

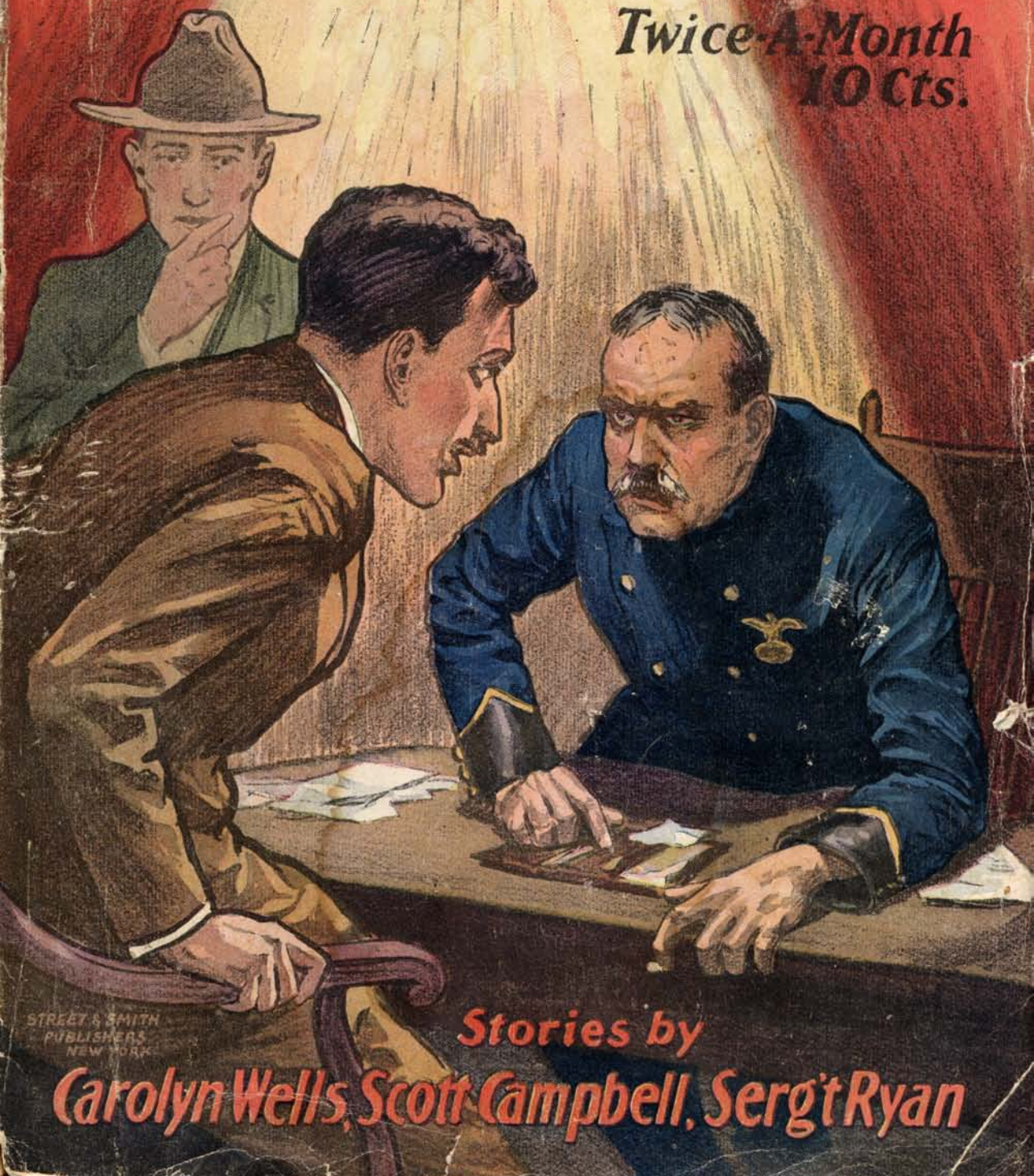
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DETECTIVE STORY

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DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

T W I C E A M O N T H

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Vol. 6.

JANUARY 5, 1917.

No. 1.

His Hand and Seal By *Carolyn Wells*

CHAPTER I.

ISABEL CURWOOD.

I DO think suitors are the worst nuisance ever!" declared Grace Curwood, tossing one letter on the floor as she opened another.

"'Tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love that makes the world go round," chanted Isabel. "Who's your troublesome adorer?"

"Oh, my adorers aren't troublesome. It's the one who won't adore who troubles me."

"Oho! The Russian count. Won't he bow at your pretty feet?"

"No, he bows at yours, and you
1A DS

know it. Oh, Isabel, do let me have him!"

"Have him! Indeed, you may. I don't want him. I'll trade him for your new spangled scarf."

"But he won't be traded. He worships the ground you walk on."

Isabel, in front of her toilet mirror, was tilting a new hat to the exact angle of reflection, and she pulled out a long hatpin and pushed it in again, without speaking.

"I can't see why you dislike him so," went on Grace, continuing to skim through her letters. "Oh, I say, here's an invitation for the Fords' week-end. He's sure to be there. There's the

telephone! Of course it's more of those bothering suitors. Let me answer it, Isabel; it may be the count. Good morning. Yes, yes. Oh, it's you, Ed? Yes, Isabel is here. Hold the wire. It's Ed Stuart," she said, handing the receiver to her sister. "Such a come-down, after I hoped it was the count!"

"Worth a hundred counts," said Isabel gayly, as she came over to the telephone.

The Ponsonby, where the Curwood girls and their mother lived, was one of New York's newest apartment houses. It was, therefore, overornate as to architecture and decoration, but it was comfortable and luxurious, and so proved satisfactory to the pleasure-seeking class that tenanted it.

Though the Curwoods were out of town at such seasons as fashion decreed, just now, in mid-December, they were at home, for matters of importance required their presence in the city. And, too, Mrs. Curwood, a matron of fashionable inclinations, was partial to New York's winter gayeties.

Mrs. Curwood's philosophy, so far as she had any, was an unbounded willingness to let everybody have his or her own way, and as a result she and her two daughters did exactly as they chose in every respect. But, though individual and self-reliant, the Curwood girls were not unconventional, and as they were both pretty and charming, they were acknowledged social favorites.

Isabel, perhaps because she was the elder, was inclined to be dictatorial, and Grace, who adored her sister, amiably submitted to her dictates. Indeed, the Russian count, who had recently invaded their social set, was the cause of Grace's first disagreement with her sister's opinion.

"Why don't you like him, Isabel?" she resumed, as her sister turned away from the telephone, and returned to her

absorbing occupation of discovering the exact frontage of the plumed hat.

"Of course I don't dislike him," she said. "You can't dislike anybody that you never liked, to begin with."

"Don't say clever things; it doesn't suit you—especially in that frivolous hat. If he saw you in that, he'd propose at once."

"Oh, I don't know," said Isabel carelessly, turning well round in her chair, as she moved a large hand mirror to and fro before her eyes to get the reflected view of the back of her hat. "Sometimes, Grace, I think, it's you the count admires, and not me."

"Oh, Isabel, do you really? I wish I thought so! But you're so much handsomer and more attractive than I am."

"There, there, Gracie; don't angle for compliments from me. You get enough from the men."

"Yes, I do; but not from him. Oh, Isabel, isn't he grand!"

"He doesn't interest me at all. I've no use for a Russian count. And I'm not sure he is a count, though there's no doubt he's a Russian."

"Of course he's a count, Isabel," said Mrs. Curwood, coming into the room. "That is, if you're speaking of Kovroff, as I suppose you are. How absurd of you to say such things! No one doubts Count Kovroff's title or wealth or charm."

"All right, mother," said Isabel gayly. "I grant him all those attractions you mention, and as many more as you like; but all the same, he doesn't appeal to me."

"No," returned Mrs. Curwood, with a reproving glance at her elder daughter; "you care only for Ed Stuart, a nonentity and a ne'er-do-well. I hate to see you throw yourself away on young Stuart. You know as well as I do that he has no money."

"But I have enough for both, mother, so why consider that question?"

"But your fortune won't last long, once Ed Stuart gets hold of it. You know his proclivities."

"I know what you mean, mother, but it's merely rumor, and you have no right even to mention it."

"I haven't mentioned it," returned Mrs. Curwood, noting Isabel's indignant expression.

"Pooh, it's an open secret," declared Grace. "I'll mention it, myself. Ed Stuart gambles, and everybody knows it. Why, all he wants is your money."

"Well, he can have it," returned Isabel good-naturedly; "but first I must get it myself. Mother, Guardy Weatherby says he has settled my affairs, and is going to pay me my money."

"Oh, I suppose that's all right, child, but why aren't you content to let it go on as it is, until you're married?"

"Not I. I'm an independent young woman, and I'm twenty-one years of age, so Mr. Weatherby's guardianship is legally at an end, and I am glad of it."

"Perfectly ridiculous for your Uncle Albert to leave your fortune in Mr. Weatherby's care, anyway," said her mother. "He should have made me your guardian, and not to do so was rude and discourteous."

"Oh, he didn't mean it that way, mother; but Mr. Weatherby, as a business man, is much more capable of taking care of my money and looking after it for me. Why, he told me some years ago that he had invested it so well that he had nearly doubled it. You couldn't have done that."

"No, I couldn't. You'll be a rich girl, Isabel, and that's why I hate to see——"

"Oh, I know what you hate to see, mother; you needn't tell me. You'll hate to see me walk up the church aisle with Mr. Weatherby, and back again with Mr. Edwin Stuart. But you're going to see it, all the same, so you may as well make the best of it."

"Mr. Weatherby doesn't approve of it any more than I do," said Mrs. Curwood, though knowing that the guardian's opinion would have little weight with her willful daughter.

"I know it, mother, but that only proves Guardy's poor taste and judgment. He doesn't know Ed very well, and doesn't appreciate him. Oh, well, what's the use of being a free and independent American citizen, if you can't marry whom you like? I'll guarantee that after we are married, and Ed is one of the family, you and Grace will love him as a son and a brother; just as I am also positive you never could make a satisfactory son and brother of any Russian impostor."

"Count Kovroff is no impostor," said Grace quietly, "and you know it, Isabel. For some reason, you're prejudiced against him, and I know the reason, too. It's because he knows something about Ed Stuart that you wish he didn't know."

"Grace, you're horrid!" exclaimed Isabel, turning an angry face toward her sister. "I forbid you to say anything more against the man I'm going to marry; and as to that old fake count, I believe you're in love with him, yourself."

"I am not!" declared Grace, though the color rising to her cheeks contradicted her words.

"You are so! Your blushes prove it. You're as red as red!"

"There, there, girls, don't quarrel," said Mrs. Curwood languidly; "it's such bad form, and it isn't a bit becoming."

"And it doesn't do a bit of good," supplemented Isabel, as having adjusted her hat to her satisfaction, she picked up her street coat. "Hold this coat for me, won't you, Gracie? And don't quarrel any more; and when Guardy gives me my own check book, I'll buy you the prettiest necklace you can pick out on Fifth Avenue."

"Where are you going now, Isabel?"

I thought you were going out to luncheon with Ed."

"I am; why?"

"I don't think this coat is dressy enough. Why don't you put on something better?"

"Oh, this is all right; a plain black tailor-made is always correct. And I'm going to wear my gray feather boa—it's so becoming."

"That old thing? It is becoming, but you've worn it so much I'm tired of it."

"I like it. And I'm going to get a lot of new things soon, so I'll only wear it a few times more. What are you doing this afternoon, mother?"

"I'm going to a bridge party, and afterward to Mrs. Malcolm's tea. Grace will meet me there, and you'll come, too, won't you, Isabel?"

"Yes, I think so. I'm going to luncheon with Ed, and then, after that, I'm going to Madame Laurestine's to try on some gowns. I shall spend some time there, but I'll go on to Mrs. Malcolm's and meet you both. Say about six?"

"Yes, or a bit earlier. Good-by, dearie. Where are you lunching?"

"At Sherry's; and then Ed will take me to Madame Laurestine's."

Isabel looked very beautiful as she bade them a smiling good-by and went away. Going down in the elevator, she gave a few admiring touches to her hat, and noted with satisfaction the mirrored reflection. She was of a large and handsome type, and though quite aware of her own good looks, she was not vain or conceited. She dressed in rather better taste than her mother or sister, and to-day, in her quiet black cloth costume, large black hat, and light gray feather boa, she looked correct and inconspicuous. She took a taxicab down to the restaurant, and as it came to a standstill at the *marquise*, Edwin Stuart stood at the curb awaiting her.

"It's a great thing, Isabel," he said,

after they were seated at the table he had selected, "for a woman to wear her clothes as well as you do. You look perfectly well dressed in the plainest sort of a rig, and lots of girls don't. One reason is, you've a good idea of color."

"Black isn't a color," returned Isabel, smiling.

"It is for costume purposes. And that gray boa suits you awfully well. But I regret to say you'll have to discard it soon."

"Why? It isn't old-fashioned."

"No, but it has seen its best days. See, it sheds little bits of gray feather all over your coat. And mine, too," he added, as he picked a couple of wisps of ostrich feather from his sleeve.

"I won't wear it again," said the girl, smiling. "Grace told me it was *passé*, but I'm fond of the thing. It's so soft and fluffy. Ed, do you know, they're still throwing that count at my head."

"Are they, dear? Well, so long as he doesn't reach your heart, it doesn't matter much. But I won't have you bothered, Isabel. I'll tell you what: let's go and get married this very afternoon."

"Don't be ridiculous! I don't want to do anything so foolish."

"I'm not ridiculous, and it isn't foolish. You do want to marry me, don't you?"

"Yes; but I want a wedding and a white veil and an enormous bouquet and yards of satin train that I can scarcely drag after me. But I want to drag it up the aisle to 'Mendelssohn' and back to 'Lohengrin.' Oh, no, I don't want any *impromptu*, justice-of-the-peace performance—and I don't believe you do, either. Why did you say that, Ed?"

"Oh, only because I thought it would save you further molestations from that very objectionable count." But the young man's manner and expression were not entirely ingenuous. He did

not meet his fiancée's direct gaze, but shifted his glance uneasily about the room.

"Oh, he doesn't molest me," Isabel declared. "It's really mother and Grace who do the molesting."

"Well, marry me, and even they shan't molest you any more. Isabel, can't you fix up your white satin and your Lohengrin soon? I don't want to wait long, darling."

The girl looked at him. The words were exactly those of a fond lover to his promised bride, and yet she missed something from the tone that she felt sure ought to have been there. And again, there was his wandering glance. Surely an eager bridegroom would look straight into the eyes of the girl he loved, with a look that would say even more than his words.

But she responded lightly: "Nonsense, boy, we can't be married before spring, of course. I had thought of June, but if you're so insistent, I'll think about April. Not May—that's unlucky."

"Oh, Isabel, do make it sooner than April! That's ages away!"

"Indeed, I won't, and I think more likely it will be June. What has made you so impatient all at once? And I've a lot to do before I think about getting married. I have to take over my fortune from Guardy Weatherby, and I have to learn to be a business woman, and keep a bank account, and manage my stocks and bonds, and invest my surplus income. I'm not going to manage my affairs that silly, womanish way everybody makes game of. I'm going to learn real business ways, and I shall take care of my estate as well as any man could. Mr. Weatherby will teach me. I've already asked him to, and he has promised."

"I should think, Isabel, that a married woman would expect her husband to manage her financial affairs."

"That's just where you make a mis-

take, Edwin mine! That sort of thing was in vogue, I believe, some years ago. But the woman of to-day, if she has any money, looks after it herself. So let's consider that settled before we go any farther."

"But I don't like the way you've settled it. I really think, dear, that you're acting in too independent a manner."

"I am independent, Ed, and you know it. You have always known it. And I'm glad we understand each other. I'm of age now, and Guardy is going to give over my estate to me at once. He is going to teach me to take care of it, and as I expect to learn rapidly, that won't take long, and then, after that, I'll promise you that I will begin at once to make preparations for our wedding."

"It doesn't become me, Isabel, to object to your plans, but you know how I detest strong-minded women. I hope you will at least turn to me for advice and assistance when you need it."

"When I need it, Ed, I will."

A short silence followed, which began to be a trifle embarrassing, and then Isabel spoke lightly of other subjects, and the question of her financial affairs was not again referred to.

When they left the restaurant, Stuart said: "Which way are you going? Shall we walk for a few blocks?"

"Yes; I'm going up Fifth Avenue to Madame Laurestine's, and I'll ask her what she thinks of an April wedding. Really, she's the most important personage to be considered in the matter."

"How absurd you are! Why do brides think they want such a lot of toggery?"

"And why do bridegrooms always voice that very sentiment, no matter how they express it?"

Stuart laughed. He was a handsome young fellow, a fair type of New York's society man. Courteous, well-man-

nered, and alert, but with an easy-going effect which was in strong contrast to Isabel's decision of character.

"Well, of course you want me to be a conventional bridegroom; otherwise you'd marry that erratic and uncertain count. So come along, my lady, and I'll take you up to your modiste's, and then I'm going to the club. But, I say, Isabel, I'm shy for the moment; could you let me have a little money for a few days?"

"Why, of course, Ned, with pleasure. How much do you want?"

"About five hundred dollars, girlie, if you have it by you."

Isabel's curved red lips set themselves in a straight line. "Ned," she said, in a firm voice, "are you going to gamble with it?"

Stuart looked at her disapprovingly, as if to rebuke her bad taste.

"Isabel, you shouldn't say things like that. In the first place, 'gamble' is not a word to be used among people of our set; and, too, a young girl like you shouldn't mention such a thing."

Isabel looked him straight in the eyes. "If I'm going to marry you," she said slowly, "there is no subject that I may not mention to you. Especially one so closely connected with your own reputation."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. I am told there are rumors of your gambling, and when you ask me for money, I'm naturally interested to know if it is for that purpose."

"Your interest seems to me more like curiosity. No, I take that back. Don't let us quarrel. Of course the money isn't for any such purpose, so let me have it, dearie, won't you?"

"I haven't that much with me, Ned, and I don't want to give you such a large sum, anyway. But I have to go to the bank to cash a check, and, if you like, we'll go there first, and I'll give you a hundred. Won't that do, Ned?"

"No, that won't do, little one; I hope you can make it a trifle more than that. Let's take a taxicab to the bank."

"Very well," said Isabel.

CHAPTER II.

THE DARK HOUR.

IT was almost half past six that same evening when Mrs. Curwood and Grace returned to their apartment in the Ponsonby.

"There was a telephone message, ma'am," said a maid, appearing in the doorway. "Mr. Stuart, ma'am, telephoned that Miss Isabel would go with him to tea."

"Very well, Jane. Did he say what time she would be home?"

"No, ma'am, nothing about that."

"She'll be in soon," said Grace. "I think she was rather clever to go to tea with Ed, instead of that place we went to. Now run along to your room, motherie, and get a little rest, so you'll look your best this evening. It'll be rather a gorgeous dinner, you know."

It was nearly a half hour later when Grace Curwood, who was lounging on a couch in her own boudoir, glanced at her clock and concluded it was time she began to dress. She pushed the button of an electric bell, and in a few minutes her maid appeared.

"I'll wear that blue-and-silver arrangement to-night," she began, sitting up on the couch and untying the ribbons of her pretty negligee gown.

But as she rose, she fell back again to the couch with a startled exclamation. For the room had gone suddenly dark. There was not a glimmer of light, and by sudden contrast it was the very blackness of darkness.

"Good gracious, Marie, what has happened? Something wrong with the electrics, of course. They'll flash on again in a minute."

"Yes, Miss Grace," came Marie's voice through the darkness; "just stay

still till they light up, or you may fall over a chair and hurt yourself."

"Oh, I'll stay still," laughed Grace, cuddling back among the pillows. "The longer the lights stay out, the better I'll like it, for it gives me a few moments' more rest. I wonder if mother is frightened. Can't you grope your way to her, Marie, and tell her to keep still until the lights are right again?"

Marie went away obediently, and Grace could hear her fumbling her way to Mrs. Curwood's room.

But even after Marie had made her way back again, the whole place was still in total darkness.

"Your mother's all right, Miss Grace," said the maid. "She has a little lamp that she has lighted, and she's going on with her toilet. She says, haven't you a candle or something?"

"No, I've no candle and no electric lamp. But if this darkness keeps up, they'll send us some sort of lights from the office, I'm sure. At any rate, I can't go on dressing until I have a light of some kind."

Grace made her way to the window and looked out. The whole near-by portion of the city was dark. "It's a district," she said. "I think the electric light is all portioned out in districts, and if anything goes wrong, the whole section is affected. But I never knew this sort of thing to last so long before."

Marie went away on a search for lights of some sort, and when she returned, bringing candles, she said: "It's a bad lookout, Miss Grace. The janitor sent a boy up with these candles, and, though I didn't get all the right of it, it's a short circuit or something like that, and the whole house is pitch dark. And not only that, but the electric elevators won't work. He says the light and power are both cut off."

"Oh, well, Marie, we must make the best of it. You can do my hair by candlelight; you're such a clever girl,

I'm sure you can. And then by the time I have to get into that blue gown, we shall probably have the lights again. Let's hope so, anyway."

But by the time that Miss Curwood's beautiful hair had been drawn into the fashionable shape that was decreed that winter, light had not yet been restored. Grace had telephoned to the office, but had received only a corroboration of Marie's account. More candles had been sent up, and the apartment was now fairly well lighted, though out of doors it was still dark.

Grace went to her mother's room. "Shall we go to the dinner?" she said. "We'll have to walk down eight flights of stairs here, and up a lot more at Mrs. Merwin's. The electric elevators are out of commission, you know. Candles will be all right on the dinner table, but I hate to ride through the dark streets, don't you?"

"I don't care anything about the dinner, Grace—whether we go or not; but I'm worried about Isabel. Where do you suppose she is?"

"Oh, she's all right. She's with Ed Stuart, you know, and of course he'll look after her. They probably went to the Ritz for tea."

"Yes, but they would have left there long ago. I hope they're not lost in the darkness."

"Well, they'd be in a taxicab, and by the lights on the cab the driver could find his way here, of course."

"Yes, that's just what worries me. They ought to have been here long ago. It's almost eight o'clock. What can we do? I wish you'd call Ed on the telephone."

"What good would that do, for I know I could not get him? He must be with Isabel, wherever they are."

As they were talking, the electric lights flashed on once more, and the whole place was as light as usual.

"Thank goodness for that!" cried

Grace. "But it must have been a bad accident to put out the lights so long. Now we'll have to fly round to get to the dinner in time, though, of course, tardiness is excusable in a case like this."

Mrs. Curwood and Grace returned from the dinner at half past eleven, only to learn that Isabel had not yet come home.

"Has she telephoned?" asked Mrs. Curwood of Jane, the parlor maid.

"No, ma'am; there has been no message."

"It's the craziest thing I ever heard of," declared Grace. "Isabel is wild about Ed, but she ought to know better than to stay out with him as late as this. Do you suppose they are dining somewhere?"

"I don't know. They've no business to be dining alone together, anyway; and if it was brought about by that electrical accident, they surely ought to be home by this time. I'm very much annoyed. I've always let Isabel do as she chose, but she never before did anything that I could criticize. I don't know what to do about it."

"I don't see as you can do anything, mother. We could telephone to Ed again, but I know we wouldn't find him at his home or his club, so what's the use? You don't think they've eloped, do you?"

"No, of course not. Isabel cares too much for a showy wedding to do anything like that."

"Well, perhaps they've gone to a theater."

"That's the only plausible thing to think of. But Isabel isn't dressed for the theater, and, too, she would have telephoned if they had done that. They may have gone somewhere to call and been persuaded to stay late."

"Well, we can't do anything, so we may as well go to bed. Of course, Isabel is all right, since she's with Ed, and

when she does come home she'll give a satisfactory explanation, I know."

"Yes, of course she will. Jane will have to sit up for her. I'm glad the lights came up again. Somehow, I feel sure it was because of that accident that they stayed away to dinner."

"Well, don't bother about it; go right to bed, my pretty little mother, and tomorrow morning I shall scold Isabel roundly for the anxiety she has caused you."

Not long after twelve o'clock the Curwoods' apartment was dark, save for its night lights, and both Grace and her mother slept quietly, without dreaming of the missing Isabel. Jane, occupying an easy-chair in the hall, waited up for the late comer. But as the hours went by and Jane's vigil was unbroken, sleep overcame her, and at last her head sank on her breast, and she, too, slept.

CHAPTER III.

WHERE IS ISABEL?

IT was a little more than half past six the next morning when Grace Curwood was awakened by the murmur of voices. Her drowsy eyes opened slowly, and then stared at the unusual spectacle of three women gathered at her bedside.

They were Jane, Marie, and Ellen, the cook, and all three white faces looked scared and awe-struck.

Marie spoke first. "Oh, Miss Grace," she said, "Miss Isabel hasn't come home!"

Grace laughed. "Well, I don't suppose the world will come to an end if she hasn't. She must have spent the night at some friend's house."

"Oh, do you think so?" exclaimed Marie, in great relief.

"Of course I think so. Where else could she be? And did you wake me up at this unearthly hour to tell me this? Go away, all of you, and let me finish my sleep."

