love."

Mr. Suggs had finished dressing. Johnny looked at his watch, picked up his hat and gloves, and rose.

"It is ten o'clock," he said in a curiously quiet voice. "I am ready if you are."

Together they went downstairs. The Suggs limousine was waiting outside. When they reached the drawing-room a sudden thought struck the reporter.

"I don't think we had better go together, dad. Hawker isn't a servant. Normally he is clever enough and suspicious enough to watch this house to see what I do. You go in the machine, drive around town a bit, then pick up Jamieson and O'Toole and Bierhalter,

if they will let him go. He saw the beginning of this affair, and it is only fair that he should see the finish, too. I'll meet Mildred near the Phillips Street address. Have the police slip in the back way, and make sure that Hawker does not see them."

"Right you are, son," said the older man. He took the boy's hand in an affectionate grip. "I'm with you all the way, understand—all the way. And, at a pinch, I don't imagine that I would make such a bad father-in-law."

He laughed; relinquished his grip. The door banged behind his burly figure.

A few minutes later Johnny, too, went out.

He met Mildred a few blocks from the Phillips Street house. In her pretty, soft gown, with a tint of blue ribbon at neck and shoulder, she seemed so very young and lovable that Suggs' heart set up a disturbed double drumming.

"I am glad you are here," she whispered. "I was afraid that something had happened to prevent it."

"Nothing could prevent—that!"

"Oh," she said faintly. Then: "Are we to go in now?"

Yes, they were to go in, it being nearly time for Hawker to appear. Mildred had the key to the place. They entered the dim, old-fashioned back parlor, where they were to keep their vigil. Had either been alone it would have been dreary waiting—a trifle eerie, perhaps—but being together made all the difference in the world. They burned, too, with the gusty thrill of the man-hunter, a sensation that nothing else can counterfeit.

At last the big clock in the corner church boomed twelve solemn, heavy strokes. Their ponderous reverberations had scarcely ceased when the opening and closing of the front door sounded. Johnny peered hastily into

the dining-room and received a reassuring hiss from Lieutenant Jamieson.

The stage was set for the entrance of the principal actor.

Suggs rose and opened the parlor door to admit Hawker.

The chauffeur was flushed with drink. Apparently he had sought to stiffen a wavering courage with numerous libations, and had only succeeded in forcing the throbbing color into his cheeks and a heaviness into his tongue.

"When I saw how dark the place was I didn't know but what you had double-crossed me," he snorted.

"You didn't think I would have it lit up like a church, did you?"

Hawker grunted sullenly.

"Well, said the reporter casually, "here is Miss Guerney to talk that matter over with you. I suppose I get that fifteen thousand, don't I?"

The other took his copy of the *Star* from a pocket, and tossed it to Suggs.

"Look at that," he said thickly. "I'm broke—haven't a penny in the world. But don't you worry. After I inherit old Guerney's money I'll double your stake."

"What do you mean?" demanded the girl.

Hawker focussed her with his red-rimmed eyes. "I had a hundred thousand dollars in the Cathedral Bank—my share of the money that Jones and I blackmailed out of old fools like Vanderduynck and Castleton. It went broke, and took every penny I own. But I'm going to get Guerney's money—when you're out of the way—ain't I, Suggs? So we're going to get rid of you very politely. I didn't know if I could trust Suggs at first, but my nerve was gone, and I couldn't put anything over alone. So we're going to kill you together—*kill* you the way Jones and Guerney and the Dayak were killed."

He fumbled in his hip pocket for a weapon.

Before his fingers had closed on the butt, Johnny leaped forward, and the knuckles of his right fist caught the chauffeur on the mouth. Hawker reeled back, spluttering an oath through his bleeding lips.

Before Hawker had recovered his balance the dining-room door opened and closed, and Jamieson stood with his broad back against it. The blue coat and brass buttons startled Hawker into instant sobriety. He glared around like a trapped wild beast. A deadly fear was stamped on his bloodless face.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"It means that we've caught the murderer of Strickland Guerney," said the police lieutenant importantly. "You should know that you couldn't deceive us, clever as you are."

"I didn't kill Guerney, before God I didn't?"

"No? Who did, then?"

"Jones did it. He planned it all, and carried it out himself. I helped him with his alibi, that was all. His date with Daisy Graelis—the ride through the park—everything was done to cover up his time. The only bit unaccounted for by anyone but me was between one-fifteen, when the traffic officer in the park recognized us, and two-thirty when Jones went to Miss Graelis' apartment. He disguised himself in overalls and a slouch hat, smeared himself with soot, and let himself in through the areaway.

"He had a key to the old man's study—let himself in. There were only a few words exchanged; then Jones shot him with an automatic, equipped with a silencer."

"Why? Old Guerney gave him lots of money."

"It was Guerney's daughter. Jones learned that she was in town. He heard that the old man had decided on a reconciliation, and he knew that he

would have to act quickly to prevent the will from being changed."

"Then you killed Jones," charged Jamieson, his ruddy face deepening in color.

Johnny laughed. "You're wrong, again, lieutenant. He did not kill Jones."

The officer scowled. "How do you figure that out?"

The reporter waved a hand toward Hawker's shrunken body. "Jones was killed before the Dayak. I know because I was in that room, and found her body. He was a fairly large man—weighed at least one hundred and seventy pounds. Do you imagine for an instant that Hawker could have lifted that body and jammed it up into the chimney the way we found it? It took a tremendously strong man to do that, and one who had a rather primitive way of hiding his crimes. It's my guess that Tama Aping killed Mr. Jones, and that Hawker, in turn, finished the Dayak. Am I right, Hawker?"

The chauffeur gave him a malignant glance, but evidently concluded that he could best help himself by making a clean breast of everything.

"I *did* kill the Dayak, but it was in self-defense," he said hoarsely. "He had murdered Jones, and hid himself—I don't know where. He probably mistook Jones for Guerny, whom he hated, and then, frightened, crammed the body up the chimney. I had followed Jones to the house. When he didn't come out I entered. The Dayak made for me with that murderous knife of his—so I shot him. That isn't murder, Lieutenant. You can't do anything to me for that."

Jamieson laughed savagely. "Perhaps not, but you're a bad egg, Hawker—a bad egg—just as rotten in your heart as Guerny was. But you conspired to kill his daughter, and you've confessed to blackmailing a number of prominent men, so if you wiggle out of the penalty for killing that greasy Dayak you're going to do time on those other charges. Take him away, O'Toole. The wagon is waiting outside."

There was a clink of steel as the handcuffs circled the chauffeur's wrists. He gave Johnny a murderous glance from his bloodshot eyes, and walked out beside the detective.

Lieutenant Jamieson rubbed his thick, damp palms. "Well, I flatter myself that we put that over rather cleverly, eh, Suggs? You know, for a bit, I was worried—what with Mullaney getting away last month, and all—"

The reporter smothered a smile. Hidden by the folds of Mildred's dress, he was holding the girl's hand, and a wonderful feeling of content suffused him. He did not particularly desire any credit for snaring a criminal. He had succeeded in what he set out to do. That was sufficient.

"Yes, pretty cleverly," repeated Jamieson meaningly.

"Oh, yes," said Johnny, turning away, "the police of this town aren't to be hoodwinked, and tomorrow the *Star* will give all due credit to Police Lieutenant Jamieson. And now, Mildred—er—Miss Guerny—"

Her hand tightened on his.

"Call me Mildred—as long as you like," she whispered.

(The End)



The Choice

By Eugene Guillaume

HE hesitatingly walked up the broad stone steps. He was not yet used to the silent dignity of the hospital atmosphere.

Inside he took off his soft hat, crushed it in his hand, and instinctively softened his footfalls as he stepped to the information desk.

"Mrs.—el—Follis?"

The girl silently plugged in the switchboard. A question, an answer:

"Corridor B, room 8. They are waiting for you," she said.

Softly, almost on tiptoe, he walked down the long corridor, passing a nurse in the light blue, white trimmed, uniform distinctive of the hospital, turned to the right, and lightly tapped at a door on which the figure "8" appeared.

A nurse opened the door, looked at him, turned and beckoned to someone in the room.

A physician, young, alert, came to the door, glanced at him a moment, came out and closed the door behind him.

The man before him nervously moistened his lips.

The physician looked at him keenly. The man's eyes returned the look questioningly.

"The time's almost here," said the physician. "It's serious—the mother, or the baby. I've told her. She says to speak to you."

A lightning expression passed over the man's face. The physician's boring gaze noted, but did not fathom it.

"May I see her?"

"Yes—but only for a minute." The physician turned and opened the door. The man advanced haltingly in the

semi-darkness to the bedside.

"John!" and two weak arms reached up and clasped him around the neck.

"The doctor says—" her voice choked "the doctor says," she whispered in weak tones in his ear, "that it is baby—or me."

A flash of pain winced her face, and she paused as it took her breath.

In a moment:

"I told him I'd leave it to you," she whispered as it passed.

"My brave girl! My brave girl! I want *you*—of course I want *you*," he answered, low voiced, but vibrant.

A look of ineffable joy came over her face.

"He wants *me!*" she said feebly, bright-eyed, joy-flushed, to the physician standing at the bedside. "He's come back at last—and he wants *me!*"

A spasm of pain convulsed her.

The physician leaned over quickly, and turned to the table of instruments at his side.

The nurse gently took the man's arm and led him to the door. Even in her pain the woman's eyes lovingly followed him.

The door closed. A moment passed. It opened again, and the man's head appeared inside.

"Doctor!" he whispered softly.

The physician turned, looked, walked to the door. The man beckoned silently, and the physician went outside, closing the door quietly behind him.

"Well?" he questioned.

"Save the baby," the man replied.

The physician stared at him . . . turned and re-entered the room.

The Long Arm of God

By Ward Sterling

IN a rock-bound gulch, half-buried under the sands of summer, covered beneath ten feet of snow in winter, six skeletons lie, grinning mockingly. In the hollow skulls of two are smooth, round holes. In one a tiny, leaden pellet leaps and bumps with each heave and groan of the sun-kissed ice in spring. The whitened ribs of two are seamed and scarred as by a knife. Upon the sixth there is no mark. Nor comes there any answering rattle when some loathsome reptile, scurrying from its lair amongst the rocks and crevices, jars against the whitened shell that once encased as foul a brain as e'er polluted God's green footstool. It lies far apart from the others, denied, even in death, the solace of their companionship.

It is of the tenant of that sixth grim remnant, gazing, hollow-eyed, toward the heavens it can never enter, that this story is written. The flesh that once covered his weather-bleached bones has long since been carried away by carrion birds; his malignant soul is now frying in hell—unless, by chance, the devil, fearing the corruption of his powers of darkness, has denied the spirit admittance.

He mocked God and spit upon His Commandments. And the long arm of God reached out and found him—even in the chill, cold arctic hell where he had hidden himself away.

I

LEE was the first to die. They found him, a month after they had discovered that they were rich—cold and stiff, his face twisted into an indescribable gri-

mace, as if he had died in awful agony. Yet there had been no outcry. Nor was there any mark upon his body to show how he had been struck down.

The six of them—Lee, the profane; Halligan, the religious; Mason, the student; Wentworth, ill-tempered and moody; Kelly, the hot-blooded Celt; and good-natured, plodding, old Drew—were from the same Mid-Western town. They had grown up together, attended the same school, soldiered in the same squad. The same girl had driven them to the land of long winters to seek their fortune. And, smarting under the same misfortune, they had been drawn together, forgetting, for the time, their differences, sharing one another's dangers, living out of a common purse, laughing at hardships—yet each praying that he might be the one upon whom Fortune's smile would fall—buoyed up by the memory of a beautiful girl far, far from their adopted home.

After a fashion, they were happy. They were filled with primitive vigor and pulsing with life. They lived constant romances and did not know it. For such is the way of the far countries. And the lure of the North had gripped their heartstrings.

They had been prospecting, without results, all summer, when they chanced upon the unmapped, blind canyon which was destined to be their burial place. Following the noisy little creek up the gulch to the spot where it bubbled from the side of the rocky wall which blocked the farther end of the canyon, between two gray, grim mountains, they decided to "hole in" for the winter.

There were signs of gold everywhere.

A cabin, old and weatherbeaten—one of the unsolved mysteries of the ever-mysterious North—stood ready for their occupancy with a small amount of repairing. Near by were a dozen mounds—grim reminders of a tragic past. In the cabin were bags filled with nuggets, their coverings rotted away. The whole place breathed of mystery—of mystery and treasure untold. Wood was plentiful and game was abundant.

Halligan and Lee were sent back for supplies. The others divided their time between prospecting the gulch and putting in shape their shack—a four-roomed affair—for they intended spending the winter in comfort.

Two weeks after the return of the two, the partners awoke to the realization that they were rich. Before they could even estimate the extent of their find winter arrived, with its long, cold nights, burying the old cabin almost to the eaves under a mass of snow which filled the gulch, tying them up effectually for the remainder of the season.

There is no stronger test of friendship than the placing of strong, vigorous men for several long, weary months in enforced confinement. With little to do save eat and sleep, forced to gaze at each other day after day, they are apt to fall into a physical lethargy which eventually creates a nervous tension like nothing else in the world. Petty quarrels become serious matters. Molehills are magnified into mountains. They grow to hate the sight of each other—to become suspicious of what, under other circumstances, would not be noticed. And, when each looks upon his companions as his rivals for the hand of a beautiful woman, hell is bound to break loose sooner or later. It is as inevitable as fate.

II

WHEN they found the grisly horror that was Lee, lying stark and stiff in

his bunk, gazing, glassy-eyed, toward the ceiling, there was no thought of foul play. It was Halligan who, in straightening out the cold, clinched fingers, discovered the tiny thread of gray wool in the doubled-up fist and called the attention of the others to it.

Wentworth was the owner of the only gray shirt in the camp. The others wore khaki or blue. It had been a cold night and he had slept in it. Instantly all eyes were turned upon him, although no word was spoken.

He turned upon his silent accusers, his lips drawn back in a wolfish snarl.

"Damn it! If you think I done it, say so!" he growled. "If I killed him, how did I do it—and when? You, Halligan, slept in the same room with us."

Halligan shook his head sadly:

"When I went to bed, the two of you, and Kelly, were soldering that hole in the old coffee-pot. I went to sleep before either of you turned in."

Kelly looked at Halligan angrily, then cast a sympathetic glance at Wentworth.

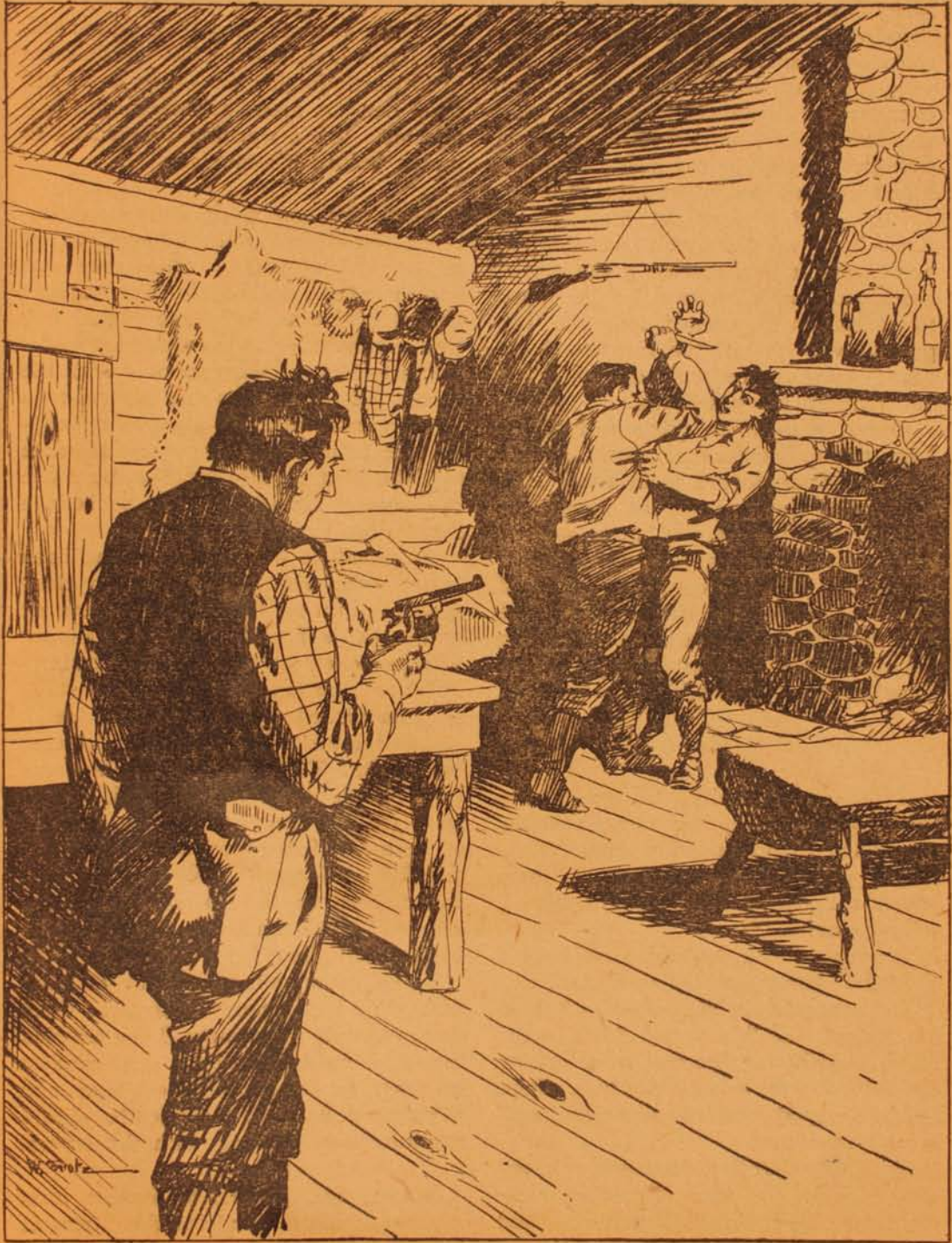
"I'm sorry to say, boys, that I 'hit the hay' before the other two. I wish now that I hadn't, because I'm confident that if Lee was killed—and I don't think that he was—it wasn't Wentworth that done it. He's not that stripe. In fact," he hastened on, "none of the bunch is."

Wentworth snorted.

"Keep your blasted sympathy to yourself! I don't want it!" he growled.

Halligan shook his head mournfully. "It's the visitation of God upon Lee for his blasphemy," he muttered. "I warned him against it many a time—poor boy."

They sat around all day discussing their companion's sudden taking away—all but Wentworth. He sat alone in a corner, silently nursing his grievances. They had searched the body; there was not a mark upon it. The other four were loud in their statements that Lee



He cocked the weapon and, with his finger on the trigger, waited for the others to settle their argument.—Page 33

must have died a natural death. But there was a feeling of coldness—an indescribable something that cast a pall over them all—a feeling toward their once-trusted comrade—a feeling that the long, lonely days of idleness and soundless nights of the past now magnified into an unspoken suspicion.

Late in the afternoon they carried Lee's body up the gulch a few yards and buried it in a shallow grave dug in the ice and snow, where it would have to lie until spring opened up again. The ground was frozen too hard to dig a grave being covered by a dozen feet of hard-packed snow and ice.

Only Wentworth remained away from the simple funeral, sitting glumly by himself inside the cabin while Halligan mumbled, brokenly, as much as he could remember of the burial service.

It was late when they retired that night. All but Wentworth. He refused to eat any supper, throwing himself onto his bunk immediately after the others had finished eating, where he lay, scowling, his eyes staring into vacancy.

III

THEY slept fitfully. It was nearly morning when they were awakened by the sharp explosion of a gun. They leaped to their feet and one of them struck a match and lighted a flickering tallow candle.

Wentworth lay dead in his blankets. Over him hung a pall of acrid smoke.

He lay upon his back, a bullet hole in his temple, his lips drawn back in the same wolfish snarl he had worn during the day. On the floor beside him, where it had dropped from his nerveless hand, lay his revolver.

Next morning they buried him in the snow beside the man who they were now sure had been his victim. And once more it was Halligan who was called upon to say a prayer.

Again he repeated his warning.

"Can't you see, boys," he mourned, "that the Lord visited his wrath upon Wentworth for his sins—just as he did upon Lee. A man's evil deeds will find him out. It's a warning for you all to repent before it's too late."

There was no work done that day. Even the dishes were allowed to go greasy and unwashed while they discussed again and again the various phases of the second tragedy that had befallen their little community. Wentworth had never been popular with the others, his moroseness and general tone of surly indifference to everything keeping him from being the general favorite that the profane but good-natured Lee had been. Yet it was hard to believe that he had stooped to murder.

As usual, it was Halligan, the born leader, who aroused them from their apathy. Putting the others to cleaning up the dishes, he cooked a hasty supper and compelled the three to eat with him.

"There's no use getting the doldrums," he admonished them. "They're dead, and sitting around mooning won't bring 'em back. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Of course, it's up to us to see that their heirs get their share of the mine after we've taken our wages out for working it. When we've fed and cleaned up the shack we'll have a game of cards and turn in early. I, for one, am sleepy."

So were they all, for, within an hour after they had eaten, the four of them were yawning vigorously. They crawled into their bunks, Halligan, who refused to sleep in the room where Lee and Wentworth had met their deaths, climbing into a spare bunk with the others.

Mason was the first to awaken next morning. He shouted for the others as he leaped out of his blankets and crawled into his clothes. Replenishing

the logs in the fireplace in the living-room, he again yelled at the other three and turned his attention to breakfast.

A second later a loud cry from Kelly brought Halligan to his feet, while Mason ran in from the outer room.

For Drew lay dead in his bunk. Between his ribs, buried to the hilt, was a hunting-knife. And it was Mason's knife.

IV

KELLY carefully drew the knife from the wound and looked at the initials carved on the handle.

"So, 'twas you, after all, was it, you skunk?" he snarled at Mason. "You with your damned sneaking ways and your smooth, oily manner, eh? Though why you were fool enough to leave your knife stickin' in him is what I can't understand. Scared away, were you?"

Mason stepped back a pace, a look of amazement on his proud face. "I swear by the ever-living God, boys, that I am innocent!" he declared. "Why would I kill Drew?"

"Why—yes, why?" snorted Kelly, his eyes glittering. "For the same reason that you killed Lee and threw the blame for it onto poor Wentworth, damn your soul! I suppose that Halligan and I were to be the next, eh?" he went on. "With us out of the way you'd be a rich man. And then you could go back and marry Cora Hunter. Oh, I'm no fool."

Halligan, sitting on the edge of his bunk putting on his moccasins, said nothing. Kelly, his Celtic temper leaping to the surface, was intensely angry. Mason, too, was a man of hot passions, although he held them under better restraint than did the Irishman. He took a half-step toward his accuser.

"Kelly—and Halligan," he began in a level voice, "I didn't kill Drew, nor had I a hand in the death of Lee. It's

just as much of a mystery to me how my knife got there as it is to you."

"'Tis no mystery to me," snapped Kelly. "You put it there, you cur."

"You're a damned liar!"

Kelly leaped upon him, the knife he still held in his hand upraised. Mason's fist met him half-way, striking him squarely in the face, but failing to stop his rush.

With a lurid oath the burly Irishman jabbed the weapon into the other's side half a dozen times. With his bare fists Mason fought the other as best he could for a second or two. His fingers clutched weakly about his antagonist's windpipe. He struggled blindly for a second, fumbling feebly for a hold. Then his knees doubled under him and, with a dull moan, he sank to the floor at Kelly's feet.

Without a sign of undue haste, Halligan buckled his belt and holster about his waist. Coolly he unbuttoned the holster and drew the gun. He cocked the weapon and, with his finger on the trigger, waited for the others to settle their argument.

"Did you get him?" he asked, as Kelly stepped back and wiped the blood from his streaming nose.

"Yes, an' I'm damned glad of it—the swine!"

Before he could turn around, Halligan placed the muzzle of his gun against the back of the Irishman's head and pulled the trigger. A dazed expression crept over Kelly's face. The knife dropped from his hand. Then he fell in a heap across the body of his late antagonist.

Halligan replaced the weapon in its holster and felt of the Irishman's heart. Assuring himself that it had ceased to beat, he raised his eyes to Mason, who was staring at him dazedly.

"You saved my life, Halligan," the wounded man muttered thickly; "but you took so long doing it that he got me

anyway. Much obliged—just—same.”

Halligan grinned.

“If I did, I’m sorry,” he remarked, cheerfully. “’Cause then I’ll have to finish you myself. It wouldn’t do for you to live, you see, because you know too much. And, besides, I want everything for myself—the girl and the money both.”

The dying man looked at him curiously. “You don’t mean that it was you, Halligan? Great God! And I never suspected!”

Halligan sat down on the edge of his bunk and laughed good-humoredly as he unbuckled his gun and threw it across the foot of the bed.

“I don’t mind telling you about it,” he said quietly, “because you’ll soon be where you can never tell.”

He rolled a cigarette and, lighting it, inhaled a whiff before he continued: “You see, Mason, I figured out long ago that as soon as we struck it rich—and I felt sure that we would sooner or later—it would be a survival of the fittest. I knew that there was no chance for any of us with Cora until we had money. She’s a selfish little devil, but she’s worth fighting for. And, with all of us rich, we would be just where we started. But now it’ll be me alone—just me.

“When we struck pay here, you remember it was me that suggested putting in here for the winter. I knew that it would be easy for me to plant the seed of suspicion in all of you, for, deep down in your hearts, you all felt as I did and each one of you suspected the other. And you were as jealous as a bunch of chorus girls.

“Wentworth killed Lee all right. I watched him do it from the other room, where I was supposed to be asleep. I suggested the idea of it to him without him knowing it several days before. He and I were doing a job of soldering and I told him a story I got from my grand-

mother—about a man who had murdered his wife by pouring a drop of hot lead in her ear.

“After Kelly turned in that night, Lee and Wentworth sat up soldering, you remember. Finally Lee dropped off to sleep with his head on the table. It was too good an opportunity for Wentworth to miss—for he hated Lee’s guts—so he drops a bit of the hot solder into Lee’s ear. He died without a struggle, as I knew he would—for the infernal stuff paralyzes every faculty. Afterward Wentworth took off his boots and sneaked in to see if we were asleep. Finding that we were, he carried Lee in and laid him on his bunk.

“You remember how Wentworth tore his shirt on a nail there by the door? I recollected that there was a scrap of wool hanging onto it. When Wentworth went back into the other room to put away his tools, I jumped out, took the little piece of wool from the nail and got it into Lee’s clenched fingers and jumped back into bed before Wentworth returned. Pretty smooth, eh?

“Wentworth couldn’t stand the gaff. He imagined that I knew that he had killed Lee, so he killed himself.”

Mason groaned.

“I killed Wentworth!” he blurted out. “You told me that he had—that he—he—about what he done to—to Cora. I saw that this was a good opportunity to get rid of him and let you fellows think he had done it himself. You put me up to it, you devil!”

Halligan laughed.

“So it was you, after all, eh?” he chuckled. “I knew that you had swallowed my little story, but I’ll confess that I didn’t think you would get busy so quick.”

“But the letter you showed me from her—from Cora?”

Halligan chuckled again. “Mason, I don’t mind telling you that when I went after supplies with Lee I fixed up five

letters, all identical except the names. I put one of your names in each letter. I showed each one of you a different letter, playing each one of you against the other. That's why Kelly knifed you. He didn't care a cuss for Drew—he was itching for an opportunity to get you. See? I stuck Drew myself, using your knife to throw suspicion on you, knowing that it would start the Irishman. Where I miscalculated was in thinking that you'd be armed. I didn't want to stain my own hands with murder any more than I had to. I put some dope in all of your grub last night when I got supper so that I could pull off the stunt without arousing you.

"That idea of mine of playing each one of you against the other was pretty slick, wasn't it? No one knows of the existence of this blind gulch here. I'll have a pretty good nest egg, and, after I marry Cora, I can always take a run back here for more if I need it. Of course, I'll bury all of you fellows nice and shipshape and I'll tell them back home about our separating and each going in a different direction. Oh, I've got a good yarn cooked up, all right."

The wounded man glared at him malignantly.

"Damn you!" he cried. "God's long arm will get you yet—even out here in the ice and snow of this God-forsaken country."

Halligan smiled. "God? Bah! If I'd believed in such foolishness I'd never won out over the rest of you. But I made you think I did—and that's how I got the best of you."

V

HE arose and stretched himself. Then, seizing the dead man, he dragged his victim out of doors and buried him alongside of the others.

Mason watched him at his work with glaring eyes. Then, as he left the room, the wounded man dragged himself

across the few feet that separated him from the bunk. Carefully, every movement filled with pain, he reached up and took the gun. He tried to lift himself to his feet and felt himself going.

"O God," he murmured, "help me—help me—get him—don't let him get—away with it. Help me for Cora's sake."

He succeeded in getting the weapon cocked—in hiding it inside his trousers pocket.

His jaw dropped and, with a convulsive twitch, he died.

Halligan finished burying Kelly and returned to the cabin for warmth. Replenishing the fire, he entered the other room and found Mason dead. Throwing him across his shoulder, he staggered out into the gulch again and laid him on the snow crust while he hastily scooped another shallow grave.

He bent over the body to roll it into the hole. As he did so there was a flash and a report. The bullet swept across his lids, searing them with its heat. His eyes were filled with the powder.

Blinded, sobbing with his misery, he tried to grope his way back to the cabin. He lost his sense of direction. He stumbled and fell, arose and stumbled again. His snowshoes dropped from his feet. Too miserable to care, he tried to go on without them. He broke through the crust to his waist. On and on he floundered his way, whimpering with pain—chilled to the marrow—thinking to reach the cabin, but ever getting farther from it.

And finally, exhausted, blinded, freezing, he fell into the stupor which marks the beginning of the end in the Land of Eternal Snow.

For the sudden cold, grasping hold of the dead body of Mason, had hastened *rigor mortis*. The dead fingers, stiffening suddenly, had tightened about the trigger of the hidden revolver.

It was the long arm of God.



"Murder!" she said quietly. "At midnight you came upon this earth and at midnight the stars plan you shall be removed from it."—Page 38

Planned by the Stars

By C. S. Montanye

THE sanctum of Madame Sovio was drab and tawdry. The room was small and done in faded blue draperies upon which were tinsel stars and moons. The one window that overlooked Sixth Avenue bore the name of the astrologer in porcelain letters and the information that her hours of business were from two o'clock to five daily. A broad table that stood in the center of the room held a plaster skull and a quantity of astrological charts. Other charts were nailed up on either side of a door which led into an ante-room. The low ceiling had once been painted to give the impression of drifting clouds. Twin gas jets, blackening it, had long past destroyed the effect. The faint though pungent odor of gin hung on the stirless air.

The owner of the astrology parlor sat at the center table. Madame Sovio wore a flowing Egyptian kimono patterned extravagantly with the mystic signs of the zodiac. She was old, gaunt and unprepossessing. Her untidy hair was wreathed with a greasy veil; her shrewd eyes focused on the financial page of a morning newspaper. From time to time she stimulated herself with small quantities of fluid poured from a square bottle convenient to her elbow.

Madame Sovio finished a perusal of the page she read and was turning languidly to the front sheet of the paper when she looked up. The door of the outer room had opened and closed. With the practice born of long experience she placed both bottle and newspaper in a lower drawer of the table, thrust a few cloves into her toothless mouth, and stood up.

The "waiting room" of the establishment was even smaller than the inner room. It contained nothing save a number of rickety chairs and a red-faced youth who was pinching out a cigarette ere consigning the stub to a coat pocket. The caller was tall, bulky and unattractive. He wore a rusty brown suit and stained yellow brogans with bumpy toes. A celluloid collar held a stringy purple cravat; from under the sagging peak of a shoddy cap a low, protruding forehead, dark, crafty eyes and a loose, rapacious mouth were visible. It was evident to Madame Sovio that the youth was flotsam cast up by the turgid rivers of subterranea.

He met her gaze and shuffled forward.

"You the one that slides out the dope on what's gonna happen?"

The woman inclined her head.

"Yes. Come in."

The visitor stepped into the room hung with the faded blue draperies. Madame Sovio closed the door after him. She indicated he should take the chair opposite her across the table.

"Do you wish a horoscope or a reading?" she inquired as he sat down.

He stared.

"A spinner on the docks give me the gab that you had steered him straight on the bang-tails. I'm due to gay-cat tonight on something important. I want a frame telling me how my luck is gonna break."

Madame Sovio twined her claw fingers together. She understood the youth to mean that some client who had sought her advice as to making bets on the races had recommended him to her.

"The stars," she began, following a usual procedure, "plan and compel! Their influence falls directly on each mortal. What is planned cannot be changed. A man's planetary destiny is as inflexible as Fate. It is Fate. I charge one dollar for a reading."

The red-faced youth produced a crumpled dollar and pushed it across the table.

"Give me the dope on how I'm gonna make out. Am I gonna be lucky or not? Get the hop working and give me a buzz. Should I or shouldn't I?"

The seamy lips of the astrologer came together.

"What is your name?" she asked in a business-like voice. "What is the date of your birth? Upon what hour of that day or night were you born? I must know these things before I read the messages of the heavenly bodies."

The youth continued to stare at her for a long minute. He muttered the name of Joe Carney, informed her of the date of his natal day and, without hesitation, said he had been born at the precise hour of midnight.

Madame Sovio became engrossed in a deep study of her charts.

While she bent her gray-crowned head over the table Joe Carney settled back in his chair. He glanced about idly and wrinkled his nose at the familiar odor of gin that could not be disguised by the perfume of the cloves. He sat patiently until a slight exclamation moved his eyes to the woman across the table. He was surprised to see she was staring at a chart with every indication of horror.

"Not one hour of the twenty-four is propitious! The day is ill-omened! All the planetary influences are dark and evil. Mars, Saturn, Uranus and Mercury are adverse. Jupiter is in a hostile position and is ringed with red. This is the star that guides your footsteps through this

constellation. Its scarlet rim foretells but one thing."

Joe Carney met her gaze.

"What's that?"

Madame Sovio moved her hand slightly.

"Murder!" she said quietly. "At midnight you came upon this earth and at midnight the stars plan you shall be removed from it. Uranus intrudes and blurs the horoscope. I can read no further. That is all."

Joe Carney laughed harshly.

"The hell it is! I pay a dollar for that song and dance? Give me the money back. You're a robber!"

Madame Sovio pushed the dirty bill he had laid on the table across to him.

"Take it! It will bring you no good. You are in the shadow."

The red-faced youth pocketed his money, shrugged with contempt and slouched out, banging the door after him. For an interval the woman sat motionless, fingers picking at the thumb-marked chart before her.

"The red ring," she said half-aloud. "Blood on the stars—murder on earth—"

Emerging onto Sixth Avenue, from the narrow entrance of the building housing the two rooms of the star-reader, Joe Carney laughed under his breath.

"A hell of a spiel!" he said to himself. "I should get glomed for a bone to get that bunk dished out. The old dame is nuts."

He crossed to the west side of Sixth Avenue and walked north. A firm believer in the Black Arts, he wished he had not listened to the dock-walloper who had told him of the astrologer. He could have interviewed a palmist or crystal-gazer and not wasted his time. He knew nothing, and now it was too late to seek another seer. Within twenty minutes he had an appointment with

Stanley Ray, the leader of the Duster Band; final plans for the night's adventures were to be unfolded to him.

In sight of the shopping district Carney entered a side street. He put a number of avenues behind him, passed under the scaffolding of an overhead railroad and presently was on the threshold of the small area of the city, controlled by Stanley Ray's band of thugs and gangsters. Tenement houses stood shoulder to shoulder in flanks of brick. Down the slope of the side street an avenue where freight cars rolled was visible; further distant was the water-front and the Hudson River. Frowsy women leaned from countless windows; children played in the gutters; the summer air was dank with the stench of salt water.

Into the avenue where the freight trains ran Joe Carney stepped. He put two blocks behind him and presently came upon a water-front hotel—a building that had been old when the city was young. Joe Carney passed through the hostelry's yawning front door and moved into a small lobby. A few loafers, smoking nauseous pipes, played checkers silently or slumbered loudly, shaggy heads tilted forward on flanneled chests.

Apart from the group, brooding over his cigarette, sat a tall, heavily built young man with a dark, sinister face in which was largely written both determination and courage. This man stood up as Carney entered, nodded his head slightly and opened a white-washed door a few feet back from where he had been sitting. When Carney had followed him into a small room that was used as a refuge for drug-peddlers and their victims, he closed the door and turned the key.

Joe Carney promptly sat down.

"Well, I'm here."

Stanley Ray inclined his head slightly. "So I see." He pulled up a chair and

dropped into it. "Listen carefully. I'm passing you the word that you turn the job on Tenth Avenue tonight. I've never told you where you're to go or what you've to do. All that you know is you've been picked out by me to swing a deal and keep your peep closed. The frame is set so that all you have to do is to walk in, help yourself and walk out. A half-wit could turn this without a mistake. That's how soft it is."

Joe Carney fished in his pocket for the half-consumed cigarette. He lighted it and inhaled deeply.

"I make you. Let's have it all."

Stanley Ray went to the door and listened. He returned to his chair and leaned forward. He lowered his voice.

"Limping Lou has turned straight—by request. He works for the gas company. Tuesday he went to a flat on Tenth Avenue to read the cellar meter. In the front basement of the place are two rooms rented by a woman called Mrs. Garber. Lou had finished reading the meter and was passing out when he heard a clinking noise. It came from inside Mrs. Garber's front room. Lou tried to look through the keyhole, but it was plugged. So he went out into the alley and found the side window of the same room. This window was protected by bars, but was open at the top. Lou found a barrel, stood up on it and looked through the top of it."

Joe Carney drew a breath.

"What did he see?"

Stanley Ray leaned still closer.

"He saw Mrs. Garber sitting before a trunk—*counting money!* Lou said she was tying up bales of the green stuff in old aprons. He watched her until she put the aprons in the trunk, filled it to the top with old clothes and then shut it up! That's what he saw!"

Joe Carney dropped his cigarette to the floor and ground it out with his heel.

"What else?"

"I stuck a plant up there," Stanley Ray resumed. "I found out this Mrs. Garber is out every afternoon. She makes her money playing the stock market. It's no use trying to get into the room during the day because the janitor of the building and a bunch of ginnies are laying pipe in the cellar. I sent the Turk up yesterday. He took a fall out of the bars. He filed them to the bone. A couple of pulls will yank them out. The window's always open and you can go in over the top of it."

Joe Carney lifted his head.

"What time do I go in? Will the miser be there when I get to the trunk? How much long change do I get out of this?"

The leader of the Duster Band favored Carney with a direct, cold stare.

"You get what I give you! Have you anything to say about it?"

Before the bland stare of the gangster king Joe Carney's eyes wavered and fell.

"Nothing," he said hastily. "Put me right on it!"

Stanley Ray smiled faintly.

"I found out this Mrs. Garber gets telephone calls from Levy's Drug Store. At a quarter of twelve I'll telephone the drug store and tell them to send for Mrs. Garber. They'll shoot their kike kid over to the basement. You'll be in the alley at quarter of twelve. When she goes out you go in. I'll stall her on the wire as long as possible. It should take you just about ten minutes to grab the dough and exit. Do you get me?"

Joe Carney reflectively rubbed his beard-rusty chin.

"Yes," he said laconically.

II

THE night was hot and unstirring. A full moon rode high in a cloudless sky. The dank smell of the river grew more pronounced. The streets were

lined with coatless loungers sprawling at ease in doorway or on stoop.

Joe Carney, shuffling up Tenth Avenue, searched each store window for a clock to tell the hour by. It could not be very late. The avenue was well filled—a number of shops were open and doing business. Again he regretted some prophet had not been employed to prognosticate the fortunes attending the enterprise. In every task he had set out to accomplish he had been warned in advance as to the condition of his luck. If he had been told it was not favorable he had postponed the event. And never once had he been apprehended.

He walked on, hands rammed in the pockets of his coat. He eyed the numbers of the buildings as he passed them, still searching for a clock, growing aware his destination must be only a few blocks distant. He saw the moon creep up over the sullen roof-tops and perceived the canopy of brightly shining stars. He thought of the astrologer of the early afternoon and the jumble of her words.

"A murder!" he chuckled, touching the automatic revolver hung under his left arm. "Swell chance!"

Two more blocks traversed, he came abreast the building in whose basement the wealthy Mrs. Garber resided. And at the same minute his eyes fell upon the face of a clock in a store of the tenement and he started.

The hands of the clock pointed to five minutes of the midnight hour!

Guiltily realizing he had been delinquent and heedless of time, Carney descended a number of steps that led down into the basement. He found himself in a cement-lined passageway. He followed it to its termination and found himself in the clothes-line hung backyard in the rear of the building. An alley ran into the backyard, presided over by a lean cat. Carney removed the animal from his path with a toe of his

boot and crouched against the face of the alley's brick wall, ceasing to curse the vivid moonlight only when a barred window of translucent glass leaped out to meet him.

A tingle of anticipation ran through Joe Carney. He found the same barrel Limping Lou had made his observations from and wheeled it close to the window. He mounted it cautiously and applied an ear to the aperture in the window's top. All was quiet within. Obviously, he decided, Mrs. Garber was in the drug store or on her way to it. He was ten minutes late and would have to work rapidly.

The window bars yielded instantly to his grasp. He tore them roughly away, one by one. When the last bar had been wrenched loose, Carney pressed the top half of the window lower and poked a head into the inky blackness of the room. Low but distinctly he heard the monotonous ticking of a clock.

Satisfied that no menace crouched in the gloom, Carney threw a leg over the sash and lowered himself into the room.

Until his eyes could grow accustomed to the murk he stood motionless. A faint odor of gin assailed his nostrils. Faint stirrings tuned his nerves to a high pitch. With a sense of direction fixed firmly in mind, he crept forward. The treasure chest, Stanley Ray had told him, rested to the right, against the room's north wall. As the thought flashed through his mind, his knees came in contact with some low-set object. His outstretched hands clasped the top of something he knew immediately was the trunk, and he exhaled a breath of relief.

The cover of the trunk swung upward at his touch. He felt to make sure that the connecting arms were firmly fastened and delved into a mass of soft garments, placed layer upon layer. These he dug out and flung to the floor, burrowing, mole-like, to reach the apron-

wrapped treasure. The scent of gin seemed to envelop him. He wondered why this odor should stir odd recollections—recollections he could not piece together.

He had pulled the last article of clothing from the trunk when the door of the room vibrated with a sudden staccato rapping. Ere its first echoes throbbled into silence, a nasal voice supplanted the loud knocks with an insistent statement:

"Mrs. Garber! Somebody wants you on the telephone down at Levy's!"

Joe Carney's hands closed convulsively. The clock he had looked upon had been fast or the telephone had marred Stanley Ray's message!

In either case, Mrs. Garber must be within a few feet of him!

The messenger from the drug store began his rapping again. Stiff as stone Joe Carney sought to think. Then, as the knocks ceased for the moment, he heard, from some quarter close at hand, the creak of a bed, a soft footfall—a sibilant swish that told of a garment being donned. Followed at once the rasp of an opening door. A vagrant air current, stirred to new action, touched Carney's forehead—cold against the sweat that had gathered upon it.

Breathless questions rushed through the mind of the intruder. Should he allow the woman to answer the messenger? Or should he strike before she reached the door?

Another series of footfalls wheeled him silently about. Someone was approaching—had stepped through the door. He thought he could detect a muffled shape of shadow moving closer to him. The suspense of waiting was agony. A breath caressed his hot face and a hand touched his arm. Someone gasped.

At the same moment he sprang forward.

With a low growl he felt his fingers

dig deep into a soft, stringy throat. Eyes glared into his own; for all of the fact she was a woman, the figure he clutched fought desperately. Carney released his left hand to bring it down with crushing force on the jaw of the struggling figure. Before he had crashed it savagely into the upturned face the woman managed to wrench a scream from between her lips.

Cursing, Carney struck again. He gripped the throat again with the hand he had used with hammer force and shook the woman as a terrier shakes a rat. As if from a distance he heard fresh raps falling upon the door—the voice of the messenger:

"Mrs. Garber! Mrs. Garber!"

Then silence.

Carney relaxed the gripping pressure of his death-working fingers. He found he was talking but knew not what he said. He had killed a woman, but it was her own fault. Hot blood pounded within him—rage and a gloating satisfaction. He felt that at that moment he wished she possessed the nine lives of the cat he had kicked from his path. He would strangle each from her.

And then he realized the apron-wrapped loot would never be his if he stood longer, clutching the limp figure. He opened his hands. The body slumped to the floor. The moon, swinging around, entered the alley and crept into the room, lighting it up like a pale arc-lamp. Carney looked down at the huddle of his victim.

The woman had fallen on her back. Her face was upturned to him—wreathed with a horrible, fixed grin. He stared, fascinated, eying, too,

greasy gray hair that seemed strangely familiar. For a full watch-tick he stared, rigid. The odor of gin—the gray hair—the gaunt face, painted with the ghastly moon glare. All at once knowledge flooded him.

Mrs. Garber wore the face of the Madame Sovio who had read the stars for him that afternoon in the Sixth Avenue room!

"Murder!" Carney whispered. "She had the right dope!"

Something, as he straightened up, stopped the flow of the incoming moonlight. He raised his eyes and turned them to the window. His gaze flashed and fell upon a helmeted head looking in over the lowered top of the translucent window. His right hand darted under his jacket and gripped his automatic. In some blind, dizzy fashion he managed to drag it out.

But before he could pull the trigger the yellow glare of an electric torch smote him directly between the eyes. A voice, curt and imperious, bade him throw up his hands. Carney, blinking like an owl drenched in sunshine, fell back. His weapon crept up to firing position.

Then the heavy silence was shattered by the sound of six shots, so rapidly fired that they merged as one.

The automatic fell from Carney's hand. He wondered vaguely if he had been shot—why his legs seemed to be melting away. Cursing again, his brain reeled and scintillated with sparks. He groaned and fell heavily across something softly yielding.

The clock that had ticked monotonously whirred and struck the hour of twelve.



Fingers from the Grave

By Edwin Carty Ranck

I
TOM GRIMSTEAD was not looking for a "story" when he decided to spend a night in the haunted Carey house. As a newspaperman, he had frequently exposed many bogus mediums and spiritualists, but the accounts of those who had spent, or rather tried to spend, a night in the Carey house seemed so authentic and honest that Grimstead, who was enjoying his vacation in the quaint New England town of Sedley, longed to experience some of the thrills that had come to these narrators.

"There was a presence in the house," quavered Martin Stacy, who had once spent part of a night there. "I—I felt it!"

"Could you see it?" asked Grimstead. Martin shuddered.

"No," he whispered, "but I *knew* it was there—whatever it was. If anyone sneaked into your room when you were reading, without making any noise, you would *feel* they were there even if you hadn't seen 'em—wouldn't you?" Grimstead nodded. "Well, it was that same sort of feeling that came over me in Mrs. Carey's bedroom."

Martin Stacy's story was similar to the others. They had all *felt* a sinister presence in Mrs. Carey's room and the feeling had always been followed by senseless, unreasoning terror that made them flee into the night.

The Carey tragedy had been the grimest that had ever occurred in the town of Sedley. Twenty years before, Weldon Carey had brought his bride to the old Carey house, which had been built

by a colonial Carey and inhabited by Careys ever since. Selma Carey was beautiful and vivacious and she appeared to be as madly in love with the old house and its colonial traditions as she was with its master.

Then came the tragedy! Young Mrs. Carey was found murdered one morning—strangled to death—and her husband told incoherently how two burglars had broken into the place at midnight. One of them had throttled Mrs. Carey and the other was threatening him with a revolver, when some noise frightened them away. The countryside was searched for the two men, but they were never apprehended and the verdict of the coroner's jury was that Mrs. Carey had come to her death "at the hands of a person or persons unknown."

Carey seemed heart-broken after the tragedy, and finally, not succeeding in selling the old house, he left it in charge of a caretaker and went abroad to live. In all these intervening years he had never returned to his birthplace, nor could anyone be induced to rent the place.

Tom Grimstead thought as he stood in front of the Carey mansion at dusk one September afternoon that he had never seen a more repellent-looking house. There was something indescribably repugnant about it, as if one were contemplating the corpse of a house. Horror surrounded it like a nimbus, and Grimstead's first impulse was to walk hastily away. But shaking off the feeling of dread that had settled upon him like an incubus, he resolutely walked up

the weed-encumbered walk that led to the front door, armed with a key that he had experienced no difficulty in securing from a cynical real-estate agent, who promptly offered to wager that he would not stay the night out—a wager that Grimstead as promptly accepted. He carried a handbag that contained a supply of sandwiches, a small automatic, half a dozen fat candles, a flashlight and two volumes of Poe's grisliest short stories. He ironically thought of these as his "ghost props."

But, stout-nerved as he was, Grimstead shrank back instinctively as the front door slammed shut, leaving him in impenetrable darkness. This instantaneous plunge into blackness was sudden enough to daunt anyone, and for a second time that afternoon Grimstead was tempted to abandon his ghost quest. Then he reflected that thrills were what he had come for, and he was disgusted at the realization that he was allowing his subconscious self to be affected by the stories he had heard. If he were really a skeptic, as he had always prided himself on being, he was on the verge of the most interesting adventure of his none-too-dull life. So he opened his handbag by touch alone, turned on his flashlight and took stock of his surroundings.

He was in an old-fashioned living-room at the far end of which was a huge open fireplace. In front of him a fine specimen of colonial architecture in the shape of an imposing staircase pointed the way to adventure on the second floor. The large room was fully furnished, but a smell of decay and mildew assailed Grimstead's nostrils.

The atmosphere was heavy and fetid; odors of bygone days seemed to meet and commingle, and the air held a penetrating chill. Something soft brushed his face in the semi-gloom and he started back involuntarily and then laughed nervously. It was a death's-head moth

and the creature settled upon the back of a large upholstered chair, its wings spread wide, shivering as the bright ray from the flashlight illumined its ghastly markings.

With a little shiver that was not entirely due to the chill of the place, Grimstead started up the stairs in search of Mrs. Carey's bedroom, which, he had been told, was the front room at the left of the upper hallway. But first he explored the other rooms, finding them all furnished but reeking with desolation and decay. Time had wrought sad havoc upon objects of inestimable value to the collector of colonial antiques.

Grimstead now turned the handle of the door that led into the dead woman's bedchamber and found himself in an ancient boudoir about which still clung an elusive odor of mignonette and lavender. Against one side of the wall was an antique dressing-table, but the surface of the long mirror which had in bygone days often reflected the fair image of Selma Carey was now opaque, blurred over by the film of years. Near the dresser was a four-poster bed covered with a yellowed counterpane, and two pillows were in place at its head. It was hard to believe that no one had slept there for twenty years.

With the exception of the dust that covered everything, and a dank smell, the room and its furnishings appeared to have been left as they were on the day of the tragedy and Grimstead found himself glancing from time to time at the door of the dressing-room, which was about ten feet from the bed, as if he expected a charming figure in *deshabille* to come romping into the room at any moment.

So acute was this impression that he strode across the room and threw open the door of the dressing-room, peering curiously within. It contained an old-fashioned tin bathtub, the paint from which was chipped off here and there,

giving it a dismal look of dilapidation. On a rusty metal towel-rack hung a rotting bath towel, and from a hook in the wall was suspended a mildewed dressing-gown that had once been lavender-colored.

With a look of infinite pity, Grimstead closed the door softly behind him, his vivid imagination conjuring up the picture of a lovely woman with golden hair cascading to her waist, humming a gay little tune as she prepared for her bath.

He now set the stage for his lonely vigil.

Lighting one of his fat candles, he placed it upon the dusty dresser in such a position that its flame illumined the bed.

Then he stuck another above the fireplace on the white marble mantel-piece.

Drawing up a small dressing-table, he placed his third candle upon that and then he dusted off a comfortable Morris chair with wide arms and placed it where he could command a view of the entire room. The dressing-table was at his left, within easy reaching distance, and on this he placed his sandwiches, his automatic and his volumes of Poe.

Satisfied with these strategic arrangements, he lit his pipe, sank into the big chair and was soon immersed in "The Fall of the House of Usher," which he had decided was the proper yarn for the time, the place and the man.

It was so silent in the house that the scampering of mice in the wainscoting sounded as loud as the romping of Newfoundland dogs. Every now and then one of them would squeal as if it were being murdered, and whenever this happened Grimstead would pause in his reading and look up with a startled tenseness, expecting to see—he knew not what. The wind was rising and it howled and moaned like a tortured spirit striving with futile hands to force

an entrance through the rotting eaves of the ancient house. It was an eerie sound and Grimstead found himself forced to exert all his will-power in order to concentrate upon the harrowing tale that he was reading. He felt like a spectator awaiting the climax to a particularly dramatic scene in a melodrama.

There came a lull in the wind and the mice suddenly ceased to scamper as if at a signal from a master mouse. The old house appeared to be waiting in suspense—holding its breath. Grimstead had reached the point in his story where the sound of muffled blows from the vault was reverberating through the ill-fated house of Usher.

"Madman," he read, "I tell you—"

He looked up quickly. The dying down of the wind and the cessation of the scamperings in the wainscoting made the room *feel* as dead as stagnant water *looks*. But it was not the nerve-racking stillness that had galvanized Grimstead into alert attention. It was the unalterable conviction that someone or *something* was lurking near him. Reaching stealthily for the automatic, he glanced keenly around the room. Certainly he was the only living soul there! But—

The door of the dressing-room was slowly opening!

II

GRIMSTEAD stared incredulously at the widening aperture. He had thoroughly inspected the room less than half an hour before and no living creature could have been concealed there. Nor was there any other door to the room. The thing was impossible—yet it was happening before his eyes!

Wider, wider the door opened, and then, as Grimstead held his breath in suspense, *something* stepped into the room. He could not see it but he *felt* it, and an icy wind suddenly stirred the

roots of his hair at the realization that he was *no longer alone*. He heard the ghostly sound of footsteps crossing the room and then the candle on the dresser suddenly wavered as if a passing breeze had slightly stirred it. As the paralyzed newspaperman gazed wide-eyed from his chair, there came from the dresser the unmistakable sound of hairpins tinkling down into a celluloid tray.

Thinking that an over-vivid imagination was playing him tricks, Grimstead, by a tremendous effort of will, sat erect in his chair and was about to spring to his feet, when an amazing thing stupefied him once more into inaction.

The ghostly footsteps crossed the carpet once more, like the soft brushing of unseen wings, and Grimstead saw the bed suddenly sag—as if a body were lying there—and then one of the pillows became indented—as if a head were resting there.

Something invisible was reclining upon the bed!

As this incredible fact percolated through Grimstead's understanding, blind panic assailed him. Only one thing, he confessed afterward, prevented him from becoming a gibbering idiot. That was his discovery that the door leading into the dressing-room, which was wide open after his visitant had entered, was now tightly closed. This tended to convince him that the entire episode was an hallucination due to overwrought nerves.

At any rate, he sprang to his feet, determined to probe the mystery to its depths, when a sound smote upon his ears that stiffened him in his tracks and made him snatch the automatic hurriedly from the table.

Someone was coming up the stairs!

He heard the sound of shuffling, reluctant footsteps, as if the person, thing or whatever it was, were disinclined to make the ascent. Slower and more hesitant became these ominous footsteps,

and Grimstead, now utterly unnerved, gripped the automatic frantically and turned a white face in the direction of the bedroom door, not knowing what to expect. But he felt convinced that if this door opened as the other had done and no tangible thing entered he should scream like an hysterical woman.

The unwilling footsteps had now reached the landing outside the door and came to a halt there, as if the intruder were listening. This wait seemed interminable to the crouching newspaperman who stood immovably by the table, his automatic aimed straight at the door. Finally there was a shuffle of feet and then a hand turned the knob. Slowly the door opened.

"Hands up," cried Grimstead hoarsely, "or I'll shoot."

"What the devil?" growled a surprised voice, and Grimstead emitted a great sigh of relief. At least it was a human being!

A heavily built, bearded man about fifty years old, a stranger to Grimstead, walked slowly into the room, first glancing around fearfully before allowing his gaze to rest upon Grimstead.

"Now then," he said coldly, "who are you and what are you doing in this house?"

"Just what I was going to ask you," grinned Grimstead, his self-possession now fully restored.

"I am—" began the stranger—and then came the crowning horror of that memorable evening. The man's voice suddenly broke and his tanned face turned livid with fear. He was staring with a look of indescribable terror at the bed.

"What's that? Who's there?" he whispered in high-pitched, terror-laden accents.

"Why—what—" stammered Grimstead and then froze into the gaping figure of a man.

The indentations in the bed and pil-

low slowly straightened out like a flat automobile tire when the air rushes in.

Once more Grimstead heard those ghostly footsteps and then the bearded man shrieked like a demon in hell.

"Selma, for God's sake, don't!" he gasped. "I didn't mean to do it! I swear I didn't mean to do it!"

He staggered back, fumbling at his throat and gasping for breath.

"Take your hands away!" he panted. "My God, you are throttling me!"

His voice died out in a choking gurgle and he staggered wildly around the room, pulling desperately at his throat as if trying to unloosen the clutch of hands. Grimstead took hold of the struggling figure.

"You are mad!" he cried. "There is no one here!"

The stranger did not seem to hear.

His eyes were rolling in his head and his face was turning a mottled purple. Up and down the room he threshed in agony, trying vainly to break the deadly hold that was apparently fastened upon his windpipe with the grip of a maddened bulldog. It was a horrible sight and Grimstead could do nothing but follow the agonized man, who seemed destitute of all reason.

The end came quickly! Suddenly there was a rattling sound in the man's throat and then he sank slowly to his knees and toppled forward on his face. Once more the sound of invisible footsteps and Grimstead looked up from the dead body in time to see the door of the dressing-room open quickly and close.

Then he lost all control over his twitching nerves and ran shrieking out of the room, down the stairs and out into the fresh sweetness of the September night, staggering like a drunken man, his brain reeling from the horrors of that fetid bedroom.

III

THE sight of the familiar street and the feel of the wind blowing in his face partially restored his faculties to normal, but he was trembling like a drug fiend as he entered Dr. Stoughton's office and his speech was so incoherent that the amazed physician was convinced that he was either intoxicated or insane. But as the spell of the horror wore away and Grimstead began to talk more rationally Dr. Stoughton realized that this was no ordinary case and that Grimstead was neither intoxicated nor insane. He was that most pathetic of all objects—a strong man suffering from overwhelming fright.

Dr. Stoughton had been the Carey physician and was for many years Weldon Carey's closest friend. So it was with a very grave face that he went back to the house with Grimstead, accompanied by "Mort" Farley, an official who facetiously called himself Sedley's "chief of police."

It was with a strong shudder that Grimstead entered the house that had shattered his skepticism to bits, and followed the two men upstairs. Everything in the bedroom was just as he had left it. His candles were still burning and his automatic lay where it had fallen from his nerveless hand. In the center of the room was a huddled heap that had once been a man.

"Hm! This looks bad!" ejaculated Dr. Stoughton as he bent above the prostrate figure. He turned the body over and the face peered up at him, distorted and black as a charred log.

"My God, it's Weldon Carey!" he shouted, drawing back from the corpse in sudden horror.

"How do you know?" asked Farley in awestruck tones. "It has been twenty years—and this man wears a beard."

Dr. Stoughton lifted the man's limp left hand.

"I can tell by this amethyst ring on the little finger," he explained. "It was given to him by his mother and he has always worn it on that finger, as it was too small to fit on any of the others."

"What do you think caused his death, Doctor?" asked Grimstead.

"It was a sudden rush of blood to his head," said Dr. Stoughton, "caused by a tremendous shock of some sort." Then, after a pause: "It couldn't have been anything else. There are no marks on his throat," and he looked challengingly at the newspaperman.

"I only know what I know," replied Grimstead, and he told the whole story again for Farley's benefit, not omitting the slightest detail. When he had finished, the police official looked doubtfully at Dr. Stoughton. This sort of a case was outside of his own ken.

"Frankly, I am puzzled over all this," began the physician, looking more closely at the face of the dead man. "It is very evident that— Hello!" he broke off abruptly. "This is devilish queer, I must say!"

Taking a small magnifying glass from his bag, he bent over the body and examined the throat carefully.

"This is the most extraordinary thing that has ever come within my medical knowledge," he said gravely.

"What is it?" asked his companion curiously.

"When I first looked at Carey," explained the physician, "there were no marks whatever upon his throat. It was strangely white in contrast with his blackened face. But now look!"

He handed the glass to Grimstead. The newspaperman looked, started, and then looked again. Without a word, he

handed the glass to Farley, who looked through it long and hard. Then he whistled softly.

"Finger prints!" he said laconically.

"Exactly," agreed Dr. Stoughton.

"They have come out on the skin like a rash. Carey's throat looked like an undeveloped negative when I first looked at it. But now, through some queer phenomenon, it has been 'developed.'"

A little silence followed his words.

"Did you, perhaps, notice anything else when you looked through the glass?" continued Dr. Stoughton.

"What, for instance?" asked Grimstead.

"Those finger prints on his throat were those of a woman," said Dr. Stoughton. "They are much too small to have been inflicted by a man."

"Good Lord!" said Farley.

"But they *couldn't* have been inflicted by a *woman*," observed Grimstead satirically, "because you said my story was an hallucination. Beings that figure in hallucinations cannot commit *real* murders, can they?"

"Humph!" grunted Dr. Stoughton. Then, with a puzzled frown: "What do *you* think of all this, Grimstead?"

"There is only one way to think," replied the newspaperman. "Carey undoubtedly murdered his wife and came back to visit the scene of his crime, as murderers from time immemorial have done. His wife's ghost was in this room. I am as certain of that as I am that my name is Grimstead. It was Selma Carey's fingers that reached from the grave and strangled her husband."

"Bosh!" ejaculated the physician. "Such things are impossible!"

Grimstead shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing is impossible nowadays, Doctor," he said.

The Deviltry of Dr. Waugh

By Christopher B. Booth

I

THE leaky radiator of a flivver was responsible for the discovery. Judson Wheaton, a farmer living in the lower end of the county, was driving to the city when he shut off his overheated engine and climbed down into the dusty roadway. Some distance from the highway stood the Thatcher farmhouse, bleak, ugly and deserted, its pitiful shabbiness charitably hidden by the thick foliage of many maple trees.

Wheaton cursed again that people should build their houses so far from the thoroughfare.

"Now I've got to tramp all th' way up that hill for water," he lamented. A stranger in the neighborhood, he did not know that the place was deserted until he reached the top of the knoll and saw the windows staring vacantly down upon him.

"Just my luck!" he mourned; "probably not a bucket on the place."

The hapless driver made his way along the weed-choked path around the side of the building. Suddenly, rooted in his tracks by horror, he let forth a yell of surprised terror.

Underneath one of the large trees was the body of a man, face turned to the sky. The eyes bulged wide and the muscles of the face were frozen into an expression of wild and livid fright.

A few feet from the body stood a smart limousine, an automobile of expensive make; on the doors were the neatly stenciled initials "K. A. W."

Wheaton raced down the hill, stood in the centre of the roadway as he

flapped his long arms up and down in a frantic signal to the motorist who was, at that moment, approaching from the north.

"Dead man up at that house!" he shrieked. "Dead man—think he's murdered!"

Brake bands protesting, Dr. John Lake, a young practicing physician of a nearby suburb, brought his car to a grinding halt.

"Dead man you say? Up at the Thatcher place? That's strange; it's been deserted for two or three years."

He eyed Wheaton with appraising eye; there were a number of road-houses along the highway which took no cognizance of the federal statute framed by a certain Mr. Volstead; the man was not intoxicated.

"I'm a doctor," he added. "I'll go up and see if he is dead."

Wheaton shivered.

"Oh, he's dead all right; I ain't a doctor, but—I saw his face; I think he was—murdered."

"You don't live hereabouts, do you?" queried Dr. Lake. "Well, I would advise you to stick around until the coroner is called; it may save you another trip. Let's go up and look things over."

"I—I've seen enough, thank you," said Wheaton, but, nevertheless, he plodded up the hill at Dr. Lake's heels.

As the two men reached the open spot in the trees, Lake's eyes widened in surprise as he caught sight of the luxurious limousine.

"Phew!" he whistled. "This is somewhat out of the ordinary; I thought it was just a common tramp."

He hurried his steps; as he reached the body, the doctor's head jerked forward in astonishment.

"Great Heavens!" he whispered in amazed awe. "Doctor Waugh!"

In the medical world the name of Dr. Kensaw Arlington Waugh was one to conjure with. A specialist of renown, he had lectured at the medical school from which Doctor Lake had been graduated and, although he did not know him except as a student would be expected to know a class instructor, it made death more of a personal matter and, for a moment, shattered his professional calm. He had always had a great admiration for the somewhat eccentric specialist.

"What a horrible death!" shuddered Dr. Lake. "I never saw such an expression on a human face!"

Mastering his emotions, he became at once his professional self. With deft fingers he searched for signs of violence; to his perplexity there was no wound, no laceration, not a single mark. Even the clothing bore no evidence of a violent struggle.

He decided that some instantaneous poison must have been used, probably cyanide, which, while it acts so quickly that the victim's life is snapped like a tight-drawn thread, seizes the body in one quick, horrible convulsion and leaves the muscles as of stone. But he failed to find the tell-tale rigidity of tissues which he had expected.

"Not cyanide, that is certain," he said in abstracted monologue. "Confounded queer business, eh, Wheaton?"

Farmer Weaton stood some feet away, back turned; it was apparent that he had no morbid liking for gruesome things.

Dr. Lake bent forward, his attention attracted by a faint abrasion on Dr. Waugh's neck, a place less than two inches long under the chin and slightly below the ear where the skin had been

rubbed nearly raw by some rough surface. Shaking his head in frank bewilderment, he walked over to Farmer Wheaton.

"Wheaton," he said sternly, "why did you tell me that this man was murdered?"

Startled by the accusing, suspicious note in the young doctor's voice, the farmer flushed.

"Because," he said angrily, "a man with an expression like THAT on his face never died a natural death. Why—you don't mean to tell me that he *wasn't* murdered?"

"There's not a single mark of violence, Mr. Wheaton."

"Mebbe not, Doctor, but his face . . . it looks . . . it looks—" His voice dropped to a sepulchral whisper. ". . . like he had been scared to death!"

"Nonsense!" snapped Dr. Lake impatiently. "Men aren't scared to death—outside of book covers."

"You're a doctor, sir; I guess you know," admitted the farmer humbly.

Dr. Lake absently creased his leather automobile gauntlets.

"Something devilish mysterious about this," he said. "What could Dr. Waugh be doing out here at an old deserted farmhouse? A first-rate mystery, I call it. I tell you what you do: There's a farm a quarter of a mile or so down the road. You go down there and telephone to Coroner Hopkins. I'll look around a bit and wait for him. I feel quite an interest in this; Dr. Waugh was one of my instructors at medical college. I might be able to help a bit; the coroner is a feeble old man with a brain about as palsied as his hands. I'm afraid that if we depend on him, the law will be a long time in getting this thing solved."

As Farmer Wheaton made his way back to the road again, Dr. Lake began a survey of the premises.

He mounted the rotting porch steps, the boards creaking under his weight. The branches of the trees, moved by a breeze, rustled against the weatherboarding of the old house.

"A fine, cheerful place at night, I'll bet," he muttered. "Somehow this begins to get on my nerves."

The door which led into the tiny reception hall was ajar. From this old-fashioned entrance were three doors leading into as many rooms. As he opened the sagging door to the right, Dr. Lake paused in startled bewilderment, wondering if his imagination was playing him a trick.

The wall between two rooms had been ripped out, making of them one long apartment. The débris, chunks of plastering and scraps of lath, still littered the floor.

Across the length of the elongated room had been laid what seemed a miniature railway track, perhaps half the width of a standard gauge railroad. The light steel rails were bolted to heavy pieces of lumber which served as cross-ties.

Resting on the rails were two cars, about seven feet in height, apparently constructed of steel. From where he stood in the doorway, Dr. Lake could see the facing end of one of the cars; from it protruded hundreds of sharp points, almost needle-like in their sharpness.

"Now wouldn't this stump you!" exclaimed the doctor. "I'll say that is a queer business—damned queer!"

In a confusion of uncertainty he advanced cautiously. The steel cars stood perhaps five feet apart. As he stepped nearer another gasp of surprise escaped his lips. The end of one of the cars, hidden from view until this moment, was caved in; the gaping hole exposed a crude framework of light lumber.

"Just a toy," mused Dr. Lake. "Pavier maché, or I miss my guess—just

cardboard painted to look like steel."

He examined the sharp steel points; they bent back harmlessly at the touch of his finger—also merely cardboard.

Closer examination showed, geared to the rear wheels of both cars, a toy motor such as might have delighted the heart of a child at Christmas time. The electric current for the motors was supplied by two wires which ran along the floor and connected with the track. The wires led to the wall and contact was completed by means of a massive switch which might easily have carried a high-voltage current instead of the weak stream of electricity which was generated by the dozen dry-cell batteries hidden in an adjoining closet.

Dr. Lake threw in the switch, the tiny motors hummed slowly and the mysterious cars edged forward; edged is the proper word, for the motion was barely perceptible. The cars made a speed of only one foot per minute.

"Huh! Uttest outfit I ever saw," Lake mused. "Dr. Waugh dead as a hammer and this—this damned foolishness—I wonder what the answer is?"

As he slowly paced the floor, hands deep in his pockets and his face creased by thoughtful lines, he was suddenly aware of a further detail. Fastened from the ceiling was an iron ring and from the ring dangled a short length of rope, the end frayed as if parted under heavy strain. Fastened to the floor, in direct line with that in the ceiling, was another steel ring.

The young doctor started suddenly. "By Jove!" he gasped. "Somebody was tied in the middle of that track—feet to the floor, rope from his neck to the ceiling."

He remembered the faint abrasion under Dr. Waugh's chin; a rope could have made that mark!

"Great God! The fiends!" shouted Dr. Lake, his voice echoing through

the empty rooms. "They tied poor old Dr. Waugh to this track and—"

He shuddered at the picture which his mind swiftly drew—the picture of a man, ignorant of the make believe harmless, bound helpless as those cars crept upon him.

The floor was thick with accumulated dust and the dirt film was broken by footprints, blurred in the spot about the steel ring in the floor, as if someone had nervously scraped his feet back and forth. The young doctor's heart leaped with hope as he saw, also, the clear-cut impression of a man's hand spread flat, fingers and thumb extended.