It was a couple of hours later when Mrs. Curwood wakened, and Marie, bringing her morning tea, told her the news. She didn't take it as calmly as Grace had. Rising at once, she slipped on a kimono and hurried to her daughter's room.

"Grace," she said, "where is Isabel?"

"Goodness, mother, I don't know. I haven't hidden her."

"But she didn't come home."

"Then she must have stayed out. Probably she stayed overnight at Adelaide Pierson's."

"Oh, Grace, if she had done that, she would have telephoned us."

"I should think so; but perhaps the telephones went out of order when the lights went out last night."

"But we telephoned."

"Only in the house. Perhaps the district was affected. I don't know what a district is, but it's always affected if anything goes wrong with the electricity."

"Grace, do be serious. I'm sure something dreadful has happened to Isabel."

"Well, nothing could happen except that she has eloped with Ed Stuart. And that isn't so very dreadful, for she was bound to marry him, anyway."

Mrs. Curwood sighed. "I wish she would give him up; he's undesirable in every way. And I'm almost certain Count Kovroff is interested in Isabel."

"Interested! I should say he was! But she won't look at him; she sees nobody but Ed Stuart. Run along, mother, and get dressed. Isabel will turn up, all right. Of course she hasn't really eloped, and you'll hear from her soon."

Mrs. Curwood went back to her room, but Grace's prophecy was not fulfilled. When ten o'clock came, and no sign of the girl, even Grace began to feel anxious.

"I think I'll telephone Ed Stuart,"

she said, "and he'll tell us where she went last night, after he left her."

"Will he be at his office yet?"

"I think so; if not, I'll call him up at his rooms."

Grace succeeded in getting Stuart on the telephone, but as she talked with him, her face assumed a bewildered expression.

"I can't understand it," she said, going back to her mother. "Ed says he left Isabel yesterday afternoon at Madame Laurestine's, and he hasn't seen her since."

"What?" exclaimed Mrs. Curwood.

"Now, don't get excited, mother; it's all right, I'm sure. Isabel spent most of the afternoon trying on gowns, and then she went to Adelaide's or somewhere, and stayed there all night. At any rate, she hasn't eloped with Ed."

"But Grace, Mr. Stuart telephoned, you know, that he was taking Isabel to tea. Jane said so."

"Why, so she did! I had forgotten that. Mother, there is something queer about it all. I'm going to telephone Mr. Stuart again."

After her second conversation with the young man, Grace was more mystified than ever.

"He says that he didn't take Isabel to tea, and that he didn't telephone up here at all. But he's coming up here himself, right away. He seems to think there's something wrong."

"Something wrong! I should say there was. If he didn't telephone, who did?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I'll ask Jane about it."

But Jane, when summoned and questioned, could only repeat the message that had been given her.

"It was a gentleman's voice, Miss Grace, and he said: 'Tell Mrs. Curwood that Miss Isabel is going to tea with me.' And I said: 'Who is this, please?' And he said: 'Mr. Stuart.' And then he shut off, quick like."

"Are you sure it was Mr. Stuart's voice?" asked Grace.

"I'm not sure, Miss Grace. I couldn't tell his voice over the telephone. But that's what he said."

"Of course it wasn't Ed Stuart's voice, if he says he didn't telephone yesterday," said Mrs. Curwood. "It's all very strange, Grace."

"It is, indeed, mother. Perhaps she has eloped with Count Kovroff."

"If that's the case, I'll forgive her gladly. But that isn't it. Grace, some accident has happened to Isabel."

"Oh, pshaw, mother! Don't let's think that until we have to. I'm sure Isabel's all right, but I can't understand that telephone message."

"I'm sure it was Ed Stuart that telephoned, though. Who else could it be? And this morning, for some reason, he sees fit to deny it. He's a rogue, Grace, and I wouldn't trust him as far as I could see him."

"Well, you'll see him soon, mother, and as we can't do anything in the meantime, let's stop worrying about it."

Grace went away to her own pursuits, but the mother's anxiety was not so easily allayed. Mrs. Curwood was a frivolous-minded matron, and often thought more about her own gayeties and entertainments than about her daughters' welfare; but this state of things was largely because her daughters' welfare had always been seemingly assured. Now that there was a possibility that something untoward had happened, Mrs. Curwood was as much troubled and alarmed as if she had been a mother of the brooding and hovering type.

After what seemed to her an interminable wait, Stuart arrived.

He came in with his usual debonair manner, and a quizzical smile played on his handsome face as he said: "What's all this about my taking Isabel to tea? I did ask her, but she refused my further hospitality. We had lunch

together, you know, and I think she felt she had seen enough of me for one day."

"But where did she go after she left you?" asked Mrs. Curwood eagerly.

"Why, I left her at Madame Lauretine's. She said she was going to be there most of the afternoon, looking at some of that lady's newest importations."

"Yes," said Mrs. Curwood thoughtfully; "she didn't have a fitting engagement; she just went there to look at some models. But where did she go after that?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I offered to come back for her and take her to tea, but she said no, she wanted to go home early, as she was dining out."

"Then she *did* intend to go to the Merwins' dinner, after all!" exclaimed Grace. "But she seemed to cut out the Malcolm tea."

"But where is she?" urged Mrs. Curwood. "Mr. Stuart, something must have happened to her."

"This is the funny part," said Grace. "We were out at a tea, mother and I, and when we came home Jane said that you had telephoned that you were taking Isabel to tea."

"Why, I didn't do any such thing!" declared Stuart. "I didn't see Isabel after three o'clock, and I've no idea where she went. I didn't telephone. Your maid must have mistaken the name."

"That must be it," agreed Grace. "She said she didn't recognize your voice, but, then, one wouldn't expect her to, and she said she's sure that the gentleman said he was Mr. Stuart."

"What other name sounds like Stuart?" inquired the young man thoughtfully. And then he added, with a smile, "Kovroff doesn't!"

"That's the worst of it," said Grace, smiling, too. "If it had been Count Kovroff, mother wouldn't mind a bit.

In fact, she's hoping that Isabel has eloped with him."

"You make a mistake, Mrs. Curwood," said Stuart gravely. "Count Kovroff is a new man among us, and I'm by no means sure that his credentials are unimpeachable."

"That's what Isabel says," declared Grace, "and I know she'd never run away with him. She hates him. I think she just went to stay overnight with one of the girls, and she never dreamed we'd be anxious about her."

"Well, I think there is some cause for anxiety. Why don't you telephone to some of her friends?"

"Oh, if you and mother are both going to be anxious, I'll have to do that to prove my case. I'll call up Adelaide first."

For the better part of an hour, Grace was at the telephone. After calling up various houses where Isabel might be, she called up unlikely ones, but all with the same result. No one seemed to have seen or heard of Isabel Curwood the afternoon before. And now Grace herself was not only as anxious as the other two, but even more so.

"Something has happened," she declared, as she hung up the receiver after her last futile call. "Something dreadful has happened to Isabel. What shall we do, Mr. Stuart? How can we find her?"

"Oh, we'll find her. I can't think anything dreadful has happened. But it's mighty queer about the telephone message. I can't think why any one should have used my name."

"What time did you leave Isabel yesterday, at the dressmaker's?" asked Mrs. Curwood.

"It was just about three; a trifle after, perhaps."

"Did you go right there from luncheon?"

"Yes," replied Stuart, but he spoke after an instant's hesitation.

"Did Isabel seem in good spirits?" asked Grace.

"Oh, yes, of course. Don't talk as if you thought she went off to drown herself! And how could a girl be other than in good spirits, when she was going to look at Paris gowns? And I may as well tell you, Mrs. Curwood, that we discussed the date of our wedding day. I persuaded her to consider April as a good time to get married."

Mrs. Curwood looked displeased. "You know, Mr. Stuart," she said, "I have never given my consent to your engagement to Isabel. Though nowadays a parent's consent is not considered necessary, I believe."

"You believe quite right," said young Stuart gayly. "So long as you don't put any definite obstacle in our way, we consider ourselves engaged. By Jove, I wish I *had* eloped with her yesterday, and then we'd know where she is now. But, Mrs. Curwood, there's no use blinking the fact that something must have happened. I confess I'm alarmed, and I think we should set to work at once to find out where she is."

"But what can we do?" asked the mother helplessly.

"The first thing to do," said Grace decidedly, "is to send for Mr. Weatherby. If the matter is serious, which I can't think it is, he's the one to consult."

"Send for him, Grace," said her mother, "and meantime I'll go and lie down. I feel faint."

"Now, don't do the despairing act, mother. Isabel's all right, and you'll find that Mr. Weatherby will take a sensible view of it."

Leonard Weatherby arrived shortly, and was soon in possession of the facts of Isabel's disappearance. Mr. Weatherby was a capable-looking man, and seemed the very one to whom to turn in a disagreeable predicament.

He was of the large type often described as portly, and his face wore

the imperturbable expression of a man of the world. His black hair was gray at the temples, and his large, dark eyes and olive complexion gave him somewhat the look of an actor. There was decision of character shown in his strong, square chin, and, on the whole, Leonard Weatherby was a man whom the most casual observer would recognize as a power and a strength.

And, indeed, he seemed so to the Curwood ladies, and both they and young Stuart felt a sense of confidence in his presence.

"Of course the girl's all right," he said, in his hearty way. "I'm quite sure she hasn't been abducted, and I trust no accident has happened. But we must do all we can to find her. You say you telephoned to all her girl friends?"

"Yes," replied Grace; "even to those houses where I am positive she never would have gone."

"Then," went on Mr. Weatherby gently, "I can't think of anything else but to telephone the hospitals. Now, don't faint," he added, as Mrs. Curwood turned white. "You know, in case of even a slight accident, if Isabel had been alone, she might have been taken to a hospital."

"But in that case they would have telephoned us!" cried Grace.

"Yes—that is, unless——"

"You mean, unless she were unconscious! Oh, Mr. Weatherby, how can you make such dreadful suggestions?" And Grace clapped her hands over her ears.

"I didn't, Grace; you suggested it yourself. But surely it can do no harm to inquire at the hospitals, for if she isn't there, you'll certainly feel relieved."

"That's true enough;" and again Grace went to the telephone.

But a round-up of the hospitals brought no news of Isabel Curwood.

"Just as I expected!" exclaimed Grace, as she returned to the group.

"Of course I'm glad Isabel isn't in the hospitals, but I wish I knew where she is. What shall we do next, Mr. Weatherby?"

"I don't see that you can do anything, except wait for her to come home. There are dozens of things that might have happened. Perhaps she met some friend who took her motoring, and the car broke down a long distance from anywhere. It might easily happen that they couldn't telephone, and perhaps they stayed at some farmhouse overnight, or even camped out under the stars."

"Why, of course that's it!" declared Mrs. Curwood, her volatile nature responding to this happy thought. "Why didn't we think of that before? Mr. Weatherby, you're a great comfort! I'm sure your supposition is right."

"Well, we'll see; and in the meantime there's nothing to do but wait."

"I don't agree with you," said Grace, in her straightforward way. "If she'd been in a motor accident, and wasn't killed, Isabel would have let us know somehow before this."

"Oh, probably not an accident," put in Mr. Weatherby; "just a burst tire, or some delay of that sort. Don't take it so seriously, Grace."

"I didn't at first," returned Grace, "but now I feel sure that it is serious. There is no rational or explainable place that Isabel could be, from which she couldn't have sent us word. And I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to send for Mr. Britton."

"Yes, let us do so," said Mr. Weatherby, "though I don't know what he could do more than we can."

"I don't know either, but he's our lawyer, and when anything like this happens, he ought to be called in."

"I think so, too," said Mrs. Curwood. "Of course, Mr. Weatherby, you and Mr. Stuart and Grace and I are all deeply concerned for Isabel's welfare, but perhaps the very depth of our feel-

ing makes us less capable of rational action than an outsider. Mr. Britton is cool-headed and clear-headed, and as our family lawyer I think he should be consulted.

"I agree with you, Mrs. Curwood," Mr. Weatherby said, "for I now begin to fear that it is a serious matter; although, of course, Isabel may come in at any moment."

"Well, there's no harm done if she does," said Grace, jumping up and going once more to the telephone. "I'm going to call Mr. Britton, anyway."

"Tell him what has happened," said her mother, "and then he can come here or not, as he sees fit."

After Grace's conversation with the lawyer, she came slowly back to her former seat, with a white, scared face.

"He's very much alarmed," she said, "and he's coming right up here. He wants Mr. Weatherby and Mr. Stuart to stay until he comes."

"Of course we'll stay," declared Weatherby. "If Britton thinks the matter serious, it may be so. He's a fair-minded man, as I recall him. I don't know him very well."

"I don't know him at all," said Stuart, "but if he can find Isabel for us, he's a good fellow."

But James Britton was about the last man in the world to whom one would apply the term "a good fellow" in its usually accepted significance. Small of stature, sharp-featured, alert, and energetic, his whole make-up betokened a hard-headed lawyer of an ascetic temperament. He was a little given, however, to bustle and fluster, and he entered Mrs. Curwood's library with a quick, nervous step and delivered himself of hasty, flurried greetings.

"What—what's all this about?" Isabel gone? Disappeared? Who saw her last?"

"So far as we four know, I did," replied Stuart, and then he told the lawyer of his parting with Isabel at

the door of the fashionable modiste's the afternoon before.

"Did she say how long she would remain there?" asked Mr. Britton concisely.

"She said she would be there some time, and afterward would go directly home. But she didn't say this definitely, and if she met any friends, at the dress-maker's or afterward, she might easily have gone somewhere with them."

"Never mind what she might have done," the lawyer flung out. "The question is what she did do."

"That I can't tell you," replied Stuart, a trifle annoyed at the lawyer's brusque manner.

"Then we must find out some other way. You're the last person that we know to have seen her, Mr. Stuart. But we assume that the next one was this dressmaker you tell of. Let us telephone her at once."

"What a sensible idea!" cried Grace. "I felt sure, Mr. Britton, you'd know what to do. I'll call her."

But after Grace had succeeded in getting Madame Laurestine on the wire, and had talked with her a moment, she turned and asked Mr. Britton to speak to her.

The fussy little lawyer flew to the telephone, and his short, crisp sentences brought consternation to the anxious four who were listening to him.

"Not at all? Are you sure? Yesterday—yesterday afternoon. Please be very certain; it is most important. Thank you, that is all."

He turned from the telephone and announced curtly: "Isabel was not at Madame Laurestine's at all yesterday afternoon."

This speech was received with utter silence on the part of his auditors, for each of the four was dumfounded. Edwin Stuart turned perfectly white, and Mr. Weatherby looked at him curiously, his dark eyes narrowing and his square chin setting itself firmly.

Mrs. Curwood looked both stunned and bewildered; and it was Grace who first found voice to exclaim:

"Then what do you mean, Ed Stuart, by saying that you left her there?"

"But I did," half stammered the young man, and still Leonard Weatherby's dark eyes gazed at him with a look of unbelief.

CHAPTER IV.

THE APARTMENT IN THE HAMMERSMITH.

A WELL-DRESSED and quiet-looking lady walked slowly along one of the streets among the upper Forties. She had been on several other streets in her endeavor to find an apartment that combined all the especial advantages she desired, but never did she stray very far from Fifth Avenue.

She paused in front of a carved stone entrance, and, taking in the general effect of the house at a glance, she gave an approving little nod. The doors opened at her approach, and she said to the hallboy: "Is this the Hammersmith?"

"Yes, madam," responded that rather ornate personage, in conventional tones.

"I wish to see the janitor. Please call him."

"Yes, madam." And in a fairly reasonable time the janitor of the Hammersmith appeared.

"You have a vacant apartment, I believe?" asked Mrs. Dellenbaugh, in the businesslike manner of one who has interviewed many janitors regarding vacant apartments.

"Y-yes, ma'am." And Mrs. Dellenbaugh stared slightly at the unusual spectacle of a janitor who was deferential instead of pompous.

"Very well; I wish to see it."

"Yes; certainly—of course. This way, madam."

As the elevator rose, Mrs. Dellenbaugh concluded she had been mistaken

in the janitor's mental attitude, for as she looked at him longer, she observed that he bore himself rather with an air of swaggering bravado.

But Mrs. Dellenbaugh was an experienced house hunter, and accustomed to all sorts of apartments and all types of attendants who showed them off.

The elevator stopped at the third floor, and the janitor preceded Mrs. Dellenbaugh to the entrance of the vacant apartment. The door was not locked, and he threw it open with a flourish.

"Very attractive hall," Mrs. Dellenbaugh murmured, as her quick eyes took instant note of the white Doric columns and elaborate doorframes. Together they went through several rooms, the lady commenting on details that pleased her, and the janitor mumbling agreement with her opinions.

At the entrance of one of the bedrooms, the man stepped aside to let Mrs. Dellenbaugh precede him, when she gave a gasp and fell back almost into his arms.

"What's the matter, ma'am?" he said hastily, as she put both hands over her eyes and seemed about to faint. "Don't scream," he added, as, after looking into the room himself, he led the trembling lady from the door.

"I'm not going to scream," she said, and, though her voice was faint, she was evidently regaining her composure by sheer force of will. "I'm not the screaming sort; but—but there's a dead woman in there!"

Though still trembling, she was standing now without the man's support, and perhaps of the two he was the more shaken.

"Maybe she isn't dead, ma'am," he whispered, as he cast furtive glances toward the door, but made no move to enter.

"Oh, she is! I'm sure she is! But if she shouldn't be, we must go to her assistance. Go ahead, and I'll follow."

"Oh, please don't make me go in there, ma'am! I—I'm awful sensitive about such things. Let us go downstairs, and send for somebody, ma'am."

"Coward! What sort of a man are you? You're in charge of this place, and it's your duty to investigate this thing. Come, if you won't go first, I will. We must see what is the matter with that poor woman."

Mrs. Dellenbaugh stepped across the threshold, and as she approached the quiet figure lying on the floor, her look of horror turned to one of compassion.

"The poor girl!" she exclaimed. "What can have happened to her? What is your name, man?"

"Taylor, ma'am."

"Well, Taylor, don't stand there like a trembling idiot. This is an awful emergency; now do your part, like a man. This young woman is beautiful and well to do. She must have come here because she wanted to end her life, or it may have been death from illness."

"Are you—are you sure she's dead, ma'am?"

"Of course she is. She's stone-cold. But it isn't our business to say so; in fact, we oughtn't even to touch her. You must send for a doctor at once. Oh, haven't you any sense at all? Don't stand there looking perfectly blank! Go at once and telephone for some doctor. Do you know of any?"

"I—I think, ma'am, it will be better to call the police first. I think that's what we ought to do."

"Well, I'm glad you've waked up to the fact that we ought to do something! I expect you're right. Go and call the police, then, and go at once."

"And leave you alone with—with that, ma'am?"

"Yes; I'm not afraid. Of course I was shocked at first, but I'm not one of those foolish women who lose their wits in an emergency. Can't you telephone directly from this apartment, without going downstairs?"

"Yes, I'll tell the hallboy, ma'am, to step out and bring in the policeman on this beat. Then he can telephone headquarters himself."

Taylor went back to the telephone, which was in the hall, and Mrs. Dellenbaugh immediately proved that her feminine trait of curiosity was stronger than her equally feminine attribute of nerves.

With no effects of fear or horror, she scrutinized the appearance and belongings of the dead girl. She noted the quiet elegance of her tailored costume, the beautiful fashion of her French hat, and the exquisite correctness of all the minor details of her apparel. With a swift glance at the door, she hurriedly opened the girl's wrist bag and glanced over the contents. She even drew out a visiting card and looked at it, replacing it just in time to escape the notice of the returning janitor.

"I've sent for the policeman, ma'am, and he'll be here soon."

"Very well. Have you any idea, Taylor, who this can be?"

"No, ma'am, indeed I haven't."

"It isn't any one, then, that lived in this house?"

"No; I never saw the lady before. Did you?"

At this sudden question, Mrs. Dellenbaugh looked a little embarrassed. "No, I never did," she replied; "but one can see at a glance that she was refined and well bred. It's very mysterious."

The hallboy came in, followed by a tall policeman. Both men were very white, and shuddered at the sight they faced. Indeed, it seemed strange that Mrs. Dellenbaugh should show composure and even curiosity when all of the men present were nervously shaken.

"You, Henry, you go back to the door," said the janitor gruffly. "There's no call for you to stay here. And I say, officer, you don't need me, do you?"

"Let the hallboy go, Taylor, but you stay here and answer a few questions."

You can't have a dead girl found in your house and walk off without a word. Where did she come from, and who killed her?"

"Oh, she hasn't been killed, has she?" exclaimed Mrs. Dellenbaugh.

"Yes, ma'am, she has; and may I ask who are you?"

"I'm Mrs. Roger Dellenbaugh, and I came here to look at this apartment, with a view to renting it. The janitor brought me up to show me the rooms, and here we found this girl."

The policeman looked at her in admiration. "Mighty few ladies can tell a story so brieflike and to the point," he commented. "Perhaps you had better stay, ma'am, until I can phone the station house and they get the coroner here. But I'll guarantee that he won't keep you long, if that's all you know about this case."

"That's all; and I'm quite willing to stay until the coroner comes. I know nothing of the case, as you call it; but I might be able to assist in some way. Shall you send for the poor girl's friends?"

The officer gave her a swift glance. "How can we, ma'am, when we don't know who she is? Do you know?"

"How could I know?" evaded Mrs. Dellenbaugh. "I never saw her before, of that I'm sure."

At that, the policeman seemed to lose all interest in Mrs. Dellenbaugh's presence, and devoted his attention to telephoning.

"It's going to be a big case," he remarked; "bigger than anything that's happened around here for a long time. You can go downstairs if you like, Taylor, but don't leave the house."

In rather a shorter time than Mrs. Dellenbaugh had dared to hope, the coroner arrived, and almost simultaneously Inspector Fox appeared.

It did not take the coroner long to learn such facts as were evident, and after examination of the body he an-

nounced briefly: "The poor lady was strangled—choked to death—by some brute. How could it have happened in this house? Are any of the other apartments vacant?"

"No," answered Taylor; "all the others are occupied."

"Here's her name and address," said Coroner Hills, opening the wrist bag that Mrs. Dellenbaugh had already investigated. "At least, we have reason to suppose that the card in this little cardcase is hers."

"Who is she?" asked the inspector, and Hills read: "Miss Curwood. The Ponsonby."

"That's up on Seventy-second Street," said Inspector Fox. "Better telephonè up to her people."

"Oh, don't do anything like that!" exclaimed Mrs. Dellenbaugh. "Think how it would shock them!"

The inspector looked at her curiously. "What would you suggest?" he inquired, with just a trace of irony in his tone.

"There must be some other way," she said, looking thoughtful. "Why don't you call up, say, the superintendent of the Ponsonby, and ask him something about her?"

Inspector Fox's manner changed. "That's right," he said. "Women always have more tact than men. It's an awful business, anyway."

And that was how it happened that Mr. Merritt, superintendent of the Ponsonby apartment house, presented himself to the little group assembled in Mrs. Curwood's drawing-room, just as they were discussing the advisability of asking police aid to search for the missing Isabel.

Not at all liking the duty he had to perform, Mr. Merritt stood looking from Mrs. Curwood to her lawyer and back again. Mr. Weatherby and Ed Stuart were there also, as they had been most of the day, but, as usual, it was Grace who took the initiative.

"You've heard something from Isabel; I know you have!" she exclaimed, and as Mr. Merritt bowed his head in grave assent she went on: "Something dreadful has happened to her; I know it has! You may as well tell us at once what it is!"

"Wait a moment!" cried Mr. Weatherby, springing to Mrs. Curwood's side. "If you've anything unpleasant to tell, tell me or Britton first."

"Yes, indeed," said the lawyer, as, jumping up, he took Mr. Merritt by the arm and drew him into the next room.

Grace, too, ran to her mother's assistance, and Ed Stuart followed, for at the first appearance of Mr. Merritt, Mrs. Curwood had felt forebodings of trouble, and at Grace's words about Isabel she had given a low moan and fainted away.

Stuart rang for Marie, and as she appeared, with Jane also, Mrs. Curwood was left to their care and Grace's while the men gathered in the other room to hear Mr. Merritt's story.

He told them that an inspector had telephoned him from the Hammersmith, and that there was reason to believe the dead girl found there was Isabel Curwood. Also, the inspector requested that some one come down there immediately to identify the body.

The three men listening were aghast at this statement, and Lawyer Britton spoke first:

"It may not be Isabel, you know, after all. So don't tell the whole story to Mrs. Curwood and Grace until we are certain. I suggest that Mr. Stuart stay here with them, and Mr. Weatherby and I will go down to the place at once, and see for ourselves. Mr. Weatherby is Isabel's guardian——"

"But I am more closely related to Isabel than that," broke in Edwin Stuart impetuously. "Let me go with you, Mr. Britton, and let Mr. Weatherby stay with the ladies."

"As you like," responded the lawyer. "What do you say, Weatherby?"

"Whatever you think best, Britton. If Stuart prefers to go with you, I will stay in charge of things here. Let us hope there is some mistake in the message Mr. Merritt received."