"Here's where I turn detective," mused Lake, remembering the camera in his car. "I'll try my hand at a bit of photography. I've a notion that the hand, fingerprints and all, will photograph very well."

At that moment a bit of sunshine, breaking through an open space between the maple trees, streamed into the room, lighting the shadows under the strange make-believe cars and glinting against a bit of yellow metal that lay there. Dr. Lake reached for it and found it to be a stickpin of rather fantastic design, something European without a doubt—the gold fashioned into a claw which grasped a blood ruby.

"Now," breathed Lake with satisfaction, "if I'm going to turn detective, I think I've got something to work on."

Lake had just finished taking his photograph of the fingerprints—and a glance at Dr. Waugh's slim, tapering fingers was sufficient to tell him that the impression in the dust was not that of the dead man's hand—when Coroner Hopkins, a bearded old patriarch who had held his office for many years, arrived, peering nearsightedly through a pair of thick-lensed glasses and shaking his head hopelessly.

"Oh, yes," he greeted Dr. Lake;

"you're the young doctor from Almont. They tell me that Doctor—Doctor Waugh is—is dead. Terrible business—can't understand it—what would Dr. Waugh be doing out here? Answer me that! Terrible business—can't understand it. And—what the devil is this contraption?"

His eyes, for the first time, caught sight of the cars. The young doctor explained what he had found.

"I am told that you have already examined, Doctor—the body," pursued the aged coroner. "What do you find?"

Dr. Lake told him.

"Humph!" mourned the coroner sadly. "Queer business; I knew Dr. Waugh by reputation—a wonderful specialist, he was. Great loss to the medical profession—can't understand it."

"What do you propose to do?" ventured Dr. Lake.

Coroner Hopkins shook his head.

"I'm not so young as I used to be, young man. I generally name an assistant to perform an autopsy."

"But," protested Dr. Lake, "won't you proceed with some sort of an investigation?"

"I'm not a detective, young man; I'm the coroner. I shall perform the autopsy, turn my findings over to the state's attorney and examine what witnesses can be found. So far, Mr.—er—Wheaton, who found the body, is the only witness."

Dr. Lake frowned impatiently.

"But, Mr. Coroner," he insisted, "there's a mystery here to be cleared up; we are outside of the city where expert detective talent is available. Of course the reporters for the city newspapers will take a hand at Sherlocking, but really something should be done."

"What would you suggest?" demanded the coroner dryly.

Dr. Lake accepted the invitation eagerly.

"If you would deputize me, I would be glad to serve," he replied. "Dr. Waugh was one of my instructors at medical school and I feel a very deep personal interest in this case. I should like to see no stone unturned—"

"You're deputized, my young friend," cut in Coroner Hopkins. "Be sworn."

II

DR. JOHN LAKE jeopardized his slim but growing practice by abruptly deserting his patients and plunging headlong into the Dr. Waugh mystery. He rushed to the city to delve into the incidents which had preceded the specialist's death. Nor was he alone; a small army of reporters was encountered at every turn; he bumped into feature writers at every step. The city editors had gone frantic over the Dr. Waugh mystery; they printed columns upon columns of entertaining description and fruitless deductions; they plastered their pages with photographs of the Thatcher farmhouse and the mysterious "steel" cars.

The real estate agent who had the renting of the Thatcher farm in charge was able to throw no light on the mystery. He had rented the place by phone. He had received a money order for a year's rent, sent in the name of "Julius Smith." The lessee had never showed up to sign the papers. The Julius Smiths listed in the directory furnished ample proof that it must be some other "Julius Smith."

The autopsy verified Dr. Lake's first examination; there had been no violence done, no poison administered; there was no clot on the brain, no heart lesion.

It remained for Dr. Lake, armed with the stickpin which he had found at the Thatcher farmhouse, to find the only real clue and, for reasons of his

own, this clue never got to the newspapers.

Dr. Waugh had no family; he lived alone in a house on Belden Avenue, attended by a servant named Samuels, a reticent and rather wooden-headed and non-observing man of near sixty.

The body of Dr. Waugh had been discovered on Thursday morning. Samuels related, for the benefit of Dr. Lake and reporters alike, that on Tuesday Dr. Waugh had brought home a young man of very shabby and disreputable appearance. The young man had worn a bandage about his eyes and Dr. Waugh had explained to Samuels that he was a patient, suffering from temporary blindness. This was unusual, for Dr. Waugh seldom treated charity patients and never at his home.

Samuels, due to the bandage about the young man's face, could not supply any sort of an adequate description; about all that he was able to say was that he believed the man's hair had been brown and that his chin was black with an untidy stubble of beard.

On Wednesday afternoon Dr. Waugh had dispatched Samuels to the bank with a check for five thousand dollars. This amount, in cash, Samuels had brought home and turned it over to the doctor. No trace of the money was found; it had vanished utterly.

Still later on Thursday Samuels was dispatched on another errand. When he departed, Dr. Waugh and his blind patient were in the house; when he returned both were gone. The specialist's chauffeur furnished another link in the far from complete chain.

Dr. Waugh seldom drove his own car, but, at the time he left his Belden Avenue home for the last time, he had summoned his car from the nearby public garage where it was kept, dismissed the chauffeur, saying that he

preferred to do his own driving that afternoon.

When Dr. Lake and Samuels were alone, the young doctor produced the stickpin which he had found in the Thatcher farmhouse.

"Samuels," he said, "did this belong to Dr. Waugh?"

"No, sir," said Samuels promptly, "but I've seen it before."

"Where?"

"Well, sir, I ain't much hand to notice things, but I did notice that pin. The blind young man that the doctor brought home with him was in a terrible condition, sir; his shoes were very badly broken and his clothing hung to him only in shreds. His linen was actually black, sir; he actually looked the tramp—a bum. Yet I noticed that he wore that stickpin; perhaps the reason I noticed it was that I could tell by the glance at it that it was a bit valuable and I wondered why he didn't pawn it and get himself a clean shirt and a pair of shoes."

Dr. Lake grinned triumphantly.

"My hunch wins!" he exulted. "Something told me the minute I found this pin that it was going to be a clue. By the way, Samuels, don't say anything to the newspaper men about this stickpin. I want to work this out in my own way—if I can."

"Very well, sir," agreed Samuels obediently.

After a time the city editors began to lose interest in the Dr. Waugh case; the city detective bureau which had tried to render some little assistance soon found troubles of their own more pressing. Yet once and sometimes twice a week there appeared in the want-ads columns of the newspapers, under the "Lost and Found" classification, this advertisement:

FOUND—Gold stickpin, animal's claw holding a stone. Will be returned to owner for cost of this advertisement.

The advertisement brought no response.

After several weeks had passed, Dr. Lake called upon Coroner Hopkins.

"Mr. Coroner," he explained, "I've still got this stickpin that I found out at the Thatcher farmhouse, and I want your permission to keep it a while longer; I want to wear it in my necktie just as long as you will allow me to keep it."

Coroner Hopkins stared at the young doctor in perplexity.

"I fail to grasp just what you mean," he retorted. "If you are asking me to give you property which—"

"No, I don't want the stickpin, Mr. Coroner; but it belonged to the man who knows how Dr. Waugh died. He wore that pin when he was ragged and perhaps hungry. I want to wear that pin three hundred and sixty-five days in the year and ten years if need be and give its owner the chance to see it in my tie. If the law of averages breaks my way, and if he's still in the city, he's going to see it—and the man who thought enough of that pin to wear rags rather than pawn it will make some effort to get it back."

"Oh, I see," snorted the coroner not without a sneer; "I see; you are still playing detective. Well, you are a persistent young fool, but it occurs to me that you'd better be spending a little more time with your medical practice."

"Then I may keep the pin for a while longer?" asked Dr. Lake, eagerly.

"I'd forgotten you had it," grunted the coroner. "By thunder, Doc, I do admire persistency!"

* * *

Dr. Waugh's death occurred in June; it was the following September when Dr. Lake, his automobile in the repair shop with a cracked crank case, was forced to make a trip to the city, via trolley. His business took him to the north side and he boarded a crowded

surface car at the interurban station. He did not observe that a well-dressed young man—apparently young despite the snow-white streaks through his hair—who had been going in the opposite direction, wheeled suddenly about and swung aboard just as the car got into motion.

Passengers were packed on the rear platform like proverbial sardines, and it might have easily been accidental that the young man lurched against John Lake just as the latter fished a handful of small coins from his pocket to pay his fare. The money fell in a shower to the floor and Lake glanced back in anger.

"I beg your pardon, sir," murmured the young man in polite accents as he stooped to aid in collecting the spill.

"My fault," he added. "Mighty sorry; matter of fact, though it's a shame the way they pack the cars—seven cent fare, too."

Lake growled agreement on this point.

"Fine weather, isn't it?" pursued the young man—he was perhaps in his middle thirties—in the trite manner of the man who wished to drum up a conversation. Lake, ordinarily a friendly soul, was not in a conversational mood; he was on the point of turning his back coldly, when he saw that the stranger's eyes were feasting hungrily on the stick-pin; his heart skipped a beat.

"Yes," he agreed, "fine weather, indeed. Live here?"

The stranger nodded.

"I was just noticing that pin in your tie," he broke out eagerly. "Reminds me of one I saw once in Europe—belonged to a friend of mine; odd, isn't it?"

"Yes," Lake laconically agreed; "I presume that it is a trifle unusual; several people have commented on it. I got it in a rather odd way, too."

The other man waited.

"Yes, bought it from a fellow who was down and out—got it rather cheap, but since I've had it I've become quite fond of it."

"Oh," said the other in evident disappointment, "you wouldn't care to part with it then?"

"Probably not for what it's worth."

"W-what do you consider it—worth?" asked the white-haired young man.

"I hadn't thought of pricing it; did you want to buy it?"

"Well, frankly, yes; you see I don't care much for jewelry, but when I saw that pin—er—its counterpart in Europe—I fell quite in love with it. I might be willing to pay your price. Name it."

"I don't believe I'd care to part with it for less than five hundred—and that's more than it's worth, probably twice over."

"I'll take it," replied the stranger with a contented sigh. "If you'll get off the car with me, we'll go to the bank and get the money."

"Very well," agreed Dr. Lake. "What bank?"

"The Liberty National."

At the next block Dr. Lake and his companion left the car and Lake, suddenly remembering that he must telephone that he would be late for an appointment, hurried into a telephone booth at a corner drug store. He called the detective bureau and hastily explained matters.

When Dr. Lake and Justin Graham, as the young man had introduced himself, reached the Liberty National, two plainclothes men met them at the entrance. At a signal from Lake, they seized Graham's arms.

"You are under arrest," one of them announced with proper official solemnity.

Young Graham's eyes widened and an unmistakable pallor crept into his cheeks.

"Under arrest!" he echoed. "What for?"

"For the murder of Dr. Kensaw Arlington Waugh," declared John Lake.

Graham took a grip on himself; he glanced at the stickpin in the doctor's tie and smiled.

"I see," he said, smiling wryly, "you're rather clever. Well, suppose we go to the station and talk it over. I'll tell you about it—but it wasn't murder."

III

IN the office of the Chief of Detectives sat the Chief, Dr. Lake and Justin Graham. The prisoner was, perhaps, the coolest of the three, for both the Chief and Lake were excitedly eager—especially Lake.

"I'm glad to get it off my mind; glad to get it all cleared up," Graham began without urging. "I'd better begin right at the beginning and tell you the whole thing. I'd be a fool to deny knowledge of the affair, for I read the newspaper accounts and I know that someone found and photographed my fingerprints; I suppose you still have them. It would be only silly for me to make a denial, for that would indicate that I have something to fear; I haven't."

He paused and turned to Dr. Lake.

"I remember you now from the pictures that appeared in the papers at the time; not very good pictures either. You are the doctor who first examined Dr. Waugh's body. You found no evidence of foul play, did you?"

"You're the man who's being questioned, not I," reminded Lake curtly.

"Yes, that's true," agreed Graham with a short laugh. "But you didn't; you found no wound, no laceration, no evidence of a blow being struck, no poison, no diseased organism—nothing but failure of the heart to function. Isn't that true?"

"Go ahead with your story," growled Lake.

"I will," pursued Graham, "but I just wanted to remind you, in the beginning, that you are accusing me of murder when you have no evidence that a murder was committed."

"We have evidence that something queer happened out at the Thatcher farm," said John Lake with spirit.

"Yes, that's true, and I'm going to clear that up for you; it's a mighty queer business, as you say. Well, here goes; I'll make it as much to the point as possible.

"On the sixth of June I was broke and hungry—starving. I could starve but I couldn't beg. My life was a failure; I was in debt. It began when I wandered out to Lincoln Park; I was walking along the lagoon and, as I came to a bridge a couple passed me; they were talking about the bridge.

"That's 'Suicide Bridge' and they're going to tear it down next month; more than fifty people have jumped from it since it was built during the Chicago World's Fair."

"Until that moment I had not thought of suicide, but the idea took hold of me and, try as I would, I could not shake it off. I tried to walk away from 'Suicide Bridge,' but the power of suggestion was too strong. A park policeman came along; 'Don't do it, buddy,' he said. I pretended that I didn't know what he meant and he went on. When he disappeared I began to climb the steps to the bridge. A voice behind me stopped me.

"I turned around and there was a well-dressed man of about sixty, with a close-cropped vandyke beard, hurrying toward me—"

"Dr. Waugh!" interjected Lake.

"Exactly," agreed Graham. "I waited for him to come up.

"Why are you going to kill yourself?" he asked me.

"None of your damn business,' I told him.

"Come with me,' he said; 'you need a square meal.'

"I went along with him. After the meal, as we sat in a quiet corner of the rather cheap restaurant, he made me his proposition. As near as I can remember it, he said:

"Life means nothing to you, for you were about to kill yourself. I want to make a bargain with you. I want to engage in a sort of an adventure; it may cost you your life, it may not—you'll have to take that chance. If you live through it, you will be five thousand dollars the richer; if it costs you your life the five thousand will be disposed of as you see fit. That's my proposition; I shall tell you no more. Take it or leave it.'

"I thought it over. He was right; life meant nothing to me. He was offering me the chance to at least quit the world with a clean slate—it would square up my debts and a little besides. I accepted his proposition.

"He telephoned for his automobile and, while we waited, took me into the washroom of the restaurant where he bandaged my eyes.

"I'll have to blindfold you,' he explained; 'it's part of the agreement.'

"When we got into the car we drove for a short time and stopped. We went up some steps; it was the house where he lived. I heard him tell a servant, whose name was Samuels, that I was blind and that he was going to treat me. I might as well have been blind, for there wasn't a ray of light through those bandages.

"Almost at once he had me undress and put me through a physical examination, especially testing my heart.

"Sound as an ox,' I heard him say after he used the stethoscope. 'Perfect heart; that's fine.'

"I spent the night at the house and

the next day he sent to the bank for the five thousand dollars. An hour or so after that he gave me some decent clothes—some of his I think they were, for we were of about the same build—and led me out to his automobile. He drove himself and I sat on the front seat with him. We went downtown and he allowed me to remove the bandages from my eyes. Then I went into a bank—alone—and deposited the five thousand dollars with instructions as to where to send it if I did not call for it within a week. I got back into the car with him and he seemed much relieved.

"I was afraid you'd try to give me the slip after you had the money,' he said. That hadn't occurred to me; I had too much curiosity anyway—I had to see it through.

"After we left the downtown districts he wrapped the bandages on again and we drove for a long time. I could tell by the atmosphere that it was night-fall. We had left the boulevards and were jolting over rough country roads. At last we stopped and he led me through high grass and weeds; my feet got all tangled up in them.

"He took me into a house and I knew by the musty smell that no one had lived there for some time and I knew by the hollow way that our footsteps echoed through the place that it was unfurnished. We had not walked very far when I stumbled over something which barked my shin. Before I knew what happened, a rope dropped over my neck and was drawn tight. Instinctively I clawed at the thing which was cutting into the flesh of my neck but he seized my arms and, although I struggled, he succeeded in tying them behind me. Of course that made me helpless. I couldn't offer much resistance when he grabbed my legs and tied my ankles—tied my feet to the floor.

"I hadn't bargained for anything like this and, to be frank, I was very much afraid—afraid of an unknown something that I could not see. I imagine that I screamed in my fright, but he only laughed at me.

"'Shout all you want,' he said; 'no one can hear you.'

"Then he took off the bandages. The room was in semi-darkness, lighted only by two flickering candles and, for a moment, I could not make things out clearly. You know what I saw—those railroad cars, looming up in the gloom and the candlelight shining on those points which stuck out from the end of each car. I was tied, standing upright, in the middle of the track. I couldn't move, for the rope about my neck kept me in one position.

"'Great God!' I shouted. 'What are you going to do to me?'

"'I am going to kill you,' he said. 'Oh, come, my young friend; you were willing enough to die yesterday. I am cheating you of nothing; you will get the five thousand dollars—and death.'

"'Perhaps you realize what will happen,' he went on. 'Those steel cars will move toward you at the rate of one foot per minute; in fifteen minutes those steel points will prick your flesh and then—they will slowly, slowly—Ha! I see you undersand—'

"He was right; I did understand. I won't burden you gentlemen with the horrors of it. I won't try to tell you the torment that was mine—I couldn't and I don't like to think of it. I—sometimes I dream of it now; it's hell!

"I begged him to shoot me—anything. I knew that he was a madman—some impossible creature in real life stepped right out from a page of Poe. As I begged for mercy he snapped on the electric switch and I could see those cars vibrate a little; they seemed to leap toward me.

"He left the room without a word,

leaving me there with that devilish death trap, as ingenious a thing of torture as the 'Pit and the Pendulum.'

"It could not have been long, but it seemed like hours. At last those cars were close enough that, had my arms been free, I could have reached out and touched them. I began to pray and as I prayed I strained at my bonds until the rope cut into my wrists and into the flesh of my neck. I was slowly choking myself to death and, just as I was losing consciousness, I had the sensation of falling. Suddenly the breath rushed back into my bursting lungs and the blackness before my eyes cleared. I had, indeed, fallen; the rope from the ceiling must have been very rotten for it had parted under the strain. The weight of my body had smashed in one of those fiendish make-believe cars.

"Something pricked my wrists; it was a nail and I patiently worked away, severing strand after strand, until my numbed arms were free. It was then but the matter of a moment to loosen the knots which bound my ankles.

"There isn't much more to tell, gentlemen; I—"

"But Dr. Waugh—" eagerly broke in John Lake. "How did he—"

Young Graham smiled shrewdly.

"Oh, yes, I'm getting to that, doctor. When I slipped out of the house, Dr. Waugh was sitting in his limousine, calmly smoking and—reading! In a sudden burst of anger, I made up my mind to kill him!"

"Ah!" breathed the Chief of Detectives; "so you admit—"

"That I killed him? Indeed, no, Chief," denied Justin Graham. "I—er—changed my mind.

"The door of the limousine was open and I slipped across the grass and had seized him before he knew it. Even as my fingers were about his throat I realized that he must be an irresponsible lunatic and that there could be no jus-

tice in slaying him. I decided to truss him up, drive him to the city and turn him over to the authorities that a test might be made of his sanity.

"He begged me not to kill him and— then he told me.

"He told me that he was a physician; he said that he had always taken the position that a normal, sound man could literally be scared to death. He told me that other physicians differed with him, arguing that so-called death from fright could occur only when there was a weak heart.

"The desire to prove his contention became an obsession with Dr. Waugh and he decided to prove it. He rented this farm, and set up his play railroad and began to search for a subject. He was hunting, in fact, when he stopped me from jumping from 'Suicide Bridge.' He justified himself on the ground that I would have ended my life anyhow and that I had lost nothing.

"When I realized that Dr. Waugh was not, after all, an irresponsible maniac, my anger returned. That a physician whose life should be dedicated to the relief of human suffering should subject any man—regardless of how lightly he valued life—to the inhuman mental torture that I had endured, all for the sake of proving a silly, unimportant medical theory!

"I had pinned Dr. Waugh to the ground. There was a rope in his tool box. Quickly I passed one end of it about his neck and fastened it to a tree; the other end I tied to his feet and to the rear axle of the automobile."

"Great God!" cried John Lake. "You were going to—"

Justin Graham did not answer.

"I got into the car," he continued; "I put my foot on the electric starter button; the engine roared and then—I shut off the engine, but—"

Doctor Lake jumped to his feet.

"But Dr. Waugh was dead!" he

finished the sentence. "You killed him; you murdered him—in cold blood! You—you scared him to death!"

Graham met the accusing gaze calmly.

"I think that most doctors will contend that a man—a man with a normal heart—cannot be frightened to death," he said quietly.

Doctor Lake eyed the prisoner intently.

"You're a medic yourself," he accused.

"Do you think so?" smiled Graham.

"Do I think so?" thundered John Lake. "I know so! Naturally I have read between the lines of your story—just as you intended that I should. Oh, you're a clever fiend! You gave Dr. Waugh the same chance that he gave you; you tested his heart as he lay there on the ground—probably you used his own stethoscope. You got into the automobile, started the motor with the deliberate intention of—of letting Dr. Waugh prove his own theory. It was *deliberate murder!*"

"I hardly think you can prove that in—in court," suggested Graham.

"I know damned well I can't," shouted Lake. "You, as cold-blooded a slayer as a man who ever fired a pistol, are safe from the law. So far as the law is concerned, the Waugh case is closed—he died from heart failure. Here's your stickpin. Get out!"

The Chief of Detectives was nodding his agreement with Lake's position; the Chief was eyeing Graham curiously.

"Hum!" he rumbled. "Mr. Graham has your—er—hair been white long?"

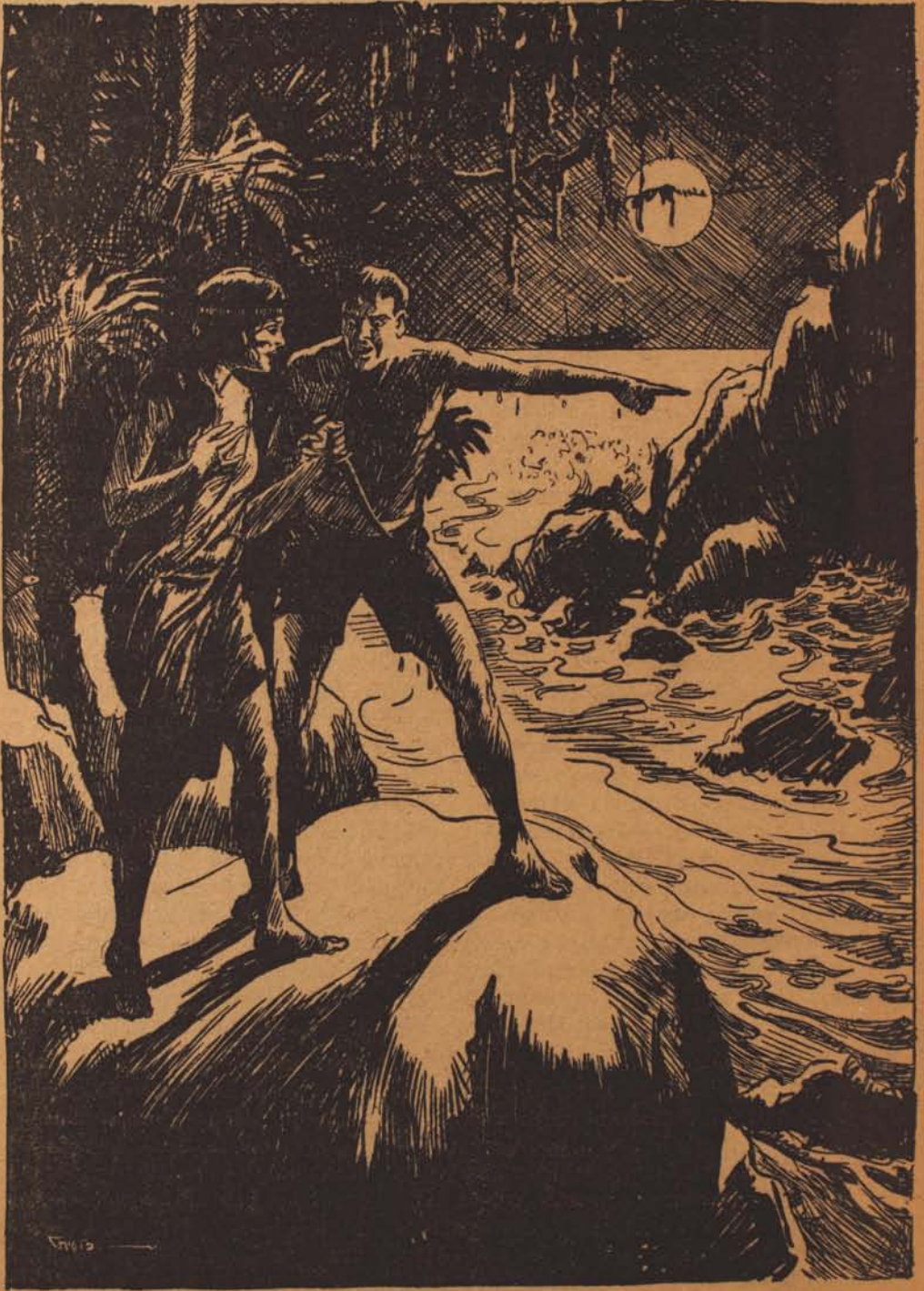
"Since—since that night," Justin Graham replied.

The door closed.

"Do you know, Lake, I don't blame Graham—much," muttered the Chief.

John Lake stared out of the window.

"Well, Chief," he said, "perhaps I don't either—much."



"The cave!" I shouted, pressing the knife into her hand and pointing to a nearby cavity.—Page 69

Daughter of the Pigeon

By Harry C. Hervey, Jr.

I

THAT last night in Marquesan waters, as Cleaves and I sat on the fore-deck of the anchored *Jezbel*, listening to the talk of Leaping Fire, the Polynesian midshipman, the Bay of Traitors was lit with an eerie glow. Along Taha-uka, from the rockbound shore where the surf hurled its futile rage upon a Bastile of dun-colored stone, to the somnolent lights of Hivaoa dreaming beneath the black thunders of Temetiu, legions of phosphorus battled in green strife.

“Yonder is the isle of Taoha, *Menikes*,” Leaping Fire was saying, pointing with his tattooed arm toward what seemed a mass of stone rising upon the moonlit night, his speech punctuated by the creaking of the boom as it swung with the slide and heave of the lazy rollers. “In the days before the Christian God came, when Po, the Power of Darkness, ruled the islands, the sea-robbers of Tahati used to hide their treasures there—somewhere near the High Place and the Vale Where Dead Men Walk.”

“The Vale Where Dead Men Walk,” I echoed. “What is that?”

“A Valley below the High Place. From the sacrificial Altar of Po the old chiefs used to hurl their victims into the gorge—in the days when the island was called Bloody Taoha . . .”

Once a Polynesian always a Polynesian, and in the South Sea Islander there still lurks a desire for the taste of human flesh. And I imagined that as he spoke Leaping Fire could again hear,

not without joy, the savage throbbing of rawhide drums in the dank, purple valleys of Bloody Taoha.

“Is the island still inhabited?” This from Cleaves.

“Yes. Years ago there were more than a thousand warriors on Taoha, but with the white man came plagues and wars—until now there are less than fifty. Mahuma is the chief, but he is slowly drinking himself to death with *Kava*. Ah, *Menikes*, the history of Taoha, the dying island is written in blood—and the future . . . But who knows the future?”

“I’d like to visit the island,” observed Cleaves.

“Do not go to Taoha,” warned Leaping Fire, “It is accursed. All die upon Taoha. And some say—” He paused.

“What?” I urged.

“Some say that the spirits of the Tahatian pirates return from under the earth to guard their treasures . . .”

Cleaves and I gazed seaward to the isle of tragic history, a bulk of stone that bared its nakedness to the low-hung tropic stars.

“Lay you two to one I can beat you swimming to the island, Rundel,” spoke up Cleaves.

I smiled. “Take you up.”

“It is two miles away!” protested Leaping Fire. “And in the bay are *mako* and *feke*—fierce, man-devouring sharks and devil-fish!”

But we would not listen to him; the tales of hidden loot and crimson deeds had stirred our blood.

“I’m for the swim, sharks or no sharks,” said I, without bravado, for I

did not realize the danger. "And as long as I've been in the tropics I have run across only one devil-fish. I'll tell you, Cleaves, we'll see who can reach the High Place first, you taking one end of the island and I the other, equalizing the distance. What do you say?"

"You do not know the way to—" began the Polynesian.

"Perhaps," interposed Cleaves. "But you will tell us. Moreover, you and a couple of the crew will follow in a whale-boat and wait on the beach to bring us back. The race will be to the High Place and back to the whale-boat, the first one reaching the High Place piling several stones on the altar to let the other know he's been there."

That was how it began. Down in the tropics men do queer things. The savage song of the surf on the coral reefs is a tune of lawlessness.

Twenty minutes later Cleaves and I, stripped but for bathing trunks, were descending the gangway-stairs while Leaping Fire and others of the crew lowered a whale-boat.

"I warned you, *Menikes*," Leaping Fire called to us sadly from the deck.

And I laughed—for his tales of piracy and the feel of the amorous wind on my body had aroused the sleeping boy within me.

"Ready?" asked Cleaves—and I nodded.

Side by side we plunged into the green bay. The water was mildly cool—old wine to the muscles. When I returned to the surface I struck out toward the island, which seemed a mass of dark-ridden rocks beneath the fiery Southern Cross. Several yards away, the phosphorus leaping about him, was Cleaves, headed for the northern end of Taoha.

That swim whipped the blood into every fiber and sinew of the being. Thinking little of sharks or devil-fish, I crossed the ruffled Bay of Traitors, and

within an hour, a bit sore of thews—I confess, I touched the sand on the southern end of the island.

Rarely have I seen such tropical beauty as on Taoha—cool white sands, strewn with sea-weed and curious shells; forests of mangoes, cocoanut-palms and bread-fruit; towering basalt rocks, honeycombed with caves and seeming riven with bronze as countless cascades and waterfalls caught the tarnished argent of the moon.

Following the Polynesian's instructions, I walked several rods down the beach and found the nearly obliterated trail that he had described, a path leading into a dark hollow.

Across valleys and ridges I sprinted, in the shadow of dripping rocks where the atmosphere was saturated with moisture, beneath *feis*-plants and the crimson-flowered *hutu*-tree, not infrequently passing ruined *paepaes*, meager evidence of the gradual death of the little island.

After a trot of about a mile I gained the summit of a hill where red jasmine and orchids bloomed in profusion, and halted, breathless, looking upon what I knew to be the mist-laden Vale Where Dead Men Walk.

Here the stars seemed to hang lower, so low that the *smell* of them was in the atmosphere. Across the earth depression, stone ledges rose from the deep-sunken valley and the moonlight struck the bare rocks, transforming them from dead matter into living sheets of light.

The Vale Where Dead Men Walk; well named; for a vague Something made me aware of its presence in the air by an imaginary, nevertheless ponderous, weight upon the lungs . . . as if the souls of the perished sea-robbers surged back upon the valley.

As I slowly descended the ridge—slowly because of a strange reluctance to hurry—I had the uncanny feeling of one invading the dominion of the dead.

Even the rank odors of the flowers suggested death.

The ascent of the ledges was not without difficulty; footholds were treacherous and more than once the roots of vines yielded to my weight, leaving me swinging at dizzy heights; but after ten minutes of breathless climbing, I dragged my full six feet over the edge of the High Altar and stood upright beside the Altar of Po.

Evidently Cleaves had not arrived. The decaying altar was bare.

The High Place of Taoha crowned a gorge—a wound that gaped in the stomach of the earth like the heel-mark of a giant conqueror. At the bottom of a sheer drop of ten feet a narrow ledge clung to the stone walls, winding down into the orchid and fern-grown cañon where the monster boulders threw their shadows across the rushing stream. On the side of the gorge opposite where I stood, a cave leered blackly from the rocks, and not far away was the lagoon, flanked with palm-fronds, a connecting link between river and sea. A mild roar insinuated itself upon the air—the combined booming of the gorge stream and the not distant surf.

The savage, lawless splendor exerted over me an awesome spell and my imagination, ever eager to slip its leash, painted sinister figures in the gorge, ghostly shapes that materialized in the maw of the black cave.

Of a sudden the blood began to throb through my head—for no conjuring of the fancy had created those forms; they were real, moving as phantoms upon the background of creepers that sprawled over the walls.

I dropped flat on my stomach, the touch of my skin upon the moist, cold stone sending a quick thrill trickling along my sensory nerves.

The figures, five in number, all lithe of body with the exception of one, crawled stealthily out of the gorge, and

when they attained the top of the opposite side were swallowed by the bread-fruit and cocoanut-palms.

I continued to stare at the trees where they vanished. Men— Islanders from the color of their naked skins—coming from the cave. It was rather intriguing, even insidious, and I immediately determined to penetrate the cave whose jaws had spewn them.

As I swung down from the High Place, dropping on the narrow ledge, I regretted my hasty action. The wiser plan would have been to wait for Cleaves, but I had started without him, and being young, which is to say stubborn, too, I decided to finish it alone.

More than once during that perilous descent into the gorge did I wish I had abandoned my purpose on the narrow trail below the High Place.

At length, a bit bruised and smarting from contact with the rocks, I found myself before the cave. Its mouth breathed damp, foul odors—the smell of fish and stale salt. A gradual incline went down into its throat, vanishing in somber darkness.

I felt a queer dread of the place as I entered and before I had advanced many yards this aversion increased to terror. In the dank, foul air was an element that inspired in me a sensation similar to the one I had experienced as I crossed the Vale Where Dead Men Walk—the ponderous weight upon the chest.

I wondered if by chance I was exploring a hiding place of the old Tahitian pirates, and if, in this gullet of darkness, I would stumble upon chests of loot—green with the rust and mould of ages. These thoughts, fanciful though they were, lured me on, drew me as in response to a magnet, deeper into the bowels of the earth.

I could hear a distant booming—like the surf upon the rocks. Other than that, and a drip-drip-drip of water somewhere in the unseen cavity, it

ached with the stillness of a sepulchre.

After fully three minutes of groping forward my outstretched hands came in-to contact with a fungi-grown wall and as I turned to the left, my fingers slipping over the damp surface, I saw a broad strip of anæmic light streaking the darkness. It was very singular, such an illumination, apparently born of itself in the cavern, and I stood motionless, trying to discover its source.

It was a noise that moved me—a groan—such as I once heard from the throat of a wounded devil-fish—a sound thrice hideous in the darksome cave. Had I coughed the following moment my heart would have lain upon the floor.

From the vague light the groan had come, causing me to take an involuntary step—and not in the direction of the streak of illumination. I wanted to bolt it, but instead I forced myself to wait for a repetition of the noise, and when a moment had passed in silence, emboldened by the hush, I moved toward the strange glow.

As I reached it I almost laughed. In the ceiling of the cave was a gap of great depth and breadth which admitted the moonlight, thus creating the singular and startling pillar of light. Stars were visible, too—no longer low-hung, but seeming at distances illimitable.

I had almost forgotten the terrible groan in my discovery when it was repeated, weaker, nevertheless stirring the hair on my scalp.

My eyes swept the shadows that hugged the pillar of light, and now, somewhat accustomed to the gloom, I could make out many square shapes beyond the glow—objects that I perceived to be nothing less than sea-chests.

The sight of them quickened my pulse. Iron-bound sea-chests; rusty locks; doubloons . . .

I could not reach the nearest chest quick enough and as my fingers found the lock they trembled violently. To

my surprise the lid yielded—but not without a shrill of protest from the ancient hinges.

Empty.

I moved to the next one. Following the shriek of the uncoiled iron, sheer horror drove its rapier the length of my body. I drew back, terrified, yet fascinated.

In the huge sea-chest, face upturned, was a man.

II

I CANNOT adequately define my emotions. I was filled with a craven desire to run, to shut the lid upon the body, to do anything to escape the horrid cavern. How long I stood there, stiff with fright, I do not know, but it was some time, and the third groan aroused me from the fear-stupor.

He was alive, I told myself—probably injured. . . .

I forced myself to grip the figure and drag it from the sea-chest into the pallid moonlight.

It was a slim Marquesan youth, naked but for a *pareu*, an ugly blade driven hard into his stomach. The sight of the wound sickened me. His eyes were open and upon me—large, pathetic eyes. With him life was a matter of minutes. A surge of pity for the young body swept me. The death of youth is always a grim affair—a dark portal closing upon sublime vistas.

To my surprise he smiled—a rather ghastly expression.

"*Menike*," he whispered, something dark upon his lips. "You, you help me . . . I—"

"Go on," I urged as his voice trailed off, and although I knew he was beyond the aid of man I added. "I will help you."

Again the ghastly smile. "*Tahaiupehii*—Daughter of the Pigeon—she—"

Well, I finally got the story, a tale of

tears and flowers such as one would expect to hear on this dying island, told between gasps for breath:

His name was Red Moon. On Taoha was a maiden whom he desired for his wife—Tahaiupehii, Daughter of the Pigeon, pale of throat and dark of eyes. She was the child of Mahuma, the chief. Habuhamo, a chieftain of Fatu-hiva, also coveted the fair Tahaiupehii—and Habuhamo was fat and degenerate, and Daughter of the Pigeon despised him, for she, in turn, loved Red Moon.

On this evening Red Moon had received a message to come to the Cave of the Laughing Lepers and as he entered he was attacked by Habuhamo and his men . . . stabbed. Before they put him in the sea-chest the obese Habuhamo told him that it was his intention to go to the *paepae* of Mahuma, the drinker of *Kava*, and steal the moon-throated Daughter of the Pigeon—after he had killed her father. . . .

In the end he asked if I, the *Menike*, would follow Habuhamo and his men to the *paepae* of Mahuma and save Tahaiupehii. He was dying, he whispered, and if I did not go . . .

As he finished his story he did a plucky thing—he withdrew the knife with a feeble wrench from his stomach, his tawny face convulsed with agony.

"You take knife," he muttered, handing the bloody weapon to me, "You carry Red Moon on . . . back—and Red Moon show you *paepae* of Mahuma. . ."

I did not believe the boy would last three minutes, but I lifted him as gently as I could and slung him on my back.

When I reached the High Place, after a tortuous ascent from the gorge with Red Moon clinging to my neck, I was disappointed. I had hoped that by good fortune I would meet my friend here, but instead of Cleaves I found a pile of stones upon the Altar of Po.

That journey from the Cave of the Laughing Lepers to the house of Ma-

huma is burned into my memory. After what seemed deathless æons of plunging through jungles, a light glimmered among the trees. When Red Moon saw it he begged to be left here, saying he was an encumbrance now.

"Save her, *Menike*," he pleaded piteously as I placed him on the round, death seeping into the liquid black eyes. "Tell her that . . ."

But I never knew what to tell her. From his lips came a sound like the flutter of beating wings. . . .

I left him there, resolved to return later and bury him, and with the bloody knife that he had given me, I crept into the clearing around the thatched bamboo house. Lights shone from the door and one window.

Climbing upon the *paepae*, I crawled to the lighted window. It opened out from a small cool room with green mats and bamboo walls. The five Marquesans were there, wearing crimson *pareus* and necklaces of shark's-teeth, all slim but one whom I knew to be Habuhamo. He was clad in a scarlet and yellow *kahu-ropa*, his big nose ringed with an ornament; fat and greasy in the light of the whale-oil lamp, with red, piglike eyes—a thing to loathe instantly.

The chief was speaking so swiftly in Marquesan that I, with only my smattering of the tongue, could not thoroughly understand him, and before I comprehended the full import of his words the four warriors filed out of the bamboo dwelling. I hardly had the opportunity to drop in the shadows before they emerged.

I lay still, not daring to move or hardly breathe, until I heard their padded footsteps growing fainter, then I became bold enough to raise my eyes—just in time to see the last of the four vanish in the gloom of a path that deserted the clearing for the jungle.

Once more I peered within the house.

Habuhamo was seated Turk-fashion on the green mats, his back to the doorway. I smiled with anticipation, for I hated him, not with the antagonism that is often the result of clashing personalities, but with a deep loathing as for some crawling thing of the earth.

Gripping the blood-soiled knife I moved to the door and crept stealthily inside, halting a few feet behind Habuhamo. At that instant some psychic current conveyed to him the fact that he was not alone. He glanced over his shoulder and I looked straight into the narrow, piglike eyes.

The sound that issued from between his moist lips was like nothing human. He tried to make his feet, but I was upon him, one arm encircling his thick neck, the blade poised above his heart.

"I ought to kill you instantly, Habuhamo," I said in my bastard Marquesan, "but there is something I want to know before—"

"No, no, don't kill!" he whimpered in poor English, "I spik English—"

"Where is Mahuma—and Tahaiupehii?" I demanded.

Habuhamo's red-shot eyes moved to a dark doorway on the left and I involuntarily loosened the grasp about his throat—and as I did he wrenched free, staggering to his feet with the scream of an angry boar. I scarcely had time to balance myself for the onslaught before the soft body was hurled upon me and his arms pressed me to his breast. I caught the reek of rum—and Habuhamo. . . .

I struck with doubled fist instead of the knife—the left fist. It went home in the solar plexus, carrying my whole weight behind it, a foul blow I admit, and with that inhuman cry the island chief pitched forward like a sodden piece of driftwood upon the green mats.

I stood above him, breathing hard and trying to clear my nostrils of the odor of him. He did not move. I turned his

bulk over with my bare foot and the feel of it sickened me.

That solar plexus blow had done him to unconsciousness. Habuhamo was out of it for at least fifteen minutes. . . .

I moved into the adjoining room. Dark—but not so dark that I could not see the body on the floor. Instinct told me it was Mahuma. The wound was a nasty one—such as had been dealt Red Moon. Mahuma seemed so old, so helpless as he lay there in his own blood.

And Daughter of the Pigeon—what of her?

The dwelling boasted of three rooms and Tahaiupehii was in none.

As I quitted the room where Habuhamo lay upon the green mats, emerging upon the *paepae*, my eyes alighted upon the jungle trail which the islanders had taken. It was the only course left to pursue and I plunged between the whispering foliage.

I knew the path led seaward, for I could hear the breakers and the pounding of the surf in the blow-holes, but I was not prepared for what I saw. The jungle dropped away before a ledge whose quartz-like surface scintillated in the moonlight. Several yards beyond the brush a narrow stream flung its torrents over spray-dashed rocks, tumbling headlong into a huge bowl of solid granite fully nineteen feet below, and here, still foaming furiously from the fall, it swirled between stone banks toward the sea. At the juncture where the river met rough water lofty cliffs overhung the beach, pierced with innumerable caves.

I found myself on the very verge of the cataract before I knew it. Below, on a flat rock at one side of the pool, was a form, slim and pale as a flame, the slender shoulders lost in masses of dark hair. Daughter of the Pigeon, I knew—for as she stood poised on the brink of the huge granite bowl she was as fair as that winged creature after which she

was named. I could see that she wore a *pareu* twisted about her.

Not two yards behind her an islander was squirming over the spray-wet stone. Following him was another. On the opposite side of the pool the other Marquesans were crouched behind boulders.

Unaware of her danger, Tahaiupehii stood on the edge of the rock, but even as I looked, her straight body flashed through the air, plunging into the foam.

As she vanished beneath the water one of the islanders crawled to the rim of the pool. An instant later her head appeared and she must have seen him, for a cry rang above the dull boom of the waterfall.

The Marquesan slipped into the pool.

...
I experienced a moment of indecision; my brain strove to function quickly. The two figures were almost side by side in the current. Nineteen feet—a straight drop, and I did not know the depth. Yet...

I gripped the blade between my teeth; took a deep breath. After that I was conscious of shooting through space... down... into what seemed a depthless pit. I struck the pool—went under with a force that lashed my flesh and expelled the air from my lungs.

In the battle against the torrent I almost lost the knife, but in some manner I managed to retain it. Through a whirling, opaque mass I came up, every inch of my body stinging.

Not more than a rod away I saw the two figures. I caught the gleam of grappling arms—saw a face that in the night was pale like blue moonlight, as exquisitely beautiful as any I have ever seen. ...

In a moment I reached them, closing about the shining dark neck. With the other hand I swung the knife. Together we sank. In that gray chaos we struggled, I slashing with the deadly blade.

Of a sudden it was conveyed to my brain, along with a strangling sensation, that my hand was holding nothing—that the knife-thrusts had told. I buoyed myself upward and attained the surface—alone. I doubt if the native ever came up.

It must have been a rock that sent me out. At any rate the pain was sharp—in the back of the skull. Things went dim. I realized that a hand gripped my hair—then I knew... nothing.

III

THE sleep that followed was not calm—nor can I hardly call it sleep, for during the whole period I had a peculiar awareness of things, of movement and a sound like unleashed thunder. And with the advent of full consciousness I was not, as I expected, in the water, although it was damp and I could feel a cool spray upon my body.

I sat upright on cold stone, my head aching dreadfully. Something close at hand was roaring and in a hazy way I realized that the noise was responsible for the spray; but as my vision cleared I saw only dimness broken on one side by a glimmering sheet that was a shade lighter than the surrounding gloom.

Gradually I comprehended. I was *under* the waterfall, in a dark recess in the rocks; the shifting curtain was nothing less than the cascading water.

Then I was startled by a voice almost at my elbow, speaking in Marquesan—*"Menike, you are awake—at last?"*

I knew her instantly, though she was little more than a blot in the dimness. Tahaiupehii—that exquisite young creature whose face I had seen momentarily as I fought the islander.

"I am glad you have come back, *Menike*," she said, creeping closer to me and slipping her small spray-wet hand in mine. Her nearness made me conscious of a pleasant odor—that of red

jasmine. "Your head hit a rock—and I was afraid . . ."

"You saved me, Tahaiupehii?" I asked.

"I saw you as you dived from above—knew that you had done it to save me from Habuhamo's men. After you were hurt I swam with you to this cave under the waterfall."

I looked about me. A grim, loathsome place. I imagined there were creeping things upon the rock floor. But it was sanctuary.

"You were very brave," I commended, wondering how I was going to acquaint her with the truth.

My vision was becoming better regulated now, and with the aid of the pale light that filtered through the liquid curtain I could see her tawny face. Daughter of the Pigeon—less than seventeen, I knew, a symphony of the world's sorrow, a living symbol of that tragic isle to which she belonged.

"How did you happen here, *Menike*?" she questioned. "White men rarely come to Taoha any more. . . ."

So I told her then—told her of my swim to the island and the discovery of Red Moon in the sea-chest in the Cave of the Laughing Lepers; told her of the death of her boy-lover near the *paepae* of Mahuma, and the finding of her father's body in the bamboo room.

Man is ever crude in the presence of bereavement, and my words must have been dagger-thrusts. She wept . . . of course. Father and lover in a night. And as she sat there, drenched with spray, clad only in the dripping *pareu*, a tragically lovely figure, she recalled to me a field of lilies that I had once seen . . . just before the dawn, when the dew was upon their chaste petals.

"Be calm, O Tahaiupehii," I enjoined gently, endeavoring to invest my sympathy in the words. "You are still

in danger. Tell me, is anyone else aware of this cave?"

"I do not know, *Menike*."

"If it is unknown to Habuhamo's men they will think us drowned—but if it is known—they will come after us—or wait. . . ."

Her small hand was still in mine and I felt her shudder.

"Ah, I cannot stay here—in this darkness—thinking of Red Moon and my father! We must dive under the waterfall and swim for the sea!"

I doubted the wisdom of such action and expressed my opinion, to which she replied: "We cannot discover if Habuhamo's men are waiting by remaining here—and if they know of the cave and come after us—then the chances for escape will be less."

I thought of Cleaves and the men—probably searching the island for me, and said, "My friends are somewhere on Taoha—and if we can make the sea—in the event Habuhamo's men are waiting—"

"Only for your safety do I care," she broke in. "You exposed yourself to danger for me, but I—All that I ever cared for is gone. Let another page of the history of this doomed island be written—in my blood—for rather than submit to Habuhamo I would kill myself."

I felt a bit hysterical; I wanted to laugh. Such odds. Three islanders, probably searching the island for me, girl and me. It might have been rare sport had she not been there, but her presence gave the situation a horrid twist.

"Come, *Menike*," I heard her say. "Let us go. This place stifles me—"

It burned me to think of Habuhamo alive. I wished that I had used the knife upon his corrupt body. . . .

"Very well, Tahaiupehii," I agreed after a moment; "swim under water as far as you can—and stay ahead of

me. I'll attend to Habuhamo's men."

I saw her smile—a fixed, lifeless expression. . . .

My heart went cold within me as we swung down from the dripping rocks of the cavern. As the deluge showered her slim body I caught a glimpse of her face, paler than the whitest moons.

That plunge was a horror to me. Bruised and breathless, my vision flecked with fire, I sank . . . down . . . into a reeling, watery world. My feet touched bottom before I was able to begin the fight upward, and when at last I gained the surface I dashed the spray from my eyes.

Tahaiupehii was a yard or more ahead of me, arms agleam in the moonlight. They were there, the three islanders, sleek and sinister, slipping down from the bank of granite basin. There was a fourth, too, a fat, sprawling form high on the rocks.

Habuhamo. . . .

Again I wished I had killed him in the bamboo hut.

The islanders were between Tahaiupehii and me, and Habuhamo was running along the shore parallel to the girl.

Straight after the Marquesans I swam until I was abreast of the rear one. He was a wiry fellow, smaller than I, with an ugly blade gripped in his teeth. I struck him between the eyes and literally tore the knife from his mouth. As he sank I saw something black upon his lips.

After that objects swam in a blurred water and rocks and over all the tranquil moon. Instead of launching an offensive against the other two natives, I succeeded in gaining a lead on them, and side by side Tahaiupehii and I were borne with the churning river. Occasionally I glanced behind at the pursuing islanders and that obese effigy on the bank.

With the deadliness of sharks the

Marquesans followed—down with the boom and thunder of the stream into the mouth of the sea. Here the conflicting currents caught us in their turbulence and lashed us toward the giant rocks that fringed the shore.

A new peril loomed in the shape of the crags where the surf gave vent to its wrath, and we swam with all the strength we could assemble against the menace. Tahaiupehii was the first to reach the shore. I saw blood on her shoulder where the sea had flung her cruelly upon a jutting stone in her attempt to crawl from the surf.

I was not far behind her, and as I staggered out of the thrashing water the bulky figure of Habuhamo appeared from behind the rocks of the river bank. Trapped. I threw the girl a look of futility. It was the finish, unless . . .

"The cave!" I shouted, pressing the knife into her hand and pointing to a nearby cavity in the rugged cliffs. "Defend yourself until I come—"

I caught the gleam of her pallid face as she obeyed.

Habuhamo must come first, I told myself—but Fate decided otherwise. Upon glancing back I perceived that one of the Marquesans had reached the shore and was clambering upon the rocks with a slim blade in his hand.

I looked about for some means of defense and my eyes dropped to the broken bits of boulders that lay at my feet. I bent and gripped one, lifted it above my head and let it fly. It struck him on the forehead with an ugly sound—like a crushed cocoanut shell. . . .

Throwing a glance toward the cave I saw Tahaiupehii entering, Habuhamo at her heels. As I started to follow, a lean something from behind closed about my ankle—the hand of the last Marquesan, a terrible-looking fellow, naked and tattooed to a king's delight.

With a bound he was upon me, and I let go my fist, sending him rolling among the rocks. Regaining my feet, I reached his side and bent over him. How I accomplished the following feat I do not know—but I grasped him by the nape of the neck and one limb and lifted him clawing above me; staggered to the edge of the surf and hurled him head-first into the shallow water.

As the weight left my hands I fell back on the rocks, but was up instantly—for the picture of Tahaiupehii as she darted into the cave, followed by that obese chief, was written in crimson on my brain.

Shortly I reached the mouth of the cave, a huge gap in the cliffs, only partially roofed and under almost two feet of water. From the rear came a muffled roar.

Splashing through water above my knees, often stumbling in the dimness, I covered what seemed miles, plunging with every step further into the cave. At an abrupt turn I was brought into an outlet that ran between lofty walls. The light of the yellow moon intruded upon the gloom, faintly revealing the sucking, snarling tide that rolled over the rocks and eddied between the cliffs.

They were there—Tahaiupehii and Habuhamo, locked together on the surface of a boulder. As I rounded the corner I saw her thrust him away and down upon him, something glistening held over her heart.

I shrieked—but the gnashi of the surf devoured my voice.

Habuhamo sprang—and at his first movement Tahaiupehii plunged the shining thing into her breast. . . .

I closed my eyes; I think I reeled, too, so sick with horror was I. When I regained the mastery of myself I dashed through the water, which was now just below my armpits, and drew myself upon the boulder where Habuhamo stood.

I struck him from behind, knocked him flat upon the stone and threw myself upon him, pinning him beneath my weight and sending my doubled fist time after time into the bloated, horrid face.

My reason surrendered wholly to a frightful lust to murder. Blind to all except the bloodshot eyes beneath me, eyes that were glazed with horror, that beseeched mercy, I thrashed him, tore at his skin with my finger-nails; choked him, beat his face until its grotesque mutilation forced a hysterical laugh from my throat. My own madness nauseated me, yet not once did I falter or weaken in the ghastly business—not until the body was lifeless, and with my bruised, bloody hands I pushed it to the edge of the boulder and kicked it into the delirious water. The last glimpse I had of that sodden, rum-soaked flesh called Habuhamo was as the surf flung its foaming arms about it and dragged it out to sea.

IV

TAHAIUPEHII was conscious when I knelt beside her on the edge—slim and white as fire, her wet dark hair spread in a tangle about her lovely face. More than ever her features seemed fashioned from blue moonlight.

"Tahaiupehii, Tahaiupehii!" I cried, trying to make myself heard above the surf. "I will take you out to my yacht—and you will get well—"

Daughter of the Pigeon smiled, not at me or what I said, but because, I believe, she heard another voice ringing clear above the tumult of the sea—the voice of her boy-lover in the darkness of Po.

She did not stir again, only lay there, lips locked, the childish smile frozen on her face. . . .

I carried her down to the beach and placed her gently on the white sands.

I shall never forget her as she lay there, her exquisite body dashed with the salt spray of the sea, the wound between her breasts as dark as a tropical gardenia.

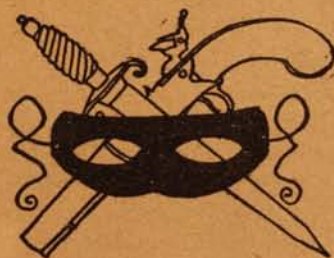
A half hour later Cleaves and Leaping Fire came upon us on the beach. They were about to abandon the search for me, believing me gone to the sharks. After I told them the story we carried Tahaiupehii to the *paepae* of her father, and here, not far from the bamboo house that had known her love and sorrow, we buried her. . . .

between Mahuma and Red Moon.

Several hours afterward I was on the deck of the *Jezbel*, and while a sullen, red-shot dawn flared above the thunders of Temetiu, the yacht throbbed out of the Bay of Traitors.

The last sight that I had of Taoha, the dying isle, was through the morning fog, a haze that lay upon it like a spirit hand . . . as if the volcano that in ages past had spewn it above the green Pacific was reaching up from fathomless depths to reclaim it.

- O Tahaiupehii—*paepae kaoha!*



The Heart on the Mantel

By Paul Everman

WHEN I first saw it move I became sceptical as to the worth of my vision. A dead man's heart, cut from his body, sealed in a glass jar of alcohol—why should it move, how could it move?

This heart was by far the most horrible thing in Leon Campeau's collection of human débris. As his roommate and fellow student in medicine I had tolerated the clutter of bones and skulls he had picked up, also the immaculate skeleton which leered grotesquely at me from its tall, glass-doored case. But to me this heart, this lump of muscle and tissue, seemed hardly appropriate as a companionable ornament.

Leon had brought it in that very morning, delighted in its acquisition, for it was on the heart that he was specializing. He had secured it, he explained, with the connivance of a keeper of the morgue. He had bribed this keeper, he told me, to allow him to remove the heart from the body of a derelict who was to be buried that morning in the potter's field. A clever fellow, Leon!

The heart was now where he had placed it—in its jar on the mantel—a reddish-brown lump that seemed but a deep shadow against the vestal whiteness of wall that rose behind and above.

With one elbow propped on my littered study table, I watched the thing nervously. Had it really moved, or was my imagination flighty?

There! It moved again—I was sure. Yes, it moved; an almost imperceptible flutter in its liquid preservative. I stared. It jerked again . . . again . . . The jerks were weak, clumsy, measured.

The thing was coming to life; it was beating.

I shuddered and glanced quickly behind me, all about the room. But I was alone—alone except for a dead man's heart.

Leon was away on one of his nightly amours, and François Bourlin, a fellow student who was specializing in diseases of the lungs, my own major, had spent the earlier part of the night with me. We had little of the brilliance of Leon, who at a glance could grasp the meaning of an entire page and retain it, who could hear more with a stethoscope than we could see with our eyes, whose skill with the knife had aroused admiration from the greatest surgeons of the faculty. No, we were grubs. We worked for what knowledge we got. But when we got it we did not boast of it as Leon boasted of his accomplishments.

François had left at nine-thirty, and it was after ten when I noticed the first movement from the heart.

Its beats were now growing stronger. I could see the alcohol ripple in tiny waves with each rhythmic beat. I listened—and heard a gentle splash, splash, splash, as regular yet not so metallic as the ticking of a watch.

Suddenly the heart flopped convulsively and drifted with the gentlest movement to the top of the jar. It was beating steadily now. It circled slowly about the jar, like an exhausted bird not sure of its direction.

"It's impossible," I muttered to myself. "It can't be. It's my nerves, my mind. I've worked too hard. I must be careful."

By a supreme effort I forced my eyes

from the devilish thing. I rummaged wildly in my desk till I found my syringe, my bottle of morphine. I drew up my sleeve and among the many almost indistinguishable pits in my arm I pricked another.

Calm came instantaneously. I laughed at my fruitful imagination.

"It was my nerves," I thought. "I will tell no one."

And, with freshened courage, I turned and gave a bold stare at the jar on the mantel. The heart had stopped beating, was lying silent, inert, in its diaphanous grave.

When Leon came hurrying in a half-hour later I was getting ready for bed. His sallow, carelessly-wrought features were splashed with the high color that is raised by much wine and aroused ardor.

"Henri," he cried, throwing aside his hat and ulster, "it has been a wonderful night! You should have had a girl and been with me, *mon ami*."

I was surfeited on this kind of talk every night. But I hid my shrug and asked:

"And where was it—the wonderful time?"

"At the Café Noir. *Sacré*, Fanchette is delightful! A wonderful companion! But you know her, *mon Henri*."

Yes, I knew her—Fanchette—a mischievous imp of femininity. I had been with Leon to the Café Noir, a modest tavern owned and managed by Fanchette's husband, M. Leblanc, a jolly little fellow so amorous-hearted and so trustful of Fanchette that before his very eyes she had carried on a flirtation with Leon. She was infatuated with him—that I could see; and here of late he had become infatuated with her.

"But," I said to Leon, "what of the little girl back in Bayonne—Nina, the girl who writes to you each day, the girl you are to marry? What of her? Have you written to her this week?"

He eyed me for a moment of hos-

tility. "*Certes*, I have written to her."

But I knew he lied; lying was a habit with him.

"*Quel diable!*" he burst out angrily, after a moment. "Why do you ask me that? How does it concern you? Am I an old owl like you, to sit around poring over books hour after hour, day after day? *Non, non!* I am no owl. I have life. I love. I enjoy myself. I am happy—till I see your gloomy face. *Tiens*, I provide for you, I give you room, I give you clothes; yet you correct me!"

I did not argue with him, for I knew that he was partly right: he was rich, I was poor. And, after all, his amours were none of my business.

François came to study with me the next night, for on the day following a final examination yawned before us. We worked hard, nervously. And when François finally took his leave, my head was near bursting with thumpy aches.

But, obsequious to duty, I bent over my study table and began to review some of Rollier's pamphlets—wonderful treatises on heliotherapy and artificial pneumo-thorax. Outside, rain splashed down heavily, as if to crush my night-blackened window panes. The cry of the storm was the mourning cry of wretched, lonely beasts. But I read on and on till the words of Rollier became but dancing specks before my eyes.

Suddenly, as if drawn by some subconscious power, I raised my head, turned slowly and stared—at the mantel.

My eyes found the heart in its tall glass jar, its reddish-brown shape sharply defined against the white background of wall.

It was beating more stanchly than on the night before, as if it had regained a lost vitality.

At the top of the jar the alcohol

rocked and lowered in gentle wavelets with each heart-beat.

I listened—intently, fearfully. And above the dull beating of rain and the whistle and howl of the wind, I at last managed to detect a sound of splashing in the jar. The sound came steadily—a gentle, purring splash, splash, splash—with each heart beat, with each wavelet.

I tried to take my eyes away, but I could not; I was held by the thing's devilish charm. As I watched, the beats became thuds; the heart gave a clumsy jerk, then floated slowly to the top of the jar. For a moment it swam about uncertainly, from top to bottom, from one side to the other. Then its movements became rapid, agitated, violent. It dashed about frenziedly, like a frightened bird vainly trying to escape from its cage. The jar rocked with the violent motion—I heard it, I saw.

With a jerky hand I wiped the cold sweat from my forehead.

"My God!" I thought. "Am I going mad?"

I tried to take my eyes away—and failed. I must do something! With all the power of will and muscle I could summon I sent my right hand groping about the table. At last my fingers found the syringe—and later the magic bottle of morphine.

Somehow I managed the injection. Calm came again. My eyes dropped from the gruesome thing. . . . And when, in a spirit of bravado, I raised them again a few moments later, it had stopped its beating and lay motionless at the bottom of the jar.

I looked at my watch; it was 11:30. And fully a half-hour passed before Leon came home.

II

HE came stumbling hilariously into the study room, plainly drunk.

"*Tiens, mon Henri!*" he cried, slapping me on the shoulder. "It was a happy night! There was wine and my Fanchette and I—ah, what happiness!"

And he babbled on foolishly till he had led me through the entire course of his happy night.

While he was talking I was silent, but as he began clumsily to hang up his clothes I could no longer restrain a warning comment.

"One of these nights when you go to the *Café Noir*, *mon Leon*, M. Leblanc will tire of your love-making to his wife. You had better watch out for him. He is a man who loves much, and if he discovers your attentions he will be dangerous."

"M. Leblanc?" Leon laughed drunkenly as he turned to hang up his hat. "I do not fear Monsieur Leblanc. He is like you, *mon ami*; he is an owl; he sees nothing. Besides, he is away now. He has gone to the country for a few days. He would buy a farm; he would put my Fanchette on a farm! *Pécaire!* But while he is gone Fanchette and I are happy. She has hired a waitress to take her place—a lean waitress with brick-colored hair. Fanchette acts as manager. I am her assistant. Hah! It is amusing. But is it not an ideal arrangement?"

My silence seemed to anger him. As he watched me his leer changed to a glare, and finally he burst out:

"But why do you tell me to be careful? You have corrected me again! How is it your affair? I will mind my own business and you shall mind yours. . . . You disgust me! . . ."

But he was in a better humor the next morning, and when I came into the study room I found him staring rapturously into the glass jar on the mantel.

"Come, *mon ami*," he exclaimed, "and admire with me the consummate skill with which I removed this organ. Ah,

was it not an artistic job? A wonderful specimen, *mon Henri*; just what I need for study. I will be a great surgeon, *n'est ce pas?* . . . You should have specialized in the heart, Henri. The old lungs that you study are of no use except for breathing, like bellows such as blacksmiths use. But the heart—ah, it is the organ *magnifique!* It is the heart that sends out blood that is like the richest of wine. It is the heart that puts the glow to my Fanchette's cheeks. It is the heart that gives us happiness, emotion, love. A wonderful thing, Henri—wonderful! . . .”

I failed miserably in my examinations that day, but from the triumphant expression on Leon's face when I met him early in the evening I knew that he had succeeded as completely as I had failed. The situation was galling to me: I had worked slavishly, he had trifled and loafed; yet I had lost and he had won.

After a hasty dinner at my *pension* I hurried to my room. As usual, Leon was gone. Partly because of a crushing headache and wracked nerves and partly because of a desire to be entirely alone in enduring the day's disappointments, I went to bed. But I did not sleep—I tossed and rolled; I thought, suffered, despaired.

Finally I got up, jerked one of Leon's richly-hued robes about me and went into the study room. It was eleven o'clock.

The night was black—a desolation of disturbing quietude. The wind and rain of the night before had gone. Not a whisper, not a sound of any kind came to break the silence of the room—it was like a void, a vacuity, of the portentous stillness.

Suddenly, yet inexorably, I was gripped by that same subconscious force that had come to me the night before. It raised my head from my propping hands. It turned me in my chair. It

focused my eyes on the tall glass jar that sat on the mantel.

Surely, regularly, its every motion accentuated against the pure white background of wall, the heart was beating, beating.

A sudden anger rose within me.

“I am going mad!” I thought desperately. I would seize the jar and its devilish contents; I would smash it, hurl it from the window. But to carry out my resolution I could not summon the strength of a single muscle. I was helpless.

As I watched, the reddish-brown lump began to swim about the jar. Its beating was measured, like a funeral tramp. I could hear it, its splashing sound thudding mightily in the deep stillness.

Suddenly there came a tremendous splash. The heart dived to the bottom, floundered for a moment, then again shot to the top. Its motion was so rapid that my eyes could scarcely follow it. It churned the liquid. It dashed and darted about, madly, frantically. It thrashed about in the alcohol like a wounded shark in the agony of death.

“The thing has a soul,” I thought; “and it is troubled, disturbed.”

The jar rocked, almost overturned, from the violent movement within. The heart veered, dodged, banged upward, then shot down. Yes, the thing must have a soul.

I tried to take my eyes away—fruitless effort! The thing was possessing me, was my master. It bade me watch, and I did. But as I watched I think I must have prayed.

I tried to reach for my syringe; but my hand hung motionless at my side. I was powerless.

A quick thought almost calmed me.

“I will see now—” I told myself—“I will see whether it is my nerves, whether I am going mad, I will fight it without the morphine. I will fight it,

and if it ceases moving, I will have won."

My situation was no longer terrifying; it became a game, a battle. I was fighting, playing against the reddish-brown streak that thrashed continuously against its background of white; I was fighting its monotonous beats, its zig-zagging progress, its splashing sounds, the agitated wavelets it made.

A mellow-toned clock boomed faintly in the distance. I counted its strokes—*one—two—three—*

The heart shot to the middle of the jar—for a moment became wholly rigid. Then its beating slowed. I stared, listened. Yes, its beats were timed exactly with each stroke of the clock. They came slowly, relentlessly, like a knell. I kept on counting.

—Eight—nine—ten—eleven—twelve.

At the last stroke the heart again became rigid. Then it sank slowly to the bottom of the jar and lay there motionless.

"I have won!" I told myself fiercely, exultingly. "I have beaten it! It was my nerves, but I have conquered them."

Surely a sedative could do no harm now, I thought. The crisis had passed; I had shown my strength. So I hastily bared my arm and pricked into it a double dosage of morphine.

Languor came speedily. I decided to not wait for Leon. So I went to bed, fell into a heavy sleep—and dreamed.

I dreamed about the heart—this reddish-brown lump on the mantel. I dreamed that it had eyes, that it watched

me. I dreamed that it had a soul, a soul that was troubled and that troubled me. I dreamed that it had power, invisible and terrible; power that charmed me, cowed me, molded me, tortured me.

I must have slept solidly throughout the night. I do not remember of awaking a single time. All I remember is that it was a night of hideous dreams against which I was powerless.

I was awakened by a clatter at the stairs, by a pounding on the door, by a voice crying shrilly, queerly:

"Henri! Let me in, Henri! Let me in!"

I sprang up, into the study room, and opened the door.

François Bourlin stumbled in, his face as chalklike as the white of his eyes.

"Henri—haven't you heard—" he began in a panicky tremolo.

"Heard?" I stammered. "What?"

"About Leon. Ah, it is terrible! All on account of that woman—Fanchette!

. . . Leon has been arrested—has confessed! Last night at twelve o'clock the police found Leblanc's mutilated body in a sewer in the Rue de Loix. He had been dead for at least two days."

François clutched my arm fearfully, and his voice fell to a husky whisper:

"*Leon—Leon had cut his heart out!*"

I recoiled. Then my eyes flashed to the jar on the mantel. Glistening in the fresh morning light, against the white background of wall was a shriveled lump, inert, silent, dead. And I knew that it would never beat again.



The Devil Takes a Hand

By Ward Sterling

TENNANT stopped outside the door of his wife's room and went over the details of his plan for the last time. The thing was so absurdly simple that he wondered why he had not thought of it months before. There was not the least chance of a failure. He had only to plant the idea in her diseased brain and she, with the cunning that all maniacs possess, would do the rest.

Everyone knew her suicidal mania. It had been brought out at the time of the hearing. No blame could possibly be attached to him for her death. Had not the nurse frustrated her in half a dozen different attempts? Damn that fool nurse anyway! She had too exalted an idea of the importance of her position.

But, after all, it was, possibly, a good thing that she had been so vigilant. People couldn't say that it was carelessness, then. He smiled to himself as he recalled the kind things their friends had said when he refused to send his wife to an asylum after the court had pronounced her insane. They imagined that it was his great love that made him keep her with him. It was laughable how easily people could be fooled. How were they to know that he had made a careful investigation and found that too close a watch was kept on the inmates of such institutions? There was a better chance of her making a successful attempt right here at home. Accidents are always liable to happen in private houses; in public institutions people are paid to guard against such things.

Curse the fool law that prohibited a man getting a divorce from an insane

wife. Such laws made a criminal of a person. Otherwise, he could have married Helen a year ago. He must guard against his love for her being found out. It might cause someone to cast suspicion his way.

Of course, they would never be able to confirm their conjectures. But his position in the community was too high to have even the finger of scorn pointed in his direction. It would never do for a deacon in the church and a prominent professional man to let people know that he was guilty of evil, even in thought.

No, he must keep away from Helen until he had shown the proper amount of respect for his deceased wife—for he had begun to think of her as already dead! After a period of hypocritical mourning, they could be quietly married—and he would still retain the love and respect of his fellow townsmen. Of course it meant several months' waiting. It would be hard—but they would have the rest of their lives together—and both of them were young.