"There must be!" cried Stuart. "It can't be that our Isabel is——"

"Of course, the inspector told me but the merest facts," said Mr. Merritt, "and he said they based their knowledge of the girl's identity on a card found in her cardcase."

"But sometimes ladies have other ladies' cards with them," suggested Stuart.

"So they do, my boy," said Mr. Britton kindly. "Come with me, then, and we will go at once. We'll telephone back, Weatherby, whatever we may find out."

"Telephone to Mr. Merritt, then. Don't stir up this apartment—that is, unless you have good news for us. And I'm afraid Mrs. Curwood is pretty ill. Perhaps we'd better send for a doctor for her."

"No," said Grace, coming into the room; "mother's quite herself now. Mr. Merritt, tell me what this is about my sister. Tell me the worst at once. It is my right to know."

"We're not sure there is any worst, Grace," said Mr. Weatherby. "There has been an accident to a young woman, and while it may be Isabel, yet it may not. Don't worry, my dear, until you are sure you have cause to."

The other three men had already left the apartment, and as Mr. Weatherby would tell her nothing further of the report that had been received, Grace was forced to control her anxiety as best she could. Mr. Weatherby advised her, very sensibly, to do all she could to lessen her mother's fears, and this had the effect of lightening in a measure her own terrible anxiety.

Meantime, the two men, in a taxicab, were hastening to their destination.

The hallboy at the Hammersmith directed them, and soon they stood in the presence of the lifeless remains of Isabel Curwood.

"There is no doubt about it," said Mr. Britton, as after the briefest of glances he turned away.

"Doubt? No, indeed," declared Stuart, as he stood gazing at the beautiful, white face. "What can it mean, Mr. Britton? Who could have done it?"

"Are you sure it is murder?" asked the lawyer of Inspector Fox.

"Sure, yes, sir. The girl was strangled, and the marks on her neck show it. But the coroner says she must be taken to Bellevue for an autopsy."

Edwin Stuart shuddered at the awful suggestion, but Mr. Britton said: "Yes, that must be done, for of course we must discover who killed her. It seems incredible that any one could have done so. That beautiful young girl!"

"But before the body is removed,

sir," said Mr. Hills, "we will have an inquest."

"Is that necessary?" asked Mr. Britton.

"I think it would be better to do so in this case. It probably won't take long. Six'll be enough for a jury. Taylor, you can round up that many in the house, can't you?"

"Probably, yes, sir."

"Then go ahead. Get six men, and bring them in here as soon as you can."

The janitor went away, leaving Stuart and Britton aghast at the business-like way in which the affair was carried on. But the bare fact of Isabel's death was so appalling that the minor details of procedure seemed insignificant in comparison.

In accordance with his promise, Mr. Britton telephoned to the superintendent of the Ponsonby, and told him that the dead girl was Isabel beyond all doubt, and that he must tell Mr. Weatherby, who would break the news to the Curwood ladies.

To be continued in the next issue of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, out in two weeks, on January 20th.

WHY RADIUM IS SO VALUABLE

ONE-SIXTH of the world's output of radium is made within seven miles of Philadelphia, in a factory at Lansdowne, which is one of six plants of its kind in the world. It has a capacity for producing three grams of radium a year. The process by which the metal is made was discovered by Doctor D. H. Kabakjian, assistant professor of physics in the University of Pennsylvania and a resident of Lansdowne.

Some idea of the delicacy of the secret chemical processes which the carnotite ore undergoes can be gleaned from the output of the factory. Hundreds of tons of carnotite are used during the course of a year. Twenty-five men working nine hours a day for a year will produce three grams of pure radium salt. The market price of pure radium is one hundred thousand dollars a gram at this time, and the Lansdowne factory's yearly output is worth three hundred thousand dollars. A gram is one-twenty-eighth of an ounce.

Radium is sent to all parts of the world from the factory in Lansdowne. "We have to be mighty careful how we ship this material," said Doctor Kabakjian. "The radium salt is placed in a sealed glass tube like this one," and he rolled between his fingers a little glass tube not much larger than a five-penny nail.

The White Cell

By Gregory Hay

I HAD been installed as curate at Cowleton only about six months when, after a long day's tramp over the moors, where I had been visiting the parishioners, I returned to my lodgings to find awaiting me a telegram from my old friend Demers, who was still on the staff of the *Morning Call*. The message read:

Come at once. Interesting case on hand.
DEMERS.

It was Monday evening, and I was free for the week, so I scribbled a note to the vicar, replaced my clericals with a tweed suit, took my automatic pistol—the one presented to me after the solution of the Silver Bullet case—and made for the station.

Demers, short, fat, jolly, and busy as ever, met me at Waterloo, and we took a cab to Mountjoy Hill, where he and I had roomed together for nearly three years. It was late, and Demers was on an important assignment for the morning issue, so he soon left me and I turned in.

The next morning at breakfast, Demers gave me an outline of his "interesting case," and I found that even his enthusiasm did not overestimate the interest of it. We had been boyhood chums; we had lived together in London after Demers, by his wonderful work in distancing Scotland Yard in the solution of the Explosive Pearl case, had secured his present place on the *Call*, and we had traced together the intricacies of crime in a number of *causes célèbres*, but none had more

mysterious features than the one which had now been assigned to him to unravel.

"That's all we have to go on, so far. But Mr. Ivors is coming at ten, and he will tell you the whole thing, and then you will understand it better." As he spoke, the bell rang, and we heard Mrs. Gammie letting in a visitor. We went across the hall to the room which Demers had fitted up as a chemical laboratory, and it was there that I first saw Mr. Harrison Ivors. Demers removed a box of test tubes from the only chair, and begged his visitor to be seated. I found a place on a trunk, and Demers perched on the edge of the sink. Mr. Ivors was a man of about forty-five, tall and distinguished in appearance, naturally of a nervous temperament, now accentuated by the evident strain under which he was laboring, but with such self-command that he was able to tell his story with a straightforward simplicity. His quiet voice and manner showed him to be a person of culture, and he gave evidence of being a man of very strong will.

"Two years ago," he began, "my eldest son, Gerald, was found dead on the morning of his fifteenth birthday. The night before, he had gone to a party, given by a cousin, in honor of the event, and his mother and I supposed he had decided to stay all night. We found afterward that he had made some excuse to leave his cousin's house before midnight. In the morning, his body was found lying at the foot of an

oak tree in my grounds, clothed in a woman's silk dressing gown, tied about the waist with a piece of greenish-yellow whipcord. There was absolutely no sign of a wound or of poison, and he lay quietly, as though asleep. We never learned how or why he died.

"Yesterday morning, the tragedy was repeated in the person of my youngest son, Jack, and again it was on the morning of his birthday. I had become acquainted with the great success Mr. Demers has had in solving such problems, and I have put the case in his hands. I implore you and your friend, if he will be so good, to help me, and bring to justice, if there be such a thing as justice for such diabolical crimes, the fiend who has murdered my sons. Expense does not matter, and I give you a free hand in every way."

Demers sat silent for some minutes. Presently he washed out a new test tube, carefully shaped a spatula from a piece of cedar, and selected a stick of wax. "Well, perhaps we'd better take a look over the ground first, Mr. Ivors, and if you will show us the way, we will start at once."

As we drove through the busy streets, Demers asked him if Jack had been found dressed in the same sort of silk dressing gown as Gerald had worn, and was answered, "Yes."

The carriage stopped at Mr. Ivors' gate. The house stood far in from the street, and was approached by a gravel walk which wound in and out among beds of flowers. Along the street was a high iron fence with a spiked top, and the sides and back were inclosed by a stone wall at least eight feet high. To the left of the entrance gate stood a group of oaks, and Mr. Ivors was leading us toward them to point out the exact spot where his boys had been laid, but Demers held us back. "Don't go near there yet," he said; "we'll see that later." Beyond the oaks was a

splendid tennis court, and in the far corner a little summerhouse.

We went up the front steps, and Mr. Ivors let us in. In the hall we met Mrs. Ivors, a dark-eyed brunette, handsome in face and figure, evidently some years younger than her husband; and the daughter, Doris, who, strangely enough, was very fair and blue-eyed. She was about seven years old. After introductions, Mrs. Ivors, who was obviously quite unstrung, besought Demers to do his utmost to dispel the shadow which was so heavy upon them. Then she burst into tears and left the room, taking Doris with her.

"Let me see the dressing gown first," said Demers, and Ivors brought it from a closet in the library. It was the whipcord that he handed to me, and as I examined it, something struggled in my memory. It was a greenish-yellow in color, like an unripe lemon, and roughly tanned. It had been cut, seemingly with scissors, from a wider piece. I felt I had come across similar material before, but my memory refused to make the connection. Demers, meanwhile, was going over the blue silk with a lens, and he now called to me.

"Don't touch it," he said, "but look at it. What do you think of it?"

"I think it is about the clumsiest bit of sewing I ever saw, for one thing, and the lace around the throat is of the cheapest, in contrast with such expensive silk."

"Right. A man made it—a man who did not dare to have it made by a seamstress, for that would provide a clew. Now, Mr. Ivors, will you pardon us if we ask you to leave us alone here with the body of your son for a little while?"

Mr. Ivors had hardly closed the door when Demers had the lid pushed back from the casket which held the remains of the unfortunate boy, and we looked upon the face of Jack Ivors, a handsome lad, the picture of his father. The pity of his early and tragic death

surged over us both as we looked at him, and it was some minutes before we could bear to continue. Then Demers stretched upon the body the dressing gown, to ascertain, as I discovered, the approximate position on which the different parts of it would lie.

"Near enough," he said directly. "Hold my lens, and these," handing me the test tube and spatula; and he began to undress the body. It is not pleasant work, sometimes, that of an investigator of crime, but it has to be done. When Demers had bared Jack's legs, he laid the body tenderly down, took the magnifying glass, and examined the knees with extreme care. Presently he looked up.

"If I were out on your moors at Cowleton, I would yell for joy like a maniac," was his characteristic remark. "Look here." I bent over the coffin. Demers very cautiously seized the skin just above the left knee, and, ordering me to hold the glass so that he could look through it, he began to press the skin gently, then more firmly. As I watched, I saw a thin film, shiny like the slime of a snail, break suddenly, and from under it there oozed out in two places a minute drop of a colorless sirup. "Yes, I'd yell; I'd yell like a maniac! I'd yell, I'd yell, I'd yell!" It was Demers' way to mutter some silly thing like that when he was strongly excited. He carefully scraped the drops from the skin with the cedar spatula, dropped it in the test tube, sealed it, and gave it to me. In a few moments the body was dressed, the cover replaced, and we were ready to depart. Mr. Ivors was waiting to show us out.

"Advertise your house and grounds for sale, Mr. Ivors," said my friend. "Put a prominent notice in both the morning and evening papers that for personal reasons you must dispose of the place within a week. You don't have to accept any of the offers that

may be made, but it will enable me to carry out my plans."

Mr. Ivors assented, though he did not relish the extra publicity to which it would expose his name. As he was closing the door, my recalcitrant memory suddenly was in operating order again, and almost before I knew what I was saying, I had asked Mr. Ivors: "Were you ever in Canada?"

The question obviously was unexpected. He paused a moment before replying, "No," that his only trip out of England had been to India.

Demers and I walked to Paley's Lane, where he left me. "You can walk around to Smellie's and leave that test tube for analysis. I'll be back for luncheon. Why did you ask Ivors about Canada?"

"I was trying to remember where I had seen whippcord like that before. I suddenly recollected my visit to Quebec. The leather is the kind the Indians and habitants there call babiche. They use it for their moccasins and snowshoes. I wonder how that piece came over here?"

Three days later, when Ivors' announcement of the sale of his property had begun to attract the attention of realty agents, Demers—who had not said a word to me about the case in the meantime; in fact, I had hardly seen him; there was a big dock strike at the time—asked me, after we had lunched together at Toni's, to go with him to Melton Road, where Ivors lived. When we got there, by arrangement, Mr. Ivors met us and showed us through the house and then over the grounds, as he had already that day conducted three other parties around. I soon saw the meaning of the advertisement. Of course, if the house were for sale, no notice would be taken of a couple of prying detectives who were ostensibly buyers. We had gone over all the grounds, which were not very large, and inspected the back wall,

where the only opening was a tradesmen's gate, opening on a lane connecting the two side streets.

As we stood for a moment in the lane, we heard a man behind the opposite wall, which was back of the house facing on the next street, parallel to Melton Road, indulging in an enthusiastic and awesome address to the universe on the general subject of vandalism, fools, and trees. We listened to the flood of invective, and then Demers, by a running jump, managed to catch the top of the wall and draw himself up where he could see the unknown orator.

"What's wrong?" he shouted.

The hidden speaker told him with fervor and profane fluency what was wrong. "Here I go away to Brest for ten days, and when I come home I find some scoundrel has taken the liberty of coming in and sawing off one of the biggest branches of my only oak. Look at it! What sort of pruning do you call that? It's a nice-looking tree now, isn't it? And two years ago I was away just two days at the Hook, and again some kindly rascal provided me with free fuel by cutting off a branch on the same side. It's a lovely state of affairs when a man can't grow a tree in his back garden without his neighbors interfering with it."

Demers dropped back into the lane, and I could tell by the gleam in his eye that he had an idea of a new sort. We had purposely avoided, till now, approaching the fatal oaks in Ivors' grounds, but now Demers led me directly there and seated himself in the exact place where the bodies had been found, asking me to sit near him.

"Now take this newspaper and hold it up as though you were inspecting a map—there—a little higher—there, stay there!" Demers was gazing intently through a small field glass over the top of the paper I held. Presently he said: "Change places with me. You will see

a brick house straight east of here. Look at the middle upper window and tell me what you see." I did as he bade me, but, though I looked at all the upper windows of the house he had indicated, I could see nothing but the blinds tightly drawn down. The blind in the middle window appeared to have a round hole cut in it. I told Demers what I had seen, and he seemed satisfied. "And you will notice," he said, "that our profane neighbor's oak almost prevented your seeing that middle window, and that if the branch he is lamenting had not been cut off, you could not have seen it at all."

On our way home, we discussed how a body could be brought into the grounds over the high walls and fence, when all three gates—the carriage entrance, the front and back gates—were fastened. Demers was impatient at the question. "That can easily be settled afterward. What we're after now is the man. There's nothing very difficult in getting through a gate if one has a little ingenuity. Here is the street where the house stands which we were scrutinizing. Here it is—No. 14, I see. You go up and ask if Mr. Jackson Byers lives there. I'll go on slowly."

I turned in at No. 14. It was a big house, standing in very neglected, weed-infested grounds. I pushed the bell button repeatedly before the door was opened by an old man, ugly, unkempt, and frightened looking.

"Does Mr. Jackson Byers live here?" I inquired.

The old man pulled out a card on which was printed: "I am deaf and dumb. Master is not at home." So I wrote my question on a slip of paper, and he replied in the negative. When I had rejoined Demers and told him how I had been received, he nodded.

"Evidently 'Master' is never at home if he has that information printed for the benefit of all who come to his door. Therefore, no friends, or perhaps one

or two who give a private signal when they arrive. A deaf-and-dumb servant, eh? What a man can't hear he can't tell. We have a clever gentleman to deal with, Alton, but we'll see what can be done. As I went by I took a look at the house and its surroundings, and I see where we can get in, and in we go to-night."

We set out from the Mountjoy Hill chambers about eleven o'clock, and walked till we came to Morning Street. It was not a well-lighted street at the best, and No. 14 was as dark as a cave. We kept in the shadows by the front wall till we came to the corner of the grounds, when it was the work of a moment to leap over the wall, and we were in the weedy lawn. Luck was on our side that night. We were making for the south side of the house, and had just reached the corner when we heard the door open, and in the dim light of the hall jet we could see the "Master" stand for a second before closing the door—a tall, fashionably dressed gentleman. He descended the steps, rapidly made his way to the street, and disappeared.

"Now for it!" whispered Demers. "Follow me, and quietly."

By the side of the house was a yew tree, and Demers said one of the branches would get us to an upper window. Up he went, and I followed as quickly as I could. By our combined weight we managed to bend the branch far enough for Demers to insert a jimmy under the lower window sash. With a sudden effort, the inner fastening broke, and the entrance was open. In another moment we were in the room, and Demers produced his flash lamp.

The room was unfurnished and full of dust. We opened the door into the corridor. Demers led the way across the passage, opened a door, and we were in a room quite as dusty. Near the window was a chair—"You will

notice there is no dust on it," said Demers—and in front of the chair a small telescope was mounted on a tripod, facing a hole, about three inches in diameter, cut in the blind.

"If it were daylight, do you know what you would see through that telescope?" asked Demers.

"Mr. Ivors' oaks!"

Closing the door, we went down the stairs to the next landing. A door was ajar, and we peeped in. It was a luxuriously furnished bedroom, and seemed to be in actual use. Demers stepped in, flashing his lamp here and there. Suddenly he began to mutter: "I'm sure; yes, I'm sure; certainly I'm sure; surely I'm certain." It was his queer way of communing with himself when excited. He had opened a wardrobe door, and displayed to me still another blue silk dressing gown, identical with the others and with the strip of babiche hanging beside it. "So there's to be another victim?" I said.

"Looks like it," growled Demers, "but we'll try to anticipate that. Now for the lower floor, though we have evidence enough now to hang forty men."

After listening for a few minutes at the top of the stairway, we started down. The gas was turned down very low. On our left, at the bottom, was an open door. Demers used his flash lamp just long enough to take a glance at the windows, all heavily curtained. "Everything is safe. Here's the gas, and we'll have a little light." He struck a match, and we looked around curiously. It was a large, uncarpeted room, with well-filled bookcases on the walls, evidently the study of some literary man. The floor was a bizarre design in squares and triangles, done in various colored hard woods.

By one window, almost behind the door as it stood ajar, was a small writing desk with a heavy swivel chair behind it, and a smaller chair in front.

There was absolutely no other furniture in the room. On the wall directly facing the swivel chair hung conspicuously the only picture the room contained. It was a portrait by a German artist, with the title: "Sin." It represented a luxuriant woman, with pale-amber face, framed in raven locks—a young woman whose shining eyes were touched with a smile at once startled and sick with longing—while the cold body of a serpent pressed its heavy coils round her body. It was a terrible picture; and, a little overcome by its powerful suggestiveness, I turned and seated myself in the desk chair. "Come," said Demers, "we must not waste time here. The man may be back any minute."

I started to rise, when suddenly a part of the floor directly beneath the picture gave way, and, seemingly actuated by the same impulse, a heavy sheet of clear glass was projected out from the firm part of the floor so as to cover the space, about four feet square, where the floor had dropped away.

Demers and I sprang forward. Through the glass we saw a large chamber built of brick and illuminated by a strong light which seemed to be directly beneath the place where we stood. The walls were circular, and they and the floor of the cell were painted a brilliant white.

"Our first business now is to find how to close this up, so that our presence here won't be known," said Demers. "One of us has touched some actuating mechanism, perhaps stepped on a cunningly contrived loose board. Anyway, let me see if this will work."

Demers inserted the edge of the steel jimmy between the wall and the glass. The glass moved back easily, and at the same time the missing square of the floor began to swing up into its place. By moving the glass still farther back, we discovered that the powerful illumination of the chamber was

extinguished. We pulled the glass out again, and once more the light blazed in the mysterious cell. We could see that the walls were solid, except that one brick was missing on the lowest tier. We were not long left in doubt as to the purpose of that, for almost immediately there glided through the opening a thick, brown snake, with a peculiarly marked head.

"The gentleman keeps a cobra for a pet," said Demers.

I watched the horrid creature curiously. It went around the cell two or three times, raising itself and expanding its hood as though to strike, then disappeared again through the wall.

Demers pulled back the glass; the floor came up and caught in place with a snap, and we arose from our knees. "Evidently the picture is the bait for this infernal trap," I suggested. "The glass enables the owner of the snake to watch his victim's death, and at the same time prevents all possibility of his screams being heard."

"Well," answered Demers, "we've seen all we need see here; let's get away upstairs."

We reached the room by whose window we had entered the house, but decided not to leave till we heard the master of the house come in, lest we should run across him as we left the grounds. Presently we heard him fumbling at the front door. In a moment I was out on the friendly branch of the tree. Demers followed, letting down the window carefully as he came. We made our way safely from the grounds, and returned to Demers' rooms.

When I awoke next morning, Demers was standing by my bed, fully dressed. "I have just been called away to Guildford," he said. "Sanderson is going with me, and we will not be back till to-morrow evening. Unless something extraordinary turns up, don't worry about the Ivors case. You might go down, if you like, and see if Smellie

has analyzed that sirup you left him." And he was off.

I stayed in the chambers all morning, expecting, or at least hoping, that Mr. Ivors would come in. I examined all of Demers' strange souvenirs of cases he had finished. I opened nearly every book in the study. I tried some experiments over the sink, but Mr. Ivors did not come. I resolved to spend the afternoon making some calls, and visit Ivors' house in the evening. I did so, and about ten o'clock that night I set out for Melton Road. As I reached the curb in front of my own door, a woman's voice hailed me from a cab. It was Mrs. Ivors who drew up near me.

"Oh, Mr. Ivors has gone out, and I am so frightened!"

"Why are you afraid? Where has he gone?"

"I don't know. Inspector Sanderson telephoned about six o'clock, asking him to meet him somewhere, and saying that he would not only learn how his boys had died, but see the author of their deaths as well. Mr. Ivors left me a note in just those words, and I am so frightened," she repeated. "To-morrow is——" And she stopped.

I thought over the situation. The telephone message, of course, was a trap, for Sanderson was in Guildford with Demers; but she did not know that, and I began to see that she had grave reason to be fearful for her husband's safety. The only thing for me to do was to attempt to prevent the carrying out of what I now saw was the last stage of a plot, already fiendish enough.

Asking her to wait in the cab, I rushed up to my room, seized my pistol, and rejoined her. As we drove to her home, I tried to assure her that her husband was safe, and told her I thought I should be able to find him without any difficulty.

"Mrs. Ivors, if you expect to see your husband alive again, you must not conceal from me any fact that might help. You do fear some individual, do you not?"

"Yes."

"Is it a man or a woman?"

"A man."

"What is his name?" She hesitated, but I repeated my question firmly.

"Edmund Wynn."

"And this man Wynn has come into the lives of you or your husband before? For he knew the exact dates of the boys' birthdays. Is that true?"

She assented.

"Why do you fear him? Perhaps I have no right to ask that. But tell me, do you think he is insane, or has he some reason which he may consider a valid one for doing any of your family an injury?"

"He may have a reason, but I do not think he is insane, unless being a murderer is evidence of insanity."

"What is 'to-morrow?'" At this question Mrs. Ivors broke down completely, and I could not learn anything further.

I had not much heart for my task, for it was now drawing on to midnight and I knew that every moment lessened my chance of ever seeing Ivors alive. I concealed my anxiety while I helped Mrs. Ivors into the house. The instant that was done, I was out again and in the street. I ran down to the corner, made my way at top speed to the second street back, and raced for No. 14. Not a constable was in sight, and I had no time to search for one, though I did not relish going alone on such an errand.

No. 14 was the fourth house from the corner, and as I approached I slackened my pace. It was useless to try to enter the house except by stealth. The gate was open. I slipped around to the side of the house, intending to climb the tree to the window by which

Demers and I had entered the night before, but there was a dim light burning in the room. It would have to be one of the basement windows.

Unluckily I had forgotten my flash lamp, but I felt around in the darkness along the wall of the house, and presently discovered a narrow window. It was fastened. I was disheartened and irritated by the accumulation of delays. Was not Ivors possibly facing death at that very instant?

I gave the glass a smart stroke with the butt of my pistol, reached through and dropped the catch, and crawled in feet first. I dropped only a few inches, and found myself on the clay floor of the cellar. I struck a match to find my way about. Directly in front there was the huge brick chamber standing by itself in the midst of the cave where I was. It was fitted with a low steel door with a combination lock like a safe. It was the door of the white cell. *Where was the cobra?* My match suddenly flickered out, and I stood, not daring to move, for one step might bring me square upon its brown body. Perhaps even now it was creeping upon me in the darkness. After what seemed like an hour of agony, I found another match and looked about.

The floor was bare and clean on all sides, and I breathed freely again. I went up to the white cell and examined it carefully. At one side, opposite the steel door, was a large iron box, set close to the brickwork and covered with a close mesh of wire netting. Lighting another match, I looked into the box. The cobra was lying in one corner. At sight of me, he raised himself and tried to strike the wires, but they were too high.

All this had taken but a moment or two, and now I turned to find the way of ascent to the floor above. I soon discovered the steps and started up.

Now had come the most difficult and dangerous part of my task, and I should

have to observe the most extreme caution. I took off my boots on the top step and I pushed open the door very slowly till I could see a light through the crack; a little farther, and I could see the deaf-and-dumb servant sitting before the kitchen fire. His back was toward me, so there was no danger of being seen; but I could not proceed on my quest without attracting his notice.