And there was the matter of Grace's inheritance to be considered, too. Good thing they had never had a child. It would be all his now—that is, after the proper formalities had been gone through. Naturally, he would erect an expensive headstone to her memory and give her an elaborate funeral. Some people measured a man's love for his wife by the amount of money he spent on her funeral.

Yes, the scheme was simply Machiavellian in its magnitude, and, with the requisite amount of attention paid to the details, there was not the least bit of danger.

He turned the knob and entered the room. With a tender kiss for the woman with lusterless eyes, who sat mumbling to herself in the low wicker chair, nervously picking at the folds of her dress, he turned to the middle-aged woman in nurse's garb who sat in the window near by.

"Better take an hour's walk, Miss Gorman," he said kindly. "You look fagged out. I'll look after Mrs. Tennant until you return."

The nurse arose wearily.

"It's awfully kind of you, Mr. Tennant. I am tired. She's been bad again today," she ended, significantly.

Tennant's face took on a worried look.

"She'll probably settle down again in an hour or so," he responded. "I've a little work to do—I can do it just as well in the other room and still keep an eye on my poor little girl. There's nothing around that she can get hold of, is there?"

He settled himself in a chair beside his wife and patted her white hand affectionately. With a tear in her kindly Irish eyes for the little, unostentatious display of love, Miss Gorman left the room and, a minute later, Tennant, from his place in the window, saw her swinging down the street.

The time was at hand.

II

PRESSING his wife's hand tightly between his own, Tennant addressed her in the tone one uses in talking to a little child.

"I've often wondered," he said quietly, "why you didn't commit suicide, Grace? Of course, I know that you've tried it, but your methods have been all wrong. Do you understand what I am getting at? I want to help you."

He looked at the woman keenly. He imagined that her dull eyes took on an

added brightness—that she was not plucking at the hem of her dress so nervously. He hurried on:

"Now, I'm going to show you how to do it, sweetheart. Then, when the nurse is out of the room, some day, for a few minutes, you can put one over on her. It'll be a good joke on her, won't it? Come on, and I'll show you how to do it."

Apathetically she arose and followed him across the floor to where the big, old-fashioned bed stood in the distant corner.

"Now, watch me, dearie, and see how I do it," he continued. "The nurse thinks that she's got you cheated by removing everything that you might use—but we'll show her, won't we?"

He removed the light counterpane from the bed and twisted it into a rope. "See, girlie, how it's done? Just the right size to hang one's self with, isn't it? Now, then, we carry this chair across the room and put it under this chandelier. Get the idea?"

The demented woman made no answer. But Tennant knew that her suicidal mind was attracted by the scheme—that the seed planted in her brain was already sprouting. She followed close behind him, her dull, impassive eyes watching his every move.

He stepped upon the chair and attached the improvised rope to the chandelier.

"See how easy it is, dear?" he went on. "Now, next, we make a noose in the rope, like this—see? It's just as easy as rolling off a log. Then we put the noose over our head and pull it up tightly about our neck. Understand, now? All that's left is to kick the chair out from underneath—and the devil and all couldn't keep a person from choking to death, could he?"

From his height atop the chair, he looked down upon the woman.

She was gazing up at him, fascinated, her eyes burning brighter now.

"The idea pleases you, doesn't it, sweetheart?" he smiled.

She nodded understandingly.

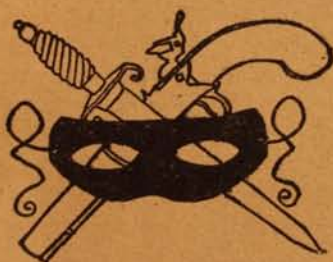
Then, suddenly, she made a leap for the chair and tore it from beneath his feet! With a frightened yell, the man dropped to the end of the rope, his toes almost—but not quite—touching the floor.

The maniac stepped back with a shrill little cry of delight and watched him gyrate and whirl as the improvised rope twisted and untwisted itself. His mouth was open! His eyes bulged

from their sockets! His tongue stuck out oddly. His breath came gurglingly, sobbingly, gaspingly. His face grew black and mottled. His legs and arms danced about curiously, twitchingly. . . .

His peculiar antics filled her with delight. She forgot her depression in her new-found happiness. He was teaching her some new game. She clapped her hands together and shouted for more. And when he hung quiet, she seized him by the legs and swung him to and fro, yelling joyously.

* And thus the nurse found them—the living and the dead—an hour later when she returned from her walk.





Behind me Mrs. Muzzard cowered, a heap of jabbering fear upon the floor.—
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The Strange Case of Nathaniel Broome

By Charles McDonell

FOR the last twenty-five years I have lived in New York, the drab, unadventurous life of a city book-keeper. I have been left pretty much out of the running, but, with money sufficient to pay my unassuming bachelor expenses, I have long ago settled down in my shabbily comfortable lodgings on Fourteenth Street.

Nothing ever happening to relieve its monotony, I grew to think that life was to hold little else save humdrum contentment for me during the quiet remainder of my days.

Now all this is changed, and changed forever. I shall never be the same man again.

A few months ago there came to take lodgings in one of the two rooms on my floor a very strange man.

The evening upon which he moved into his room my landlady knocked at my door the way she does occasionally for a little chat.

"Evenin', Mr. Scrimgeour," she said. "I suppose you heard him movin' in his things?"

"Oh, your new lodger," I replied. "Well, Mrs. Muzzard, you've had the room a long while idle on your hands."

"Yes, Mr. Scrimgeour, but I can't ezac'ly say as I'm overjoyed that it's rented."

"Why not?"

"Mr. Scrimgeour, I don't like him!"

"What's the matter with him?"

"Why, there ain't nothin' the matter with him as far as that goes. It's on'y

that I have a kind of presentiment, that's all. He's so—so queer."

"That needn't worry you, Mrs. Muzzard, if he pays his rent. That is, as long as he doesn't look like a Bolshevik or any other kind of dangerous lunatic."

"He ain't no Bolshy and I guess he ain't no loonier than most of the artists and writers around Greenwich Village here. And as I've been living down among them for twenty-odd years I guess I can stand it. No, it ain't that, Mr. Scrimgeour; I can't say ezac'ly what it is. I think he's one of them Spiritualists we hear so much about these days in the papers. Now he asks me for an oil lamp with a heavy shade. Why ain't the gas light good enough for the likes of him? I'd like to know. I never heard of such a queer thing. What can he be wantin' a 'soft light,' as he calls it, for, if it ain't so as he can see the spirits? They say them mediums works in the dark. Ugh! It fair makes me creep!"

"Well, if he raises any objectionable spirits around here, you just let me know," I laughed. "I'll see what can be done toward exorcising them."

As my interest was aroused in my fellow lodger by this conversation with my landlady I lingered about in the hallway the following morning in the hope of catching a glimpse of the stranger. But my curiosity was unrewarded.

Every evening during a whole week I heard him climb the uncarpeted stairs and enter his room. Often, during the course of the evening, I could hear his

heavy, measured tread as he paced the floor sometimes late into the night.

One evening as I arrived home slightly later than usual, having been detained at the office upon some special work, I passed him in the dark stairway.

He was coming downstairs, and as the light from the upper hall shone upon his back and full into my face, I was unable to see what he looked like. I got the impression only of the hugeness of the man.

Tall, heavily built, his body enveloped in a large black cloak, he appeared, in the exaggerated half-light of the stairway, to be some great giant hovering threateningly over me.

He stood courteously aside, however, pressing himself against the wall to allow me to pass. As I did so I glanced into his face. But he wore a very wide-brimmed Quaker-like hat and, in the shadow which it cast, I could note little save that he wore large, black-rimmed spectacles.

"Good evening," I murmured.

His reply came to me in a deep, resonant voice, soft and almost tender. There was the rich quality in it of the deep notes of an organ.

A most unaccountable feeling came over me as I brushed past him; something from the inscrutable alchemy of an unusual personality. I felt like a little child that had got lost in an empty house.

II

ONE evening I discovered, upon trying to light the gas in my room, that I was without matches. Seeing a light shining under the stranger's door, I ventured to knock and to beg a match of him.

He answered with a sonorous "Come in," which, considering the secrecy of the man, filled me with surprise.

I found myself in a meagrely fur-

nished room of nondescript threadbareness akin to my own. The apartment was lighted not with gas, as in my room, but by the small table oil-lamp which had so excited the landlady's suspicions. The soft yellow glow, repressed by a heavy shade, poured its light over the table, covered, as I noticed, with a confusion of papers.

"You will pardon my intrusion," I began, explaining my forgetfulness about the matches.

"Indeed," he replied, "I am glad, if I may put it that way, that you *have* forgotten them, as it affords me an opportunity of meeting you other than in the stairway."

Why was it that, as he spoke, I fancied he must be smiling? Something in the genial raillery of his words, I suppose, for when I looked at him no trace of amusement could be seen. His face was as calm, as unemotional as the placid features of a Chinese idol. His cheeks did not crease, nor were there any wrinkles about his eyes.

The impression which he made upon me now was only one of great good-nature. I wondered why, recalling our first meeting, I had been so eerily moved.

Then I looked into his eyes and again that strange, haunted feeling crept over me, as it had done that evening upon the stairs.

His eyes were so large that I fancied their unusualness must be caused by the lenses of his glasses, or perhaps by a trick of the shadows. Yet there was something in their expression which I was unable to fathom. Could it be drugs? No, for there was a look of grandeur about them. They baffled me. We humans, who trust so innocently to our sight, we are all so pitifully blind!

This was only the first of many evenings spent with Nathaniel Broome. Diffidently, almost timidly at first, our

acquaintance then ripened into a quiet friendship.

What I am most conscious of having gathered from him is beauty; beauty in the commonplace; beauty in the song of a sparrow; beauty in the drowsy hum of the city's impersonal noises.

Nathaniel Broome changed my outlook upon life until we together saw "no longer blinded by our eyes."

The low, quiet tone of his magnetic voice lent a magic to his strange unusualness; his great, expressive hands shaping the gestures of his speech.

When I listened to him talking I seemed to be swept up, enveloped in his personality. I felt as a child must feel when a playful senior stoops and smothers it in the skirts of his overcoat. I felt helpless, yet cared for. I was strangely happy.

And, more than his voice, his eyes, always his eyes, sometimes a little terrifying to me even now, held the secret fascination of his remarkable character.

That immobile face; that calm, inscrutable Buddha. Behind his huge, horn-rimmed spectacles those great, kindly eyes of his beamed in gentle merriment at some jest or some quaint conceit of his fancy.

He showed me once the portrait of a young girl—a dark-haired, hauntingly beautiful child.

"My daughter," he replied to my look of inquiry, putting the photograph back into the drawer of his writing-table. I knew that he was a widower and, for some reason, by his manner perhaps, I supposed that his daughter was dead, too.

Naturally, I did not press him for these confidences. The subject seemed to move him so deeply that, after he had once spoken, I had never voluntarily mentioned it of my own accord. If he told me about himself it was because he felt the need of companionship, the want of a sympathetic ear.

III

ONE morning—it was a holiday, one of those rare occasions when one is permitted to enjoy the meagre privilege of seeing his home surroundings by the unfamiliar light of day—Mrs. Muzzard rapped sharply at my door.

"Mr. Scrimgeour, for heaven's sake come and see what can have happened to Mr. Broome. I've knocked and knocked at his door, but I can't get no answer."

"He's probably asleep still," I replied. "I wouldn't disturb him yet, Mrs. Muzzard."

"Oh, Mr. Scrimgeour, I don't think he's asleep! Please come and try to get him to talk to you. I'm . . . terribly frightened of him and those creepy eyes of his. You mark my words, Mr. Scrimgeour, there's something uncanny about that terrible man! Oh, why did I ever let him have me room! Why did I ever let him come into me house? Him with his strange ways, talking to departed sperits all night long!"

"Nonsense, Mrs. Muzzard. You mustn't let all this newspaper talk get the better of your good, Irish common sense!"

"I know what I know, Mr. Scrimgeour, him with his wide-brimmed hats and his shaded lamps! Skulking around like an old mole afraid to show his face in the light o' day! That man has a guilty secret!" she whispered melodramatically into my ear.

"Oh, I see!" I laughed. "That explains it! Nathaniel Broome is a mysterious bandit—cut-throat—murderer, masquerading incognito."

"I don't know what he's in, Mr. Scrimgeour, and I don't say he's no murderer nor nothing. All I got to say, and if it was over me dead body I'd say it—that man's hiding from the police!"

I laughed aloud as much at the absurd melodramatics as at the idea of my

old friend having so lugubrious a history.

"Well, let's knock at the terrible bandit's portals, Mrs. Muzzard," I said mockingly, "and see if we can persuade him to show himself."

I pulled the cord of my dressing-gown tightly about my waist, and the action as I did so seemed whimsically like that of an ancient warrior "girding up his loins."

"Come," I said, "I shall do the bearding of the lion. You may shelter yourself behind me. Surely if there are any evil spirits to confront they will have to tackle me first!"

We crossed the dark hallway and stopped in the shadows at the closed door of the mysterious room.

I tapped gently upon the panel.

There was no answer.

Again I rapped upon the door.

"He must be out, after all," I muttered, as there came no reply, and, to my own amazement, I breathed a sigh of relief!

"I swear to God, Mr. Scrimgeour," exclaimed Mrs. Muzzard in a hoarse whisper, "I swear to God he ain't set foot outside this door today!"

She crouched close behind me, her whole body shaking with excitement, her breath coming in sharp gasps through her set teeth. Unaccountably I thought of a terrier bristling with fear at something it cannot understand.

As we listened, something of her perturbation communicated itself to me.

"Can it be," I thought, "that the woman has some reason for her fantastic premonitions?" Then, "Preposterous! Incredible!"

"He may not have come in at all last night," I ventured, trying now to reassure myself as well as my frightened companion.

"You *must* have heard him as plain as I did, Mr. Scrimgeour," she replied

with startling vehemence. "He's so heavy on the stairs."

I remembered now that I *had* heard.

"Surely, then, he is asleep. We had better not wake him."

"Knock again, Mr. Scrimgeour, for God's sake knock again!"

Seized by a sudden excitement I rapped heavily, frantically upon the panel of the door. So hard did I use my knuckles that a sharp pain shot through them, and, glancing down at my fingers, I saw that I had broken the skin.

IV

TENSE now with inexplicable excitement we both stood listening, our heads bent toward the closed door.

"Good God, what was that!" sobbed Mrs. Muzzard hysterically, as I fancied that I could hear a low groan.

"Broome! Broome!" I called, all my eerie apprehension vanished. The man was sick, perhaps dying—

"Broome!" I called again, jerking at the handle of the door.

Again we heard the groan, this time louder than before.

"For God's sake, Broome, open the door, man!" I called.

"You—must—not—come—in—!"

The words were spoken with very great difficulty, as if the unfortunate man were suffering in intense agony.

"Are you ill?" I called. "It is I, Scrimgeour! Don't be afraid, but tell me, Broome. If you are ill we must help you. You have locked the door."

"I am—not—ill." Again the same tortured voice, forcing itself to speak through an ecstasy of pain. "You—must—not—come—in—!"

"Oh, God!—God!—God!" shrieked Mrs. Muzzard in terror. "I tell you that man's a devil. He's at some of his ghost tricks now. He'll have all the powers of hell down on us! Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may me sins be for-

given! Oh, Blessed Mary, stand betune us and harm!"

"Shut up, you idiot!" I cried. "Can't you realize that the man's been taken suddenly ill! He naturally locked the door last night, when he went to bed, and he's too sick to get up and open it for us!"

"Then what are we to do?" she moaned, making ineffectual gestures in the air with her hands.

"We'll have to *break* open the door. Get me a hammer, or, if you have an axe or something heavy . . ."

"I'll run right away and get Mrs. Seagle's next door."

"You—must not—open—the—door!" came again slowly, ominously from the inner room.

During several moments—moments that were age-long—I stood still, rooted to the floor, unable to move my limbs; utterly powerless to cry out.

At my sharp command Mrs. Muzzard had disappeared, more than eagerly I fancied, in search of a battering implement.

She returned, a few minutes later, with an axe, which she had succeeded in borrowing from her neighbor.

There seemed such a feeling of actuality in the stout wooden handle of the axe that, as I gripped it in my hands, I felt my courage returning.

"Look out, Broome!" I shouted. "If you're up keep away from the door! I'm going to break it in!" And with that I dealt a heavy blow upon the upper panel.

The voice inside became a strangled, inarticulate scream.

Behind me Mrs. Muzzard cowered, a heap of jabbering fear, upon the floor.

Seized in a sort of panic, I rained blow after blow with my stout axe upon the door. I remember, even in my excitement, comparing the scene with a similar one as it would be staged in moving pictures. How quickly upon the

screen the door would have been burst open, and how, in actuality, it was so difficult to split such resisting wood.

At last I managed to make an opening through which I might insert my hand and turn the key in the lock.

Then the door swung open.

The window shades had been drawn closely, so that the place was in darkness. I groped my way to the bed.

"Broome!" I cried, still breathless from the unusual exertion, "what's the matter?" And I leaned over the blurred form that lay crouched in an unnatural attitude upon the bed.

"A little light, Mrs. Muzzard," I said over my shoulder, as the landlady crept shuddering into the room.

She walked obediently to the window.

The dark form seemed to writhe in agony. Then the shade was lifted and the late morning light poured into the room.

V

WHAT I saw there will remain a fearful image in my memory until the day I die.

As I looked at that face upon the pillow the cold chill of horror pricked at the roots of my hair. Clammy drops of perspiration stood out upon my forehead. I could feel the skin drawing into gooseflesh over my spine.

Nathaniel Broome, fully dressed, his body twisted unnaturally in the grip of some strange paralytic seizure, lay huddled upon the bed, his knees drawn up until they touched his chin.

I called that creature by the name of my old friend, but the distorted mask which I saw upon the pillow bore no resemblance to that placid face. It was the face of the fiend which mediæval sculptors have carved with Gothic monstrousness in imperishable stone.

There was no nose; only two terrible holes where the flesh had been eaten away.

The cheeks were hideously twisted into gnarled, unnatural shapes. The dreadful mouth, perverted to a Silenic grin, leered lasciviously up at me until I shrank back, dizzy, nauseated, at the repulsive sight of it.

I felt myself shaking with terror. This—this nightmare! This phantasma! I could not take my eyes away. For above that horrible disfigurement of flesh, the deep, soul-fathoming eyes of my friend looked up wonderfully into mine, and held me in spite of all my horror at the almost obscene ugliness beneath them.

There was the same old immortal patience, the world of understanding, the illimitable depths of pity. Pity for me! And there, too, at last I divined what I could never interpret before. There was the look which I had for so long been unable to understand. That look was Pain!

Our gazes met: mine telling all my horror, my terror, my fear, my abject cowardice, my disgust; his, immortal, patient, all-wise, all-knowing, like the eyes of God.

"My poor friend—" the gargoyle's mouth twisted and contorted shockingly in an effort to form the words, "I cannot speak. This seizure has taken sudden hold upon me. This face—this ghoul's head—"

"Have pity—have pity upon my weakness," I faltered in the tremulous whisper of a frightened child. I was too much unnerved even to attempt a concealment of my horror. "I can't help myself. I know that this is only physical with you. I know that we have no mastery of our flesh. When you are well again I will show you how really much I feel for you in your terrible misfortune."

I looked appealingly down into the all-pitying light of those unfathomable eyes. I tried to see only his eyes. I tried with all my soul to forget the

frightful contortion beneath them. And slowly there stole over me a sense of illimitable calm.

"My very good friend," the low voice, articulating slowly and painfully, came to me as through a mist of dreams, "I am dying. I have been waiting, trying to prepare for this during several months. Now it has come. After I have been laid away you may care to know . . . some day you may wish to understand. . . ."

"I have made provision for that, both for you and for one other whom you will meet after I have gone."

His face working in frightful contortion, my friend lifted a hand, pointing tremulously to the paper-littered table.

I had forgotten Mrs. Muzzard, who had apparently been standing by the window. As I moved from the bedside, where my body had been screening the dying man, she caught sight of his face upon the pillow.

With a shrill scream, lifting her hands to cover her eyes, she fell a crumpled heap upon the floor.

Managing to control myself until a doctor was summoned, I had my tragically unfortunate friend removed to a hospital.

Poor Mrs. Muzzard went out of one fit of hysterics into another, so that I was obliged to lay sufficient hold upon myself to plead with one of the neighbors for aid in attending her.

All these necessary duties served to keep my mind from dwelling upon the terrible ordeal through which we had gone. But late into the night I lay tossing upon my bed unable to sleep. I did not dare put out the light in my room, so fearful was I of the shadows of the dark.

All night long I was haunted, haunted, afraid to close my eyes lest I should see that grim vision of distorted flesh.

Once a window-shutter, loose from

its fastenings, swayed noisily in the wind, and I screamed in terror.

But when the dawn came and the gas grew wan against the light of day, with weariness and exhaustion I fell at last into a deep sleep.

VI

I WAS awakened by a knocking at the door.

"Come in!" I called, but in a voice which I could scarce recognize as my own.

Mrs. Seagle, the neighbor who had taken care of my stricken landlady, pushed an untidy head through the open doorway.

"There's someone to see you, sir," she said.

It was someone from the office, I fancied, to know why I had not gone to work. I felt a wave of rebellious annoyance, because, for this one dreadful day, I might not be left in peace.

"Well!" I cried petulantly as Mrs. Seagle did not move, "show the man up!"

"It's a lady."

"A lady," I echoed in consternation.

The woman grinned meaningly at me.

"Confound your impudence!" I cried, "show the lady into Mrs. Muzzard's parlor."

"Mrs. Muzzard ain't got no parlor," the woman retorted, retreating in some apprehension at my vehemence.

"Well, then, show her into one of the vacant rooms downstairs while I put my coat on."

As I entered the stuffy room a few moments later a tall figure clad in black arose from one of the hideous horse-hair chairs and approached me.

"Are you Mr. Scrimgeour?" she asked. Her voice was low and musically soft. I looked into a pair of large, wistful eyes. Something about them seemed familiar to me.

"You are . . ." I hesitated wonderingly.

"I am the daughter of Nathaniel Broome," she replied, and for a moment the heavy lids lowered over her eyes.

"I have come from Montreal. The day before yesterday I received a telegram from my father saying that he was ill, so, of course, I came at once."

"But have you seen your father, Miss Broome?"

"I called here early this morning and was told of my poor father's seizure."

"I wasn't told that anyone had called," I observed. "It's perhaps due to the fact that Mrs. Muzzard is ill. You see, everything is in confusion here . . . a neighbor . . ."

"Yes, I have learned that."

"And your father?" I asked.

"My father, Mr. Scrimgeour, is dead."

I could only stare, dumb and astonished. "Why haven't I been told?" I exclaimed at last. "To die like that, friendless and forsaken!"

"I have just come from my father's bedside," she replied. "I am here to bring you the sad news."

"Good God!" I exclaimed, suddenly remembering. "You saw . . . you saw . . .?" I dreaded to ask, yet wanted most frantically to know.

"I can't understand why," the young girl went on, looking inquiringly at me, "but the nurses at the hospital wouldn't let me take the cloth from my father's face."

I did not dare to look into her eyes. I could not reply.

"My father once told me in one of his letters that in case of anything happening to him I was to come to you for advice and for guidance. I have come now. Will you tell me what you know? It all seems very strange. I . . . I'm at a loss to understand. You will not refuse?"

With the pleading charm of her eyes

her overwhelming beauty encompassed me like a wave of some divine ether carrying me off my middle-aged feet.

"Dear friend," I replied, scarce able to keep the agitation from my voice, "I shall refuse you nothing in my power. Your father has left a number of papers which he hinted to me in words I didn't understand would tell us all we wished to know." My heart warmed under the look of gratitude in her eyes.

"And those papers, where are they?" she cried eagerly.

"The room, I fancy, is still untouched as we left it yesterday."

"Let us go then; I am all impatience."

Gravely I led the way upstairs to the ill-fated room. The naked boards of the old stairs creaked abominably as we trod upon them, and, thinking of the wretchedness of the upper rooms, I was ashamed.

VII

THE papers upon the table lay just as they had been left upon the previous day.

"Each page is numbered," said Miss Broome, looking them over. "We shall find little difficulty in reading them."

She busied herself collating the scattered leaves, bending her head to hide the turbulent emotion in her eyes.

Turning, with a wistful smile, she handed them to me.

"Here they are in their correct order," she said. "Would you care to read them aloud to me?"

"As you wish," I replied gravely, accepting the papers.

I hesitated for a moment, glancing at the young girl. Her radiant freshness seemed to be smothered in that tawdry setting.

"I'll open the window," I ventured; "the place is airless."

The manuscript bore every evidence of hasty writing and was difficult, at

first, to read; but after a page or two I grew accustomed to it and went on smoothly enough, my companion, listening quietly, not uttering a word.

What follows here has been copied down word for word from that astounding narrative known as "The Strange Case of Nathaniel Broome":

VIII

FEELING that I have only a short while to live, I must try to set down, as clearly and as concisely as possible, the true story of my unfortunate life.

Scrimgeour, who has proved so big-hearted a friend, has a right to know. How often have I not seen that look of baffled inquiry in his gentle eyes when they rested upon my seemingly quiet, untroubled face!

And Marguerite, my daughter, who has been the object of my deepest affection, what must she think of me! Poor child, she, too, has every right to be told.

But such a tale: fantastic, incredible as the ravings of an opium-haunted nightmare. . . .

My hand trembles; my eyes grow misty; I must make haste before it is too late.

My father, Lemuel Broome, was an artist, and from him, together with great physical beauty, I inherited a deep, æsthetic feeling for the beautiful.

My mother died upon giving birth to me. I was their only child.

I learned, in my childish years, to seek for Beauty and to know Beauty in everything.

"Beauty is Virtue; Ugliness is Sin." "That," my father used to say to me, "is all you know and all you need to know."

Small wonder is it then that as I grew from boyhood, through youth to manhood, sheltered and alone with my father, this doctrine of Beauty grew

with me, became a part of my very soul.

I shunned all ugliness; ugly thoughts, ugly places, ugly people. The servants about my father's house and estate were chosen for their good looks and not for their trustworthiness or their honesty.

My education was given me by private tutor at home, so that I need not suffer the vulgar contamination of a public school. In fact, until after his death, I had scarce set foot outside the high stone walls of my father's home.

When I was twenty years of age my father died.

Ignorant as I was of business or of the ugly ways of the world, I was a fair target for the cunning of any scoundrel who might chance to come into my path.

Such an enterprising person was my tutor, James Shirley. He was probably the most physically perfect specimen of a man that I have ever seen; but to that flawless beauty there was added an equally flawless lack of moral principle.

The details of his swindles and more heinous crimes may be found among the prison records. Suffice it to say that before James Shirley died he had succeeded in robbing me of almost everything I possessed. Then, reduced practically to beggary, I met the woman who since became my wife.

Though Angela has been dead fifteen years, I still cannot think of her without emotion. She was the most beautiful woman whom I have ever seen, the most radiantly lovely; a wealth of grace, of tender sweetness and charm. For five years we lived a life of well-nigh perfect happiness.

It is true my wife could never quite understand my unusual outlook upon life. She was amazed and sometimes a little fearful of my acute physical horror of ugliness. Yet, secure in her own surpassing loveliness, she sought only to please me and to be pleasing in my eyes.

Shortly after our daughter Mar-

guerite was born I began to notice a change in Angela. It was not that she had grown less beautiful, for motherhood had only added a new tenderness to her charms. No, the subtle change which I divined in her and mutely wondered at was to be found only in the expression of her eyes. The change which I thought could be noticed in them, however, was something that for a long time I could not find words to explain.

One evening as we sat together talking in the twilight, following some odd remark of hers, I glanced sharply at her and caught the weird expression for a moment in her face.

"My dearest," I exclaimed, "is there something the matter?"

She smiled and the strange look vanished.

"Why do you ask that question?" she returned. Then I told her of the fears which I had lately felt concerning her.

My explanation seemed deeply to move her.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," she cried, "you fill me with horror. For days past I have been trying to argue with myself that it has all been my childish fancy. I have told myself that over and over again. But now . . . if you, too, have seen it, it must be true!"

"Tell me, for heaven's sake," I cried in alarm, "tell me what it is!"

"Oh, I'm so much afraid! The terror of it has haunted me for so long! And yet you will protect me—if it's humanly possible to be protected."

"That is my right, dear," I answered. "Tell me."

"Come, then," she replied, and led me to the large mirror hanging above the mantel-piece.

"Stand perfectly still behind me, so, and look with all your courage at my reflection in the glass."

White with excitement engendered by the deathly seriousness of her words, I stood as she bade me, and gazed at our

two faces, pale and drawn, reflected in the mirror.

Her countenance, beautiful as a madonna's, was aglow from the flickering, mellow light of the grate fire. I stared at her, half mad with her loveliness.

"You have never been so beautiful," I began. The scent from her hair and the nearness of her adorable self; the smoothness of her bare shoulders, made the blood leap intoxicatingly in my veins. I wanted to kneel to her. I yearned with all my soul to worship, to abase my body at her exquisite feet.

"You are wonderfully beautiful—"

"Wait—wait! Keep looking into the mirror!" she whispered.

"Is there—is there any change?" she asked fearfully.

"No," I replied, and she gave a deep sigh of relief. Then slowly her image in the mirror began to grow misty and indistinct.

"It's a trick!" I cried, and my voice seemed high and strained. "It's a trick! You are playing a joke upon me!"

"Then, it *is* true," I heard her say in a hard, cold voice.

"What—in God's name!"

"Look, *look and you shall see!*"

The blurred image in the looking-glass started to clear.

But instead of the face of my wife there began to take shape an image so hideous, so ghoulish, that I can only compare it to the disintegration of—a human corpse!

IX

At this point in the extraordinary narrative I stopped reading. For, happening to glance up from the manuscript, I saw such horror in my listener's eyes that I had not the courage to continue.

"It is too harrowing," I said. "I must not go on."

"Read, read, my friend," replied Miss

Broome, shielding her eyes with her hands. I wondered at the remarkable nervous force displayed by one so young.

"Then first allow me to get you a drink of water," I replied.

She thanked me with a gracious inclination of her head as I returned with the glass. As she accepted it from my hand her cool fingers touched me. Something leaped in my turgid veins at the contact, and I resumed the reading of the story.

X

THERE was something, however, which I was able to notice even during the panic of fear that possessed me. I saw that the mysterious transmission of flesh had not changed the eyes. I seized my wife by the shoulders and turned her sharply about.

Her face was as I had always seen it, radiantly, hauntingly beautiful. The only change was in her eyes. Staring searchingly into them I tried with all my mind to read what I saw there. And the look that was in them was Pain.

We were both of us horribly frightened after our extraordinary experience, and sat up discussing it all night long, while little Marguerite, all unsuspecting, lay sleeping peacefully upstairs.

The gruesome illusion hung over our spirits for days. Neither one of us dared to leave the other for a moment alone. The shadows were peopled with ghosts, and dark places became hideous with the hidden menace.

I had all the mirrors in the house removed, and when we went out into the streets I hurried my wife past shop windows with averted eyes, afraid to see in some chance looking-glass the spectre that had become the terror of our lives.

I awoke each morning afraid to look into her eyes; I went to sleep beside her

with dread in my miserable soul. For always the terror haunted us, that some day I should look into her face and see without the mirror's baleful aid that festering putrefaction of flesh and bone.

XI

WE sent Marguerite to a convent near Montreal, so that she, poor child, might be spared the agonies that kept us fearful and eternal company.

Then, at last, the menace that for so many weeks had hung over us took tangible shape.

We had been trying to talk lightly together one evening, trying pitifully to avoid the one subject uppermost in our minds.

I was sitting close to my wife with an arm about her waist. Suddenly I felt her body shiver slightly under my touch.

"What is it?" I asked. "Are you cold?"

The answer came to me in halting, distorted words, as if she were speaking with very great difficulty.

"You'll not escape from me if I have to follow you from the grave!" But the voice that spoke was not the voice of my wife. Labored, painwacked though it was, I could recognize it. It was the voice of my old tutor, James Shirley!

I leaped from my chair, and in the horror that was written in my face my wife needed no mirror to see that at last the dreaded visitation had come and that the fleshly metamorphosis had taken place.

For one agonizing moment I caught the look of pain, of unutterable agony in her eyes, then, with a strangled scream, she fled from me to hide the loathsome body which had taken possession of her from my sight.

I followed wildly to her bedroom, pounding ineffectually upon the door. I could hear her inside, screaming and jabbering meaningless noises. She

must have gone completely out of her mind.

Then followed the sound of something falling and the smash of breaking glass. I knew that the lamp had been overturned. A moment later the smell of burning came to me through the door.

My desperate efforts finally succeeded in getting the door open.

I found the room ablaze, the oil from the lamp having spread all over the carpet. The window curtains had caught fire and the place was thick with smoke.

But writhing on the floor, a mass of leaping, venomous flame, my wife lay, filling the choking air with agonizing shrieks and heart-rending groans.

I seized her with one arm, attempting with the other hand to beat out the flames; but they only leaped about her more triumphantly than before.

By this time the conflagration had spread about us and I was obliged to carry her downstairs and out into the street.

I found shelter for my melancholy burden with some kind neighbors. Meanwhile my home was given over to the flames.

XII

ANGELA never spoke again. Her charred and mutilated body was buried, but I alone knew what it was which we had put into the grave. For the malignity which had pursued her, finding an easier entry into her passive mind, did not rest with her death. The evil spirit transferred itself to me!

In the phantom-haunted, grisly years that followed, through nights of fiendish mental torture and of bodily agony I learned a terrible intimacy with her ghostly murderer.

What I have found out will be incredible and preposterous to those who know nothing of spirit visitation or pos-

session; to those narrow-minded skeptics who brush aside all evidence of psychic phenomena as the unhinged ravings of the insane.

Scrimgeour, who has known me intimately during the last few months, can vouch, however, for my sanity and my reason.

But I have other evidences to support my statements. I have the testimony of a host of scientific investigators as well as the indisputable experiences of countless men and women who have given years to the study of this extraordinary mystery.

And more than all these, I *know!*—I *know!* I, who write these lines, trembling with fear at the fate awaiting me, lurking here in my very room! Waiting patiently, craftiness, cunning incarnate. Sometimes he sits in that far-off corner leering at me, contorting his ghastliness into still more loathsome expressions. There he taunts me, dares me, whispering to me words so lewd, so obscene, so frightful that I wonder the very walls do not tumble about us at their lascivious echoes.

And I know that, soon, soon, he will come nearer, he will dare to come nearer as he dared with my wife's most beautiful body. He will take possession of me as he took possession of her.

Already I have seen his shadow in the glass, and I know that it is the beginning of the end.

James Shirley, who lived a life of crime, of loathsome debauch and lasciviousness upon earth; James Shirley, whose body has long lain putrescent in its convict's grave, will creep at last into my soul, my brain; will take pos-

session of my very body, leaving me only his rotting carcass which lies mouldering in its tomb. . . .

XIII

HERE the manuscript ended. The papers dropped from my fingers and fell rustling to the floor.

Between us for several moments there was complete silence. The girl's cheeks were white as marble; her eyes big with terror.

Through the open window the quiet hum of the street traffic reached us, borne on the summer breeze. There the day's occupation spent itself in calm, unhurrying routine. . . .

I could hear a messenger boy whistling merrily. . . .

A young girl laughed.