By this time my anxiety had become unbearable. I drew my pistol and started toward him, but his eyes were closed and he was asleep. Resolved to lose no time, I hastily opened two or three doors which gave into the kitchen, pantry, back stairs, passage leading to the front hall. I was for advancing straight down the front hall to the study when I heard the tinkling of an electric bell and at the same time a green incandescent bulb in the kitchen began to flash, the flash recurring with each sound of the bell. It was the master's device for summoning his servant. The bell, I suppose, was to warn himself if visitors came.

I had barely time to open the door to the back stairs and close it behind me when the dumb man was aroused by the flashing of the light, and I could hear his steps as he went to admit his master. So Wynn—for I was sure of my man now—had been out for a walk while I thought he and Ivors were together in the ominous house!

Where, then, could Ivors have gone? And how was I to conceal myself? I ran softly up the stairs till my eyes were on a level with the upper corridor floor, and in the dim light of the hall I could see the top of the front stairway. If Wynn came up those stairs, instead of entering his study, should I suddenly confront him, or run the risk of being discovered? I was in an awkward predicament. I could, of course, hear no sound of voices. If there were any conversation, it was in the sign language. I heard the servant return-

ing to the kitchen. I was still on the flight of steps, my eyes on a level with the floor, and I watched the front stairs, expecting every moment to see Wynn's head appear. The light was still on in the lower hall; I should see him easily enough; but I was soon convinced that he was not coming up. I advanced cautiously till I was standing on the floor, and then made my way forward till I could see the whole front stairway. No one was in sight. I heard the scratch of a match in the study. What now? I had been so sure that Ivors was in the house, that now I knew Wynn was alone, I felt I had no motive for remaining. It would be better to slip away quietly and set the police to find Ivors, if he had not returned.

Catching the scent of tobacco, I decided that Wynn would be quiet for a while, and I would have a chance to get out of the house some other way. I tiptoed along the passage to get to the second flight of stairs, and was about to start up when the last flicker of my match showed me something that stopped me. Surely that was Ivors' cane, which had a most uncommon head carved on it? Another match. Near the cane, all neatly folded in a corner, was a suit of clothes. I lifted the coat, from which dropped three letters, all addressed: "Harrison Ivors, esquire."

I saw it all now. I had come just too late. Ivors had come—and gone; but between his coming and his going, another frightful crime had been committed. Ivors was probably lying now on the grass in his own grounds, dressed in the mocking, blue silk dressing gown, with his life stilled forever.

For a few moments I was stupefied with the horror of it all; then—the murderer was calmly smoking in the room below. If I had not proofs enough now of his guilt, I never should have. But I must be careful, for I

realized that I had a very dangerous and cunning man to deal with, one who would hesitate at nothing to protect himself. I was now at the top of the front stairs again. I went down slowly, and the thick carpet drowned my steps. Twice I was stopped by hearing a most peculiar noise from the study, the door of which was half open. On the bottom step I paused, and heard again the strange sound which broke the deathly stillness of the house. I turned down the hall and crept along the wall till I was at the edge of the door.

If, as I expected, Wynn was in the swivel chair by the window, his back would be toward me. Very slowly I moved forward till I could see part of the room. No one was in sight. I stepped just within the door, still keeping behind it. Again that weird sound. I was now able to look around the edge of the door, and I saw Wynn sitting at his desk, his head bowed and hidden in his hands, and even while I watched, again a great sob broke from him.

"Where is Mr. Harrison Ivors?" I had stepped out from behind the door, and stood confronting him with my pistol.

At my first word, Wynn bounded from his chair with a sharp cry and stood glaring at me. He was a tall man, with an intellectual cast of countenance. His hair was slightly gray, but his fine blue eyes made him appear almost youthful.

"Who are you? What do you want here?"

"As I said, I am here in the interest of Harrison Ivors. I have come here to find him."

"He is not here. He left the house over an hour ago." The frightened look was gone now. Wynn had dropped into a pleasant, nonchalant manner, which seemed his natural one, and addressed me in the friendliest tones possible.

"He was here, then?"

"I ran across some information which I thought he desired, in regard to the death of his sons. Though I live so near him, I only learned of that tragedy from the newspapers, for I go out very little. He spoke of a Mr. Demers—I suppose you are he—who was investigating the unfortunate affair. You will be glad to know that before he left Mr. Ivors learned how his sons had died. Doubtless he is awaiting you now at his house."

All this was spoken in a clear, well-modulated voice, in which there was no trace of emotion, unless it were pleasure at having been of service to a fellow being. And his story was so obviously probable that I had difficulty in remembering that, after all, we were standing directly above the white cell and its deadly occupant.

"How did you enter, Mr. Demers? I did not hear the bell. And will you not put up that pistol? Firearms make me nervous."

"By the cellar, Mr. Wynn." But I kept the pistol in my hand. My knowledge of his name seemed to startle him, and I fancied his hand was approaching one of the drawers of the desk. "You have a very dangerous serpent in your cellar." Wynn's hand was resting on the drawer handle. "A cobra, isn't it? I have suspected Jack Ivors came to his death by a cobra bite, and I think you will have to come——"

"Did Mr. Ivors walk from this house, or was he carried?" Demers stepped suddenly into the room and shot the question at Wynn, who was hardly more startled than I was at his sudden entry upon the scene.

"He walked, of course, just as he had come."

"Mr. Wynn, as I heard you called, it may interest you to know that Mr. Ivors is dead in precisely the same circumstances as his two sons."

Wynn stood before us for a moment, bending forward as a man bends to

shelter his face from a harsh wind. Presently he recovered himself.

"Will you sit down and let me tell you about it? I see you know the truth. I am responsible for the death of Ivors' sons, and now he has followed the boys to the hell where he belongs. Let me tell you my story. No one knows it now but myself and Mrs. Ivors. When I come to trial, I shall not open my lips, let the law do with me what it will. But I should like to have one person hear my side of all this tragedy, that I may be judged aright. All the world will have its own opinion of me. Will you listen and judge?"

We assented. There was a pathetic eagerness in his voice, and I, for one, could not resist. Besides, I was curious to know what were his reasons for his crimes. Was Ivors, after all, not the man he had seemed, but one himself so guilty, so treacherous, that even Wynn's atrocities had a semblance of justification? It was entirely possible. Who knows the dark and unplumbed depths in the inner spirit, even of the most guileless and innocent? We seated ourselves, I taking the swivel chair and Wynn the other chair, Demers remarking significantly that he preferred to stand.

"You caught me weeping. Do not think that my weakness was due to remorse. For five years I have lived for this night of the eighth of June, and yet now that it is all over, memories of other days came over me so powerfully that I was not quite myself. You will understand soon.

"Ivors and I were boys together. He was a couple of years older than I, but we were inseparable companions, were in the same form at Eton, and entered Cambridge the same day. When we left the university, Ivors married and entered the army, and seemed likely to remain there. I did not settle down for a year or two, and then resolved to study for the bar. In due course

I was admitted, but clients were long in coming, and I was devilish poor. With all my poverty and wretched prospects, in those days I was hopeful and confident, with a good-natured belief in men and women. The world was a good old world, after all—you know the attitude. In the midst of it all I fell deeply, passionately in love with Edith Somerville, sister of one of my fellow barristers, a chap whose cases were as scarce as mine, only he had his family behind him, you see. And Miss Somerville seemed to be as deeply in love with me as I undoubtedly was with her. If she had only known her own heart then! She was beautiful, attractive with that mysterious charm that even other women love to look upon. There was an unclouded frankness about her brown eyes that made me believe her a loyal, royal soul. I did not disguise my poverty. She hardly knew what the word meant, and thought it would be jolly fun to try living on three pounds a week.

"I need not go into the story of our hardships; you can know that there were hardships, and how they would press on my wife's young life. But she bore herself bravely, and there was no complaint. This went on for nearly two years, and I was beginning to make better progress in my profession when one day I received word that an uncle employed in the Russian secret service had died and left everything to me. I should have to leave for St. Petersburg at once—that is, as soon as I could borrow enough to take me there. Where could I leave my wife meanwhile? Her own people were in France for the winter. I thought of Ivors. He had been invalided home shortly before, and was living with his two boys at the home of his widowed sister, for his wife had died a couple of years before. It was soon arranged that my wife and my infant girl, Doris, should stay with Mrs. Raleigh, and I set out for Russia.

"My windfall proved to be worth about eight hundred pounds a year, but I had great difficulty in proving identity and conforming to a host of legal refinements that our code knows nothing about; so that it was quite seven months before I could set out for home. How my mind pictured the greeting I should receive, and the pleasure and relief my little fortune would procure! I was proud as any king—I was young then—at the thought that I now had it in my power to make up in some degree for the privations my wife had undergone for my sake. When, on the last day of May, five years ago, I reached Ivors' house, Mrs. Raleigh met me at the door and burst into tears.

"'Where are Ethel and Doris?' I cried. She did not answer me, but gave me a letter addressed in Ivors' hand, which read:

"Ethel and I have decided to cut along and start life somewhere else. Greenway is my solicitor. There will be no defense. The sooner you sue, the better. IVORS.

"There was a little note from my wife:

"Will you forgive your wife? Life has been too hard, too dull. I can't stand it any longer. ETHEL.

"'When did they leave?'

"'Yesterday morning.'

"I need not waste your time telling you about my agony of mind at the disclosures made to me. I did not blame Ethel; I knew Ivors, with his powerful, magnetic personality and his abundant means, would have been a temptation to women more experienced and with happier prospects than my poor wife. I did not know what to do. I had plenty of money in my pockets now, and resolved to follow them. For so many weeks I had dwelt on the glad picture of my home-coming and the happiness of displaying to my wife the means of our release from poverty that somehow the feeling still possessed me that I must even yet find her and tell

her. It did not take much ingenuity to discover that they had sailed for India via Canada. I followed on the next steamer; and even during the brooding loneliness of those long days and nights on board ship, I could not clearly define to myself what I would say or do when I confronted my wife. But I wanted to see her again, and my little child.

"At length, on June 9th, I reached Quebec, two days behind the *Moranic*, on which Ivors had crossed. I searched the register of guests in two hotels before I found, at the Hotel Montmorenci, the names: 'Henry Ivors, wife, and child.' The clerk told me the numbers of their rooms, but said Mr. Ivors had stepped out. It was my chance.

"I went up the broad staircase and found the rooms by the numbers on the doors. As I stood for a moment, I heard a low voice sing a lullaby; Doris was being put to sleep. I pushed open the door and entered, and was greeted only with a startled exclamation. My wife was dressed in a blue silk dressing gown, with a belt of leather. The girdle was loosely fastened, and fell off. I reached for it and put it in my pocket—probably you gentlemen have seen pieces of it. I crossed the room and looked at my baby asleep upon the bed—and went out.

"So tumultuous and perplexed had my emotions been that I did not realize till long afterward that I had not spoken a single word to my wife. During the harrowing minutes we were together, we seemed to understand one another without the aid of speech. I followed them during their whole trip. I was seen only once—at Nagpore, where my wife caught a glimpse of me. It was the day I bought my cobras—there were three, but two have died.

"Gradually, and in a very dull way, I began to formulate my future. I closed up the house in which we had lived after our marriage, and for a time took chambers. I managed, by

careful saving, to buy this house. One day I found this picture." And he pointed to the portrait, wonderful in its beauty, horrible in its suggestiveness, which hung over the fatal chamber. "I bought it, and one day I knelt here and prayed to all the evil and deceit and murderous lust that is portrayed there to sustain me in my purpose of revenge. I have even burned candles before that seductive image, in my mad worship."

Wynn's eyes were gleaming now, and I could notice an insane passion gradually creeping over him as memory brought up the past. His flushed face and twitching hands warned us that he was becoming dangerously affected by his recital. Demers and I watched him narrowly, expecting every moment that his nervous control would give way, and we should have to deal with a maniac. Suddenly he arose and stood before the picture.

"You have encouraged me and upheld me even until now," he whispered to it, "and I am thankful and content." He raised his hands before it as a suppliant. Intensely responsive to the whole shocking scene, I leaned forward in the swivel chair, when to my horror the floor beneath Wynn gave way and he was precipitated, even as his victims had been, into the brilliance of the white cell. The heavy glass closed over the opening so suddenly that we scarcely heard his shriek of terror.

In a moment Demers and I were prying at the glass to get it open again, but in some way it had fastened itself too firmly, and it resisted every effort to break it. Demers rushed away for a hammer, and I continued pounding the glass with the butt of my pistol. It was of no avail.

I saw a brown head and an agile body appear upon the floor of the cell. It raised itself gently and moved its horrid head back and forth, now and

again spreading out the curiously marked hood in token of growing rage. Wynn had backed to the wall as far as possible from his deadly instrument of vengeance. The snake began to advance toward him. I could tell by the contortions of Wynn's face that he was suffering the tortures of the damned. Once he screamed, but it came to my ears only as a whisper. He never raised his eyes, but his hands were high above his head. The serpent was advancing and stopping. Presently it was within striking distance. Still it remained as though undecided.

Wynn was absolutely motionless. I saw his tongue slip across his lips. The cobra raised itself a little, drew back

its head, and distended its spectacled hood. Its mouth opened—and it struck. Wynn still stood as he was, and the snake struck again, then turned to the hole whence it had come. Wynn's arms dropped to his sides, but he remained upright. And when the police and the coroner arrived, an hour later, he was still standing in the blazing glare of the white cell.

I hurriedly explained the circumstance to Doctor Smellie.

"Yes," he said, "sometimes when persons die while at the climax of a powerful emotion, their muscles retain the rigor in which they were held. By the way, Demers, that was cobric acid you left for me to analyze."



FAMOUS SCOTLAND YARD DETECTIVE CHIEF DIES

ALFRED WARD, chief inspector of Scotland Yard, who made two trips to the United States to bring back Ignatius Tribich Lincoln, former member of Parliament and self-confessed German spy, died recently at a hospital in London, England.

Inspector Ward was one of the best-known police officers of Europe, and handled some of the greatest cases and investigations of recent years. One of the most noted was the solving of the theft of the famous seven-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar pearl necklace, which took place July, 1913.

The investigation of this mystery was one of the most remarkable examples of detective work on record, and was declared to stamp Inspector Ward as being the foremost criminal investigator of Europe.

All that Scotland Yard had to guide it were three lumps of French sugar and a torn scrap of a French newspaper found in the registered packet that should have contained the necklace.

The thieves, who had hoped to obtain a consignment of cut stones when they stole the packet, soon found the necklace to be a white elephant on their hands. They dared not break it, as the pearls were widely known through the advertisement which described each one, and eventually determined to sell it in its perfect form.

Two Paris jewel merchants were approached, and through them Inspector Ward established the connection that led to the arrest of the four thieves and to their receiving heavy sentences in Old Bailey Court.

Sinking Sands

by **Wilder Anthony**

SHERIFF PARKER crooked one leg around the horn of his saddle and let his horse drop its head and graze, while he took tobacco sack and papers from the pockets of his open vest and began to twist a cigarette. He had just reached the top of a high, grassy knoll, and, as he smoked, his eyes wandered restlessly over the plain in front of him. Fifty miles straight ahead the hazy tops of the Bear Claw Range stood out against the sky line, and in between the rolling prairie stretched in a series of brown waves broken here and there by green alfalfa fields and shining irrigation ditches. At irregular intervals, a ranch house, with its surrounding outbuildings, stood out in the sunlight; and a score of miles to the horseman's left, a faint haze of smoke showed where the thriving little city of Elktooth lay hidden behind a fringe of hills.

The sheriff wasted no time, however, in looking toward the city. He had left there only a short time before, and his work lay ahead of him, not behind. For a while he impartially scrutinized the entire country; then his gaze centered on a small, red house, which stood near a clump of cottonwoods at the edge of a little creek, some half dozen miles away. Despite the distance, the place was surprisingly distinct in the hot glare of the midday sun, and Parker eyed it thoughtfully for many minutes before he touched his horse's flanks lightly and rode slowly down the slope.

As he rode along, silent and inscrutable as the dun-colored plain itself, his mind was busy with the errand which had brought him into that neighborhood. For many days, mounted on the roan gelding—whose looks belied his speed and staying qualities—clad in faded khaki, gray shirt, open black vest, and high-crowned soft hat pulled well down over his eyes, he had been wandering around in a search for clues which would lead him to the headquarters of a gang of rustlers that had infested the county for months. Gradually the trail had narrowed until now the sheriff was on his way to Jim Carroll's ranch, his mind settled in the belief that the cattle thieves, whoever they were, had established their base somewhere in its vicinity. Just what he would do when he reached the ranch he had not decided, although it was in his mind to ask for a night's lodging and then keep his eyes open for anything that might turn up.

About half a mile from the ranch, Parker stopped his horse and gazed with speculative eyes at the sight which confronted him. At this point the trail wound around the base of a tall, dome-shaped butte, and a dozen yards beyond the trail—between it and a huge alkali spring—was a mass of black sand which moved and billowed in the afternoon sunlight like the surface of a restless sea. Barring the sheriff and his horse, not a sign of life was anywhere apparent, and there was something uncanny in the sight of the rest-

less, undulating mass which made both man and beast shiver slightly as they watched it.

The place was well known to the sheriff, as it was to every resident within a radius of many miles. People called it the "Sinking Sand," and in its time it had sucked down into its bottomless depths many an unwary horse and range steer, and several humans who had approached too close to its treacherous edge. Nearly a quarter of an acre in extent, it surged ceaselessly, waiting, always waiting for whatever might step into its clutches. Shaking himself together with a little shrug, the sheriff touched his horse and moved on. After all, fascinating though it was in a weird sort of way, the great quicksand had nothing to do with his present mission.

Not a soul was in sight when the little officer finally rode around the edge of the cottonwoods and stopped his horse at the hitching rack in front of Carroll's house. Dismounting slowly and stiffly, he climbed the porch steps, mildly surprised that not even a dog was on hand to greet him. The door was wide open, however, and he paused on the threshold and rapped sharply with his knuckles against the jamb. When he had waited several minutes without obtaining any response, he stepped inside and looked around.

Parker found himself in the main living room of the ranch house—a combination of dining room, office, and lounging quarters. A long pine table, still bearing the remains of a meal, from which a cloud of flies rose up at the sheriff's entrance, stood in the center. There was a battered desk in one corner, in another lay two saddles and their equipment, and a telephone was on the wall opposite the door; but not a human being was in sight. Crossing the room, the sheriff entered the kitchen which, save for a sleeping cat, was

empty also; and, satisfied at last that the dwelling was entirely deserted, he went out into the yard and approached the barn.

Here, a score or two of hens were scattered about over the sun-baked ground, and a dozen young calves dozed in a corral. Everything, barring the absence of any human occupant, seemed exactly as it should; but there was a mournful, brooding silence about the place that somehow got on Parker's nerves, though he would have found it hard to tell just exactly why. It was not until he stepped inside the gaping doorway of the barn that the little officer paused abruptly, and his inquisitive eyes narrowed slightly behind their sheltering glasses.

Just inside the door, half a dozen feet or so from the heels of a three-year-old saddle colt which stood tied in a stall, lay the body of a very stout man. He lay on his back, arms and legs spread-eagled, and his wide-open eyes staring straight up at the floor of the loft above him. He was dressed much as was the sheriff himself: flannel shirt, overalls, and vest, and a felt hat lay a few paces away. Save for a thin dribble of blood from his nostrils, there was no sign of violence or injury about him; but his first quick glance told Sheriff Parker that Jim Carroll was dead.

The officer bent over the body and placed his hand on one naked wrist. The wrist was cold and rigid, proving conclusively that death had occurred several hours before.

Straightening up again, Parker cocked a calculating eye at the colt, which had turned as far as its halter would permit, and was eying him in the suspicious, wild-eyed manner common to all young or half-broken range horses. Judging from the blood at Carroll's nostrils and the exterior absence of any wound, it looked very

much as though he might have been killed by a kick while in the act of entering the colt's stall. But the little sheriff seldom jumped at conclusions.

Lifting the body by the shoulders, he dragged it a few feet; then he gave vent to a little grunt. His eyes had just fallen upon a small hole in the flannel shirt sleeve over the man's upper arm, and long acquaintance with bullet wounds told him what had happened even before he raised the arm to find it broken and that the bullet had passed through it into the body beneath. It was beginning to look very much like a case of murder, after all; and the officer's eyes lit up with professional interest as he turned them upon his immediate surroundings.

But the hard-beaten, litter-covered, earth floor of the barn could tell him nothing, and, after looking through the half-empty hayloft, also barren of clues, he covered the dead man with a blanket and returned to the house. Thus far he had been able to discover nothing beyond the fact that Carroll had been apparently shot from above—he deduced this from the downward course taken by the bullet—by a high-power gun of about .30 caliber.

A systematic and painstaking search having thoroughly satisfied him that the house, both upstairs and down, was actually deserted, the sheriff sat down at Carroll's desk and ran through its contents. Several papers taken from the bottom of a drawer made him open his eyes and purse his lips thoughtfully; but there was no direct clew to the murder or the deserted condition of the premises, and he finally left the room and went outside. Here he wandered about until he had poked his nose into every nook and cranny large enough to conceal a mouse, but without any result worthy of note. When he finally sauntered toward the little grove of cottonwoods, however, his eyes

brightened and he whistled to himself.

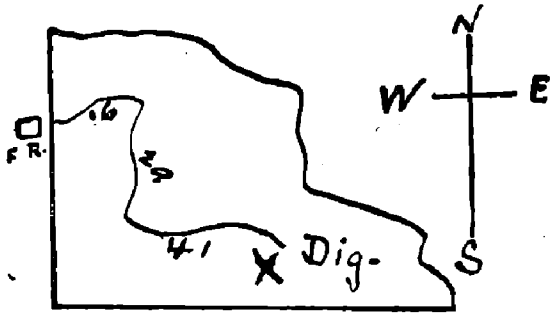
Near the edge of the trees, the ground, slightly damp at this point, was cut by the footprints of a large-footed man who seemed to have walked slowly toward the barn, although the trail was lost again on the hard clay beyond the shadow of the grove. A little farther on, the grass was broken and bent as though by some heavy weight.

Rolling a cigarette in a thoughtful way, the sheriff sat down on a convenient rock and smoked dreamily for several minutes; then he measured several of the footprints with a pocket tape. Finally he returned to the house and telephoned the coroner of his find, telling that official that he would await his arrival, which would be at the end of about three hours, at the ranch.

By this time the afternoon had turned into evening and the dusk of the summer night was beginning to fall, a dusk that was considerably intensified by a dark bank of clouds which had come up from the northeast. There was the feel of a storm in the air, and as he smoked and pondered upon what he had discovered, Parker watched the scudding clouds and wondered if his friend the coroner would reach the ranch before it broke. From some notes and accounts he had found among Carroll's papers, the officer was inclined to think that Jim Carroll had been mixed up in the cattle stealing, and he wondered if the murder could be the result of some quarrel among the thieves.

One paper especially among those in the dead man's desk puzzled the sheriff exceedingly. It was a crude drawing or map, showing the location of something that seemed to have been buried; and, as he sat thinking over his problem, Parker took it from his pocket and spread it on his knee in an attempt to

fathom its secret before the coroner's arrival.



For a long time Parker studied the drawing, trying hard to guess what "F. R." might mean, and wondering if the thing was really important, or only a sketch of some part of Carroll's ranch. The figures might mean almost anything, but, taken in conjunction with the word "dig" and the crooked line through the center of the map, it looked very much as though they were meant to denote distance along some path or trail. Suddenly the sheriff sprang to his feet.

"By George!" he exclaimed aloud, in an excited tone. "That must be it! The general outline is the same, and if a man had anything of importance to bury he could not pick a better spot than the quicksand, provided, of course, that there really is a safe path through it. I've never heard of any, but Carroll knew the place better than anybody, and he may have found one. That 'F. R.,' too, may stand for flat rock—there's a big one close to the edge of the sand, I remember. On the whole, I believe I'll look into it; it may be the solution of the whole business."

Having arrived at this conclusion, the sheriff put the map back in his pocket, and he was of two minds whether to ride out to the quicksand right away or wait until daylight the next morning, when a sudden rising of the wind decided him. The shower was coming up quickly; already the wind was blowing in strong, sharp puffs, and big drops of rain were pat-

tering on the roof. Hastily closing the doors and windows, Parker lighted a lamp and sat down at one end of the table in the living room to resume his study of the map, which now seemed to be his most important clew.

He had been busy at this for some time when all at once he thought he heard some one step on the boards of the porch. For a little he sat still, listening intently, but aside from the roar of the wind and the sharp rattle of the rain, he could detect nothing unusual. With the thought, however, that the coroner might be arriving, he got up and opened the front door.

By this time it was dark, and as he stood peering down the road the sheriff began to doubt if the coroner would get there at all before morning. At any rate, there was nothing in sight at the moment, and he was turning back into the house when a slight movement at his left caused him to whirl quickly. He was not quite quick enough, however, for before he could protect himself in any way, something dark and heavy was thrown over his head and shoulders and he was knocked to the floor. Here, in spite of his violent struggles, he was held and bound hand and foot; then he was picked up and carried into the living room, where he was dropped on top of the saddles.

A moment later, the dark, blanket-like thing which enveloped him was plucked away, and he found himself gazing into the grinning face of the tallest man he had ever seen. At least that was what Parker thought at the time, although he afterward realized that the flickering lamplight somewhat accentuated the man's height. He was tremendously big, however, big in every way, and he towered like a giant in the low-studded room.