The clanging of insistent bells mingled with the occasional drone of motor horns. Life, with its unimaginative sameness, was near, was all about us, yet we had no part in it.

Robbed by death of his earth body, James Shirley had killed twice in his feverish yearning to live again. I seemed to feel the presence of his malevolent spirit hovering about us, an eidolon, reaching out lustful, discarnate arms, trying, longing, aching for life.

Marguerite Broome, transcendently beautiful, with all the delicate aroma, the fresh intoxication of flowers about her, sat before me under the shadow of an impending doom. And I, old, withered, ridiculous in my new-found emotions, I who loved her, I who worshipped her, could only stare at her, impotent and pitifully afraid. . . .



The Man Who Would Not Die

By Harold Ward

A WOMAN, young, handsome, richly dressed, lay dead on the sidewalk. Over her stood a young man, hatless, his hair mussed, his face bruised and bleeding. Around them—the living and the dead—the crowd surged, held back by a little cordon of blue-coated policemen. A police automobile, its gong clanging raucously, dashed up to the curb and a tall, broad-shouldered man in plain clothes leaped out and elbowed his way through the throng of curiosity seekers to the sergeant in charge.

"Great Heavens, Casey!" he exclaimed, as his glance fell upon the face of the woman. "Do you know who she is?"

Casey touched his cap respectfully. "This chap here says that she's Mrs. Augustus Winters, the young wife that old Winters, the millionaire, married a couple of years ago. Used to be an actress before she married him, I understand. I don't know the lady myself, inspector."

The big man nodded. "He's right, Casey. It's Mrs. Winters all right." He caught himself with a start. "No, by George, it isn't!"

The bareheaded young man with the bruised face interrupted. "You are wrong, sir. I know that it is Mrs. Winters."

The inspector gave him a quick look. "You mean that you think it is she. The fact of the matter is that Mrs. Winters died suddenly yesterday afternoon."

"You must be wrong," argued the other stubbornly. "I have waited on Mrs. Winters hundreds of times. I

know her as well as I know myself. And she was alive and well ten minutes ago."

"Couldn't you be mistaken? I'll admit that this woman looks enough like her to be her double. Must be her sister."

"I insist that you are wrong, sir. I'll take my oath that this is Mrs. Winters lying there."

Inspector Des Moines scratched his chin reflectively. "It's got me beat!" he declared. "There's only one thing to do, under the circumstances, Casey—get the body to the morgue and send for old Winters to identify it. Ask him if his wife was a twin. And," turning to the young man, "you get your hat and come on with me to the station. I want to have a talk with you."

II

SEATED at the big, flat-top desk in his well appointed office, Des Moines lighted a cigar in silence, offered another to his companion, then suddenly demanded:

"Now, come clean, young fellow. What's the story behind this affair? Let's have the straight of it."

The lad—he was scarcely more than a boy—gulped to hide his agitation.

"I—I—" he stammered.

The inspector smiled kindly. "Don't get scared, my boy. Don't get scared. Bless your heart, sonny, I know that you didn't kill the woman. I only want to get at the facts in the case as speedily as possible. Just forget my gruff way of speaking—it's my natural voice."

"I hardly know how to start," began

the other, his fears vanishing under the inspector's kindly manner. "The lady—Mrs. Winters—came into Harden & Company's store, where I am employed as head salesman in the jewelry department, and asked to be shown something rather 'nifty' in a diamond brooch. That was yesterday afternoon. She looked at a number of pieces, finally selecting one valued at thirty thousand dollars. She asked me to lay it aside for her, stating that she wanted her mother, who was buying it for her for a birthday present, to look at it before she made her final decision.

"This morning she returned and, coming into the store, requested that I accompany her to the curb with the brooch, as her mother, who was an invalid, was outside in the limousine. Of course it was irregular, but she is an old customer—you know Harden & Company's policy—so I did as requested. I handed her the jewel case just as we reached the machine and she passed it in to the woman—whom I supposed was her mother—who was leaning back against the cushions. The curtains were down and the interior was in semi-darkness, so I did not get a clear view of the face of the lady.

"Just as she handed the other the jewel, the chauffeur, who had been keeping his engine running, leaned out and slugged me with something—a sandbag, I imagine. At the same time Mrs. Winters made a quick leap for the interior of the machine. But, involuntarily, as I fell I grasped her, and we went down in a heap together.

"The chauffeur immediately started his machine and, before I recovered my wits, which had been largely knocked out of me, he was around the corner. I didn't even have an opportunity to get the number of the auto."

"We have already attended to that," interrupted the inspector. "Casey'll have it down in his notebook if anyone

in the vicinity chanced to notice it. Were there many people on the sidewalk at the time?"

"They were constantly passing—the usual ten o'clock crowd."

"Um-m-m. All right, go ahead with your story."

"There is nothing more to tell. When I came to my senses—and I couldn't have been dazed more than a second or two—the machine was disappearing around the corner, as I just told you, and the woman was lying on the sidewalk beside me—*dead*. It must have been apoplexy, inspector, for I'll swear on a stack of Bibles that I didn't seize her hard enough to kill her." He hesitated, then continued, haltingly: "But what puzzles me is why Mrs. Winters—a woman of untold wealth—would stoop to aid in a crime like that."

He looked at the inspector for an answer to his question. The latter smoked in silence for a second. "That's what we've got to find out, my boy. You said your name was—"

"Johnson—Adolph Johnson."

"Oh, yes. And she got away clean with the jewelry did she? The other woman—the one in the machine—and the chauffeur?"

Johnson nodded.

They were interrupted by a rap at the door. In response to Des Moines' gruff "Come in!" Casey entered, his good-natured, red face glowing with excitement.

"What the dickens do you know about it, sir?" he exploded. "Winters has identified the body, positively, as being that of his wife."

"But Mrs. Winters died yesterday afternoon."

"She did. *But sometime during the night her body disappeared. And this morning they found the body of her maid, dead, in the casket from which the mistress had been taken!*"

"Good God! Murdered?"

"Not a mark on her body."



"I stepped to the casket. The body of my wife was gone! In its place was the body of Dolly, her maid, cold in death!"—Page 96

III

BEFORE the inspector could recover from his astonishment, the door burst open and a man, grey-haired, tall, angular—beyond the middle age—rushed in without the formality of rapping. His wrinkled face was drawn and haggard, his eyes bloodshot and red from weeping, his whole appearance that of a man almost bereft of his senses.

"Inspector," he shrieked, "who is the guilty man? Who has desecrated the poor, dead body of my wife? Who stole it from the casket? Damn them! Damn them! Damn them! Who murdered Dolly, her maid? She was murdered, I say! I know it! I know it!"

He glared about him for a second. Then: "Give him to me, I say! I'll tear the scoundrel to pieces with my naked hands! Give him to me! I demand justice!"

He dropped into a chair and burst into hysterical sobs. For an instant there was silence. Des Moines chewed thoughtfully on his cigar. Johnson, white-faced, unused to scenes such as this, fidgeted nervously, his fingers twitching. Assuming the quieting tone of a mother addressing her child, the inspector turned to the weeping man.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Winters," he began, slowly. "I know that it's hard—it's awful, terrible. But we'll get at the bottom of it some way. I promise you on my word as a man that I'll capture the guilty wretch and hang him. Yes, curse him! I'll hang him higher than a kite, or I'll quit the force! But the affair is growing more puzzling every minute. I can't make head nor tail out of it as it stands now. Won't you let me hear your story?"

Winters sat up and dried his eyes. "What can I tell you?" he sobbed. "How shall I begin?"

"Start with the death of your wife."

"There is little to tell. She was strick-

en, suddenly, yesterday afternoon while dressing to go out. Dolly Matthews, her maid, who was with her at the time, hastily summoned assistance. But she passed away before the doctor arrived—in fact, even before the servants, who responded to Miss Matthews' cries, could reach her. The physician—Doctor Bennett, the well known specialist—gave as his opinion that the cause of death was heart failure.

"The body was prepared for burial in the usual way. I sat beside the casket until nearly morning. Then, in response to the urgent appeals of the friends and relatives who had rushed to my side in my hour of trouble, I surrendered my post to Miss Matthews. The poor girl loved my wife devotedly and was terribly grief stricken over her untimely death. And now she's gone, too!" He burst into another paroxysm of sobbing. Des Moines waited until he regained control of himself, then motioned for him to continue.

"I could not content myself. My nerves were nearly at the breaking point, although the physician had given me an opiate to quiet me. After lying on the bed and tossing around for an hour or two, I arose and again sought the side of my dear one. I was surprised not to find Miss Matthews in the room, which was empty, although there were several people in the study just across the hall.

"I stepped to the casket. As there is a God in Heaven, the body of my wife was gone! In its place was the body of Dolly, her maid, cold in death!"

"There was no evidence of foul play in the case of the maid?"

"No, although I am certain, under the circumstances, that she was murdered. She couldn't have died a natural death and crawled into the casket herself, could she?" He glared at the inspector as if expecting a denial. Receiving no answer he continued:

"My cries brought those who were in the other room and we immediately sum-

moned Doctor Bennett, who made an examination. He would not even venture an opinion as to what caused death.

"Meanwhile, I was almost beside myself. Can you blame me? We searched the house from cellar to garret, looking for the remains of my wife. Failing to find her body, we were about to call up police headquarters—which we should have done in the beginning—when I received the call to go to the morgue. There I found the poor dear. I demand that immediate steps be taken to bring the perpetrator of the hellish deed to justice! I am a wealthy man. I will spend every cent I possess to hang the wretch. Damn him!"

Inspector Des Moines scratched his chin reflectively. "It's got me beat, Mr. Winters. I'll confess that I never came across a case like this in all of my twenty years on the force. You are ready to swear that your wife died yesterday afternoon and that you saw her body in the coffin. A reputable physician made an examination and pronounced her dead. Yet—Are you sure that the body you examined in the morgue is that of Mrs. Winters?"

"Positively. I identified it, not only by her sweet girlish face, but by a small birthmark on her left shoulder."

"She had no sister? She was not a twin?"

"She was an only child."

"Then, Mr. Winters, how do you reconcile your story with that of Mr. Johnson, here, who swears that the woman whose body you saw in the morgue, and have identified as your wife, was alive and well at ten o'clock this morning? Yes, he even goes farther and asserts that he talked to her and that she, aided by two others, robbed Harden & Company of a valuable diamond brooch."

Winters leaped to his feet, his eyes blazing, his face aflame with rage. "He's an infernal liar and a blackguard—"

Before he could continue, there was a

rap at the door. Des Moines' secretary entered. He handed the inspector an envelope marked "*Important. Winters Case.*"

The policeman tore the envelope open and glanced hastily over the contents. Then, with an oath, he read it aloud to the others:

My dear Inspector: I have just started. I am Lessman, the man who laughs at death! I killed Mrs. Winters! I killed her as I have killed others—and as I will kill again—by the power of thought alone! Unravel that if you can.

What is death, my dear inspector? Who knows? No one but me. What is the human body? Only a prison in which the soul is confined—a piece of clay to be discarded at will. God kills when he wishes. Why not I? It suited my purpose to use the mortal form of Mrs. Winters, and I took it.

Hereafter, I will give you due and timely notice of each crime I commit—and I assure you that they will be numerous.

With best wishes, I sign myself
LESSMAN, The Man Who Will Not Die.

IV

THE Winters' mystery was the most interesting news event of the day and the afternoon papers made the most of it. At its best, the city administration was not a favorite with the press. Augustus Winters was wealthy and popular, his wife had been one of the leaders of the faster young society set. As a result, the police department was grilled to a turnover for what was termed the laxity of its methods.

Inspector Des Moines, accustomed to the vagaries of journalism, used to being praised one day and reviled the next, gave little heed to what was said or written about him or his department. Yet he read every detail carefully in the hope that the reporters had gathered some

new evidence that would tend to help in working out the solution of the puzzle. For in the past he had secured much valuable help from the newspaper men. But this time he was doomed to disappointment. They could find nothing—absolutely nothing—that gave him any additional light.

Nothing had been left undone. Men from the inspector's office had combed the city in search of a clue to the mysterious Lessman. But without avail. Only the machine used in the Harden & Company robbery had been found. Stolen earlier in the day from a garage in the outskirts of the city, it had been abandoned by the side of a country road when the users were through with it. Beyond that one small detail, no headway had been made.

The newspapers had assigned their best man to the case. They could secure not even a trace of the unknown perpetrator of the startling crimes—for Des Moines had not thought it advisable to take the press into his confidence in so far as the threatening letter he had received was concerned.

Tired and disgruntled, he was about to leave the office, for the night, when the 'phone on his desk thrilled. He picked the receiver from its hook and answered.

"Inspector Des Moines?" queried a heavy, male voice.

Des Moines answered in the affirmative. The man at the other end of the line chuckled to himself.

"Well?" growled the Inspector. "Did you call me to the 'phone at this time of the night to tell me a joke?"

Instantly, the quiet laughter ceased and the voice came clear and strong across the space. "No, inspector, I beg your pardon. This is Lessman speaking!—Lessman, the Man Who Will Not Die! I imagined that I would catch you in your office. I had a notion to call around and see you, then thought better of it. Can you understand me all right?

"Now, listen to me carefully, Des Moines. I told you that I would give you fair warning when I was ready to make my next move. I always keep my word. Are you listening? Tomorrow morning, on the stroke of ten, I am going to kill a man! Where? Oh, no, I have no objection to telling you where—on the street in front of 1416 Broadway—yes, 1416 Broadway! Probably a policeman! No, no, not you. But be on the job, inspector. I am doing this for a purpose. I hate the police, damn them! But it will give you an opportunity of studying my methods. Ha, ha! You and I will match wits frequently from now on.

"Oh, yes. Before I say good night I'll make you a promise. If you'll be present tomorrow, I'll promise you that I will do my best to hunt you up and talk with you. You need not go to the trouble of notifying the papers, for I have done that myself. I've asked them all to send their best men. That's all for this time. Good-bye!"

The receiver at the other end was hung up with a click.

Then Des Moines was galvanized into action. Frantically he jiggled the hook up and down until Central answered sharply.

"Quick!" he demanded. "This is Inspector Des Moines at Headquarters. Where did that call come from just now? Get on the job and find out. Fifty dollars in it for you if you'll find out immediately!"

"Hold the line, please!"

Thirty seconds later his vigilance was rewarded.

"This is the Chief Operator. The call you inquired about came from booth number fourteen at the Biltmore. Send the reward to Operator One-hundred-and-Six, please."

To secure a connection with the switchboard operator at the Biltmore required only an instant.

"Inspector Des Moines, Headquarters, speaking. A man just called me up from booth number fourteen. There's a ten in it for you if you'll get a description of him for me inside of a minute. Do you understand? Move fast!"

"You can send the ten right along, inspector. The man who used booth number fourteen stopped at the desk and gave me a tip as he passed out. He just went through the door a second ago."

"Fine! Fine! His description? Quick!"

"You know him, inspector. *It was Augustus Winters, the millionaire!*"

V

INSPECTOR DES MOINES was a man of action. While even his best friends did not claim for him the brilliancy of a Sherlock Holmes, a Cleek of The Forty Faces, an Arsène Lupin, or any of the other celebrated sleuths of fiction, yet, once given the slender thread of a clew, he followed it to the end. The taunting telephone call led him to believe that, in Augustus Winters, he had the master mind who was directing the crimes in the millionaire's own household. Why Winters would make way with his wife and her maid—for the detective was firmly of the belief that both women had been murdered—he did not attempt to reason out. He only knew that a crime had been committed and that he, as an officer of the law, was pledged to find the murderer, regardless of who he might be. Just now all straws pointed to Augustus Winters himself.

He believed that Winters had overlooked a point in telephoning from a public booth in a hotel where he was so well known; that he was likely to recall his indiscretion and, in an effort to retrieve his lost ground, hasten home in order to provide himself with an alibi, the officer believed, would be his next move. Consequently, to checkmate that

alibi and prove it false from its very inception was the obvious thing to do.

He reached for the telephone again and called the number of the millionaire's residence. Not over three or four minutes had elapsed since Winters—or Lessman, as the inspector believed him to be—had talked to him from the Biltmore. To drive from the hotel to his home would take the better part of an hour, even with a fast car. It would take nearly as long to go from Headquarters. And there was always the danger of an accident. Des Moines thought rapidly, then made his decision. The telephone was faster and better than making the trip in person and standing the possible chance of having the aged criminal—and the inspector now had no doubts on that score—reach there first.

A sleepy voice answered his ring. "Augustus Winters' residence," it said.

"Who is this?" he demanded.

"Wilkins, the butler, sir."

"Has Mr. Winters returned, yet?"

"He has not been out, sir."

"Let me talk to him then." Des Moines chuckled softly to himself as he made the demand. He knew that there was no possibility of the millionaire replying. And the testimony of Wilkins would support his charges when the time came to prove the falsity of the alibi.

"I'll connect you with his room, sir," answered the butler. A second later the inspector was astonished to hear the clear, calm voice of Winters at the other end of the wire. It nearly floored him. He was almost too nonplussed to reply. For Winters, obviously, could not be in two places at once. If this was Winters, then the man who had called him up from the Biltmore must, necessarily, be an impostor. And what manner of man was he who could disguise himself so cleverly that even those who were personally acquainted with the millionaire mistook the counterfeit for the real?

"Des Moines speaking. When did you get back?" he asked casually, making an effort to hide the agitation that he felt.

"When did I get back? I was not aware that I had been away!" answered the other testily. "What was it you wanted, inspector? Must be something important to call up at two o'clock in the morning. Have you secured some new information? Or, possibly you have the guilty wretch under arrest?"

Des Moines knew that he was defeated. The least he could do was back out gracefully. It was not necessary to divulge his suspicions. He informed Winters as casually as he was able of the telephone message he had received from "The Man Who Would Not Die," reserving, however, the information that the other had been masquerading as Winters. Then, he abruptly hung up the phone.

The case was growing more puzzling every minute. Instead of the telephone call clearing up the mystery, he was forced to confess to himself that it only made it darker.

VI

WHO was Lessman, the man who termed himself "The Man Who Would Not Die"? Was there such a person, or was it an alias? Des Moines, humped up in his chair, chewing his dry cigar, went over the case detail by detail. Figuratively speaking, he held it up to the light and dissected it bit by bit, piece by piece. And, when he had completed the process, he was obliged to confess himself as much in the dark as ever.

Who was Lessman? Who was the man of iron nerve and diabolical cunning? Could it be Winters? The inspector had been inclined to suspect the aged moneybags—was still disposed to

do so—but what was his motive? Was he insane? Had he the ability—and the nerve—to carry out such a plot? And there, too, was his alibi, cast-iron, puncture proof.

If Winters was not Lessman, who was? Could it be Doctor Bennett? The physician admittedly had more opportunity to commit the murders than any one else. But, in his case, too, there was lacking the motive. Could young Johnson, the diamond salesman, be the man? In his case there was a motive—the theft of the brooch. But, on the other hand, there was nothing to show that he had ever visited the Winters home under any pretext. And it was natural to suppose that the person who could cause the death of both the mistress and the maid must have had, sometime at least, entrée to the millionaire's residence. Des Moines had had both the physician and the salesman investigated. The reports of his men, lying on the desk before him, showed nothing against them.

Who had spirited the body of Mrs. Winters from its casket? How could she, a dead woman, be alive? And Johnson, as well as other employees of Harden & Company, swore that she had been? They had seen her—talked with her—nearly twenty-four hours after her reported death. How had the body of the maid been placed in the casket the mistress had occupied? Who was the disguised man who had so cleverly passed himself off on the employees of the Biltmore as Augustus Winters?"

It was not until dawn was breaking that Des Moines gave up wrestling with the problem. And when, at last, tired and stiff from his long vigil, he arose and stretched himself, he was forced to admit that he knew no more than when he had first been called into the case.

There was nothing to do but wait.

VII

HUMAN nature is peculiar. A circus always advertises a thriller as its chief attraction; people attend in the hope of seeing the performer make the one little miscalculation that will end fatally. The newspapers had heralded the announcement sent them by Less-man in huge type. Their front pages shrieked forth in colored ink and huge type the news that at ten o'clock the mysterious man who in his letter confessed to the murder of Mrs. Winters and her maid would take another life.

For miles people came for the purpose of enjoying what promised to be a thrilling spectacle. A score of policemen attempted to stem the tide, but without success. Around 1416 Broadway, the street was packed for blocks in either direction. Even the reserves were called into action.

In front of 1416 a knot of policemen, headed by Inspector Des Moines in person, waited stolidly, silently, in a suppressed fever of excitement, like soldiers waiting the signal for an attack. About them the crowd surged and stormed. But bent upon keeping the fiend from carrying out his threat, Des Moines had cleared the street for a space of nearly a hundred feet, holding the curiosity seekers back with his cordon of bluecoats.

Hundreds of automobiles were caught in the vortex of humanity, their drivers unable to either go forward or to back out. The officers were forced to let well enough alone; to handle the jam was a task beyond the power of the guardians of the law.

In one of the machines Des Moines recognized the pale, haggard face of Augustus Winters. The millionaire, huddled up in the back seat, his every movement showing the mental strain under which he was laboring, caught the inspector's eye and beckoned. Des

Moines shouldered his way through the mass of humanity to the side of his automobile.

"I've been caught in the crowd, inspector, and we're unable to get out. Can't you help us? You can understand the awful agony that I am suffering at such a time."

Des Moines shook his head. "Don't you realize, Mr. Winters, that if it were humanly possible, I'd have this street cleared and keep it cleared? My men are working in from the outside—but it'll be a job of hours, I'm afraid."

"But, my God, man! You are not going to allow this murder to take place, are you?"

Des Moines shrugged his shoulders. "Out of the hundreds of thousands of people packed in this vicinity, Mr. Winters, show me how to pick out the one man—the man I want. My hands are tied. There is nothing for me to do. I must bide my time and wait for the fiend to strike."

Suddenly, the aged millionaire clutched the other's shoulder. His eyes dilated. He leaned forward, his muscles twitching, his face ashen and drawn. "Oh, God!" he shrieked. "*It's happening! Look! Look!*"

His long, skinny forefinger pointed far out over the heads of the crowd. And then he fell in a heap on the bottom of the car in a dead faint.

Des Moines leaped upon the running board of the machine and gazed in the direction Winters had pointed. Then, with a yell, he jumped to the ground, and, hurling people to the right and left, plunged through the mass of humanity like a maddened bull.

For Officer Ryan, a strapping figure of a man, with the muscular figure of an athlete, who, a second before, had been in the prime of health, had suddenly thrown his arms in the air. For an instant he wove backwards and forwards, his face twisted, every muscle

tensed, as if struggling against the unseen hands that were pulling him down. Then he gave voice to a shrill, hideous, agonized scream, and, lurching like a drunken man for a pace or two, crumpled up in a heap on the pavement.

A dozen of his brother officers leaped to his assistance. They were hurled back as if by an electric shock. Arising, they fought against the invisible force that held them in its power, but without avail. Open-mouthed, their feet fastened to the pavements as by steel bands, they were forced to stand and watch the torture of their comrade.

As Des Moines broke through the edge of the crowd, the unknown power that held them in check lessened. In a body they dashed to the stricken man's side and turned him on his back. His eyes were already glazing. His hands were cold and clammy. On his forehead was the sweat of death. He shivered spasmodically. Then his jaw dropped. Lessman had struck. "The Man Who Would Not Die" had won another victory.

Silence. Tense, nerve-racking silence. Eyes were peering, heads moving. On all sides excitement was visible on every face. But no one spoke a word. The agony was too great.

"Boom!" High up in a tower a clock was striking. Every eye was turned towards it. But still no word. Only the soul-straining, awful silence.

"Boom!"

"Boom!"

The clock was striking ten. Lessman had kept his word to the minute. A woman screamed. Her shrill, hysterical shriek broke the spell.

Then over the heads of the silent, awe-filled crowd rang a burst of laughter—cold, haunting, diabolical laughter—weird, mysterious—the gloating of a fiend.

Pandemonium broke loose. Those in the front lines, frozen with supernatu-

ral terror, turned, white-faced, from the horror that they had witnessed and sought an avenue of escape. None knew but the arch-fiend might continue—that, any moment, others might fall, blasted like a tree after a lightning stroke.

Men fought and struggled to flee from the invisible. Who knew? Lessman might be he who stood beside you. Even now he might be seeking another victim! Nothing could stop him. He was omnipotent! Every man suspected his neighbor. The police labored with club and fist. It was like stemming the ocean's tide with a shovel. It was a panic, a riot in which the stronger trampled the weaker under foot. There was no mercy—only a desire to escape from the spot. Men and women dropped, fainting, exhausted, dying where they fell, beneath the feet of their maddened fellows. Their dying screams only added to the fright of those who rushed over them. Automobiles, their drivers stricken by the fear that mastered all, dashed madly ahead, slaughtering and crippling. The pavement, covered with dead and wounded, was like a battlefield. It was a miniature hell—an inferno created by the diseased brain of a devil in human form.

When the officers had finally completed their task and the street was cleared—when the last ambulance had departed with its ghastly load—Des Moines looked about him for Winters. He was gone. An officer remembered seeing the millionaire's machine driving away, its owner huddled up in the back seat, shrieking and babbling, his shoulders shaking with hysterical sobs, his face wearing the look of a man who has just escaped from Hades.

The inspector stood deep in thought. "He said that he'd speak to me! And yet—dammit all! The man never lived who could act such a part. It can't be

him!" And, with a shake of his head, he returned to his duties.

VIII

IN a lonely house in one of the outlying districts—a house set down in the midst of great trees and gardens, surrounded by a high stone wall—dwelt a man of extraordinary powers. To his neighbors he was merely an Oriental gentleman of wealth and refinement, who preferred solitude in an alien country to a position of magnificence and power in his own. But to the initiate—that little band of followers selected from every walk of life—he was the ambassador of a tiny group of learned men who, for centuries before Jesus, the Christ, walked upon this earth, have been striving to bring about the regeneration of the world. Their representatives are to be found in every large center of population, working quietly, unostentatiously, teaching, preaching, gaining an occasional recruit, ever content to bide their time, knowing that years are but seconds in the general scheme of the universe.

Mahommed Gunga, the Master, as he was known to those who loved and obeyed him, was a truly wonderful man. Taken, when a child, by The Holy Ones, his life had been dedicated by them to the service of his fellow creatures. Masters of mystery, delving far beyond the comprehension of ordinary humans into the phenomena of life, they had poured their combined wisdom into his open ears. And, their task completed, they had sent him out into the world, as they had sent many others before him, to spread the propaganda of the great work to which they had pledged themselves.

None knew the limits of his power, none the depths of his great learning. To him all things were possible. To him life's mysteries were but common-

places. Master of theosophy, philosophy, and the sciences, what, to the novice, seemed to savor of the weird, the mysterious, the occult, was to his mighty mind but the working of nature's laws.

It was to the shrine of The Master that Des Moines always journeyed when confronted by a puzzle past his comprehension. For the clear, reasoning power of the sage untangled riddles which, to the ordinary mind, appeared beyond solution.

So, it was to The Master that the inspector hurried as rapidly as his high-powered car would carry him after the Broadway horror had shown him the futility of his reasoning.

IX

He found The Master walking in the garden, a faraway look in his soft, dreamy eyes, in silent communion with nature. Upon the policeman's arrival, however, his face lighted up and he shook hands warmly. For Mohammed Gunga had none of the methods of the charlatan; to his friends his life was an open book to be read by all who cared to take the time.

"Greetings, my friend," he smiled. "What new problem brings you here this morning? For I dare not hope that so busy a man as yourself would deign to make a purely social call. Come walk beside me and tell me all about it." He laughed sadly as he continued: "Will you never remember, my friend, that every atom has its master and recognizes his intelligence? Have we not been taught to know that we have but to seek the way by making the profound obeisance of the soul to the bright star that burns within?"

Des Moines fell into step at his side and hastily sketched the events of the past thirty-six hours. For Mohammed Gunga did not keep in touch with the

world; newspapers never passed his doorway.

When the inspector completed his tale, The Master turned in his tracks and, placing his hands on the big man's shoulders, said in a voice that quivered with emotion:

"Dear friend, you have rendered the cause a greater favor than you realize by bringing your problem to me. For Lessman, in his egotism, has at last unmasked himself. Now we can fight him in the open. But I forget that you do not understand. Sit here on this bench with me and let me explain.

"Professor Darius Lessman is, without a doubt, the greatest intellect this or any other century has produced. He was employed at one time as teacher of psychology in a small, inland college. His great ability soon brought him to the attention of The Holy Men to whose cause we are all devoted. You know the lengths to which they will go to further the spreading of the great work. They sought him out. He became the favorite pupil of one in whose footsteps even I am not fitted to walk. He was tried in various ways and found not wanting. He was taught all—everything. His wonderful brain grasped in a few years that which others have spent a lifetime in learning. So proficient did he become that plans were made to send him across the waters for final instruction from those, the hem of whose garments you and I may never hope to touch.

"The Creator of all things never intended that a man should have the brain that was bestowed upon Darius Lessman. The man is an anomaly. The devil must have had a hand in his making and, when his training was completed, took him for his own. For Lessman, crazed by the power he found was within him, conceived the idea of living forever. He believed

that he was greater than the God who created him.

"For months he practised in secret, attempting to transfer his soul from one human body to another at the command of his will. Failing, he sought his old Master, told him his secret and begged him for help. When the Master turned upon him in horror and loathing, he killed the good old man to protect his own devilish secret.

"Then he fled with a woman he had captivated by means of his diabolical wiles—a pure girl named Meta Vannetta, who, too, had been an humble pupil of the murdered Master. She became Lessman's tool—his accomplice.

"Together, they worked out Lessman's plans in some secret place, spreading death and destruction wherever they went in order to gain the human clay with which to work. We have followed them, tracking them from country to country, yet seldom daring to strike because of our knowledge that he was our superior. For Lessman is a monster—a man who laughs at death. And none has been found strong enough to kill his twisted soul. The cell was never made that could hold him. For he has but to discard his body and seize upon that of another. Many men of our faith have met him. He has killed them all by the power of his will.

"The brain has not been made that can match his in a duel of wills. Even I am fearful of him—and I am backed by the united intelligence of the Holy Men who are with me in spirit night and day. His is a mind gone wild—amuck, as you would say in the vernacular. For years I have prepared myself for the meeting. Am I fitted for the ordeal?

"I tell you, my friend, the time has come. *Lessman must die!* We must kill him for the sake of humanity! Not as one man kills another. We must

kill his soul, even though we are forced to call upon the Holy Ones for aid. For the time you must forget that you are the policeman, and become the protector of mankind. We must gird ourselves for the battle, trusting in God to protect the right. Now do you understand?"

Des Moines drew a trembling hand across his brow, from which the sweat was pouring. "God," he muttered, hoarsely. "It's horrible—unbelievable."

The Master patted his shoulder affectionately. "I realize it, my friend. Yet, to a certain extent, you have been trained to see that which, to the ordinary mind, appears obtuse. Multiply that which you know, and understand, by hundreds, and you comprehend my wisdom. And I am but an infant in intellect compared to Darius Lessman.

"The man cares for but two things—riches and power. Seek for the man who would profit most by the death of Augustus Winters. And, when you have found him, return to me. Further than that I can tell you nothing. I must go now and, in prayer and meditation, prepare myself for the inevitable meeting."

X

INSPECTOR DES MOINES left the home of The Master, his head in a whirl. Although his years of experience in grappling with criminality in all of its sickening forms had made him a man far beyond the ordinary in point of intellect, his brain was too well acquainted with the wonder-worker he had just left to doubt his veracity.

He had seen the terrible power of Lessman in the case of the unfortunate Ryan. The other officers who had battled against the unseen force were unable to add any information to what he already knew. They could only say that, for the instant, a will more powerful than their

own had held them in check. What it was, they could not explain. Nor could they describe their sensations. Pondering over the matter as he whirled citywards the inspector could only shake his head. He was face to face with the greatest mystery he had ever tackled—a mystery so big that only The Master himself could fathom it.

As he came to a cross street, he suddenly changed his mind and directed the chauffeur to drive to the Winters home. He would again study the millionaire at close range. He was unable to reconcile himself to the belief that the slow-witted, hysterical man of money was the enormous intellect described by Mohammed Gunga. Yet, everything fitted in to make a case against Winters—only to tumble to pieces at the next turn.

There was the telephone call. His men had investigated. Not only was the operator ready to swear that it had been Winters who called from booth number fourteen, but the cigar girl as well. The man had stopped at the cigar stand for an instant. He was well known to the girl in charge, who had addressed him by name, as had the clerk on duty at the time. Yet, three minutes later, Winters had answered the telephone at his own home ten miles away. Clearly, a man could not be in two places at the same time. Nor was it within the power of any human being, by any modern means of transportation, to transport himself that distance within the time given.

Wilkins answered the inspector's ring. His master was in the parlor sitting beside the body of his beloved wife. He would announce the inspector.

A second later he returned and ushered Des Moines into the big reception hall. The inspector shook hands with the millionaire. Then, his eyes on the other's face, he plunged immediately into the reason for his call.

"Mr. Winters," he said, "I believe that

I am on the right track at last. But I need some information which only you can give me. Will you do it?"

There was no hesitancy on the part of the man of wealth. "Ask me anything you wish, inspector. I will answer your question to the best of my ability."

Des Moines bored on.

"Winters," he said, sharply, "who is your heir?"

The millionaire started.

"Why, er—I don't understand what you are getting at?" he exclaimed.

"Just this. If I am correct in my guess, your life is in danger. In view of this morning's happenings, I am at last firmly convinced that Mrs. Winters' death was nothing more or less than a cold-blooded murder! So, too, was the death of the maid! I will admit that several times I have had my doubts. Now I know!"

Winters started back, aghast. "Horrible! Horrible!" he cried. "It is hard to believe—yet it must be true. But who could have so hated my poor wife as to take her life?"

The inspector continued relentlessly. "With Mrs. Winters out of the way, it is my belief that you will be the next to go. We must protect you. Now who is going to profit by all this devilry? Have you made a will?"

Winters put his hand to his head. "Surely, it cannot be true. You cannot believe that they—mere children—"

"Who are they, man? Speak up!"

"My nephew, Thomas De Pew, and my niece, Cora Dayton, his cousin. Everything I have will go to them. Mrs. Winters had no near relatives. My will has been made for months. Of course, had my wife lived, she would have inherited all."

"Do they live in the city?"

"They make their home with me. They have lived here since childhood. Both are orphans."

"I would like to talk with them, ques-

tion them, without their knowing the reason. Will you kindly summon them? Tell them that I am merely seeking additional data for my report."

Winters, white-faced, arose. "I will do as you wish, inspector," he said, slowly. "But you are wrong in suspecting those children. Thomas is but nineteen years of age. His cousin is nearly a year younger. Theirs cannot be the brains that planned this horrible outrage."

He stepped into the adjoining room, only to reappear, an instant later, with the information that both of the young people had driven downtown for the afternoon.

Inspector Des Moines left the Winters home feeling that he had made no material progress.

XI

THE funeral services for the late Mrs. Winters had been held and the body tenderly laid away in the family vault in Rose Hill cemetery. At the same hour, in another part of the city, amid more humble surroundings, was held the funeral of Dolly Matthews, the maid.