"Startled you some, I reckon, eh?" he remarked, with a throaty chuckle. "I must say you're a cool hand. Camp-in' here as comfortable as you please,

after killin' poor Jim. When I found his corpse in the barn, I thought— But never mind that. What you done with the money?"

"Money?" Sheriff Parker looked incredulously up at his captor. Despite his natural anger and chagrin at the easy way he had been captured, he thought he grasped the situation. "You've made a mistake, my friend. I know nothing about any money, and I didn't kill Carroll—I was investigating his death when you attacked me."

"That's a likely story," the big man sneered in an ugly tone. "I've been watchin' you for some time, partner, an' I know what you been up to. Jim Carroll and I was pals, and I aim to see that you get what's comin' to you after I locate that cache. Ah!" He gave vent to the last exclamation as his roving eyes fell on the map on the table, and he grabbed it up eagerly.

For several minutes he studied the paper intently, paying no heed to the sheriff's attempts at explanation. He merely laughed and shrugged his shoulders when the prisoner proclaimed his identity. Finally he turned, and, without a word, stuffed the end of a towel into the officer's mouth and tied it there. Thus gagged, the prisoner could only glare his rage as the big man folded the map, put it in his pocket, and left the room.

For a time Parker struggled furiously with his bonds; but he finally gave up. His strength was not equal to the task of breaking them, although he could make the rope give a little with each violent heave. Soon the coroner would arrive, and when he did so, things would be put right. After all, the big stranger seemed merely to be laboring under a misapprehension of the true state of affairs, even though his questions about the money, and his delight at finding Carroll's map did look decidedly odd. The sheriff was considering the possibility of the stran-

ger being a member of the rustler gang when he was aroused by the chugging of an automobile.

The soft, dirt road, made muddy by the heavy shower, caused the car to labor considerably; but it finally came to a standstill, and soon afterward steps sounded on the porch outside. Unable to speak or move, the sheriff could only wait until the door swung open and the coroner stepped into the room, giving vent to a little outcry and a start of surprise when his eyes fell on the helpless man in the corner. He was just springing toward him when a tall figure loomed up behind and there was a dull thud. The coroner collapsed in his tracks.

"Humph! Another one of you, eh?" The big man stooped over his latest victim and carefully searched his pockets, bringing to light, among other articles, a revolver, which he tossed on a chair.

"I hope this is the last," he muttered, as he dragged the senseless man away from the door. "I've got my work cut out for me as it is, but I can make it, now the shower is over an' the moon comin' up. That quicksand was sure some hidin' place for the loot. I hardly gave Jim credit for that much brains—thought I'd find the stuff about the place here somewheres, after our tussle in the grove this mornin'. Oh, yes, I shot him—had to in self-defense—an' there's no use tryin' to keep up the bluff any longer. As it is, I'll have the coin and be plumb gone away before you or your partner here is able to take after me."

He turned and strode heavily out of the room without another word.

Sheriff Parker chewed savagely at the rag in his mouth. He saw the whole thing now, and he was mad clear through. Carroll and the big man had been partners in the cattle stealing, and Carroll had hidden the proceeds of their thievery. Then they had quar-

reled and Carroll had been killed. Now the stranger was on his way to the quicksand to dig up the loot and hide himself in the hills before any one could get on his track.

Possessed with but one thought—the determination of arresting the murderer before he could get clear away, the sheriff renewed his assault on his bonds with all the strength he had. As before, however, his efforts seemed useless, and he was on the point of falling back exhausted when his eyes lighted suddenly.

Lying on the littered table, not far from the edge, was a long, keen-bladed carving knife, and if he could reach it, all might yet be well. Rolling off the saddles, he managed to hitch himself along the floor until he could reach one leg of the table and joggle it violently by throwing his body against it. At the end of ten minutes of violent exertion, the knife fell on the floor, and within five minutes more the officer's hands were free. When he had untied his feet, he stooped over the coroner for an instant, saw that he was only stunned, and smiled grimly. Then he caught up the revolver on the chair—his own weapons had been taken by the murderer—and hurried out of the house.

Kneeling in the middle of the heaving, black sand, which in the faint moonlight seemed even more repellent than by day, the murderer was digging with his bare hands when the sheriff crept over the top of a little rise and paused to watch him. He was digging furiously, feverishly, like a man crazed, and now and then he cast a swift glance

to right and left, as though afraid that the hungry sand would rise over the narrow path on which he knelt and engulf him. Suddenly he gave vent to a little cry of delight and reached down to pull a small bag out of the hole he had dug. Without pausing to open it, he turned and began to pick his way toward solid ground.

Sheriff Parker watched him in silence, having no mind to attempt an arrest until the man was safely out of the quicksand, for he felt sure that the murderer could not escape him now. For twenty feet or so, pacing in the methodical manner of one who counts his steps, the big man zigzagged along safely enough; then something seemed suddenly to go wrong—his right foot, planted carefully ahead of him, failed to rise for the next step. For an instant, in a kind of desperate frenzy, the man tugged at it with all his strength; then he gave vent to a wild scream which the sheriff could never forget.

"It's got me!" he yelled. "The sand has got me!" And then he began to struggle madly like a man in a fit.

The sand rose swiftly, and with horrified eyes Sheriff Parker watched it creep to the murderer's middle and then to his shoulders. With one last horrible shriek, the man's head went under, and the quicksand was calm and unbroken as before. Still surging, still waiting for another victim.

Shaking himself together like one who has just awakened from some terrible dream, Parker retraced his steps to the ranch, where he found the coroner sitting up and wondering what had happened to him.



Li Shoon's Nine Lives

By H. Irving Hancock

CHAPTER I.

THE HAND OF THE DEAD?

SIX weeks after they were back from their Colorado adventure, Donald Carrick, seated in the carpeted section of Doctor John Fleming's wonderfully compact laboratory, uttered an exclamation of wonder. As the chemist whirled about, he beheld Carrick drawing very hard at his pipe and staring steadily through one of the windows.

"What's going on outside, to draw such an outburst from my calm friend?" Fleming asked.

"Nothing in the gardenette before this window," responded Carrick briefly, continuing to send up great clouds of pipe smoke.

Fleming, who had started to join his friend, now turned back to a bench on which stood a test-tube rack containing liquid in a dozen test tubes, to which he had just added as many reagents.

For at least three minutes Carrick continued looking out of the window, though he saw no near object. At last, picking up the newspaper, he resumed what he had been reading.

"That's strange," he muttered.

"Is it permissible to ask what is so strange?" Fleming inquired lightly, as he reached to an upper shelf over the bench and brought down a two-liter bottle of tenth-normal acid.

"Why, the *Spokane*, of the Blue Stack line, is missing—nine days overdue, and not sighted anywhere," replied Carrick. "She's a freighter, last stop San José de Guatemala, bound with general cargo to San Francisco. I own a bit of stock in the Blue Stack line."

"I see," said the chemist, nodding. "Looks as if she had been lost. How do you relish a slump in the returns from and value of your stock?"

"Not particularly pleased over the prospect," responded the Master Hound, "though at the moment I was not thinking of that. Incidentally, Fleming, the *Spokane* carried in her strong room something over two million dollars in gold, shipped from South American banks to meet collections in San Francisco."

"But if the *Spokane* was wrecked," Fleming argued, "the line is hardly responsible for the value of the money."

"The value of the money, in any event, will come out of the pockets of the underwriters at San Francisco," retorted Carrick.

"Let's see," mused Doctor Fleming, clamping to a stand the burette he had just filled with acid solution, and turning around, "wasn't the steamship *Halcyon*, of the Red M line lost about three weeks ago in the Pacific, with two million and a half in gold on board? You are beginning to see light, I believe, Fleming," said Carrick.

"Not the light that is illuminating or irritating your mind, I fancy," replied the chemist, with a smile. "If the San Francisco underwriters have to face a loss of four million and a half dollars, it must make them peevish. Yet how does it affect you? You haven't any funds invested in marine insurance, have you?"

"Not a penny," Carrick declared promptly.

"Then——"

"But see here, Fleming," went on the Master Hound quickly, "neither steamship can have been lost in a gale, for there was no gale along the Pacific coast at the time either craft was last seen, nor for many days after. Both boats are American owned, had no munitions aboard, so could not have been blown up by submarines. Besides, none of the warring nations have submarines in those waters. It seems highly probable, therefore, that both the *Spokane* and the *Halcyon* foundered in smooth seas."

"Did neither craft carry wireless?"

"Both did," Carrick went on, his eyes gleaming. "That makes the mystery all the more dense. No distress signals were received anywhere from either craft."

"But there is only one class of men who rob ships and then sink them, destroying their crews," the chemist objected. "Such men used to be called pirates, and pirates are extinct in these days of steam."

"That doesn't mean that a new breed of pirates couldn't spring up," Donald Carrick interposed, speaking almost impatiently for one of his equable temperament. "In fact, if piracy has been committed in these two instances, then we are bound to admit that pirates exist, or reëxist. The point, Fleming, is right here. For weeks there have been no other losses in the Pacific, from Panama up, and the only two vessels to vanish are, curiously enough, the

only two that carried notable lots of gold coin."

"Does the newspaper say anything that could throw more light on the double mystery?" the chemist inquired.

"Here's the article," replied the Master Hound. "You may read it for yourself."

Hastily the chemist scanned the printed paragraphs, then shook his head, for he had really learned nothing that his friend had not already told him.

"If it weren't a flat impossibility," Carrick went on musingly, "I should be tempted to say that the vanishing of the two ships has many of the earmarks of the uncanny work of the dread Li Shoon. But that can hardly be, since we saw Li and his satellite, Weng-yu, leap to death over the edge of that Colorado precipice. More, we saw their mangled bodies lying crushed in the gully below."

"That would be proof enough of the death of most men," laughed John Fleming. "But would even such proof hold good in the case of an archfiend and a piece of cleverness like our Chinese friend, Li Shoon?"

Once more Donald Carrick picked up the paper, studying it attentively through eyes one-quarter closed.

"I could almost swear that Li was behind this job," he grumbled.

Fleming sprang to answer the telephone, but quickly swung around to say:

"Telegram for you, Carrick."

The latter moved to the instrument, listening intently. At last he said briskly:

"Send that telegram here in writing, and deliver it as speedily as you can."

Resuming his chair and his pipe, Carrick smoked harder than ever, sending up clouds of smoke, yet uttering no word. Knowing his friend well, Fleming asked no questions, but continued letting a drop at a time fall from the

stopcock of the burette into a flask underneath.

Within ten minutes Tako, Fleming's Japanese servant, knocked, then entered, handing a telegram to the Hound, then silently withdrawing. Tearing off the end of the envelope, Carrick read twice through the message on the yellow page.

"See what you think of this, Fleming," he said finally, and the chemist read:

Your two Chinese fugitives who were supposed to have leaped over the precipice several weeks ago, it turns out, did nothing of the sort. Their supposed remains in the gulch difficult of access were inspected closely yesterday. Proved to be only two stuffed dummies, in Chinese garb, that were thrown down from cave in face of cliff near top. The fugitives really jumped after fastening around their waists concealed ropes tied to roots of big bushes at edge of cliff. Bushes show marks of ropes. Signs in cave, which opens into cliff less than ten feet from top of cliff, show that four or more men, presumably Chinese, lived in cave at least two days, then regained top of cliff and escaped. Nothing has been heard from any of them. Any instructions? Do you mean to come out here to take up clues beginning at cave and gulch?

The telegram was signed by Bowers, sheriff of the Colorado county in which was the mountain precipice from which Carrick and Fleming believed they had witnessed the suicide of Li Shoon and Weng-yu.

"I never did a more foolish thing than not to investigate the two supposed bodies at the bottom of the gully," remarked Carrick, rather bitterly when he saw his chemist friend lay the sheet down.

"It would have taken hours to have reached that gully," Doctor John Fleming responded, "and the scene laid out for us was so real that I do not wonder that even you, Carrick, were fooled. Confound Li Shoon! He appears to possess the nine lives of a cat."

"Li Shoon would make a cat look foolish by comparison," retorted Car-

rick, more bitterly. "It seems impossible to slay him. I never really thirsted for any man's blood—not even Li's—but I am certain that it would not grieve me greatly if I were to see him cut into small pieces. Only then could I feel certain that he had ceased to girdle this suffering earth with his villainy."

"Are you going to do anything immediately in this matter?" Fleming asked.

"Nothing more than to think about it, if you mean the disappearance of the two treasure ships."

"I have finished this bench work," Fleming continued, as he lifted three racks of test tubes and some other bits of apparatus and stacked them neatly at the back of the bench. "So now, if you do not need me, I thought I would run up to Sylvia's hotel and chance a visit. If she is out, I will come right back."

"What if she has already vanished?" suggested Carrick, though he smiled, for he regarded the chance of that as slight. It was enough, though, to cause Fleming to turn a bit pale. With a spring he was at the telephone, calling up the hotel where Miss Dorrance lived. He soon heard that young lady's voice at the wire.

"If I arrive in about fifteen minutes," inquired the lover, "do I stand a good chance of being able to have a little time with you?"

"An excellent chance," laughed Sylvia.

"Ask if I may call with you?" suggested Carrick. Fleming did so, though he frowned slightly over the request. Lovers have sometimes been known to be impatient of the presence of third parties.

"You are wondering why I wish to go," Carrick continued, as Fleming hung up the receiver. "I shall not dally long, John, but I wish to warn Miss Dorrance, in my own way, against any efforts that Li Shoon's emissaries may

make to lure her once more into captivity such as she was forced to endure on two other occasions."

"That will be as well," smiled the chemist thoughtfully. "Though, after what I have said to Sylvia on that very subject, I doubt if she would be likely to be trapped by anything less than downright force."

For five minutes Fleming busied himself with his toilet. Then, passing his own inspection in a mirror, he turned away just as Tako came in to report that the doctor's motor, which he had ordered brought round, stood at the door. Fleming and his friend went out, the former taking his place at the steering wheel. Quite punctually to their appointment, they presented themselves at the hotel desk to have their names telephoned up to Miss Dorrance's rooms. Two minutes later, the callers were received by the elder and the younger Miss Dorrance.

"We did not know but that you had already vanished," smiled Donald Carrick. "Unfortunately, we have news that Li Shoon, though officially dead, is again at large."

"You cannot mean it!" gasped Sylvia Dorrance, much of the color fading from her lovely face.

"It is true," replied Fleming, while Carrick pleasantly inquired:

"Has Li made any effort to get you away from your hotel again, to some point at which you might again fall into his power?"

"No," said Sylvia Dorrance, regaining most of her composure. "On the contrary, in yesterday afternoon's mail I received a much pleasanter letter and one which auntie and I have been wondering if we could not accept. It was from Elsie Duveen, one of my school chums. She and her mother are at Citrusville, California, and they have invited us to spend a few weeks with them."

"California?" quickly inquired Carrick, barely concealing his deep interest.

"Here is the note," said Miss Dorrance, rising, going to a desk, and returning with a folded, scented sheet of paper. "Perhaps you can read Elsie's horrible scrawl. I used to tell her that she had never really learned to write."

"And this is her writing—her own writing?" Carrick inquired, as he glanced at the letter.

"There can be no mistaking Elsie's handwriting," said Miss Dorrance.

"Thank you," said Carrick, passing back the sheet after having read it through. "Miss Dorrance, may I advise you not to think of starting to California until I am able better to advise you?"

"Why—what—do you really think?" asked the young woman, in astonishment.

"Later to-day I shall be able to tell you just what I think," Donald Carrick replied, rising. "And when I advise you, I shall *know!*"

Most courteously he took leave of the ladies, next nodding cheerily to Doctor John Fleming, who, despite the little that he knew of the Hound's thoughts, now appeared to be a bit mystified.

As he dropped in the elevator to the office floor, Carrick said to himself:

"At present I suspect old Li Shoon of knowing all about the disappearance of the treasure ships. Inside of two or three hours I think I shall know positively whether that yellow scoundrel is now after the yellow metal of ships on the Pacific!"

CHAPTER II.

SMOKE FROM THE BLUE STACK.

STOPPING at the office of the manager of the hotel, Carrick said: "I wish to send a telegram in your name, and will show it to you in a moment."

"I know it will be all right," said his friend the manager.

Seating himself, after the other had handed him a pad of blanks, the Hound penciled this dispatch:

MISS ELSIE DUVEEN, *Citrusville, California.*

Highly important to know if you recently sent Miss Sylvia Dorrance an invitation to visit you in your present home. Kindly wire answer immediately, collect.

To this Carrick signed the name of the manager and the name of the hotel.

"Will you have this sent for me at once?" asked Carrick, tendering the money with the telegram.

"With pleasure," responded the manager, after a glance at the sheet.

"Then permit me to telephone it to the Western Union in your name, and at the same time I will call up an official in the company, asking him to see to it that both telegram and reply travel at fastest speed west and east."

Within three minutes, Carrick had secured a pledge that the telegram would be "rushed" in the liveliest sense of the word. The Hound thereupon turned to his friend the manager.

"When the answer comes, you will phone me at Fleming's laboratory, won't you?" he requested.

"Without fail, Carrick."

Outside, stepping into a taxi, Carrick gave the chemist's address, and was quickly back. Once admitted to the laboratory by Tako, the Hound glanced down at his pipe, resting on a table, then shook his head.

"It may turn out that I need sleep more," he mused. Removing his coat, Carrick lay down on the sofa, tossing a blanket loosely over him, for outside the winter air nipped in strong contrast to the uniform warmth of seventy degrees within. Sixty seconds after lying down, the Hound slept, nor opened his eyes until, nearly two hours later, he was disturbed by the ringing of the phone bell.

"Answer to your telegram," pro-

claimed a voice from the hotel, and he recognized the manager's voice. "This telegram is signed: 'J. N. Skinner, caretaker.' The dispatch reads: 'Miss Duveen and mother now absent for five weeks on trip to Hawaii; due to return in about three weeks.'"

"Thank you, old man," was Carrick's fervent acknowledgment. "The money that I left with you paid the charges both ways? Yes? Thank you. Will you be good enough to send that reply up to Miss Dorrance's room, with a copy of the telegram that I sent in your name? Will you kindly explain to Miss Dorrance that I took the liberty of wiring in your name? And will you kindly tell Miss Dorrance that, under the circumstances, I strongly advise against her taking the California trip? I am sure that she will understand."

Having adjusted matters to his satisfaction, Donald Carrick again stretched himself on the sofa, carefully covering himself.

"It must never be forgotten," he murmured to himself, "that Li Shoon is an adept at forgery, or controls the services of such an adept. Nor must it be forgotten that his yellow and brown crew know well how to secure specimens of handwriting that are to be forged. Miss Duveen did *not* write the letter that Sylvia Dorrance showed to me. Li Shoon did write it, or caused it to be written. Miss Dorrance must have told him something about Miss Duveen, or else Li obtained his information in other ways. Though twice the trick has proved futile, Li Shoon again sought to get Miss Dorrance where she could be easily taken in under his impelling control, and that in order to have a strong hold on Fleming and myself, compelling our remaining passive. If Li wanted Miss Dorrance under his power in California, then Li is also there, or else he used California as a headquarters. Therefore, considering all the other facts that I now

know, one thing is certain: Li Shoon is behind and responsible for the vanishment of the two treasure ships. Will another or some more treasure ships vanish from the surface of the sea? Yes, unless I can succeed in interfering in season."

Having reached this conclusion, Donald Carrick closed his eyes. For something like thirty seconds he remained awake; at the end of that brief period he was sound asleep, to be awakened only by the abrupt entrance of Doctor John Fleming, who shook the Hound brusquely by the shoulder.

"I've heard," said the chemist quietly. "So Miss Duveen's supposed note was a forgery, committed or inspired by Li Shoon in the hope of getting Sylvia finally in his power. Is there no limit to the ingenuity of that Chinese devil?"

"Apparently not," yawned Carrick, sitting up and reaching for his pipe. "And what I've learned to-day completes my reasons for knowing that Li Shoon knows all about the missing treasure ships."

"A man trained as a chemist," replied Fleming gravely, "would say that you have strong reasons for believing that you know the trend of Li's present activities, but that you lacked anything like logical proof of your suspicions."

"Let it go that way, then," said Carrick, smiling indulgently. "However, Li and his principal men must be at work on the Pacific coast, or else they wouldn't desire to lure Miss Dorrance out there, feeling that for this and the third time they can really hold her from rescue, and that her captivity will still your activities, and, through your friendship, will also induce me to quit looking for the yellow rascal's trail. For it cannot be other than Li Shoon who has conceived the idea of sending Miss Dorrance to California on a most tragic wild-goose chase. Now, my dear fellow, if your chemically trained mind can admit that Li Shoon must be in

California, or operating from there, then you must be ready to concede that my next destination must also be California."

"I shall have to grant your reasoning," said Fleming. "More especially as I know you must be right, anyway."

"Ting-a-ling-ling!" called the chemist to the telephone.

"Carrick? Yes, he's here. I'll call him to the machine.

Carrick moved over, listened gravely, then directed quietly:

"Kindly deliver that message to me in writing with utmost speed. Tell the messenger to take a taxi and I'll pay for it."

Turning to the chemist, he asked:

"John, how long will it take you to get ready to go to San Francisco, or some other city in California? Yes, you are to go. Oh, of course, I understand your reluctance to go far away from Miss Dorrance, but look at it in another way. The sooner we can know that sod really holds Li Shoon down in the bosom of Mother Earth, the sooner you may feel that Miss Dorrance is wholly safe. For Li will try to get hold of Miss Dorrance every time that he starts in with any new villainy. He has an obsession that she is a hostage who can be used to make us stay our hands. One of these days Li, if he secures possession of your sweetheart again, will, in an excess of temper, remove her from this earth as a rebuke to us. So the thought causes you to look a bit pale? Then you will surely be glad to go to California with me. For this time we shall surely get Li, and we shall just as surely bring him back to New York. Here he can be convicted of murder and executed. Then, and not till then, will Miss Dorrance be safe, and may we feel that we are through with the yellow wretch and at liberty to pursue happiness in our several ways. So run along and get ready. When you wish, phone Miss

Sylvia, of course. Don't forget to tell her that I am going to call on her within half an hour, with her cousin, Mr. Lawrence Semple. You never heard of that 'cousin.' I suppose not. He's in the criminal-investigation line, and a most clever and resolute fellow. Now, don't be jealous, Fleming, even if I am going to ask him to put up at the same hotel, be known as Miss Dorrance's cousin, and escort her about for a while. Semple is middle-aged, a gentleman, bald-headed, and has a wife and four children. He's a decent and cool fellow, and after I leave him at the hotel we may both feel assured as to Miss Sylvia's safety. Phone her now, if you wish, Fleming. I'm going out to meet the taxi."

Nor did Carrick have to wait long at the door. The message was delivered. Carrick, after seeing the boy, carefully read the message before he stepped inside. Then he returned to the laboratory, setting fire to the message and dropping it in the grate.

"The president of the Blue Stack line wired, asking you and me to take up the matter of the disappearance of the *Spokane*, as the company expects to ship treasure by other steamers of that line," the Hound went on. "You and I are offered our own fees and all expenses to take up the matter on the jump. We can hardly afford, can we, to decline an offer so liberal?"

"I can't," Fleming admitted honestly. "But you? Humph! You own more money now than you will ever spend. You're going to accept the offer, of course?"

"I shall wire my acceptance as soon as I have arranged for the safety of Miss Sylvia Dorrance. And, by the way, Fleming, Semple will be only the outward sign of Miss Sylvia's safety. He will have such help as he needs. It will be part of our expense account for the job that the Blue Stack line will pay. Why not? I shan't attempt to fool the

Blue Stack people about it. Now, do you feel like going?"

CHAPTER III.

THE APPARITION OF THE "BUDZIBU."

LI has learned to keep under cover well," grumbled the Hound, nearly a month later.

"It is time he did," agreed Fleming placidly. "He appears to have nine lives, but even nine may be lost in time. Besides, there are no more treasure ships sailing. The steamship companies have secretly instructed their masters not to accept specie shipments."

"They will resume presently," declared Carrick, rather moodily. "There will be a ship start up the coast with a whopping treasure as soon as I have found the slightest clew to Li and his scheme of operations. It would be murder and robbery to have treasure brought up the coast with a practical certainty that crew, money, and ship would be lost. But don't think I have been idle, Fleming."

"I know full well that you haven't been idle," was the chemist's grave answer. "We've put in breathless days in San Francisco, and have raked Chinatown with a fine-tooth comb. We have been in Spokane and Seattle; we've been in Los Angeles, fairly taking up the carpet of that town, prying underneath, and now we've been ten days in San Diego, and they've all been busy ones."

The two friends sat just inside the balcony of a parlor in the Del Coronado Hotel at San Diego. Of the suite, two of the rooms were chambers. There was also a dining room and bath. The balcony overlooked the salt water. Near the door to the balcony stood a mounted telescope of unusual power. Two pairs of strong field glasses rested on a table.