Alone in his office, Inspector Des Moines sat scanning the afternoon papers. They were still filled with criticisms of the police administration. Nor did the inspector blame them greatly. For he was obliged to confess himself beaten—defeated at every turn of the road. He had attended the funeral of Mrs. Winters in person. Several of his best plain clothes men had mingled with the crowd. Others had been present at the funeral of the maid. Their reports were one and the same. There was nothing—absolutely nothing—to report.

Over the telephone, he had given The Master the results of his interview with Winters. Mohammed Gunga had advised him to say nothing, do nothing, until Lessman again showed his hand.

Lost in reverie, he went over every

phase of the case. A stone wall confronted him. There was nothing upon which he could even base a theory. Even though he succeeded in pinning the crimes on Winters, what jury would believe the incredible story? There was not even a motive. He would be laughed out of court. Mohammed Gunga was his only hope.

The telephone tinkled jarringly, startling him out of his day dreams. The voice which answered his gruff "Hello!" was that of a stranger, agitated, jerky.

"Inspector, this is Thomas De Pew, Augustus Winters' nephew. For the love of God, come out here quick! Something awful has happened.

"I don't know what it is. I can't explain. I only know that a stranger called here shortly after we returned from the funeral and inquired for my uncle. Wilkins, the butler, heard him request a private interview. Uncle Gus took him into his study and closed the door. We supposed that he had departed, for, later, my uncle left the house for a short stroll—or, at least, we so imagined.

"A few minutes ago Wilkins entered the study. He found the body of the stranger lying on the floor—stone dead! No, there is not a mark of violence on him. The physician—Doctor Bennett—has just completed his examination.

"And my uncle has not yet returned."

XII

OVER the telephone, Des Moines reported the latest angle of the case to Mohammed Gunga. Then he drove to the latter's residence and picked him up on his way to the Winters home.

The white-faced butler admitted them, trembling like a leaf as he ushered them into the presence of young De Pew, a slender youth trying hard to appear manly in spite of his agitation. A moment later they were joined by Miss Dayton, the niece, a beautiful girl whose

eyes were swollen and red from weeping, although she seemed to hold herself under better control than did the boy. The inspector briefly introduced The Master as one of his men versed in subtle poisons, brought along for the purpose of detecting if any such had been used in making away with the stranger found in the study.

A hasty examination of the dead man proved the correctness of young De Pew's report. He was a rough appearing individual, evidently a laborer, far from the sort of person a man of Winters' refinement and wealth would be likely to be on intimate terms with.

Mohammed Gunga arose from the stooping position over the dead man and turned to De Pew.

"Darius Lessman," he said, in the conversational tone of one polished gentleman addressing another, "the time for unmasking is at hand! We meet at last! It is your soul or mine! Prepare yourself for the ordeal! Summon, if you are able, the powers of darkness. I warn you that behind me lies all of the great strength of the Holy Ones—and only you know what that means. Are you ready for the trial?"

For an instant there was silence. Then, with a wild shriek, the girl ran screaming from the room. Des Moines stepped back a pace, startled by the sudden accusation. Yet he knew the Master too well to doubt the correctness of his charges.

De Pew's eyes glared angrily. He seemed about to leap at the throat of his accuser. Then, with a shrug of his thin shoulders, he chuckled—a throaty, diabolical, gleeful burst of mirth.

"As you wish, my dear Mohammed Gunga! As you wish. I will warn you, as you have warned me. I intend to kill you, damn you! Yes, and the infernal meddler with you, too. I'll kill you as I killed the others."

He rubbed his hands together glee-

fully, giving way again to his unholy mirth. "Yes, and, by God, I'll use your carcasses as I used this piece of carrion on the floor, there. Think you that you can stop me—that you, in your littleness, can end a career such as mine? I am Lessman, The Man Who Can Not Die! I'll be chief of police for a day! Ha! Ha! Yes, and I'll wear the robes of The Master.

"Listen, fools. Meta, the woman I love, is she who has just left the room. Together, we killed Mrs. Winters—blasted her as we will blast you. Yes, I'll blast you, curse you! I can throw my will across the continent. Think you, then, that you can defeat me? I got Des Moines here to end him, knowing that he would bring you along. With you gone, the world is mine!

"In the body of Mrs. Winters, Meta left this house. She came here in the body of Dolly, Ha! Ha! It was a puzzle for the fools of policemen, trying to figure out how the body of the maid got into the coffin of the mistress. I love puzzles. I worked it all out to attract your attention—as I knew it eventually would—my dear Mohammed Gunga. You were getting too close to my tracks—you and your hellish gang! With you gone, none will be left on this side of the water who can hope to match their strength with mine.

"My only regret is that I didn't blast that damned salesman, Johnson, who blocked our game when we stole the brooch. I was the chauffeur, as you have already guessed. I grew tender-hearted—fool that I am. When he seized Meta, he forced her to quit the body she was occupying and enter that of the dead woman we had in the machine, ready for just such an emergency. I'll get him yet, though, damn him!

"I killed Winters, inspector, the same night that I telephoned to you. Ha, it was funny. I left his body hid-

den in a room I keep downtown for just such purposes. Then I threw my soul across the space and into the body I now occupy in time to answer your telephone call. I knew that you would trace the call and seek to trap me. I wanted to puzzle you. It has been a real pleasure for me to play with you. For I give you credit for having more intelligence than the average detective. I knew that sooner or later, though, you would get beyond your depth and call for aid from Mohammed Gunga.

"Where is Winters' body hidden now? That's my business, fools! It's hidden away where I can use it again if the occasion ever demands—after Meta and I get through using the Winters millions, possibly. Your policeman? O, yes, I killed him—blasted him from the automobile while I was talking to you. I kept my promise, did I not?

"And now, both of you, prepare to die! I, Lessman, the Man Who Will Not Die, will it!"

XIII

DES MOINES felt an icy sensation creep over him. Then came a peculiar numbness. He struggled against it. Clammy fingers seemed to clutch his throat! He was choking! He staggered like a drunken man, seeking an avenue of escape. A veil of darkness seemed to weigh upon his eyes. Tighter and tighter grew the bands about him. And, then, screaming like an hysterical woman, he fell to the floor, unconscious.

How long he lay there he never knew. Probably only a few seconds. He awakened suddenly. For an instant he imagined himself dead. He opened his eyes. Over him stood the Master, calm, self-reliant, facing the monster. Silently the two men, only a few yards apart, waged the greatest battle the



From his body emanated a thin vapor—an aura. It spread across the room like a nauseous miasma.—Page 110

world will ever know—the battle of wills—a duel between the Powers of Darkness and the forces of Good.

Slowly—slowly—slowly, Lessman seemed to weaken. Great drops of sweat stood out on his forehead. His breath came in asthmatic pants. He struggled to save himself, to concentrate his powerful will for a final effort, but in vain. Opposed to him was a will greater than his own—the united will of the thousands who had devoted their lives to the work of uplifting mankind—the will of the holy men of India.

His legs trembled. His fingers twitched jerkily. Then, as he sank to the floor, he made a final effort to escape. From his body emanated a thin vapor—an aura. It was his soul attempting flight. It spread across the room like a nauseous miasma, smoke-like, cloudy, repellent—hellish!

In response to The Master's will, it drew itself together. Slowly—oh, so

slowly—as if fighting to the very last, it drew nearer and nearer to the man to whose mind it acknowledged the mastery.

At last, it was but a tiny, smoky, grey ball of vapor. The Master held forth his hand and it hovered over his palm. He pressed his fingers together. When he opened them a tiny particle of grayish power lay within his hand.

Through the house rang the blood-curdling shriek of a woman—a single, despairing wail of anguish! Then, through the door floated another wraith. For a second it hesitated. Then it mingled with the ashes of its lover in the Master's hand.

Mohammed Gunga blew upon his palm. The powder vanished into nothingness.

He extended his hand to Des Moines and assisted him to his feet.

"That is the end! Only you and I know the truth. Let us depart. *The Monster is dead!*"



The Yellow Dog

By Eric A. Darling

I

THE moment for which Hankinson had made such anxious and careful preparation during three weary weeks of watching and waiting had come at last. There, within a yard of him, was the old jeweler whom he meant to stun and to rob; there, in Hankinson's hand, was the sandbag with which he intended to strike him down. And all about the two men, the one unsuspecting, the other quivering with intent, hung the heavy silence of midnight, broken only by the metallic tinkle of the valuables which the old man was slowly transferring from counter to safe.

Hankinson, thief and criminal from his youth upward, had at that time been out of prison for precisely a month. He had no particular desire to return to prison, but, on the other hand, he had no leanings toward the path of rectitude.

Upon emerging from durance he had possessed himself of a small stock of money, which he had safely hidden in view of emergencies; when it was in his pocket he had left his usual haunts in North London and betaken himself to new ones in the purlieus of the Mile End Road. He took a cheap lodging there, and began to look around him in Whitechapel and its neighborhood. And in time he saw what he considered to be a good chance.

Lurking about in the busy streets, always with alert eyes, he saw at last a prospect of replenishing the gradually emptying purse. Thereafter he gave all

his thought and attention to that prospect. The prospect quickly became a scheme.

There was an old-fashioned, dingy jeweler's shop in a small side street off Houndsditch; it was also a pawn-broking establishment. Three gilded balls overhung a passage entrance at the side. In that passage there was a sort of sentry-box in which the shutters of the front window were kept. A curly-headed, hooked-nose boy put up those shutters every night before going home. He was utterly indifferent to the shutters, that boy, when he had once put them up; but when he had gone away, whistling, Hankinson, under cover of the dusk, took a mighty interest in them. For long years of trained observation had made Hankinson's eyes unusually sharp, and it had not taken him more than one glance to see that in one of those shutters there was a noticeable, an appreciable crack. You could see the light in the shop through it. Therefore, through it you could see into the shop.

Hankinson contrived to see into the shop through that slit a good many times. It was always at night that he made these observations, and he made them with delicacy and with speed. But within a week he learnt a good deal.

Much of what he learnt was obvious in other ways—namely, that the shop was closed on Saturdays all day long; that from Monday to Thursday it was closed at nine o'clock in the evening; that on Friday nights it was kept open until eleven. But his observations through the crack in the shutter informed him that every night after clos-

ing hours, whether at nine o'clock or at eleven, Isidore Marcovitch, the old proprietor, a gray-haired, stooping-figured Hebrew, busied himself, alone, unaided, in transferring his most valuable wares from his window and counter to a large safe which stood in the rear of the shop. And, dingy and old-fashioned as the shop was, there were valuables in it which made Hankinson covetous.

Hankinson made his preparations carefully.

First of all, he convinced himself that this hiding away of goods was a nightly performance.

Secondly, he made sure that the old man was always alone when the performance was gone through.

Thirdly, he came to know that the only other occupant of the house was a girl—quite a young girl, presumably Marcovitch's granddaughter—who appeared to live in the upper regions.

Hankinson formed the opinion—on good grounds—that this young woman retired to bed long before closing hours on Friday nights; at any rate, there was a window in the very upper room in which a light shone for a while every night at half-past nine. He grew to be positively certain that, beyond this girl, there was nobody on the premises save Marcovitch himself, and that Marcovitch was the only waking thing in the house when he put his goods in the safe on Friday evenings. Obviously, then, Friday was the day of excellent choice.

But Hankinson did not content himself with outside observation only. He felt it necessary to see the inside of that shop at close quarters. Therefore he invented a good excuse for visiting it twice—by taking something to mend and calling for the mended article a few days later. On these occasions he inspected this new hunting ground with due care.

After the second inspection he told himself that it was all right. The big

safe in which old Marcovitch stowed his best things stood detached from the wall; between the wall and it there was a space in which a man could easily bestow himself unnoticed. The only difficulty was to secure an unobserved entrance to the shop. For long, vigilant observation had shown Hankinson that when Marcovitch was not behind his counter the curly-headed boy invariably was.

Hankinson watched for his opportunity on two successive Friday evenings. At ten minutes to eleven on the second opportunity came. For some reason or other the old jeweler sent the lad out of the shop. A moment later he himself quitted the counter, and disappeared into the rear premises. And thereupon Hankinson slipped in, and an instant later had hidden himself between the safe and the wall.

There were old coats and cloaks, dusty and musty, hanging there, and they made good cover. If Marcovitch, when he came back, had narrowly inspected these ancient garments he might have found Hankinson's nose protruding at one place and his feet at another. But Marcovitch suspected nothing, and Hankinson was well skilled in holding his breath.

The usual routine of the establishment went on placidly. The curly-headed boy presently put up the shutters and went away, pocketing his wages. Marcovitch locked, chained and bolted his door. He disappeared into the pawn-broking part of his shop. Hankinson heard more bolting and barring.

Then, from some inner part of the premises, he heard the sound of a withdrawn cork, and a little gurgling and splashing. The old man, said Hankinson to himself, was about to refresh himself with a drink.

Then came the scent of a strong, pungent cigar, and presently Marcovitch returned into view, a cigar in one cor-

ner of his bearded lips, a steaming tumbler in his hand. An odor of rum, strong, insidious, penetrated to Hankinson and overcame the musty smell of the old garments. Because of his previous vigils, Hankinson was well acquainted with the accustomed routine.

Old Marcovitch began by unlocking the safe. Then he took out certain goods from the locked showcases on his counter. Better things came from a sort of wired-in enclosure which filled the center of the window—an enclosure of stout wire, closely meshed and clamped. There were trays in that which contained rings and necklaces and ornaments set with diamonds and pearls. Some of these things were ticketed, some were not.

But Hankinson, having often glued his nose to the thick plate-glass window, had a good idea that he could easily stow away a few hundreds of pounds' worth of stuff out of those trays in one of his pockets. Good stuff, he said to himself, lies in little room.

It was Hankinson's notion to hit Marcovitch when the trays from the window and the counter-cases had been laid on the counter previous to transferring them to the safe.

He had everything ready for the attack: the sandbag was already grasped in his right hand; in a left-hand pocket he had a gag all ready to insert in the old man's jaws; in another pocket a length of cord wherewith to secure Marcovitch's wrists. And the moment was drawing near, was almost there, when Marcovitch turned from his trays to the safe, took out of a drawer a small packet done up in brown paper with a tissue-paper lining, and, with a low chuckle of delight, shook out on the counter a quantity of loose diamonds.

Hankinson grew hot and cold and hot again as the light fell on those sparkling stones.

Here, indeed, was luck! Such luck

as he had never expected. He was not versed in the lore of precious stones, but he knew diamonds from paste, and he had no doubt that these sparkling things were genuine products of the South African diamond fields.

And there was pretty nearly a handful of them. They must be good, for nothing but the thought of their extreme goodness would account for the self-satisfied way in which the old Jew chuckled as he bent over them, turning their shining facets over with his claw-like finger. And—now was the time.

Hankinson glided out of his cover and brought the sandbag crashing down on Marcovitch's bald head.

Marcovitch instinctively, spasmodically threw up his hands. He emitted one groan, reeled and was falling over on his side when Hankinson caught him. It was not part of Hankinson's game that Marcovitch should fall heavily on the floor. He let the old man slide gently down. In two minutes he had securely gagged him. In two more minutes he had drawn his hands behind his back and fastened his wrists together.

And it was as he rose from the accomplishment of these things that he suddenly heard a strange sound—the sound of something alive, drawing in its breath in a queer, sniffling, snuffling fashion, somewhere close at hand.

Instantly Hankinson recognized that sound. It was the sound made by an imprisoned animal which snuffs at the crack of its prison door.

"Lumme!" whispered Hankinson to himself. "A blinkin' dawg!"

He lost no time after that, and as he transferred the most valuable things to his pockets—diamonds here, gold there—he wondered how it was that he had never seen any dog about Marcovitch's premises.

Presently the sniffling sound died away; all became quiet again. And, without as much as a glance at the fallen

man, Hankinson made round the counter to the door. In his opinion the man who has done his work effectually should go away as soon as his job is done. But going, he took care to turn out the gas.

Hankinson had manipulated the key, the chain and the bar, and was about to open the door in gingerly fashion when he heard a sound at the rear of the shop. He turned, muttering a curse. A door had noiselessly opened, and there, holding a lamp above her head, stood Marcovitch's granddaughter. She was in her nightgown, her hair—long, black, lustrous—fell far below her waist; her great eyes, dilated with alarm, shone like stars. And at her side, nuzzling against her knees, was the strangest, ugliest-looking beast of a dog that Hankinson had ever set eyes on.

It was queerly shaped, it was of no known breed, it was a vile yellow in color, and it had only one eye. It was borne in upon Hankinson, amidst the rush of thoughts which this new situation forced on his consciousness, that he would have had dreams about that dog, and he cursed it without knowing that he was even thinking of it.

There were other things to think of just then. Hankinson realized his danger. He made a sudden dash back at the girl. The girl set up a loud scream, dashed the lamp in his face, drew back with the agility of a snake, and locked the door behind her.

Hankinson went too, then. He groped his way to the street door and let himself out. As he crossed the threshold he had an unpleasant feeling of a sinuous, wiry body that cannoned against his legs, and he kicked out at it in sheer frenzy of hatred. But when he reached the pavement and looked round him there was no dog there. And, with another oath, he made off.

There was nobody about just at that point, but there were people twenty

yards away on either hand, and Hankinson's chief desire was to mingle with and get beyond them. He turned to the right and sped swiftly away, and just then the Jewess darted out into the street from the side entrance and let out a yell that startled every midnight stroller within the eighth of a mile.

"Murder!"

Hankinson shot into the nearest entry. It was light where he entered it; it was black where he traversed it; it was light again where he left it. And, flinging a glance over his shoulder as he turned at the end of it, he saw figures dart after him; also he heard a queer padding sound not so far away from his heels.

He knew then that here was a serious business, and he set his teeth and ran. There was a network of alleys and courts and queer places thereabouts.

Hankinson dodged from one to the other as a rabbit dodges about in its warren when the ferrets are after it. But wherever he went he heard the queer padding sound, and he cursed that one-eyed yellow dog to the depths of a dog's hell.

And yet once, twice, thrice, he looked round—at least once with his revolver in his hand—and never saw any dog at all, not even when there were patches of light which the pursuit, brute or human, must cross.

Eventually Hankinson, spent of breath, made two or three desperate twistings and twinings and darted into a dark court. The next minute something seemed to catch him by the ankle. He made a violent plunge forward, dashed his head against a wall, saw thousands of stars flash and coruscate before his eyes, and felt a great buzzing and humming rise up somewhere behind his ears. And immediately after that Hankinson, for the time being, felt and saw nothing more. . . .

II

WHEN Hankinson came back to consciousness he gradually realized that he was in surroundings of an undeniably strange sort. Save for a dull aching in his head, occasionally varied by a sharp stab of pain, he was not uncomfortable. He was lying on something very soft and warm; his head was properly pillowed; he felt that some hand had carefully tucked a covering around his limbs.

He judged from these things that he was not, at any rate, in the detention cells of a police station; experience had taught him that in these places small consideration was shown to visitors. But it was no use opening his eyes, for he was in a queer sort of darkness—not an absolutely black darkness, but a sort of deep, misty blue darkness, in the midst of which, high above him, was a faint spot of ruby-colored light. He could make that out, and he could tell that the darkness was blue and not black; more than that it was impossible to say.

But if Hankinson's eyes could do little, his nose was able to do more.

His nostrils began to expand and to titillate under unfamiliar odors. There was a queer, clinging, permeating scent all around and about; a scent of saffron and musk and sandalwood; it was heavy, thick, almost oppressive; it made him cough.

There had been an unearthly silence about that place until then. Hankinson's cough sounded like the report of a revolver let off in a vault. And when it died away and silence fell once more Hankinson heard the sniffing and snuffing of a dog somewhere close by. Then he remembered everything, and a cold sweat broke out all over him. And at that instant a flood of light was turned on, silently, and Hankinson, blinking upward, saw standing at his side a gigantic Chinaman clad in the costume of

his own country, who looked down upon him with an expression which would have sat well on the face of a sphinx.

This extraordinary vision so frightened Hankinson that he immediately closed his eyes and shut it out.

Then he felt a cool hand laid on his forehead and heard a voice speaking in perfect English and soft, mellifluous tones.

"How do you feel now?" asked the voice.

Hankinson made so bold as to open his eyes again. He took another, a longer, look at the Chinaman.

The Oriental wore spectacles, and it was impossible to see his eyes clearly, but his tones were propitiating, and Hankinson's spirits revived.

"Bloomin' queer," he answered. He tried to move and, for some reason, found movement difficult. "'Ow," he continued, "'ow did I come 'ere, guv'nor?"

"I carried you into my house," said the Chinaman quietly. "I was taking the air at my door when you darted past me, followed by a dog. The dog suddenly caught you by the ankle and you stumbled and fell and dashed your head against the wall. That," he added, laying a delicate fingertip on a lump of wet lint which decorated Hankinson's right temple, "that is where your head came into contact with something harder. It is well for you, my friend, that your frontal bones are of more than usual strength."

Hankinson stared.

Then he referred to the only part of the speech which seemed to him to be really pertinent.

"That there dawg, now?" he asked anxiously. "Wot about 'im, guv'nor?"

The Chinaman pointed to a door at the foot of the couch on which Hankinson was lying.

"The dog," he replied, "is safely be-

stowed in there. He followed us in—and I took good care that he should not go out. He appears to be an animal of undoubted sagacity.”

Hankinson moved again, and again found that movement was difficult, if not impossible.

“I’m obliged to yer, guv’nor,” he said. “I—I’ll be movin’ now, if you ain’t got no objections?”

The Chinaman shook his head gravely.

“Not yet,” he said. “It will not be well for you to move just yet. Let me advise you to rest quietly where you are.”

“An’ why?” demanded Hankinson suspiciously. “There ain’t nothink serious, is there, guv’nor? A crack on the ’e’d, now—that ain’t nothink. I got business, yer see, an’—”

“And there are those who have business with you,” remarked the Chinaman. “The police.”

Hankinson felt cold again, but he managed to look surprised.

“Perlice!” he exclaimed. “Wot about the perlice, then? I aint—”

The Chinaman stretched out an arm and pulled a small, wheeled table from behind Hankinson’s head. He silently directed Hankinson’s eyes to it.

“’Eavens!” muttered Hankinson.

The surface of the table was covered with an array of objects pleasing enough in themselves, but not welcome to Hankinson under present circumstances. These objects were laid out in order, neatly and systematically.

There was a row of gold watches, there was another row of gold chains—good and solid. There were pendants, ornaments, bracelets—all of gold, for Hankinson had scorned anything of less value. And there were precious stones—some fine pearls, some excellent rubies—and in the center of everything, on a rag of blue velvet, lay the diamonds over which the old jeweler had

chuckled. Also, in one corner of the table lay Hankinson’s revolver.

Hankinson felt very sick as he looked at these things. Yet—it was about what he had expected. And all he could do was to glare resentfully at the bland features of the spectacled face.

The Chinaman, however, remained unmoved.

“That,” he said, again indicating the table, “will explain much. If you wish for further explanation—Mr. Marcovitch is dead.”

Hankinson jumped—as much as that curious inertia would permit.

“G’arn!” he said in a low voice. “Yer don’t mean it! It can’t be, guv’nor. W’y I on’y—”

“He was quite dead when the police entered his shop,” said the Chinaman. “You hit him too hard. And perhaps you are not very experienced in the use of the gag. However, he is dead, and the police are in pursuit of you.”

Hankinson began to whimper.

“Yer’ve trapped me!” he whined. “Yer meanin’ to ’and me over! Yer’d a deal better ’ave let me lie where I was. An’ yer’ve done somethink to me, an’ all—I can’t move.”

“That,” replied the Chinaman, “is the effect of a medicine with which I have treated you. Rest awhile and the effect will pass off. I am not going to hand you over to the police. You are quite safe—quite safe, I repeat—so long as you do what I tell you.”

Hankinson stared. He was suspicious as ever, but there was a calm, confident assurance about the Chinaman which went far to allay suspicion. And suddenly his eyes brightened and his voice lost its whine and became almost cheery.

“You see me right, guv’nor, an’ I’ll make it all right wiv you,” he said insinuatingly. “’Struth, I ’adn’t no intentions o’ finishin’ the old man! An’ wotever you likes out o’ that little lot, it’s yours.”

The Chinaman pushed the table out of sight again.

"We can discuss that matter later on," he said. "At present you must take some food, and after that you must sleep until evening, and then we will see about getting you away."

Hankinson's small eyes looked a sharp inquiry.

"Strite?" he asked. "No fetchin' the perlice in while I'm—here?"

"You can trust me," answered the Chinaman. "It would not suit me to have police in my house. I have my own affairs."

That reassured Hankinson. He set down his host as being one of his own kidney. And presently he ate the soup—good, rich soup with strength in it—which the Chinaman brought him, and after that he went to sleep quite calmly. . . .

III

WHEN Hankinson woke again there were two Chinamen in the room with him. One was the big man of the previous interview; the other, also garbed in Chinese dress, was a younger man of about his own size and weight—an almond-eyed, stolid-faced fellow who was regarding Hankinson with an inscrutable expression on his immobile features. The big man was talking to the small one in gibberish which Hankinson did not understand. Catching sight of Hankinson's opening eyes, he broke off the conversation.

"You are quite better now," he said, not questioningly, but in positive assertion. "You—now you may get up. There is food and drink ready for you in the next room. Come this way."

Hankinson got up and stretched himself. Certainly he was all right then—not a trace of injury remained in him. And with this realization of recovery a

desire for action came upon him. He wanted to be out of that. Instinctively he looked round for the little table on which his loot had been laid out. But the little table was not there.

"In the next room," said the big Chinaman with a grin. "Come."

Hankinson followed the two men into a plainly furnished apartment, which evidently did duty as living-room and kitchen. There was a table set out in English fashion.

Hankinson was motioned to seat himself. The smaller Chinaman sat down in a corner and stared at him; the big one served him with hot roast fowl.

Never had Hankinson eaten such tender food in his life. And he gave him bottled stout to drink. It seemed to Hankinson that he had never tasted such nectar. He stuffed himself, he guzzled freely, wondering all the time what it all meant. And when at last he could eat and drink no longer, he shoved away his plate and looked his host full in the face with half-impudent inquiry. For Hankinson was very sure that the big Chinaman was not playing the Good Samaritan for nothing; he would want his fee, like everybody else.

"An' now what, gov'nor?" asked Hankinson familiarly. "If it's all the same to you, yer know, I should like to 'op it. I dessay it's all right, but this 'ere neighborhood ain't what you'd call healthy, is it, now?"

The big Chinaman, who had taken a seat by his compatriot during the final stages of Hankinson's repast, produced an evening newspaper and laid it before the guest.

His long, tapering fingers indicated bold headlines and other uncomfortable things about midnight murder and burglary. Hankinson's pale cheeks grew paler as he read.

"Yer said as 'ow yer could get me away?" he muttered at last. "An' I said as 'ow yer was welcome to what

yer liked to take out o' what I got—eh? How's it to be, guv'nor?"

"I can get you away," answered the Chinaman. "But—it will have to be out of England."

"Out of—England!" exclaimed Hankinson. "'Struth! W'y, I ain't never been out of England. I don't know no lingo but English. Where would it be now, guv'nor? Not—not to where you come from, would it? 'Cause I understand that's a longish way off."

The big Chinaman leaned forward as if to attract strict attention.

"Now listen," he said. "There is a Chinese ship in the river, lying off Wapping, which sails tonight for Amsterdam. Her captain will take you, on my recommendation, to Amsterdam. And in Amsterdam you can sell your—diamonds. When you have sold your diamonds you can take ship to America—or wherever you please to go."

Hankinson silently ran over his inventory of the stolen goods.

"Diamonds, eh?" he said musingly. "There are other things than diamonds, yer know."

"I have estimated the value of what was on you," said the Chinaman gravely. "The diamonds are worth about two thousand pounds. You will get one-third of their value in Amsterdam. The other things are worth about four or five hundred pounds. You can leave those with me—my share."

"Done!" exclaimed Hankinson. "But, how am I to get down to that there ship?" he asked anxiously. "Seems ter me as 'ow there'll be a pretty sharp look-out for me, guv'nor, an' no error! How's it to be done?"

The big Chinaman motioned to the smaller one.

"This gentleman," he said, "will lend you some garments. You will go down dressed as a Chinaman, after dark. I will prepare you—make you up with a

little paint and other matters. And we will begin now—time presses."

Hankinson cheerfully submitted to the proposed transformation. He stripped to his underclothing. He put on Chinese trousers and soft-soled Chinese boots; he was fitted with upper garments which amused him by their strangeness and comforted him with their silky feeling. And then he sat down, and the big Chinaman produced a box of colored pigments and delicate brushes, and set to work on Hankinson's head and face. He worked with the zest of a true artist, and the other Chinaman stood by and admired without moving a muscle of his features.

At the end of half an hour Hankinson was bidden to look in a mirror, and he stood up and looked and stared. It did not amaze him that he did not know himself; what astonished him was that the craftsman's cunning had transformed him into the double of the other Chinaman! The big man, with a sly smile, had twisted his compatriot round so that he stood side by side with Hankinson, facing the mirror—and Hankinson gasped as he gazed at the two yellow faces.

"Gawd!" he said. "Why—it's 'im!"

The big Chinaman allowed himself to laugh. He put a few finishing touches to his work, adjusted the cap and false pigtail, finally produced a truly Chinese umbrella. And then, in short, plain fashion, he gave Hankinson his instructions. He was to make his way to a certain wharf in the neighborhood of London Docks; there he would be met by a boat's crew and taken on board the Chinese vessel. In his progress through the streets he was to preserve a sober, grave demeanor—above everything, he was not to hold converse with anyone, especially a policeman; if anybody accosted him, he was to smile blandly and shake his head.

"Right, guv'nor!" said Hankinson.

"I'm on—mum's the word. Now them shiners?"

The big man produced a small bag, open at the mouth. Within it Hankinson saw gleams of sparkling fire. He made haste to stow it away in the pocket wherein he had already put his money. Then he gave the big man a firm look.

"There's another thing," he said, "I'm goin' into strange parts and amongst strange folks. And I ain't a-goin' wivout my revolver. Hand it over, guv'nor. As it was, mind."

The Chinaman produced the revolver, showed Hankinson that it was fully loaded, and calmly dropped it into his own pocket.

"I will hand that to you in the street," he said. "I am going to walk a little way with you. Now let us go."

And he led Hankinson out of the house into the night. As they passed out the younger Chinaman hastened to a window which commanded the way by which they went. He saw them pass in and out of the lights of the lamps—and suddenly he saw a couple of vague, shadowy figures emerge from a dark place and steal after them. In his eagerness and excitement to see that part of the proceedings, he threw up the sash of the window and leaned out. And in that instant the yellow dog, which had been tied up in that room, completed its day's task of eating through the stout cord that had prisoned it. The young Chinaman, leaning through the window, was conscious for a second of a sinuous body hurling itself past him. Before he had time to comprehend matters he saw that body vanishing round the corner. He shut the window then and retired to resume his usual sphinx-like demeanor.

Presently the big man came back and grinned at his compatriot.

"They are after him," he said briefly.

"I saw them," replied the other.

The big man grinned again.

"It is fortunate that this fellow fell

at my door," he said. "He has served us well. Certainly he will never fall there again. We benefit very well. We have what he brought in—and he has some worthless bits of paste. It is good!"

The younger man made no answer to this. Nör did he mention that the dog had escaped.

"It is time that I go now," he observed.

And without further remark he proceeded to divest himself of his Oriental garments and to put on the inconspicuous suit of grey tweed which Hankinson had recently taken off.

IV

TEN minutes later a figure dressed in Hankinson's clothes, much muffled about the neck and face, and having Hankinson's cap pulled down over its nose, slipped out of that quiet house and went away by devious paths to other and safer parts. No figure followed it; the two figures that had lurked in waiting for it since dark were following Hankinson.

And Hankinson went on, knowing nothing. He was beginning to feel himself safe, and he did not care how much people stared at him as he walked in the glare of the gas. He had what he believed to be diamonds in his pocket. It had never even occurred to him that the big Chinaman might or would substitute paste for the genuine article. He had a prospect of selling them to advantage. And he had his revolver. Therefore, being a bit of an actor, he went onward, always smiling blandly.

Hankinson knew the nearest way to the wharf of which the big Chinaman had spoken, and it took him little time to get down there. All his thoughts were of his own business, and he had no idea that two yellow-faced, slit-eyed fellows, clad in slop suits of blue serge,

were dogging his every footstep. Nor did he know that an ugly, uncanny-looking, one-eyed mongrel was slinking behind him, keeping close to walls and to the fronts of shops, that one eye perpetually fixed on its object of pursuit.

Hankinson never saw that dog until he had walked on to the wharf—a deserted, desolate, cold expanse of timber, on which there was no business doing at that hour of the evening. There was a pale gleam of yellow from the window of a waterside inn at the other end of the wharf; a half-moon was far up in the cloudy sky; here and there a faint gas flame burned. In this poor light Hankinson suddenly saw the yellow dog's one eye—baleful, malevolent. It turned him hot and cold, and he could do nothing but stare at it.

He saw nothing of a boat putting off from any vessel; thereabouts, indeed, nothing of any sort seemed to be doing. There was, in fact, no sign of life on the wharf but in his own and the dog's presence. And the dog had sat down now, and did nothing but watch him. When the clouds cleared off the moon Hankinson saw the dog's one eye—and he cursed it under his breath in plain Cockney English.

It was in the midst of these muttering curses that the two slinking figures suddenly leapt out on Hankinson as he passed the stack of timber. There was a flashing of steel in the moonlight, and

two knives went swiftly in and out of the soft silks in which Hankinson was masquerading. He fell over on his back as the knives were withdrawn, and convulsively twisted up and on to his side. He knew that blood was running from him like the spurts from a suddenly pricked wineskin, but his brain was clear enough yet, and he mechanically snatched at his revolver and fired, left and right, at the two figures which were drawing back from him. And as his own eyes began to glaze he saw the two figures sway and fall—fall in the unmistakable fashion.

"Lor'!" gasped Hankinson, as his head dropped. "Got—'em—both!"

Then Hankinson died, and the yellow dog came near and looked at him.

When you find the bodies of three dead men lying in the moonlight on a Thames-side wharf, one of them an Englishman dressed in Chinese garb, two of them Chinese men attired in reach-me-down slop suits, the Englishman stabbed, the Chinese shot, the Englishman with a collection of paste diamonds on him, the Chinese with next to nothing, and all three watched by a miserable, one-eyed yellow dog, you have all the elements of a first-class mystery. There were two Orientals in different places who could have solved that mystery, but your true Oriental knows how to keep a still tongue. And the yellow dog, unfortunately, was unable to make humans comprehend him.



Bulling the Bulls

By Walter Scott Story

I

YOUNG Ryan looked down the Worcester platform through the canyon formed by the mail and express cars. Catching the desired final signal, he passed the word to his chief, Carruthers.

Carruthers unthrottled the giant at his command; and the long heavy Boston express got under way, with a deep and mighty puffing of the engine, the dull grind of its reluctant wheels, the clank of trucks and the clink-clank of the couplings as each preceding coach began to move and communicated motion to the following.

As the train gathered way rapidly—fifteen minutes behind schedule on its way to Boston—a tall man in a dark blue suit emerged from somewhere among the clutter of trunks and crates and bales and, running alongside of the smoking car, grasped the rail of the end of the car and after a few paces swung himself aboard, going swiftly up the steps and entering the coach.