"Li Shoon cannot operate unless on the sea," Carrick went on reflectively. "Naturally he would not ship on a treas-

ure craft itself. Hence he must have some vessel of his own. That vessel would have to possess speed, for, on account of the disturbances in Mexico, several United States war craft are sailing up and down the coast. Li or his lieutenants, if overhauling a treasure ship, would need speed. If, while the operation of boarding and robbing was going on, a United States war vessel were to appear, Li would have to have a good deal of speed in order to get away from some of our long-range guns. A craft of from twenty-eight to thirty knots would be needed, or safety could not be secured. That would mean a yacht, for none of the coasting vessels possess such speed. I have had all the yacht registers examined, and cannot find the slightest reason to believe that Li has chartered any craft along this coast. Where, then, did he get his vessel?"

"A submarine, perhaps?" hinted Fleming.

"There are no private ones," returned Carrick, with a shrug of his shoulders. "True, one could be built, but one could not be hidden. It would have to put in somewhere for supplies, and then its existence, even though it had been built secretly, would almost surely be known."

"There are little ports or bays along the western coast of Mexico where it could be hidden," Fleming suggested. "Mexican rebel officials could be bribed to keep the secret, and could sell supplies at outrageous prices."

"A Mexican rebel official might be bribed for most things," Carrick returned, "but it would be difficult indeed in the case of a submarine. The Mexicans of all factions are daily looking for a possible war with this country. They have no submarines, but would sell their souls to own one, for in the event of our making war upon them, their coasts would be blockaded. They would prize a submarine that they could

send out on a mission of sinking blockading craft. No, there is hardly a shade of a chance that Mexican rebels would protect Li Shoon in running into one of their smaller bays or harbors, or even in appearing along the open coast. Besides, a submarine does not possess speed enough to make sure of her overtaking a liner. The chance would be too much of a hit or miss to please Li Shoon's longing for sure things. Fleming, we must find Li's craft in some above-water craft, and she must be an unusually swift one—therefore a yacht."

The chemist did not argue further. He knew that his friend was generally right in his deductions. Instead, the chemist, rising, sauntered close to the balcony, while Carrick, lounging back in his chair, blew smoke lazily toward the ceiling.

"I wonder if a yacht like that one could be fast enough?" said Doctor Fleming, a few minutes later.

Instantly the Master Hound was upon his feet, snatching up a glass and gazing intently.

"If that boat's engines match her lines," cried Carrick eagerly, "she should be good for thirty knots an hour. See! She's making for the harbor; going to put in here. I'll know in a jiffy what craft she is, and my new friend at the customhouse will hold his tongue about my inquiry, too."

Carrick seated himself at the telephone table and called for one of the officials at the customhouse. A short conversation ensued, to which Fleming did not pay much heed, for he was busy with the field glasses that he had snatched up.

"Carson will find out as speedily as possible all about that yacht," Carrick announced at last. "I shall remain here until he calls me."

"Do you wish me to motor over to the harbor?" Fleming inquired.

"No, for if that yacht be really com-

manded by Li Shoon or one of his lieutenants, what more could you do than show yourself and perhaps put the Chinese on their guard?"

So Fleming continued to watch. Presently he reported that the yacht had run into the harbor and had moved as though going to a pier, but obstacles prevented his seeing either the craft or her possible berth.

"She went in under good speed. I noticed that much," the chemist added.

Twenty minutes later, the phone bell rang. Carrick jotted down the information that the yacht was the *Budzibu*, of Dutch Sumatran register, with a Mr. Ronnvald aboard as owner, with a party of guests. A customs inspector had reported that he saw no Chinese in the crew or among the guests. The yacht had put in for oil fuel and supplies, and would put to sea again as soon as these had been obtained. The owner was cruising for pleasure, and had not decided upon his course or next port of call.

"That's unusual," Carrick added, after he had told Fleming the news he had received. "I'm going to note that craft a little closer."

Calling the office, Carrick ordered a car with closed body to be at the hotel entrance immediately.

"Come along, Fleming," requested the Hound, after examining his automatic revolver and glancing at a set of papers that he drew from an inner pocket.

The car swiftly bore them to a point from which they could examine the wharf at which the *Budzibu* lay. It was plain that great activity was being displayed in the loading of the yacht.

"They're filling the yacht's fuel-oil tanks with two great hose pipes," Carrick explained. "It is altogether suspicious speed. One would expect the owner and his friends to want a little time ashore after having been for days at sea. We'll take a chance or two,

Fleming. Perhaps the yacht won't sail as early as planned. I'm going to headquarters, get some policemen, and go on board. I have with me a duplicate copy of the New York warrant for the arrest of Li Shoon, Weng-yu, and Ming. We can take two officers with us in this car, and a whole motor patrol wagonload of policemen can reach the water front not far behind."

"And there will have to be some lively apologizing done if it proves that none of our fugitives are on board."

"I'm a very convincing apologist," said the Hound, smiling. Then he leaned forward to give the chauffeur his orders. There was but brief delay with the police. Two policemen stepped into the car, and more were ordered into a patrol motor. Swift time was made to the water front. Just as the car turned into the short street leading to the wharf, Carrick uttered an exclamation of rage.

"There is the *Budzibu* putting out already!" he announced, pointing. The yacht was, indeed, making for open water at a speed of not less than twenty knots.

Stopping the chauffeur, Carrick jumped out to confer with the police lieutenant in the patrol motor. That lieutenant was a gem in the way of knowledge of San Diego's water front. The patrol motor returned, as useless, but one of the two policemen in the car took a seat with the chauffeur, while the lieutenant seated himself beside Carrick.

Within five minutes, the ocean-going tug *Terence* was steaming out of the harbor at her best speed, fourteen knots, turning south after the now vanishing *Budzibu*. That police lieutenant on shore with his two remaining men had most complete instructions for telegraphing. Donald Carrick, in a craft of half the speed, had begun his chase—around the world, if need be—of the *Budzibu*.

Yet aboard the *Terence*, unsuspected by one even as astute as the Master Hound, Chinese ears listened attentively to the words that passed between Donald Carrick and Doctor John Fleming, as they sat in the tiny cabin that had been turned over to them.

CHAPTER IV.

DEVOTEE OF THE SPORTING CHANCE.

WE'RE in the open water now," announced Carrick, filling his pipe as he glanced through the cabin window. "It will be a long chase, my friend. You didn't hear my instructions to the police lieutenant, did you?"

"It was needless," replied the chemist, with a wave of his hand. "I knew that you knew what you were doing, and you didn't need my help."

"Do you believe that this fourteen-knot boat can overtake the *Budzibu*, with her best speed of twenty-eight knots?"

"It can if you say so and plan it," replied Fleming, with easy confidence.

"I'm not quite such a fool," replied Carrick. "The yacht *Vulcan*, with a best speed of twenty-nine knots, is two hundred miles up the coast, and on her way south. I ordered her, four days ago, to be fitted and sent to a little bay twenty miles north of San Diego, that I might have her at need. I gave Lieutenant Allen a message that the *Vulcan's* master will understand. He will chase this tug, which has wireless of an amateur order. Some time to-morrow the *Vulcan* will overtake us, and we'll transfer to the right boat. After that—the real chase."

"But why didn't you wait for the arrival of the *Vulcan*?" Fleming asked wonderingly.

"Because no one can tell what will happen to, or on, the *Budzibu* before to-morrow," replied Carrick gravely.

"But if you overhaul the strange yacht at sea, what then?" Fleming

asked. "You have no authority to board her, and can do so only by courtesy. If Li Shoon is on board, and in charge, surely you wouldn't trust much to *his* courtesy."

"Events will have to provide for themselves," was the enigmatic answer, which caused the listening Chinaman, English educated though he was, to hold his breath and wonder.

It was in the wainscoting that the Chinaman stood hidden. Not only was his place of secrecy secure, but he had easy means of leaving that hiding place to go to any part of the tug. Li Shoon, knowing that Donald Carrick could always be counted upon to dog his steps, had surely left the Master Hound and his chemist comrade well watched in New York. So cleverly had the trailing work been done that, though Carrick had not once detected any sign of shadowing, their whole course since leaving New York had been closely watched.

And this Chinese member of Li Shoon's fraternity of evildoers had succeeded in secreting himself aboard the *Terence* because he knew when to expect the strange *Budzibu* in port, and also because the *Terence* was the fastest tug at that port. Li Shoon meant to know whether Carrick was really trailing him. In the event that Carrick tried to follow in the *Terence*, plans had already been laid for sending that tug to the bottom of the ocean!

As he listened, the stolid young Chinaman—he did not appear to be past thirty, and was dressed in white man's attire of a rough, seagoing sort, looked puzzled, but soon a wicked grin overspread his face.

"It will be rough on me," he mused. "If this tug transfers her passengers to the *Vulcan*, I could not hope to smuggle myself into the transfer. But Doctor Li Shoon's orders provide for the alternative of destroying the tug before help for Carrick can arrive. This tug

will have to go to the bottom, with all on board, including myself, unless I can manage to provide myself, unseen, with a life preserver. No matter! My life does not count as much for the Ui Kwoon Ah-how as Carrick's does against it. I can die with our enemies."

The stolid shrug with which that was said was quite worthy of the traditions of murderous unselfishness belonging to the dreaded body, the Ui Kwoon. Many yellow members, and some brown-lascars and Malays—had already sacrificed themselves in other treasure-amassing adventures.

"As I may have to be up a good deal to-night," Carrick presently proceeded, "I shall turn in now for forty-one or forty-two winks. And you, Fleming?"

"I am not sleepy now," returned the chemist. "I shall take the air on deck."

Doctor John Fleming passed out on deck, using his sea legs as the *Terence* plowed southward against the considerable swell on the water. The Master Hound was soon asleep. The watching Chinaman in the wainscoting softly opened a hitherto invisible panel that he had constructed three days before. Through the narrow slit thus made the Mongol eyes studied the sleeping face of Carrick.

"Shall I slip into the cabin and stab him?" pondered the member of the Ui Kwoon. "But Carrick has the name of being a light sleeper. I might shoot him, but the boat is rocking. If I only wounded him, and could not make good with a second shot, then my mission would be defeated. I must not lose my chance through haste. A few hours' patience, and then I can condemn all these Americans to death!"

So the panel closed as noiselessly as it had opened. Carrick slept on dreamlessly.

Five minutes later, the panel again opened. Ling Cheng, devotee of the sporting chance, had been unable to resist the temptation to bewilder and per-

haps warn his enemies—the enemies of Ui Kwoon.

In his hand he held a tiny atomizer. Noiselessly he sent sprays in two or three directions into the little cabin. As the panel closed, a subtle, pleasing odor filled the room—one compounded of llang-llang and sandalwood.

And now Donald Carrick really dreamed. Some unanalyzable influence of that long-unsmelled but not-to-be-forgotten odor caused him to dream of that hidden Chinese rendezvous in the Philippines in which he had, years before, first come face to face with that prince of deadly plotters, Doctor Li Shoon.

But the dream passed, though for a few seconds the gentleman adventurer stirred uneasily in his berth. Half an hour later, the door opened to admit Doctor John Fleming. The Hound opened his eyes.

"I say, Carrick, what is this strange, baffling odor?" demanded the chemist. "It smells like—let me see! Sandalwood, or llang-llang, or—hang it!—both of them!"

"I do catch some odor," assented Donald Carrick, sniffing. "And now it is plainer."

The next instant his features displayed a singular gravity. It was the nearest thing to terror that any man had ever seen on the Hound's face.

"I smelled that odor first on a terrible night," he went on. "It was then the dominant scent in Li's headquarters, many thousands of miles from here. But it must be imagination—here, at sea, on the *Terence*."

"If it is," declared Fleming seriously, "then it is odd, isn't it, that your imagination equally affects me, and I never smelled this combined, compounded odor before?"

"Yes, the scent is quite unmistakable," agreed the Hound, sitting up and drawing on his shoes. "I cannot account for it."

"Is it possible that some of that Chinese crowd can be on board this boat?" cried Fleming.

Donald Carrick surveyed his friend with a queerly quizzical smile.

CHAPTER V.

WIRELESS AND WAVE CREST.

AFTERNOON had changed to night. The two passengers had dined with Captain Mike Rourke. The early evening passed. Carrick and his friend were in the captain's cabin as the tug-boat plowed along a few miles away from the coast.

It had been left to the bow watch to report the unlikely event of sighting the long-vanished *Budzibu*.

In a tight little hutch back of the boat's pilot house, the wireless operator leaned back in his chair, headpiece adjusted on the chance of picking up the signal "Q—Q—Q" at any hour during the night.

From somewhere aft on the hurricane deck a figure might have been sighted, hiding cautiously behind a life-boat, only his head showing. It was Ling Cheng, sometimes the devotee of the sporting chance, but now neither taking nor giving foolish chances.

Only the mate in the wheelhouse and the bow watch were observing the course or neighborhood of the craft. These two and the wireless man were the only ones visibly on duty. The door of the wireless room hung ajar.

With an evil smile, Ling Cheng studied the scene. It was one nearly to his complete liking. By the aid of a tiny flash light he cautiously read the position marked by the hands over the dial of his watch.

"From the course and the time elapsed since leaving San Diego harbor I can come very close to giving our position," he told himself, with a low chuckle. "And the wireless man need not be long in the way! Yet I must

be wonderfully careful until after I have sent my own wireless word!"

After listening intently, Ling moved forward in the felt-soled shoes he had donned for this grisly work. His eyes taking in all that was to be seen, Ling glided on through the night like an apparition.

In the wireless room, eyes closed, ready after the manner of his kind to open them at the first click through his headpiece, the operator undeniably dozed. Larry Dorkins would never wake again.

There came a swift flash, a burying of steel through flesh and between vertebræ. The knife was withdrawn, again plunged and withdrawn. There were some blots of blood on the floor, but that mattered not in Ling Cheng's design. Picking up the slight body of the late wireless man, Ling bore it to the starboard side of the hurricane deck. The boat was wallowing in a rough sea. Watching the most favorable instant, Ling cast all that was left of Larry Dorkins far out, so that it splashed in the sea and was swiftly astern on the waves.

Then Ling turned, though even his stolid disposition recoiled when he heard the incredulous, wrathful bellow of Captain Mike Rourke as that doughty master bounded from the top of the railed deck-house ladder to the deck.

Not a word was spoken, but the master came on warily, without waiting to summon help. Ling crouched and waited, gauging his man and judging that the encounter was one of life and death. Worse! Unless Ling came out victor, there was but scant chance that he could send his message over the waters!

So the two faced each other, but Mike Rourke was not the type of man to favor delayed action. Warily, yet with a bound full of latent power, the tug's master leaped at the Chinaman.

Ling ducked, dodged, then struck with the knife.

But Rourke, expecting that, was not to be caught at the other end of the dagger. Instead, his right fist crashed against the Chinaman's arm, breaking it. The dagger dropped to the deck.

"One murddher is enough for ye in a night!" bellowed Rourke, as he gripped his man, holding him with one massive hand by the collar. Like an eel, Ling Cheng sought to slip out of that coat, only to find his left arm held crushingly in one of Rourke's massive hands.

"It's not gettin' away ye'll be doing!" uttered the master grimly, shaking the prisoner as if he would empty him. "Watch below, there! Bow watchman! Is that you? Send Donovan to the foot of the ladder!"

In a trice Donovan, a deck hand, scarcely less powerful looking than Rourke himself, reached the foot of the ladder and hailed.

"Here I am, wid a lad I want ye to take hold av," roared Captain Rourke, appearing with his captive. "His right forearm is broken, but break his head as well, Donovan, av he thries to give ye the slip. Even av he does give ye the slip, let it be nowhere but overboard!"

With that, and steadying himself expertly despite the lurches of the wallowing tug, Mike Rourke passed the yellow man down to Donovan, who reached up to take the human offering.

"I dunno where this yellow ape came from," announced Rourke, "but he killed Dorkins, I mistrust, an' threw him overboard. Hould him, Donovan!"

Then, still awake to all his duties as master, Rourke ran to the wheelhouse, where he gave orders to make a short turn and put about over the foam-indicated course as closely as possible. In another instant the bow watchman's hoarse tones tumbled all hands on deck.

Carrick and Doctor Fleming, barely in their cabin, noted the abrupt changing of the course, accompanied by the noise of swift orders.

"Something out of the ordinary has happened," remarked Carrick, bounding up and opening the door. He and the chemist were soon on the deck. The first very tangible object on which their gaze lighted, as displayed under a deck light, was the now rather crumpled figure of Ling Cheng in the relentless grip of Donovan.

"How did this man get aboard?" demanded Carrick, indicating the prisoner.

"Ask the captain—he don't know," retorted the deck hand. "Naythur do I. But this yellow snake threw Dorkins, the wireless man, overboard. We're putting around to foind him av it can be done."

Then a white glare shot over the waters ahead. The *Terence's* searchlight was being employed in the task of keeping as close as possible to the widening and gradually vanishing track of white foam left by the tug's propellers.

"Don't let that scoundrel slip away," urged Carrick, and strode forward.

Long, keen, and earnest was the quest, for Mike Rourke believed that Larry Dorkins might be still alive and swimming more or less feebly. Rourke was no man to abandon another. He was a finely competent master of his seafaring trade, and bawled his orders from the bow to the wheelhouse. Yet presently even a man of Rourke's resource and resolve was forced to give up the quest. If Dorkins' body still floated, it had been impossible to pick up a glimpse of it on the crest of any white-capped wave or in the darker shadows of the trough of the sea. With a gulp, and a tear in either eye, Captain Rourke was at last compelled to give the order to put about and follow the course. Yet for a full three miles

on the resumed southerly course that searchlight was kept playing over the waters ahead.

"D'ye see how I can do anny more av me duty?" Rourke demanded hoarsely at last.

"You have done your full duty, captain," Donald Carrick assured the tug's master.

"Then it's time to find out what we can be learning from that—begging your pardon, sir-r!—that dhirty haythen scoundhrel. I've bro-oken his ar-rm, but I'll be breaking his hear-rt av he doesn't begin tellin' all about himself and his dhirty wor-rk!"

CHAPTER VI.

STRANGER OR PIRATE?

IT was time to devote some attention to Ling Cheng, for the members of the crew were giving him an unwelcome amount of consideration. Donovan was doing his best to keep his grip on the captive, and at the same time to fight off four angry deck hands who appeared bent on at least a partial lynching of the unpopular Mongol.

"Captain," shouted Donovan, "I'll be glad whin ye're relievin' me," came hoarsely from the temporary captor. "It's not much longer I'll be able to hould on to the pig-tailed reprobate."

"Avast there, lads!" bellowed Rourke, striding down the deck. "Shove off there, will ye? If it's anny wan to be killin' the yellow lowlife, I'll be doin' it mesilf. 'Twas I that caught him red-handed!"

Elbowing his way through, Captain Rourke grabbed hold of Ling, nodding to Donovan to step aside.

"Drown the heathen!" demanded the crew angrily.

"I'm not blamin' ye, lads," retorted Captain Mike Rourke, "an' maybe we'll soon be doin' that very thing. It'll all depind on the way the scoundhrel talks

up an' tells what he knows. Come along wid ye, chink!"

Into the dining room Rourke dragged Ling Cheng, that being the largest room available for an inquisition. Having hurled the yellow man inside and beckoned Carrick and Fleming to follow him, Rourke carefully locked the door, dropping the key into his own pocket.

"Now, stand up, me lad, an' let me frisk ye," ordered the tug's master, forcing Ling to stand in the middle of the room away from the tables folded against the walls. Rourke ran his hands up and down over the Chinaman's clothing, without finding any weapons. Ling had left a revolver in his hiding place in the wainscoting.

"Ye've no fightin' tools on ye," Rourke conceded at last. "Now, ye yellow disgrace, talk up for yersilf. What can ye say?"

Ling Cheng shook his head, as though to convey that he did not understand.

"Ye can talk some English, all right, I'll be bound," Rourke roared at him. "Now, will ye make a good thry, or do ye prefer some av this?"

"This" was the burly fist that the master shook under the assassin's nose.

"I'm beggin yer pardon, gintlemin," Rourke continued, glancing at his passengers, "but this is a black-hear-rted murtherer, an' he killed wan av me crew. So, av he won't condescind to talk, thin the least I can do will be to trim his face for him."

"Go ahead," said Carrick, who did not see the necessity for applying the rules of ordinary humanity to one of Li Shoon's aids.

"Now will ye talk? Last call!" warned Rourke.

But the Chinaman again shook his head, whereupon Rourke let fly with his fist, hurling Ling across the room, the Chinaman folding up into a heap on the floor. After him sprang the tug's master, picking up the wretch and administering to him a shaking that

threatened to dismember the wretched victim. This course was punctuated with blows that must have left welts.

"Now, thin, what's your name, your josh-house name, mind ye!" bellowed Rourke.

"Ling Cheng," came rather promptly.

"Good enough!" vouchsafed Rourke.

"Now, ye've shown that ye know English, so be quick with yer other answers. How did you come to be on this boat?"

"No savee," replied Ling, trying to look perplexed.

"Ye'll savee all right whin I'm through wid ye," retorted Rourke, administering more of the recent treatment. Ling must have ached from head to foot when Rourke hurled him to a sitting posture in a chair. "Now, thin, tell me how ye came aboard this boat!"

"Me stow awhile," chattered Ling.

"Stowed away, ye mean? All right! Why did ye do it?"

"No savee."

Smash! Whack! Ling suffered from the course in chastisement. When Rourke's question was repeated insistently, he at length answered:

"Me think you go mebbe Mexico side. Me want get there—no pay fare."

"And was that why ye murdered me wireless man?" demanded Rourke.

Again Ling Cheng was troubled by a fit of silence. Nor could Rourke's fistic persuasion induce him to talk.

"Ye'd better be tellin' me," the tug's master warned the yellow assassin. "Av ye don't, I may decide to let me crew in here. Av I do, they will get something out av ye, av it's only yer life."

But Ling persisted in remaining sullenly silent. Rourke was too big-hearted, possessed too large a sense of fair play to go beyond a certain point in manhandling even a Chinese assassin.

"Bad luck to ye, thin, for an obstinate haythen!" growled the tug's master.

"Av ye won't talk at all, thin we'll l'ave it to the American courts to take it out av ye wid the electric chair. Ye'll get that, all right, as soon as I return wid ye to the States and hand ye over to the law. In the meantime, 'tis no chance ye'll have to betther yersilf wid not speakin'. Ye've shown that ye can understand English, and ye'll do no eating, nor drink anny wather, until ye've loosed up the joints av yer tongue. So now I'll be takin' ye to a room that ye'll find to be as stout a brig as iver aven a decent American sailor was iver locked up in. Come on wid ye!"

Gripping Ling's collar, Rourke led him to the door, unlocked it, and stepped with his prisoner out on to deck to face the wrathful, waiting crew.

R-r-rip! Swift as a flash, the seemingly cowed Ling Cheng tore out of his jacket. Away from the captain he bounded, diving between two deck hands.

"Gr-r-rab him!" bellowed Mike Rourke.

But all hands reached the rail too late. Leaping up there, Ling, without an instant's hesitation, dove into the sea. He sank, as though his body had been drawn in under the craft's hull.

All in one breath, Rourke gave the order to turn and put about. In a wide arc the tug obeyed her helm. Back over the course went the tug, and again the searchlight was brought into play. But the quest was in vain, and Rourke at last felt forced to give the order to go about and resume the course.

"Av he'd only done the last thrick first," grumbled Mike Rourke, "I'd still be havin' Larry Dorkins wid us in the wireless room."

"Have you any other man fitted to do the wireless work?" Carrick inquired.

"Not a one," rejoined Rourke. "'Twas that quick ye called me into ser-vice the day that I had no time to get

hold of me other wireless man, Jim Shea."

"Then I must get up to the wireless room," Carrick went on. "There must be some one listening for signals, or the master of the *Vulcan* would deem himself on the wrong course, and perhaps turn aside."

Fleming, with Rourke, accompanied Carrick to the wireless room, where the three men gazed solemnly at the bloodstains on the floor; but Carrick, his work of the night on his mind, sat down, adjusting the headpiece that had been so rudely wrenched from the head of Dorkins.

Not during the next hour was there a call, such as he listened for. At last Carrick, bending forward over the key, tested the apparatus. Though weak, it responded to the test.

"Q—Q—Q" signaled the Hound into the air. He waited, but no response came.

"The current doesn't drive far enough for the *Vulcan* to pick us up, I imagine," he commented to the chemist.

"Or else, perhaps, Li Shoon has agents on that yacht, as he had aboard this craft," Fleming suggested solemnly.

"It doesn't seem possible, and yet it may be the case," Carrick assented, after a few moments' thought. "If the *Vulcan* is done for, then so is our quest for the present, anyway, for she was the one and only boat of the right speed that I could find for our task."

It was after one in the morning, and Rourke had turned in, when the voice of the bow watch reached the ears of the friends in the wireless room as he hailed:

"Strange craft five points off the port bow, sir. Seems to be making off from the Mex shore, sir. Thought I saw her use her searchlight for a single, short flash, but it's dead just now."

Fleming bounded outside. Carrick, laying aside his headpiece, followed quickly. Both edged around to the port

side of the wheelhouse, to find the second mate, who had turned the wheel over to a man, sweeping the shoreward horizon with a night glass.

"Can you make out anything?" Carrick asked.

"Yes, sir; there's a craft there. I can make out masts, but no hull. She must be under power, but I can't make out any smoke cloud."

"An oil burner, then?" hinted the Hound.

"Must be, sir. I'm wondering if I'd better call the captain."

"Do you think the stranger is traveling full speed?" demanded Carrick.

"Too far away to be certain, sir, but I should say she was."

"Then you would better call Captain Rourke," advised Donald Carrick quietly, while to Fleming he added, in an undertone: "If it's the *Budzibu*, then perhaps Ling succeeded in signaling her before fate overtook him, and she's trying to overhaul us."

"'Trying' to overhaul us?" retorted the chemist. "She won't *have* to try. That greyhound can't fail to overtake this slab-hulled sea cripple! If she overhauls us, it will be a trip to the bottom for us!"

"What did you say, sir?" inquired the second mate.

"My friend was just saying," replied Carrick calmly, "that it will be a very excellent idea to call Captain Rourke and to tell him that I'm afraid we're running into more trouble than he'd be willing to believe."

"Anything more than that, sir?" persisted the watch officer.

"Isn't that enough?" demanded the Master Hound. "How strong a message does it take to call your captain from his bunk in the middle of the night? If that doesn't rout him out, just whisper the word, 'Pirates!' But hurry, my friend! Davy Jones is waiting for us at the bottom of the ocean!"

CHAPTER VII.

SUSPICION AND THE SEARCHLIGHT.

CAPTAIN MIKE ROURKE was speedily on deck.

"What's this I'm hearin' about a pirate?" he demanded, as he picked up a pair of glasses and stood at the open port window of the wheelhouse.

"That craft over yonder," Carrick answered quietly.

"A pirate, eh?" remarked Captain Mike, taking a long look through the glass. "Don't ye call that inthresting, sir-r?"

There was no hurry in his voice or manner. On the contrary, it was plain that he by no means discredited the information that had been offered him.

The strange craft, the *Budzibu*, or whatever she was, remained for several minutes at about the same angle on the port bow. She was making much faster time than the *Terence* could do, and was plainly moving to intercept the tug.

"Would ye be afther likin' me to change the course?" asked Captain Rourke.

"What would be the use?" questioned Carrick. "That craft can overtake us, and changing the course would be interpreted as conscious flight on our part."

Nearer and nearer dashed the overtaking yacht. Her hull was now plainly visible.

"It's the *Budzibu*, an' no mistake," commented Captain Rourke, now out on the deck behind the wheelhouse, as he studied the stranger. "I mar-cked her well whin she came into por-rt."

"I'm going to get out of sight before she plays the searchlight on us," declared Carrick. "I might be recognized, if that yacht is bossed by the man who I think controls her movements."

"What shall I say, av we're hailed?" demanded Mike Rourke.

Carrick gave the master some general instructions.

"And on the way you handle the matter, captain," finished the Master Hound, "will probably depend the safety of your craft and of all on board."

"I'll do me best to bring ye through safely, sir-r," promised the tug's master. "It'll not be my fault av ye and yer friend come to har-rm."

"I'm not thinking of myself, nor of my friend," replied the Master Hound gravely. "Fleming and I took these chances deliberately. I shall be sorry if I am the means of bringing you and your men to grief."

"It won't be the fir-rst time that anny av us has faced throuble," rejoined Rourke. "And, av we get through wid this, it won't be the last time we'll face throuble, ayther, I'm thinking. But I thank ye for the thought av us, sir-r."

Carrick and Fleming slipped into the wheelhouse, where, away from the windows, they could slip out of sight at need.

Ten minutes later, with the yacht not more than a mile and a half distant, the broad, white band of her searchlight shot across the sky, then dropped full across the *Terence*.

"Shall I return the compliment by givin' her a glimpse av our own light?" queried the master, standing near the wheelhouse window.

"It could do no good," Carrick answered.

Presently Rourke reported:

"She's overhauling us right fast, sir-r, an' there goes her whistle to signal us that she'd like us to lay to for a hail."

"It would look strange if you didn't oblige," the Hound answered.

So bells jangled in the tug's engine room, and by degrees the *Terence* slowed down, running under reducing headway and then rolling on the waves.

"Ahoy, tug!" came the hail through

a megaphone, as the yacht, also barely moving, rounded in as close as was safe. The voice from the yacht, though hailing in English, betrayed more than a trace of foreign accent. "Where are you headed, tug? What business?"

"Me own business, sure!" Rourke bawled back, in a seemingly good-humored voice, his lips to a megaphone.

"Have you any objection to answering us candidly?" came the demand.

"Surely not, since ye're askin' us in a civil way," Rourke returned. "The Red M two-stacker *Pearl City* is in some trouble wid her propeller shaft, and we're undher or-rders to proceed down the coast and stand by. Maybe we'll be r-reaching her be daylight, or an hour later."

"We didn't hear any wireless signals from the *Pearl City*," remarked the voice from the yacht suspiciously.

"Then I'm glad ye didn't, av ye're in the same business as mesilf," retorted Rourke, a grin in his voice. "I'm wanting the *Pearl City* job all to myself. But ye're a gentleman's yacht, aren't ye?"

"Yes."

"Then ye'll not be thryin' to take the job from me, for I want it, and ye've more speed."

"You know well enough that this is a pleasure yacht," came gruffly from the *Budzibu*.

"I've the best av reasons for knowin' it," Rourke retorted, good-humoredly. "You tould me so yersilf."

"I think I'll send a boat aboard of you," continued the voice from the yacht.

"Are ye in disthress?" queried Rourke.

"We are not."

"Thin ye'll sind no boat aboar-rd av us," declared Captain Mike. "Be yer own confession ye're no mon-o'-war, and ye'll put on none av the airs av wan."

"Rourke is handling it well," Carrick

whispered in, "but the *Budzibu* is plainly suspicious. There are six life preservers in this wheelhouse, Fleming. Keep your eye on one of them if we're sunk."

"I'd sooner go to the bottom at once than prolong the agony," the chemist answered.

"Cap', sir," almost whispered the second mate, "there's a searchlight roaming the sky to the south of us."

Rourke wheeled, saw the distant flash of the new light, and took his cue.

"Ye'll have to be excusin' me, captain," Rourke bawled through the megaphone. "Av I'm not mistaken, that's our customer looking for us now to the south'ard av here. Good-by, and thanks for the talk. Full speed ahead, Mr. Riley, as soon as the engine is turnin' well."

Instantly the second mate rang for half speed, the engine room responding. From the *Budzibu* there was no further hail, though two men could be made out as they stood, enveloped in caps and long coats, beside the yacht's officer on the bridge.

Within three minutes, at the latest, we ought to know whether we are going to be safe for the present," Carrick declared, as Captain Rourke, turning his back to the yacht, leaned in over the window sill.

Second Mate Riley, leaving the wheel in the hands of a deck hand, was now busy uncovering the tug's searchlight.

"Better signal and ask what ship is to the south of us," suggested Donald Carrick, and Rourke gave the order.

"Sometimes Heaven is good to liars!" ejaculated Riley, as the unseen stranger answered with her flash light in the code. "That craft is really the *Pearl City*."

"'Twas likely she would be," assented Mike Rourke. "Whin I lied to save me boat and its people, I gave the name av a steamer I knew was comin' up the coast, or was due to."

A bare quarter of a mile away, and still holding to the tug at reduced speed, the *Budzibu* seemed to watch as though her controlling spirits felt that their worst suspicions were about to be realized.

"How'd she be sinkin' us, av she thried it?" Rourke asked suddenly, after a glance over his shoulder.

"Probably she carries, concealed, a quick-firing cannon or two," Carrick replied. "She may even have a torpedo tube, though I would doubt that, for a tube is not easily concealed when making port."

Again the yacht's searchlight lay broadly across the tug.

"She'll not give up thinkin' bad av us," muttered Rourke.

"It'll be all r-right, sir-r, av she does nothing more than thinkin'," ventured the man at the wheel.

"But if she fires on us," suggested Rourke, "surely the noise av her guns'll be heard by the *Pearl City*."

"It wouldn't bother the scoundrels on that yacht to sink the *Pearl City* as well," Carrick answered.

"Thin I don't see much hope for us," Rourke growled. "For the boss av that yacht, 'tis plain, doesn't like the looks av us at all. See the way the sea terrier hangs at our heels."

Taking off his cap, and at infinite pains to expose only the top of his head, Carrick glanced swiftly out between Rourke's broad body and the window frame.

"She's undoubtedly going astern to rake us," declared the Master Hound gravely. "The *Budzibu* must mount her gun or guns forward."

CHAPTER VIII.

DANGER'S HAUNTING LOOK.

KEEPING just about a quarter of a mile astern the yacht followed along. The tug did not deviate from its course, nor was any one allowed to

be visible on the *Terence* aft, for that would have looked as though the master of the tug believed the *Budzibu* to be dangerous.

None the less, Carrick, Fleming, and Captain Rourke had gone below. They now watched the yacht through the ports of the darkened after cabin.

"Li Shoon may decide to follow us along until he learns whether the *Pearl City* really needs your help," said Carrick, after a while. "If he finds that he has been fooled, Li will then not hesitate to sink both the tug and the liner."

"Why should he be such a murderin' scoundhrel?" asked Rourke.

"He's an international criminal," Carrick replied, rather evasively. "He's already wanted on a wholly provable charge of murder, so that nothing he can do would bring him to any worse punishment. He's playing a game for big stakes, and will stop at no number of murders to advance his game or to save his own skin."

"Thin maybe he's wor-rking for the dir-rtly Mexicans?" suggested Mike Rourke, but Carrick did not answer.

"I believe the yacht is falling astern," cried Doctor Fleming presently.

"She is losing a bit of her speed," Rourke confirmed.

Though the trio watched with night glasses, they could not at first make out the game. After a little the yacht was half a mile astern, presently a mile, then a mile and a half.

"Now she's turning in toward the coast," declared Carrick finally, whereat Rourke bounded forward to use his glass.

"Unless that craft is playing a game to fool us, thin she has given up the chase," the master of the tug announced.

Ten minutes later the trio ascended to the hurricane deck. In the darkness the *Budzibu* had vanished. It seemed good to be out in the open air once more. For a few moments that thought

dominated over the realization that the tug had not been foully sunk.

"I wouldn't care to know that gintleman, the wan ye call Lou Shine," said Rourke grimly. "Be all ye say about him, he must have a bad conscience."

"The best and brightest conscience that you ever saw," Carrick reversed. "He has never given it the slightest use since he was born."

Presently the hull of the *Pearl City* was sighted. The two craft passed with hearty steam signals. At this moment Carrick was sweeping the coastward horizon for any sign of the lurking presence of the *Budzibu*, but that evil craft was not to be seen.

"I hope the *Budzibu* will try to run us down when we are once safe on the *Vulcan*," Carrick confided to his friend.

"Ah, then the *Vulcan* is armed?"

"When we are aboard of her we shall be more nearly on equal terms," was the Hound's response. "And the *Vulcan* is a knot faster than the Sumatran boat, I believe."

"May the *Vulcan* travel faster than she ever did before!" uttered Doctor Fleming fervently. "It doesn't seem so bad to be shot at on dry land, but looking out over this inky waste of salt water, I can't help feeling that I'd rather not be called upon to sink beneath the surface and remain under. It doesn't appeal to me as my choice of deaths."

"What is death?" mocked Carrick lightly. "Merely the end of the struggle—the wind-up of the fight. The only man who is afraid of death is the one who realizes that he hasn't played the best possible part in the fight."

"I believe," said the chemist gravely, "that I prefer tobacco to the abstruseness of philosophy."

The night being fine, though dark, the two friends remained up on the hurricane deck with their pipes until

nearly two in the morning. It was now in the first mate's watch. Captain Mike Rourke had long ago gone back to his repose. A stern watch, as well as the one at the bow, had been set.

It was nearly nine in the morning when Fleming opened his eyes. The Hound was still asleep, though he opened his eyes as the chemist slid from the upper berth to the floor.

"I'm going out to see if the *Vulcan* is in sight," stated the chemist.

"You needn't have spoiled your sleep for that," yawned Carrick behind his hand. "I left orders that we were to be wakened at the first sign of the *Vulcan*."

But Fleming hastily completed his dressing and toilet, and stepped out on deck. Though there was a breeze, the weather was noticeably warmer, for the *Terence* was now well down the Mexican coast and the sun shone with greater brightness. Nowhere on the horizon did a sail, spar, or smokestack appear.

"Good morning, doctor," came Rourke's hearty greeting. "D'ye know, I'm all over the nightmare feelin' av the night."

"It didn't last long," said the chemist, laughing. "You went to sleep as fast as you could."

"'Twas bad while it lasted," declared the skipper gravely. "I've been on the salt wather a good many years, but niver did I hear of a scoundhrel as bad as the wan your friend is playin' hide and seek wid."

"If we encounter him out here, it won't be our first meeting face to face," replied Doctor Fleming.

"Is it so, now?" asked Rourke, with lively interest. "Wud ye mind tellin' me a bit about the rapscallion?"

"I'm afraid Mr. Carrick wouldn't like me to be too talkative."

"Don't you read the newspapers, captain?" demanded the voice of the Master Hound, as he came up behind

them. "Some months ago there was plenty in the New York newspapers about Li Shoon, the yellow criminal who murdered a few New York millionaires after getting their property deeded to him."

"Now, I did read about that fellow," cried Rourke. "But I thought he wint to the electric chair."

"No, he escaped, and has been at large ever since," Carrick went on. "That is all I wish to say at present."

"A foremasthead showing in our wake, sir!" hailed the stern watch, in a bawling voice. The trio turned hastily. Glasses were brought into play.

"It's the foremast of a yacht, all right," cried Fleming gleefully.

"Yis, but 'tis wondherfully like the rig av the *Budzibu*," said Mike Rourke tensely. "Oh, well," with a shrug of his shoulders, "av she is coming up again, it won't seem as bad and dir-ty as it did in the night."

"If it is the *Budzibu*, then she evidently discovered that we had no business with the *Pearl City*, and she has been scouring the water for us ever since," advanced Donald Carrick. "Of course, she has sighted us by this time, for she must carry a foremast lookout."

More and more of the foremast of the pursuing craft came into sight. Presently the top of the hull began to appear over the curve of the horizon.

"I'd injoy bein' proved a bad guesser," asserted Captain Mike Rourke. "But I must say that the craft yondher has all the look av bein' the *Budzibu* an' no other!"

CHAPTER IX.

SEEKING THE TRAIL IN "OLD MEX."

THE trio had retired to the after cabin, using the portholes once more. A messenger had been stationed to hasten any order to the watch officer in the wheelhouse.

Line after line of the other craft came into sight, every new glimpse confirming the suspicion that the stranger was the Sumatran yacht.

"If our suspicions are right," announced Carrick, in a steady voice, "no man now on this boat has more than a half an hour of life left."

"I've said me prayers already," retorted Rourke, "so I have a free hand for me duties. But I'm sorry for the boys undher me."

Fleming said nothing, though he puffed his pipe with a slight acceleration of speed.

"Maybe we're three fools," hinted Mike Rourke, two minutes later. "Av me memory is wor-rkin', the Sumatran boat had her deck rails painted white. "This craft has shinin' brass rails."

"That much disguise would be quite within the bounds of Li's strategy," Carrick answered. "Don't be too sanguine just yet, captain."

"A wireless question to the craft astern might settle the question," proposed Fleming.

"And that wireless would be picked up by the *Budzibu* if she's anywhere within a hundred miles or so," Carrick retorted, shaking his head. "The *Vulcan* had especial orders to use no wireless for fear it might be picked up by the enemy.

A mile nearer came the pursuing craft, then shook out a line of signal flags from the foremast.

"We're a pack av fools, I believe," uttered Rourke. "That craft wants to know av we're the *Terence*, an' av we are, she suggests that we lay to for the transfer av two passengers."

"It must be the *Vulcan*, then!" cried Fleming.

"Whether it is, or not, we may as well go out on deck," decided Carrick. "Even if it is Li Shoon's private navy, we'd go to the bottom soon, anyway."

Acting on his own judgment, Rourke

ran to the wheelhouse, where he gave orders for half speed, next a full stop. Onward swept the yacht in their wake, veering to port as she came close, and stopping her own engines within hailing distance. The name plate on her wheelhouse had been obscured.

"Ahoy, *Terence!*" came a megaphoned voice from the yacht's bridge. "This is the *Vulcan!* Have you passengers for us?"

"Two av thim," answered Rourke gleefully. "An' mighty glad we are to know that ye're the *Vulcan.*"

From the yacht a boat was lowered, manned by a mate and four men. Rourke was now busy in picking out other details in which this yacht differed from the Sumatran craft.

"Aven at that, though," declared Captain Mike, "the two boats are so much alike I'd swear they were built in the same yard at the same time."

"Come into the cabin a moment, captain," Carrick requested. Having the skipper behind a closed door, the Hound produced a bulging roll of bank notes.

"You'll find here, captain, the stipulated hire for the number of hours; also a hundred dollars for each of the mates and the chief engineer, and fifty dollars for each other member of the crew. They are to receive the money with the distinct understanding that not one of them lisps a syllable of what has taken place on this trip before sixty days from this time."

"They'll keep silent, I'll go bail," replied Rourke, "though I'm sorry ye thought me min had to be paid to hould their tongues."

"And here is a souvenir of two hundred for yourself, captain," Carrick went on, adding more bills to the pile.

At first Rourke stoutly resisted, but Carrick could be a diplomat, and in the end prevailed.

By this time the boat was alongside. Carrick and Fleming slipped over the

side. Amid cheers from the tug's crew the boat slipped away. A few minutes later the Hound and the chemist signaled Rourke from the starboard rail of the *Vulcan.*

"'Twas their own boat, thin," muttered Rourke. "Good luck to thim—the best. Misther Scanlon, the course is straight back to San Diego."

Amid a din of whistles the two craft parted company, the *Vulcan* skimming speedily south.

Carrick had, indeed, found himself among friends. Captain Mulford was a bluff, hearty skipper. His two mates, Gray and Kerrigan, were keen-looking young men. The *Vulcan*, a narrow-built craft of some eight hundred tons, was sure to roll in any kind of heavy sea, but her social and sleeping cabins were provided with every kind of comfort and many luxuries. Officers and crew were nattily uniformed after the naval pattern.

"This boat is in the United States naval reserve," Mulford declared proudly. "We try to keep up the best traditions on this craft. But there is one bit of information you may be able to give me, Mr. Carrick. Though my crew is large, and though I never carried more than two mates before, just as we were ready to sail the agent sent aboard a third mate and five more seamen. Mr. Olney is the new third mate's name. I believe he's sleeping now. He can sleep all the time for that matter, for the instructions that came with this Olney chap were that he was not to stand watch, but was to observe and learn all he wished to learn. Did ever a skipper have a queerer mate sent to him?"

"I cannot give you any information about Olney," replied Carrick gravely, and appeared to dismiss the matter from his mind. As soon as Fleming found a chance he whispered to his friend:

"Donald, do you suppose that Olney

and his men represent any kind of treachery that is to be sprung later?"

"Drop the idea," counseled the Hound. "The agent through whom the charter was made is not the kind to be imposed upon. Whatever Olney's mission aboard may be, rest assured that it's an honorable one, and that the shipping agent knew what he was doing."

"I don't see a sign of a gun on board, either," Fleming continued. "If the *Budzibu* carries 'em, and we get at close quarters, what then?"

"In any event, Fleming, I believe that the *Vulcan* will prove able to take care of herself."

Further confidential conversation was cut short by the steward's call to table, where Captain Mulford joined them. The *Vulcan's* skipper was anxious to have his further sailing instructions in full.

"How far will your wireless reach?" asked Carrick.

"All the way to Vancouver, if need be," was the proud response.

"Then be good enough to have this signal flashed," requested Carrick, writing on a notebook page the letters: "B-B-B-F-H-G-P."

"And then——" insinuated Mulford.

"That will be all," declared the Master Hound.

"That signal is being watched for in San Francisco," Carrick confided, in an undertone, as Captain Mulford turned to hand the message, with orders, to one of the table stewards, who ran out with the slip of paper. "It will tell all that I wish to say, and will start our campaign."

After luncheon Third Officer Olney appeared on deck, and was presented to the passengers by Second Officer Kerigan. Fleming tried hard to make up his mind whether he liked Olney, who had an extremely sleepy look. The chemist could not disabuse himself of the idea that Mr. Olney was not nearly as sleepy as he looked.

The afternoon passed without incident. Fleming noticed that two men were kept in the crow's nest and that both were vigilant in examining every visible part of the sea to the circled horizon. The *Vulcan*, at nearly full speed, was out of sight of the Mexican coast, the course being as nearly due south as the outlines of the invisible coast permitted. Yet, with all her speed, the yacht, burning oil under her boilers, did not leave a trail of smoke behind. There was little rattle of machinery, but a good deal of rolling in the rather brisk sea.

For three days the *Vulcan* continued in a generally southerly direction. In that time more than a dozen northbound and four southbound steamships were passed. Each was asked, by signal, whether another yacht, much resembling the *Vulcan*, had been sighted.

At first there was no news. Then some vague news came. The fourth of the southbound steamers flew several signaled messages in response to the questions that Carrick caused Captain Mulford to ask. Then both craft lay to. A boat was lowered, and, at the Hound's request, Third Officer Olney was put in charge. Carrick descended the side gangway, stepping into the boat. Fleming, not having been invited, remained 'on the *Vulcan's* spar deck, smoking his pipe placidly.

In three-quarters of an hour Carrick could be seen coming down over the steamship's side.

"We're too far south," he reported to Captain Mulford, on coming on board. "Put in to Mattanegua Bay, which you ought to reach in the hours of dark tomorrow evening. Do not approach until well after dark, and I will have further instructions ready an hour south of Mattanegua."

On an altered course sailed the *Vulcan*, but Fleming felt well pleased. He was satisfied that the Hound was working on definite knowledge.

At nine o'clock the next evening Captain Mulford called Donald Carrick to the bridge for a conference. The coast of Mexico was now just vaguely in sight off the starboard quarter. At reduced speed the yacht proceeded. At a quarter of ten, when she lay to, the *Vulcan* was not more than half a mile from the shore. Low, sloping hills rose from the beach. Seen through the night glasses, these slopes were covered with short, dense growths of what looked like scrub oak.

No sooner had the *Vulcan* lain to than a boat was lowered, Kerrigan being this time in charge.

"Look to your weapon," muttered Carrick. "Take two extra magazine loads with you and a full box of cartridges."

"I have them on me," Fleming answered.

"Then we'll get into the boat."

While they were being pulled toward the shore, Carrick continued to talk in an undertone.

"Never much of a port, Mattanegua Bay is now closed to commerce," he said. "The town around the bay is headquarters for some two thousand Mexican rebel troops. Calvoras, their commander, is a typical Mexican rebel—arrogant, cruel, unreasoning, and densely ignorant, but he is a power among his men. The *Budzibu* was seen to enter the bay, and doubtless is still there. Our task on shore is to find out all we can about the *Budzibu* and Li Shoon, without running into the rebels or bandits—call them which you prefer. We are landing three miles below the bay."

CHAPTER X.

A HINT OF THE TRUTH.

PAUSING only long enough to see the boat pushed off to return to the *Vulcan*, Donald Carrick turned his back on the water to inspect the jungle ahead of him. Then he tugged at Flem-

ing's sleeve, leading the chemist not more than a hundred feet into the jungle. Now the Hound sat down as comfortably as though at his journey's end.

"What's the idea?" queried Fleming, in a whisper, seating himself beside his friend.

"Both the *Vulcan* and the landing of the small boat may have been observed by Calvoras' lookouts, though I hope not," was the Hound's response. "If they have seen us, and we do not presently appear, these same lookouts will come down to the shore to investigate. Then we shall know that we have been observed."

After that the Master Hound was silent. It was so dark where they hid that the chemist, unable to see his friend's face clearly, wondered if Carrick dozed.

At length the boat reached the yacht, which soon after stood out to sea. The *Vulcan* was not running with lights tonight, and Fleming could hardly be sure of what he did see. Yet the moving of a shadowy mass told him that the yacht had left them behind.

Not until some time after did Carrick, after listening with his ear to the ground, rise and whisper:

"Evidently our coming was not observed. We will start on our way."

Owing to the tangled masses of shrubbery and low forest through which they moved, Donald Carrick was forced to take his course from such glimpses of the stars as he obtained. Both trod softly, taking pains not to tread on crackling brush in the undergrowth.

"In the matter of poisonous snakes, which are reported to abound here," whispered the Hound, during one of their brief halts, "you must trust entirely to luck. We could not see a snake in time to avoid it."

It seemed to Fleming as though they had walked for many hours, when Car-

rick suddenly brought him up short with a grip of his nearer arm. The Hound pointed ahead to a glow on the ground, distant some two hundred yards. As the two friends stood there, observing, they saw several figures flit to and fro past the dying camp fire. Fleming soon guessed that there were at least a dozen men near the fire. Carrick, from other signs that he detected, judged that there were from fifty to sixty men ahead; probably an entire company of Mexican rebel soldiers.