He passed up the car looking from left to right. The car was exceedingly crowded, some men sitting on the arm rests of the seats, and even then in the middle of the afternoon it was almost dusky because of tobacco smoke.

The tall man went up the car slowly, but saw no vacant seat. There were two or three groups of card players, but, notwithstanding this, all the seats seemed to be taken.

The traveler who had made the

train by the skin of his teeth, as the saying is, passed the groups of players and went on.

The fourth seat from the front of the coach on the right-hand side was occupied by but one person—a stout, sleek, prosperous-looking man of fifty or thereabouts, dressed in a neat gray suit and wearing a mouse-colored fedora. At this seat, the tall man halted.

“Seat engaged?” he asked.

The other man looked up and smiled slightly in good humor. He had a merry, but very keen blue eye, and his face had a healthy glow of red and tan—the face of an outdoor man or of a business man who is faithful to his golf. He shook his head and moved in a trifle farther toward the window.

The tall man sat down and relaxed, leaning his trim, broad shoulders back against the seat. He was a fine-looking man between thirty-five and forty, with a hawk-like, yet boyish face. After a covert scrutiny of his seatmate from deep-set, keen dark eyes, he drew down his felt hat somewhat over his forehead and seemed to compose himself for a nap.

While he sat in this position with his eyes closed, the stout man looked him over, studying his face and clothes—apparently puzzled. The tall, athletic man was neatly dressed, but, somehow or other, he seemed to give his clothes distinction and seemed not to get from the clothes the setting proper for such a trim, handsome fellow.

The forward door of the coach

opened, and the conductor, spectacles perched on the top of his nose, came in, followed by an assistant.

When the door opened, Durkee, the tall man, opened his eyes and began leisurely to reach into his pockets for ticket or money. From the first pocket his hand came out empty, and an odd expression came across his face. He sat upright and hastily, but without flurry, searched for the necessary tender. Presently, he gave a shrug of the shoulders and sat back. He was a man of the world—that was clear—but, notwithstanding, he was mentally squirming as the conductor, a grizzled-haired man with a stiletto eye and a very short, but polite tongue, collected from one man and then another.

Durkee gave an inaudible breath of embarrassment and vexation as the official at length stood next to him, actually touching him as he leaned over to give a mere glance at the stout man's punched slip tucked in the hold in the seat ahead.

"Ticket, sir," said the conductor.

Durkee looked up, a slight smile on his dark, handsome face.

"I came away in a hurry," he said, "and I haven't a red cent on me as far as I can find."

There was just a moment of silence, and Durkee felt that embarrassment which any man, no matter how practiced a traveler he may be, feels when he is without funds and left to the mercy of a man who daily has to judge between humbugs and innocents.

"We stop at Framingham, sir, I'm sorry, but"—

"Beg pardon," interposed the stout man, turning to Durkee with a smile. "Where you going?"

"Boston?" answered Durkee.

"What's the tax, Doctor?" inquired the stout man, blandly.

The conductor named the price and prepared a rebate slip and passed it to the stout man when he had paid Durkee's fare.

"I haven't even my watch on," said Durkee when the conductor had passed on. "I'm very much obliged to you."

"Don't mention it, my friend. I've been in similar predicaments."

They conversed for a little while on general topics of the time—cautious on the subject of politics—but presently lapsed into silence and rode on for ten or fifteen minutes without speaking.

"Live in Boston?" asked Grant, breaking the silence.

"No," returned Durkee. His tone was not of rebuff, but he volunteered no information about himself. "By the way," he said, at length, "if you'll give me your name and address, I'll send you my fare."

Mr. Grant waved his hand and uttered a little laugh.

"That's all right," he said.

"It's *not* all right," declared the other, mildly emphatic. "There's no reason why you should pay my fare."

Mr. Grant half turned and looked his seatmate over with a marvelously quick glance.

"If that's the way you feel about it, Mister," he said slowly, "it may be you can do a little bit of a favor for me."

Durkee in his turn eyed his seatmate again in a furtive manner, his deep-set, sharp eye missing nothing. A little curve appeared at the corners of his mouth—but went quickly away.

"The fact is, I'm in a mean little fix," said Grant. "I suppose I can rest in confidence upon your word of secrecy if you don't care to help me?"

"Yes—if I pass my word," responded Durkee.

"And do you pass the word?" asked the other, quickly.

"Yes."

"Well, this is the case. Maybe you've heard of the Pelton bank robbery a few days ago?"

"No," said Durkee. "Don't recall hearing about it."

The stout man looked surprised, seemed about to say something, then apparently changed his line of thought and speech.

"Well, there was one there, and they say the robbers got away with about—I think about twenty thousand, or something like that. There was a lot of talk about some of the town police being mixed up in the business, and some of the—er, officers are in a peck of trouble over it."

"All news to me," asserted the tall man, carelessly.

"The truth is, Mister, I'm one of the officers there in Pelton, and definite charges have been made against me. In fact, confidentially, I was to be arrested, and I'm on my way to Boston to see some friends—high-up fellows who can *do* things. See?"

"Yes."

"As I say, the fellows are out to 'get' me—it's a frame-up back there, you see—and I got a feeling that I may be pinched in the South Station. Now, you can see—any man of good sense knows how these things go—that if I don't get to my friends first I'll be in a pretty pickle. That'd be a trump play against me. I don't want to be caught in Boston and sidetracked and have it come out in the Boston papers and copied at home."

"I don't blame you," commented Durkee, looking at the other from the corner of his eye, a thrill running through him.

"No, I don't think anybody can blame me," said Grant—"anybody

who knows about politics. Now, the idea that came to me was this—that you and I put on a pair of handcuffs and give those fellows the slip in the station, just as if you were taking me down. Get the idea?"

"Yes, but I don't carry such articles with me—not as a rule," responded Durkee, with a grin.

"Well, *I* always do, *of course*. Do you think you could help me, through the crowd, taking the part of an officer conducting me to the authorities?"

Durkee smiled, looking at the other covertly with a queer light back in his keen eyes.

"Suppose I can't bluff the thing through, my friend, if you're right and someone's waiting for you?—what then?"

Grant turned and looked squarely at him for an instant.

During that instant all the humor was absent from his blue eyes, in its place a hard, very hard look.

Then he laughed shortly, that odd gleam disappearing.

"Why," he said, at length, "I'll release you and do the best I can."

"They might hold me under the circumstances. Couldn't blame them much. It's pretty risky, Mister, I should say."

Grant looked out of the window for a few moments and then turned back to the other, failing to see the look of satisfaction or triumph—or whatever it was—that passed over Durkee's face.

"I shall be glad to give you say, fifty dollars, young man. I mean, of course, this in addition to your fare," he supplemented, jokingly.

"I don't see that it can do much harm, anyway," remarked Durkee, rather carelessly. "The only danger is that they might make things unpleasant for me."

"Oh, I'll see that you don't get in wrong, anyway."

"Well, then, I'll try to help you out," promised Durkee. "Got 'em?"

After a careful glance about, Grant produced a pair of handcuffs. He clicked one hold on his left wrist, and then Durkee, after a slight hesitation, linked his thin, sinewy, long-fingered hand to the other's.

In this fashion they rode the rest of the way to Boston, avoiding the subject which linked them together and chatting casually on various matters of interest to ordinary citizens.

II

THE express stopped at Huntington Station. A few people got off, and a few got on. Two broad-shouldered, keen-eyed men, obviously together, came into the smoking-car by way of the forward door and came down looking from left to right. They noted Grant and Durkee and the bond that held them, and without comment passed on, swiftly, but in a very business-like way.

"No one I know," announced Grant, as the two went on after the first glance.

He spoke in a matter-of-fact way, but Durkee perceived that he was really much relieved.

The train got under way after a very short stop and sped on, finally coming to journey's end under the mammoth shed of South Station.

Durkee and Grant descended promptly from the smoker and went up to the shed with the crowd. The tide of people converged and narrowed as it approached the gate of the shed and, passing through the entrance, spread out into the open space and began immediately to lose its entity among

the throng scurrying here and there in every direction.

As Durkee and Grant passed through the gateway and bore off to the left, neither hurrying nor lagging, a burly, ruddy-faced man in dark clothes came from the fence—noting them as soon as they issued from the shed.

"Well, well—hello, Kelly," he said, mockingly jovial, but with an undertone of real and intense satisfaction, and as he gave the greeting he grasped Mr. Grant by the arm, apparently ready for trouble, as if he knew something about the peculiar light that could shine in the other's eyes.

At the same moment he noticed Durkee and the bond between him and the stout man he addressed as Kelly. He lifted his eyebrows in surprise and favored Durkee with a steady and half-hostile look.

As this man accosted and touched Grant, another big man of the same cut approached from another direction and joined the trio, a little grin coming to his face as he saw Grant.

"Hello, Kelly," said this newcomer, speaking very much as the other stranger had spoken. "*At last!*"

"Hello, Moran," returned Mr. Grant, with composure.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," put in Durkee, promptly and courteously, "but it's hands off for you. Nothing doing at all. I got Kelly for the First National break in Portland two years ago. Lighted on him in Worcester by accident. Sorry"—a tantalizing slight grin came on his hawk-like face—"but you can come up and have him in just about twelve years."

The first burly man drew back a pace, scowling. Then he shrugged his broad shoulders resignedly and used strong language feelingly.

Kelly, for his part, shot a quick glance at the man whose fare he had paid, his blue eyes like rapier points; but after that look he glanced at the disappointed Boston men and laughed at them.

"Tough luck, boys," said Durkee, "but you can have him when we're through. Come on, old bird."

He gave Kelly a slight tug, and, Kelly grinning queerly, they walked elbow to elbow through the throng and out of the station.

Durkee secured a taxicab and, having given his direction—North Station—entered the designated cab with his captive.

When they were in the vehicle, Durkee pulled the curtain on his side half way down, Kelly following suit at his request.

"Well, I'll be confounded!" exclaimed Kelly as they crossed the tracks and went into Atlantic Avenue. "You got a quick wit, my friend."

He looked steadily at his companion through half-closed lids. Producing a key, he reached over to insert it.

As his right hand came down, Durkee's left hand, with long, sinewy fingers, closed over it with a grip of steel and suddenly twisted the key from the other's possession.

Kelly, protruding his head bellicosely, glared at Durkee, his eyes now green and glinting; and Durkee met his glare with a dancing light in his eyes.

"Come across now, Kelly," said Durkee coolly, a grin coming to his face.

"So you're the real thing, are you," exclaimed Kelly with a vicious sneer—"a real bull, eh? Walked right into you, didn't I? Funny, too, 'cause I had a feeling before we got to Boston that there was something

off about you. Well, well." He spoke evenly and smoothly now, and settled back a little.

Durkee held his free hand to the window and kept his eye upon the other man.

"Don't you pull that gun, Kelly," he said, quietly, in a quick warning, "or I'll drop the key and smash you. *And come across!*"

"That's your game, eh?"

"That—or delivery in Portland. I knew you were Kelly two minutes after we began to talk?"

"How much?—a hundred?"

Durkee laughed mirthlessly, and dexterously released his right hand from the cuff and slipped the key in his pocket.

"All you got on you now," he answered, sitting tense like a coiled spring.

As he spoke, Kelly—having hesitated just long enough to let Durkee free his hand, although noting his action—drew back with a jerk; and at the instant he drew back, his hand whipping behind, Durkee fell upon him like a bolt of lightning.

III

KELLY was a hard man and a fighter; but the younger man, trim and lithe, was a tiger, and in less than two minutes he had him half throttled and had his right hand in the hold of the cuff he himself had worn.

He took Kelly's automatic from the hip pocket and placed it upon his own person and then, ruthlessly bearing the stubborn, undaunted bank robber down, made an exceedingly rich haul from various parts of Kelly's clothes—thousands of dollars in notes of large denominations—all of which he placed in his own pockets, despite the other's vicious struggling.

As soon as he had convinced himself that he had taken all the money Kelly had, Durkee signaled the taxi chauffeur to stop, and when the car had come to a standstill at the curb he opened the door and stepped out into the late afternoon sunshine and the atmosphere of fish and dirty water.

"Kelly," said he with a grin, "I'll give the key to his nibs here and tell him to unlock you at the North Station. From there you may go anywhere you please."

"Who the blazes are you, anyway?" demanded Kelly, after delivering a volley of vituperation—the only effect of which was to make the other man's grin broaden.

"See here, Kelly," said Durkee, calmly, making no response to the question, "you haven't any kick coming. I got you through the line all right, saved you from a lot of trouble, and I know you got a lot of stuff somewhere. I kept my word not to squeal, and you can afford to pay. So quit your growling."

"Well, who *are* you?"

"Really like to know?"

"Yes," returned Kelly with a savage, almost frenzied growl.

"Well," said Durkee, smoothly, with great gravity—mock, maddening gravity—"I'll tell if you think it will make you feel better. My name is Ricker H. Tucker in real life. By profession I am, like you yourself—a bank robber; but an unfortunate one, mediocre, and until two days ago I was incarcerated in a New Hampshire retreat. I had just worked down to Worcester, and

there, as you know, fortune brought me face to face, side by side, with the master of our craft—Aloysius Kelly—fortune at the same time giving me an opportunity to run the Boston lookout and to fill an empty pocket. I admire you, Kelly—I take off my hat to you"—the tall, eagle-faced rascal who had indulged himself in the luxury of several truthful statements took off his hat with an ironical bow—"and as one who has done time, I admiringly admit that you're the better man, and—I thank you."

Durkee slammed the door, gave the handcuff key to the chauffeur and told him to drive to North Station and there release Kelly. He was sport enough to pay for the ride, too,—with a bit to spare.

As the cab darted from the curb with the frantic Kelly, he looked after it for a moment with a smile, then, turning, walked swiftly back in the way he had come.

That same night Mr. Durkee sat smoking contentedly on the deck of a barkentine passing the Graves en route for Rio de Janeiro. He was thinking of the stout man whom he had helped as desired—the king of bank robbers who had never served a sentence, whose reputation he himself had that day saved—but was not worrying about him or his welfare. It was natural that he should think of him, for he had secured from brother Kelly the snug sum of \$15,000 plus. But mostly he was letting his mind dwell virtuously upon reform under comfortable conditions, upon a life of strict obedience to the law—at least while the money lasted.



The Best New Mystery Books

By Captain Frank Cunningham

In this department THE BLACK MASK will present every month brief reviews of the best new books of detective and mystery stories, stories of the occult and stories of adventure. Needless to say, the department will be conducted without fear or favor. Only *good* books will be noticed. There will be absolutely no boosting in the interest of publishers. Every book mentioned may be bought at any bookstore. THE BLACK MASK will NOT receive orders.

I

THE SILVER BAG, by Thomas Cobb. Who owned the handbag left in the apartment of a young English author? And why was the author distracted? And what was the purpose of the young woman who caused so much trouble? There is lots of fun in unraveling these perplexing situations. If you like a mystery story mixed with humor, this plot will interest you.

II

THE RED SEAL, by Natalie Sumner Lincoln. Unlike most mystery stories, all clues that might lead the reader to discover for himself the true culprit are cleverly concealed. And so you are kept guessing until the very end. Jimmie Turnbull, a bank cashier, is thought to have been poisoned by a powerful drug. Each chapter brings to light some evidence that changes the reader's hunch as to the identity of the real criminal.

III

THE EYE OF ZEITON, by Talbot Mundy. This is not, as the title might suggest, a story about a precious jewel. But it is a romantic tale of adventure in Armenia. Zeiton is an ancient

stronghold in the Armenian mountains, which the Turks have never been able to capture. The "Eye of Zeiton" is an Armenian patriot who does his best to serve his country, and guides three soldiers of fortune into a land where they believe adventures await them. And getting there, they find they were not mistaken.

IV

COME-ON CHARLEY, by Thomas Addison. Charley is a shoe-clerk in a small town. Just for the sake of playing a practical joke, a lawyer tells him that he has come into a fortune of two million dollars, when the truth of the matter is the fortune amounts to only ten thousand dollars. But Charley goes to New York with the idea of doing startling things. What happens makes a farcical romance, and if you like a story full of good fun read the adventures of Charley.

V

BLACKSHEEP! BLACKSHEEP! by Meredith Nicholson. No one likes to be told in advance of the adventures of a gentleman crook, and what happens to him when he gets into a tight place. "The Governor" is a strange sort of a hero, who carries a pocket edition of

Horace, "borrows" automobiles in Ohio and Michigan, and has a philosophy all his own concerning the business of thieving. There is woven about him humor, mystery, melodrama and romance. And his adventures will keep you smiling and thrilled.

VI

MARCHING SANDS, by Harold Lamb. Captain Gray, a former United States Army officer, learns that somewhere in the center of Asia, in the Desert of Gobi, is a lost race of white men. He goes to find out for himself what this mystery is, rescues a party of English scientists, and has a great many exciting adventures. This is a very entertaining story, well told, and full of the atmosphere of the unknown Orient.

VII

WHISPERS, by Louis Dodge. A story of a murder in a costume shop, and a newspaper man who promises to solve the problem in forty-eight hours. How he makes good in spite of obstacles, and an almost serious blunder on his part, makes this story one that must be read through before the book is laid down. The descriptions of a disreputable lodging-house and the many types of men who gather there give a new touch to this most interesting tale.

VIII

WYNDHAM'S PAL, by Harold Bindloss. A story of the sea and the Caribbean coast that creates the atmosphere of romance and adventure of those days of pirates, lost treasure and buccaneers. The hero plays for big stakes, and enjoys the excitement of the game for the game's sake. A story out of the ordinary, and a rattling good tale.

IX

THE PECULIAR MAJOR, by Keble Howard. Suppose you had a ring, a wishing-ring, that would bring you anything you wanted, or give you the power to do anything you desired. What would you do? Would you set out to rule the world? Would you become the richest man on earth? Or would you merely start out to have a good time? That's what the hero of this story did, and his adventures make a story that is well worth reading for the fun of the thing.

X

THE SCARRED CHIN, by Will Payne. A story of adventure and mystery, blackmail, spies and intrigue, with the scene laid in Chicago. Situation piles on situation until the very last page, and then everything ends happily.

XI

FIRE OF YOUTH, by Henry James Forman. A thoroughly pleasing story, with excitement, adventure, and a hero who, having given away a family heirloom to an ex-comic opera singer who jilts him, follows her to Europe to get it back. But before he comes home again he has learned many lessons, not the least of which being that there are many wonderful things in life besides ex-comic opera singers.

XII

THE BRIDGE OF TIME, by William Henry Warner. This is a story of reincarnation and the occult. An ancient Egyptian prince, by means of an occult power of the High Priest, finds himself suddenly transported to this modern civilization. There is much fun and satire in his impressions of our complicated customs and manners.

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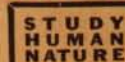
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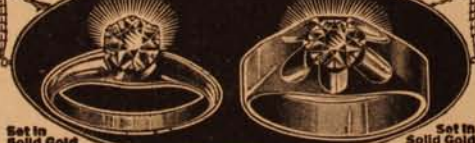
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DON'T send a penny. Send your name and finger size and say, "Send me a Lachnite mounted in a solid gold ring on 10 days' free trial." We will send it prepaid right to your home. When it comes merely deposit \$4.75 with the postman and then wear the ring for 10 full days. If you, or if any of your friends can tell it from a diamond, send it back. But if you decide to buy it—send \$2.50 a month until \$18.75 has been paid.
Write Today Send your name now. Tell us which of the solid gold rings illustrated above you wish (ladies' or men's). Be sure to send your finger size.
Harold Lachman Co., 12 N. Michigan Ave., Dept. 1696 Chicago

WHY DON'T YOU WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG WE'LL HELP YOU ALONG

By composing the music FREE and publishing same. Send poems to-day.
A. J. LENOX CO., 271 W. 125th St., N. Y.

UNSIGHTLY HAIR

on the Face, Arms, Limbs, & Underarms

DESTROYED

permanently with the Roots

NU-ART

Destroys Superfluous Hair



A BEAUTIFUL SKIN IS ADORED Using depilatories to burn off merely surface hair is useless. You must lift out the root. With NU-ART formulated by a physician you can do this easily, quickly and painlessly. No electricity or caustics. Pleasing aroma. Satisfaction guaranteed. **One application** will instantly and completely remove all undesirable hair. \$1.00 at your dealer or direct by mail in plain wrapper.

NU-ART LABORATORIES
SOUTH ORANGE N.J.

SUBMIT YOUR SONG-POEMS ON ANY SUBJECT FOR OUR ADVICE. WE REVISE POEMS, COMPOSE MUSIC OF ANY DESCRIPTION, SECURE COPYRIGHT AND EMPLOY ORIGINAL METHODS FOR FACILITATING FREE PUBLICATION OR OUTRIGHT SALE OF SONGS UNDER THIS SUCCESSFUL CONCERN'S GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION.

SONG WRITERS' MANUAL & GUIDE SENT FREE

CONTAINS VALUABLE INSTRUCTIONS TO BEGINNERS AND TELLS THE TRUTH CONCERNING EVERY BRANCH OF THIS ESSENTIAL AND FASCINATING PROFESSION. THE GREAT WORK ACCOMPLISHED BY THE POPULAR SONG IN WINNING THE WAR IS ONLY AN INDEX TO THE MUCH WIDER SCOPE AND GREATER OPPORTUNITIES AFFORDED BY PEACE.

KNICKERBOCKER STUDIOS 210 GAFFNEY BLDG. N.Y. CITY

Scratch a woman-hater, and you'll find a disappointed lover—scratch a man-hater, and you'll find a woman who never had a lover.

* * *

Philanthropy covers a multitude of sins.

* * *

Strike, and the iron will grow hot.

* * *

Don't say that war is hell—that insults the devil's house keeping.

The Boss of The Ranch Must Be A Man of Blood and Iron— The Kind of Man Nuxated Iron Helps Make By Building Red Blood, Strength and Endurance

Hardened by the rigors of life on the plains, living for days in his saddle, his strength, courage and endurance put a thousand times to the most severe tests, the Boss of the Range daily proves himself every inch a man—a man of blood and iron. He has won his spurs by countless daring feats, perfect calmness in the face of danger, tireless energy and alertness, untold deeds of action, force and power. When you see him with his men on the range you know he's boss and what he says goes. But the rugged, outdoor life of the ranchman which helps to keep his blood rich in strength-giving iron is denied many a man whose indoor existence, hard work and worries sap his energies and rob the iron from his blood. It is such men who need sustaining, health-building help of organic iron—Nuxated Iron—to increase the oxygen-carrying power of their blood and thereby aid in restoring wasted tissue, strengthening their nerves and giving greater power and endurance. Nuxated Iron is now used by over three million people annually as a tonic, strength and blood-builder.

"There are countless numbers of men today who at 40 are broken in health and steadily going downward to physical and mental decay simply because they are allowing worry, overwork, nervous strain, dissipation and occupational poisons to sap the iron from their blood and destroy its power to change food into living tissue, muscle and brain," says Dr. John J. Van Horne, formerly Medical Inspector and Clinical Physician on the Board of Health of New York City. "Yet there are thousands of such men who undergo a most remarkable transformation the moment they get plenty of the right kind of iron into their blood to give increased energy and endurance. Their imagined ills are forgotten, they gain physical poise and fitness, mental alertness and greater power to combat obstacles and withstand severe strains. To help build stronger, healthier men



and women, better able physically, to meet the problems of everyday life, I believe that physicians should, at every opportunity prescribe organic iron—Nuxated Iron—for in my experience it is one of the best tonic and red blood builders known to medical science."

If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of Nuxated Iron three times per day, after meals, for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. Many an athlete or prize fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance, which comes from having plenty of iron in the blood, while many another has gone down to inglorious defeat simply for lack of iron.

Manufacturers' Note: Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended by physicians is not a secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists. Unlike the older inorganic iron products it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed in this city by all good druggists.

No More Wrinkles

BEAUTIFUL FIGURE

Superfluous Hair Vanishes Like Magic. Eyelashes Beautified

Pimples and Blackheads Removed Forever

Let this woman send you free, everything she agrees, and beautify your face and form quickly



This clever woman has not a wrinkle upon her face; she has perfected a marvelous, simple method which brought a wonderful change in her face in a single night. For removing wrinkles and developing the figure, her method is truly wonderfully rapid.

She made herself the woman she is today and brought about the wonderful change in her appearance in a secret and pleasant manner. Her complexion is as clear and fair as that of a child. She turned her scrawny figure into a beautiful and well-developed form. She had thin, scrawny eye-lashes and eyebrows, which could scarcely be seen, and she made them long, thick and beautiful by her own methods and removed every blackhead and pimple from her face in a single night.

Nothing is taken into the stomach, no common massage, no harmful plasters, no worthless creams.

By her new process, she removes wrinkles and develops the whole figure plump and fat.

It is simply astonishing the hundreds of women who write in regarding the wonderful results from this new beauty treatment, which is beautifying their face and form after beauty doctors and other methods failed. She has thousands of letters on file like the following:

Mrs. M. L. B. Albin, Miss., writes: "I have used your beauty treatment with wonderful success. I have not a wrinkle on my face now and it is also improving my complexion, which has always troubled me with pimples and blackheads. My weight was 112 pounds before taking your treatment and now I weigh 117, a gain of 5 pounds. Your treatment is a God send to all thin women. I am so grateful you may even use my letter if you wish."

The valuable new beauty book which Madame Clare is sending free to thousands of women is certainly a blessing to women.

All our readers should write her at once and she will tell you, absolutely free, about her various new beauty treatments and will show our readers:

- How to remove wrinkles in 8 hours;
- How to develop the figure;
- How to make long, thick eyelashes and eyebrows;
- How to remove superfluous hair;
- How to remove blackheads, pimples and freckles;
- How to remove dark circles under the eyes;
- How to quickly remove double chin;
- How to build up sunken cheeks and add flesh to the body;
- How to darken gray hair and stop hair falling;
- How to stop forever perspiration odor.

Simply address your letter to Helen Clare, Suite A387, 3311 Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill., and don't send any money, because particulars are free, as this charming woman is doing her utmost to benefit girls or women in need of secret information which will add to their beauty and make life sweeter and lovelier in every way.

WRITE SONG POEMS

I have absolutely the best proposition to offer you. I have written songs that were sung by Al Jolson, Geo. "Honey-boy" Evans, Harry Fox and Yansci Dolly and many other stars. Write me immediately.

RAY HIBBELER, D 116, 4040 Dickens Ave., Chicago

Send No Money!

Ladies' Solitaire
EXAMINATION FREE
—10 MONTHS TO PAY

280

A Month

Examine ring FIRST, then if you decide to keep it pay only \$2.00. Buying direct assures you the Rock Bottom Price. A perfectly cut blue-white Diamond in ladies' solid gold setting at only \$2.80 a month!

Take Advantage of this amazing offer to-day. YOUR MONEY BACK if you are not satisfied. No Security —No Red Tape.

Buy To-day
10 Months
to pay

A POSTAL BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST DIAMOND WATCH AND JEWELRY BOOK EVER PUBLISHED
Whether you order this ring or not, let us send you this De Luxe Catalog FREE, containing descriptions of rings, watches, diamonds and other articles of jewelry. Everything sent on FREE EXAMINATION. Address Dept. 39-F.
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L.W. SWEET INC.
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Rheumatic and Sciatic Pains

Ask Your Druggist for A-K Tablets
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Small Size
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The Antikamnia Remedy Company, St. Louis, Mo.
Write for Free Samples



Send the Coupon -we'll send you a Lachnite

No. 7A1410

This solid gold solitaire is the most popular ladies' ring in the world. Beautifully finished, the essence of good taste. Setting is a flashing Lachnite Gem weighing about one carat.

Price..... \$18.75
Deposit..... 4.75
Monthly..... 2.50

No. 7A1504

This solid gold ring is shaped and finished by hand. No finer or more fashionable ring could be made. It is set with a brilliant Lachnite Gem weighing about 3-4 carat.

Price..... \$18.75
Deposit..... 4.75
Monthly..... 2.50

SEND NO MONEY. Just send us your name and address and we will send you, prepaid, on 10 days' trial, a genuine Lachnite Gem mounted in a solid gold ring. These sparkling gems have the eternal fire of diamonds. Their brilliance and hardness are guaranteed forever. We want you to select one of the rings from this advertisement and wear it ten full days at our expense. *Then, if you can tell it from a diamond, send it back.* Over 150,000 people have accepted this offer—and have found a way to own exquisite jewelry at a trifling cost.

Pay As You Wish

When the ring comes just make the first small deposit (\$4.75) with the postman. This is only a deposit. It is not a payment. The money is still yours. Put the ring on your finger and wear it everywhere for ten full days. Then if you decide to keep it, pay the balance at the rate of \$2.50 a month without interest. But if, during the trial, you decide to send the Lachnite back, your deposit will be refunded instantly. You run no risk.

Harold Lachman Co.
12 North Michigan Avenue
Dept. 1126 Chicago, Ill.

Send me prepaid Ladies' Ring on ten day's free trial. When it comes I will deposit \$4.75 with the postman. After ten days I will either return the ring or send you \$2.50 a month until the balance has been paid. Total cost to me, \$18.75. If I return the ring you will refund me \$4.75 immediately. I enclose my finger size.

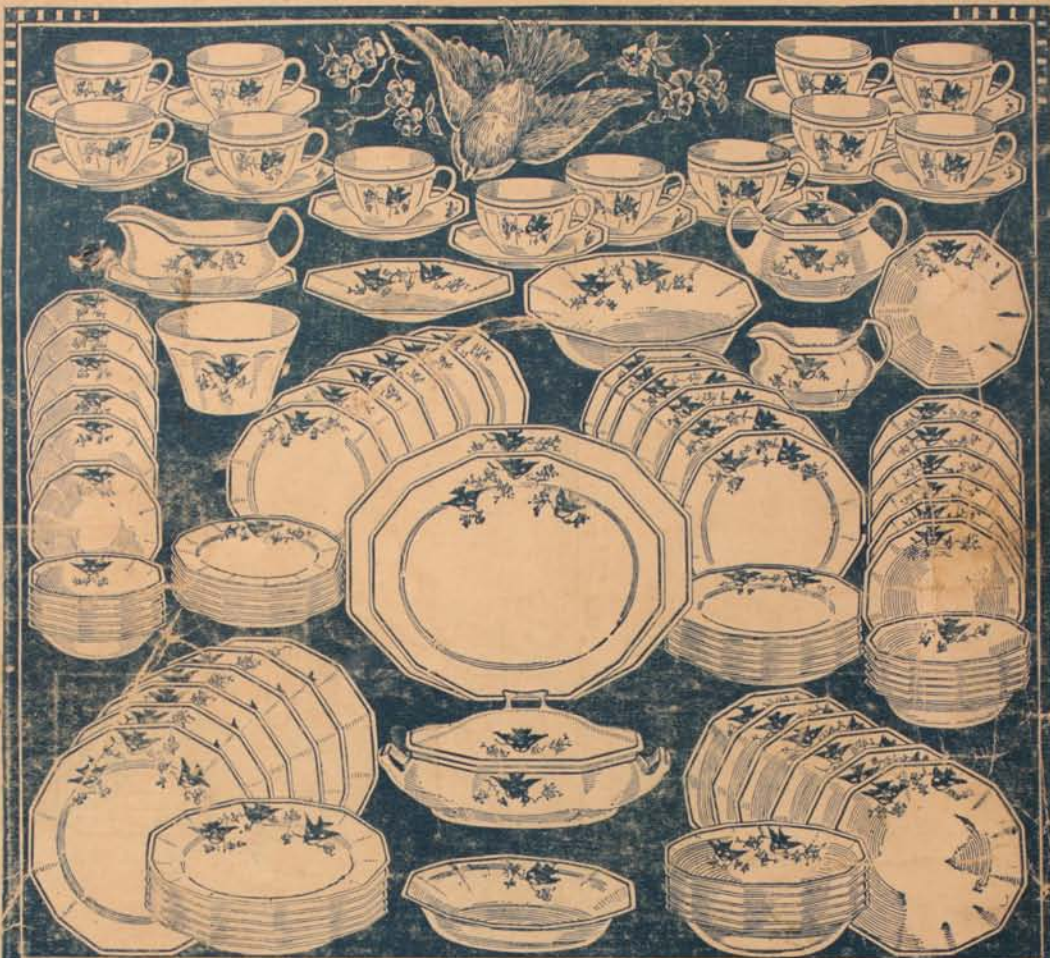
Name.....

Address.....

Send the Coupon!

Don't send us a penny. Just put your name and address in the coupon and tell us which ring you prefer. Be sure to send us your finger size. To get it cut a strip of paper that will just meet around the middle knuckle of your ring finger. Send the coupon now. You will be under no obligations to buy.

Harold Lachman Co. 12 No. Michigan Ave.
Dept. 1126 — Chicago



110-Piece Dinner Set Famous Bluebird Design

\$1

Down Amazing value. Record-breaking offer. In each piece the highest type of color harmony and exquisite design has been attained. Set is in popular Colonial shape, decorated with Bluebird design, blending perfectly with the pink, lavender and green flowers. Lovely blue bordering on each piece. Each piece is fired in the glaze and guaranteed not to check or craze. That splendid Old English finish is applied in the clay before firing, giving each piece the finish of rich snowflake white. This wonderful set can be yours for only \$1.00 down and then \$3.00 monthly. Price, in all, \$32.95. Complete satisfaction guaranteed.

A Complete Service—110 Pieces

This splendid set consists of 12 dinner plates, 9 inches; 12 breakfast plates, 7 1/2 inches; 12 coupe soup, 7 1/2 inches; 12 fruit saucers, 6 1/2 inches; 12 cups; 12 saucers; 12 oatmeal dishes, 6 inches; 12 bread and butter plates, 6 inches; 1 platter, 11 1/2 inches; 1 platter, 12 3/4 inches; 1 covered vegetable dish, 12 pieces; 1 oval open vegetable dish, 9 1/2 inches; 1 round vegetable dish, 8 1/2 inches; 1 gravy boat; 1 gravy boat stand; 1 bowl, 1 pint; 1 sugar bowl and cover, 12 pieces; 1 cream pitcher; 1 pickle dish; 1 butter dish, 7 1/2 inches. This set is one that will add tone and beauty to any dining room. With ordinary care it will last a lifetime. Weight shipped, about 100 pounds.

Order by No. G6138A. Send \$1.00 with order, \$3.00 monthly. Price of 110 pieces, \$32.95. No C. O. D. No discount for cash.

Straus & Schram, Dept. 1696 W. 35th St., Chicago

Enclosed find \$1.00. Ship special advertised 110-piece Bluebird Dinner Set. I am to have 30 days' free trial. If I keep the set I will pay you \$3.00 monthly. If not satisfied I am to return the set within 30 days and you are to refund my money and any freight or express charges I paid.

110-Piece Bluebird Dinner Set No. G6138A, \$32.95.

Name.....

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If you want only the catalog, put X in the proper box below:

Furniture, Rugs, Stoves, Jewelry Men's, Women's, Children's Clothing

Small amount down, easy payments on all articles in our big bargain catalog. 30 days' trial—money back if not satisfied. No discount for cash; no C. O. D.

Send the Coupon

along with \$1.00 to us now. Have this 110-piece dinner set shipped on 30 days trial. We will also send our big Bargain Catalog listing thousands of amazing bargains. Only a small first payment and balance in monthly payments for anything you want. Send coupon below

Straus & Schram, Dept. 1696 West 35th Street, Chicago, Ill.