A low hum of voices came to them. At last the Hound began moving forward, a cautious single step at a time. Minutes passed ere the friends again made a halt, this time within plain eye range and audible distance from the little groups in the clearing. As both Carrick and his friend spoke Spanish, they were able to comprehend the words that reached them in the Mexican jargon.

"With the three thousand new rifles, and all the cases of cartridges, my captain, our general, Calvoras, will doubtless soon begin recruiting and increase his army."

"It is even so, Lieutenant Calderas," replied the captain. "And then, when our general's new and mighty friend brings still more rifles, Calvoras will take the field, openly, and we shall sweep across Mexico. Our general has promised me that I shall soon be a colonel, and you, lieutenant, will doubtless become a major."

Lieutenant Calderas, a youth of not more than twenty-three, stroked his incipient mustache with an air of military pride.

"How many rifles are to come next time, Captain Bustanobo?"

"Our great and good friend promises not less than four thousand. He will even try to get six thousand, but he informs our general that he is obliged to buy with great care, through many agents and in small lots, that he

may not excite suspicion. Within a few months we shall doubtless have fifty thousand rifles, and that, with the valor that our men exhibit, will be plenty to make Calvoras president of Mexico. Me? I shall doubtless be a general of division by that time. But, lieutenant, have you seen to it that a close watch is kept?"

"I have been on the alert, my captain. I will call Sergeant Penumbra, and he shall tell you what he is doing. Pass word for Sergeant Penumbra."

The name was uttered in tones loud enough to be heard at a distance. Soon a little, brown man came running up, though he rubbed his eyes as he came.

"Sergeant," demanded the lieutenant, "you have kept vigilant watch over the water?"

"My men have done so, excellent lieutenant. Always two have remained standing since dark begun, their eyes turned out on the sea. They have seen no ship of any kind."

"It is well, sergeant," declared the lieutenant. "Faithfully serve the new republic of Calvoras, and you shall be rewarded. You may become a lieutenant, like myself, if you detect the coming of such a ship and report it in time. Think what it will mean to be a gentleman in the new and glorious republic."

"Never doubt my alertness, my lieutenant," begged Sergeant Penumbra, saluting and retiring when he received the signal.

"When a Mexican *knows* that an enemy is near, he is a marvel of watchfulness," whispered Carrick in Fleming's ear. "But sometimes the Mexican soldier is found napping on his post. That sergeant and his men have surely been making up some arrears in sleep."

"May the whole command here sleep forever!" was the doctor's pious wish.

Farther on a group of half a dozen soldiers played cards, almost silently, by the light of a second fire. Many

men of the command, wrapped in their tattered rags, were now sound asleep under the stars.

"There is little to be feared from this sleepy lot," asserted the Hound. "Come, we will move around them and on toward Mattanegua. We must learn if the *Budzibu* is at anchor in the bay. We already have a fairly good idea of how Li Shoon, if he be here, has managed to gain asylum in this pirate's nest of a closed port. He is spending a part of his wicked plunderings in bringing in munitions of war to Calvoras. It is a clever way of gaining the hiding place and protection that he needs!"

With infinite care the Hound picked his way around the camp, under the deep shade of the trees. But on the northern side of the camp the two Americans, despite their stealth, made slight sounds that reached the ears of two Mexican sentries. This brown pair, after listening for an instant, slipped silently, on their bare feet, behind two tree trunks. Carrick and Fleming passed between the trees. Just another instant, and rifle butts descended on their heads. Both men pitched forward to the earth, half-stunned.

"*Alerta! Al numero sierte!*" bawled both sentries at once. It was their way of summoning help for post No. 7. Two rifle bolts clicked ominously, and two rifle muzzles were pressed against the two dismayed captives.

In the camp, confused murmurs followed. Half a dozen soldiers ran up at once. Others could be heard following. With instant death as their portion in case of resistance, Carrick and Fleming wisely made no effort to draw their automatics. Had they been on their feet, they would have opened vigorous fire, then taken to their heels.

"Ah, we have prisoners, and Americans, at that!" cried Captain Bustanobo, turning the rays of a lantern on

the captives. "These must be they, for whom we were told to watch."

"That is hardly likely, my captain, since they did not come by ship," interposed Lieutenant Calderas gravely. "But, none the less, they are Americans, and our brave general loves that breed so well that he sends them immediately to heaven!"

"Guard the prisoners, and kill them if they attempt to escape," ordered Captain Bustanobo briskly.

"You are taking a lot of trouble to be sure of securing two unarmed men," scoffed Carrick, in Spanish.

"Search them!" commanded Bustanobo. A dozen eager hands were stretched forth at once, as though the soldiers hoped to discover real loot. Of course, the automatics and extra magazines, as well as the cartridges, were speedily brought to light.

"Lieutenant," cried Bustanobo joyously, "you and I have long craved just such excellent revolvers. They are ours now. And men who lied to us about being unarmed will prove no more truthful in anything. I shall ask them no questions, but will take them at once to our brave general. Lieutenant, you will take command of the camp, and you will keep as close lookout as before against the coming of the expected ship. Sergeant, take a guard of ten men, and stand ready to shoot the prisoners at any sign of a wish to escape! March!"

Forward the little procession went. What Carrick and Fleming may have said, under their breaths, does not matter much. Through a seemingly endless jungle they finally arrived upon the semblance of a road, which became somewhat better as the party came within sight of the lights of the little port of Mattanegua. Now the arrest party passed a few outpost guards at frequent intervals. Then down through a street the captors marched their prisoners, halting before a large,

two-story white building, before which stood at least a dozen armed guards. These saluted Bustanobo's party, permitting them to enter an oblong courtyard within. Bustanobo passed in through a guarded door, but soon reappeared, to say:

"The prisoners will follow me!"

Under his guidance, Carrick and his friend were led into a corridor and through the second door to the right. In that room stood two young officers, while a man of fifty-five, seated at a table, with a bottle and wineglasses at his elbow, turned to scowl at the prisoners.

"Welcome, my most excellent friends!" exclaimed an unctuous voice, and Li Shoon, in richest Chinese garb, appeared in a doorway.

CHAPTER XI.

CALVORAS TAKES THE HELM.

HOW?" demanded General Calvoras, in a somewhat thick voice. "Then these are the two Americans whom you hoped to catch, Doctor Li?"

"The very pair!" cried the international criminal joyously. "They are the two American secret-service agents from whom you have most to fear. They have penetrated the secret of your source of supply in munitions of war. General, you will know what to do with them?"

"I shall have them shot within sixty seconds!" exclaimed Calvoras wrathfully. "Captain Bustanobo, you have heard my pleasure?"

"It shall be done at once, my general, as you say," assented the captain.

"I beg you to let them remain for a moment," pleaded Li Shoon, in sweetest Spanish. "Carrick! Fleming! You are balm against the soreness of my eyes. In my darkest moments I knew that this time would come. It was promised me by Hop How, my sooth-

sayer. I shall reward him for this prophecy, which has come true."

Beginning with his address to the hapless prisoners, Li had dropped into English. He now continued:

"You two should have known that you could not long hope to baffle me. You had your brief triumphs, yet they lasted but moments, after all. And now all the score is settled."

"Li," spoke Carrick steadily, "you can send me to death, but I can take you with us. Your yacht is under the guns of these miscreants. In seven words I can inform this make-believe general that your yacht contains, hidden away carefully, yet discoverable, millions in gold coin that you have stolen from ships that you have afterward sunk. This braggart bogus soldier will forgive you your villainies, all except the fact of your concealing from him the enormous stores of gold coin that you have on the *Budzibu*. When he hears of the gold he will kill you either before or after he has seized the gold, for which he will hunt like a rat on the scent of grain. Unless you can save us, Li, you are done for as surely as we are. Think! Are your wits quick? Can you save our hides and your own?"

"Do you think I'm fool enough to carry the coin on the yacht?" taunted Li. "That would be more stupid than to smoke in a powder mill."

Calvoras, after listening in a stupid, noncomprehending way, drained another glass of wine, then rose heavily to his feet, breaking in in Spanish:

"I understand, Doctor Li Shoon, that you are talking over old grudges. Let it be so. I will leave you alone for a while. Then I will send my file of soldiers to see that these scoundrelly Americanos are taken out and shot. A quick shooting, Doctor Li, always saves bother."

The door closed, and the three were alone. Had Carrick wished, he could

have sprung upon this odious Chinaman and killed him with his own hands. Li was an outlaw, without rights before man, but the Hound's mind was working fast along other lines.

As if he realized his own danger, Li glided to another door, clapping his hands smartly. In came a dozen Chinese, led by Ming, executioner to the Ui Kwoon Ah-how.

"Amuse these gentlemen," said Li, in English, but the gesture was enough, accompanying their leader's evil smile. At a guttural word from Ming, the yellow assistants seized upon both Americans. Immediately there began a series of horrible arm twisting and straining of joints. Fleming had the hardest work of his life in keeping his groans back. He felt like yelling hysterically. Great drops of cold sweat stood out all over his forehead, his cheeks, his entire body. Carrick's face was more immobile; he looked almost calm under the fiendish torture, though his soul writhed under every wrench. But Carrick's was the more imperturbable nature. Besides, he had had years of experience in the Oriental world.

At a word from Ming, the torture stopped. At another word three of the Chinese left the room, soon returning with implements of torture that made the comprehending Carrick shudder visibly.

"Ah! You know what is coming," said Li Shoon, smiling sweetly. "I always strive to give the best of my hospitality. And, after these machines, I have others that provide even more amusement. Oh, we shall have a rare night of it! When it is all over, then General Calvoras may send his firing squad in with the dessert, if he then thinks it worth while!"

Yet even as Ming superintended the sorting and preparation of the torture machines a heavy tread sounded at the door. In strode a Mexican captain,

in heavy boots, followed by a sergeant and eight barefooted privates, all armed with rifles.

"It is by General Calvoras' orders that I take these prisoners from you, doctor," he said, with a courteous bow. "They are to be shot at once!"

"But I am not through," Li protested shrilly.

"That I regret to hear, but you will understand that I can only obey my general's orders," said the captain courteously. "Sergeant, take the prisoners! March!"

Quivering with rage at being so coolly deprived of his prized prey, Li Shoon moved swiftly from the room. The sergeant and his squad, surrounding Fleming and Carrick, marched them out of the building, through the courtyard, and up the principal thoroughfare of Mattanegua.

"Shooting is a welcome relief from what was to have been offered us," muttered Carrick. "I have had many meetings with Li, but never saw him in such a fiendish mood as he was tonight."

He will probably have the orders revoked," suggested Fleming. "A messenger with altered orders is likely to overtake us at any moment."

As he spoke, the chemist tried to glance backward down the poorly lighted street, but a soldier jabbed him with a bayonet, forcing him to keep his eyes ahead. As the squad moved along, Mexican rebels and the populace smoked indolently in the streets, hardly turning their heads to gaze after such a familiar scene as an execution party.

Past the town and out into the woods the Mexican captain marched his party. At last he halted in a grove of tall trees.

"You will be tied, each to a tree trunk, gentlemen," he announced, "and four men will hold rifles against each of your chests. Death should be in-

stantaneous and painless. Will you long without real money and on scant pray, or have you anything that you food. wish to say before you die?"

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER THE SHOWER OF GOLD.

I HAVE a few courteous words, captain, that I would like to say to you and your men," Carrick replied gravely.

"Courteous words to executioners are rare, gentlemen," said the rebel captain, fondling his mustache.

"What I wish to say," Carrick went on, "is that I appreciate the fact that you are soldiers. Therefore, you must obey your orders, and I bear you no ill will. I have one request to make, and that is that you take full pains to make our deaths instantaneous. I am going to reward you for doing it, for I have gifts that our first captors overlooked. I have with me twelve hundred dollars in American gold, worth nearly twenty-eight hundred dollars in Mexican silver, and worth more than a shipload of your paper currency. I propose, captain, that this gold shall go to you and your soldiers."

As he spoke, Carrick fumbled dexterously with his clothing. In a twinkling, then, he brought forth his money belt. His nimble fingers ran along the catches over the pockets, opening them.

"Some of this money is in coin and some in American gold notes, which are as good as gold coin at any bank in the world. Captain, I propose to give your men a merry scramble for it!"

As he spoke, Carrick swiftly took hold of the belt by one end, twirled it, and hurled it far into the bushes.

As the belt flew, a golden shower of coins could be heard dropping to the earth. Gold notes fluttered against the faces of some of the soldiers, as, with stifled cries, they raced after the fortune. Nor could even the captain resist the lure. These Mexicans had been too

"We've about seven seconds!" whispered Carrick, striking Fleming's arm. "Follow me like a streak."

But Fleming dallied for at least four of the precious seven seconds. He had noted that several of the soldiers had dropped their rifles to join in the hot scramble after the money. Like a hawk the chemist pounced upon the three nearest rifles and also a bandolier of cartridges that one of the soldiers had carried on his arm. Then the doctor fled.

"Good work and a happy thought!" panted Carrick, as he relieved Fleming of two of the rifles. "Now we can at least die fighting!"

But the fugitives were out of sight ere the Mexican rebel captain realized he was a victim of trickery. While still searching nervously for coins or notes, he called to his men to look after the prisoners. Each eager soldier, however, left obedience to be rendered by his fellows. When the captain finally, by the use of many curses, brought his soldiers to their senses, the captives had long vanished, and leaving not so much as a guiding sound.

Again the Master Hound had to have recourse to the stars, when he could spy them through the thick treetops. He took a generally northerly course through the thick forest, in which there was not a trace of a path to be found.

Behind them two rifle volleys crackled out. Fleming halted for a moment to chuckle noiselessly.

"I know our Mexican neighbors well enough to know what is happening and will happen," he whispered to Fleming. "The captain and his men have fired that they may be able to back up the tale they are going to tell of the execution. They will even lay out two mounds, then go back and report that we are dead. But they will search that

forest until no more money can be found. Captain and men will hold their tongues as to what really happened, for they possess a secret that would hang them all."

More deliberately, now, the Hound led the way through the forest, listening all the time. When he halted again it was to say:

"Fleming, the snatching of these rifles and the cartridges was a stroke of genius! At the worst, we fear no one now, for we can go down giving as good as we get."

It was soon plain that to the north of Mattanegua, at least where the forest ran, that no rebel outposts had been stationed. Carrick, after half an hour of flight, walked with less caution until he heard the noise of an automobile moving slowly somewhere to the south-east of them. He halted to listen.

"There must be a road parallel with our course," Fleming whispered. "That car is coming our way, and seems likely to pass us within a stone's throw."

Getting his bearings, Carrick led the way forward once more, shaping his course so as to approach gradually the road that he believed to lie to the east of them.

"It's a poor enough road, judging by the car's noise," Fleming whispered, as the car passed them, to the eastward, going north. "I wonder who can have a car over here."

A minute later the car stopped. Carrick, though he did not halt, moved with greater stealth, an example that the chemist at once imitated. Soon they heard the murmur of voices, dead ahead. And next the unctuous tones of Doctor Li Shoon came to them. The wretch was talking in English, presumably that no passing Mexican should understand. Li preferred, when useful, the modern tongues to Chinese.

"I brought you here, Weng," Li was explaining, as the Americans drew

near, "that there might be no danger of Calvoras knowing what I have to say. Though they apparently understand only Spanish, I am always suspicious that some of the general's officers may know too much English for our good. While I do not expect to die, I am always aware that fate may be about to press the cup to my lips. I have good news—wonderful! We now have four and a half million dollars in gold coin. You know where it is hidden."

"Yet I could not go to it," objected Weng-yu.

"I am coming to that," Li went on, with a wave of his hands. "But the news! You know that Sing Yen just came ashore from the yacht with a wireless telegram for me. It was sent from San Francisco, in our Chinese code that not a soul in the world could read outside of the Ui Kwoon Ah-how. And that code message—it is exhilarating. Barely more than a hundred miles to the south of here the steamer *Sea King* is proceeding slowly north against difficulties with her machinery. She has wirelessed San Diego for aid, though she can keep slowly under way unless a further break occurs in her machinery. And the San Francisco newspapers express grave concern, for the *Sea King* carries in her strong room the sum of eight million dollars in gold! Think of it, Weng!"

"Truly, the thought is enough to drive one out of his mind!" quivered Weng-yu. "That, with four and a half millions already hidden, is one-fourth of the whole sum needed to launch the Ui Kwoon Ah-how on its glorious work of subduing all of Asia to Chinese rule!"

"We would have had the entire fifty millions ere this, had it not been for that dog of a Carrick and his hardly less dangerous friend, Fleming," uttered Li bitterly. "The gods of our an-

cestors be praised that both of the meddlesome Americans now sleep in their last beds! By to-morrow forenoon, Weng, that eight millions should be ours, and all traces of our work lost under the waves. The *Sea King* carries fifty passengers, as well, but what are fifty more lives when the glory of Ui Kwoon Ah-how thrills our hearts?"

"Nothing whatever," declared Weng-yu, snapping his fingers. "I would kill all on the American continent to see the Ui Kwoon triumph!"

There was a third in the group—Ming. But that Mongol stood by in grave silence. His were only the deeds of blood; not his to use his brain but his hideous tools.

"Yet the gods of our ancestors may call me before my work is done as I would see it," Li Shoon continued musingly. "I have had that thought, for, though I have boasted of possessing nine lives, the number may be nearly run. Therefore, Weng, I am giving you, now, to be hidden securely, a copy of my map showing where the four millions and a half in gold are hidden. You have seen the spot, but have not followed the navigating map closely. You know the little bay when you see it, six miles below Cape Marca on the coast of Lower California. You know as well the three trees whose trunks form a triangle. Yet you could not reach the spot again, with surety, without this map. If the gods put the cup to my lips, then you will go there and get the hidden gold, as well as that which is to be taken from the *Sea King* to-morrow. You know what is to be done with it. You know, also, that you are to succeed me as head of the Ui Kwoon."

Weng-yu stretched forth his hand to receive the precious paper. Before his fingers could close upon it, it was snatched away by Donald Carrick, who sprang from behind a tree.

CHAPTER XIII.

"MEXICO IS ONE HUGE TRAP!"

THE gods have sent your spirit back to torment me!" gasped Li Shoon. For an instant Li's face was as near pallid as a Chinaman's may be.

But the click of a bolt as Fleming cocked one of the rifles and stood back to cover the yellow trio, was accompanied by the chemist's jeering retort: "Spirits don't use rifles; at least, I never heard of a case."

Having tucked away the map, Carrick, too, presented the muzzle of a rifle for the inspection of the momentarily baffled ones.

"But you two were shot!" protested Li, his voice still a bit shaky. It was difficult, indeed, for him to overcome his belief that the Hound and the chemist had been duly executed.

"We came to life again," said Carrick briefly. "We came back long enough to have our reckoning with you. Doctor Li, of course you are aware that you are an outlawed man, and, therefore, any man's lawful prey."

"In America, perhaps, but not around Mattanagua," Li retorted mockingly. He had found his nerve again, though neither he nor his companions ventured to dash against rifles held by men whom they knew to be full of resolution.

"Mexican rebel law could have no terrors for me," declared the Hound coolly. "Doctor Li, have you any reasons to offer why I should not kill you?"

"Only that you do not dare kill me," mocked Li Shoon. "A single shot, and you will bring down upon you the soldiers—my friends. I will make you a proposition. Give me back the map and I will let you go."

"A wonderful favor!" exclaimed the Master Hound, with biting irony. "You will let us go—where? We are hundreds of miles from our own country, and all the Mexicans for scores of

miles obey Calvoras. Wherever we go, if discovered, we are killed. It would take us weeks, even if not caught, to walk to our own country and safety."

"Is it as bad as that?" queried Li, with huge satisfaction. "You did not follow me by sea, but came overland? Then, truly, you may as well drop your rifles and ride back with us to Mattanegua. You can only be shot to death; therefore, why not be done with it?"

"Fleming, step back about six paces and cover these wretches!" commanded Carrick calmly. "If one of them stirs, kill him. Do not mind the noise of the shot. And, for preference, kill Li Shoon."

"To do so will afford me great pleasure," replied the chemist coolly.

Carrick darted east to the road. There, at the edge, he found the car. Moreover, in the tool kit he found a file and a monkey wrench. For a brief time he filed industriously against the steering rod of the motor car. Then, adjusting the wrench tightly to the rod, he snapped it.

"That is all," announced Carrick, coming back to where his friend held the yellow trio at bay. "Li, you and your friends will walk back to Mattanegua. Whoever attempts to follow us will be killed. By daylight, if we have good fortune, we can be a dozen miles from here, and farther in the jungle. Doctor Li, in the patter of this country, adios!"

At a run, Carrick and his friend disappeared, going northeast. After some three minutes of running, Carrick halted, abruptly throwing himself to the earth, where he listened with his ear against the ground, while Fleming peered behind him into the depths of the forest, through which they had come.

"I do not believe we are being followed," the Hound whispered, in his friend's ear. Now, we will see if we

can find the spot on the coast for which we should aim."

For Carrick, in landing, had given orders that the *Vulcan* should attempt to pick them up at a point some miles north of Mattanegua, instead of south of it.

Shaping his course once more by the stars, Carrick trudged on ahead, Fleming following some dozen feet to the rear. The latter carried two of the three rifles. Carrick wore the bandolier of reserve cartridges.

Despite the season, it was almost stiflingly hot in here among the trees. Both men were bathed in perspiration by the time they reached the coast, at the point for which the Hound had aimed.

"This cannot be the place," Carrick murmured. "We are too far south, probably by at least two miles. Come in under the trees again. It would not do to walk on the beach."

So they continued on, for nearly an hour more. Then, through the trees, they beheld a little bay lighted only by the stars.

"There is our place," Carrick murmured. "We will go down to the edge of the trees and wait. If you are as footsore as I am the rest will be welcome to you."

"Welcome, indeed," murmured Fleming.

Still in the lead, Carrick had not more than emerged from under the trees when half a dozen Mexican rebel soldiers leaped to their feet, aiming their rifles.

"*Para! Quién vive?*" (Halt! Who goes there?) came the sharp hail.

"Company, halt!" called Carrick deliberately. Doctor Fleming, just in time, called: "Company, halt!"

Fleming made noise enough with his own feet to give some idea of men halting under the trees. From the beach he was invisible.

"Put down your guns, my men!"

ordered Carrick confidently. "You are outnumbered by an American naval party. You do not wish to be wiped out? Then attempt no resistance. Obey my orders and your lives shall be spared."

As the rebel soldiers hesitated, Carrick motioned impatiently, frowning, as though he could not credit such stubbornness.

"If you do not at once drop your rifles, my men will fire and sweep you from the earth!" he cried angrily, still in Spanish. "Have none of you men families or sweethearts, that you would throw your lives away? Down with your rifles! On the ground! Now, march away from your pieces, hands up! That is right. Halt!"

Sheer bluff had won. Cowed, the Mexicans had obeyed. They now stood with the nearest a hundred feet distant from his rifle.

"Lieutenant!" hailed Carrick sharply.

"Aye, aye, sir!" from the chemist.

"Send the sergeant down here to bind these men."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Then, as the chemist appeared, Carrick added:

"You can tie their wrists behind them with their own sashes, and leave ends sufficient to tie them to the trunks of small trees.

Doctor Fleming accomplished that with a speed born of some knowledge of the art of tying. He soon had the men tightly lashed.

"Now, march!" commanded Carrick, leading the way, while Fleming, with rifle at the ready, brought up the rear. Fully six hundred feet up the wooded slope the men were led, then lashed to trees.

"It will be of equal value to gag these men," Carrick declared, so the gagging was accomplished by cutting pieces from the men's clothes and stuffing into their mouths, the tying being done with knotted strips cut from their jackets.

Patiently as dumb animals these men submitted, preferring the humiliation to the loss of their lives.

"One doesn't feel pleasant about despoiling these poverty-stricken fellows of their only clothing," murmured Carrick in English. "Fleming, have you any gold pieces?"

"A few," admitted the chemist.

"Then slip one into the trousers pocket of each prisoner," Carrick begged, next adding in Spanish his apologies to the men, and informing them that the gold was to be used in providing themselves with whole clothing.

The task ended, Carrick, striking and shading a match, glanced at his watch.

"It lacks but two hours of daylight," he announced. "If we are to escape, after all, we have but little time in which to do it."

Down the slope they ran, but soon slowed down, going on tiptoe, as they heard some body of men moving through the forest.

"Li must have got back and given the alarm!" whispered Carrick. "If so, and if this be a searching or relief party, and our gagged friends are found, then all we can do is to die game."

Dropping to the ground, moving the three rifles before them, and placing the bandolier so that either could reach for reserve cartridges, the Master Hound and the chemist awaited developments.

Up in the forest above could be heard, not very plainly, the sounds made by moving bare feet through the undergrowth.

"They're halting now," whispered Carrick. "If they try to communicate with the missing outpost at this point, guess what is going to become of us."

"I never bet on sure things," Doctor Fleming replied grimly.

"Picture to yourself how the tied and gagged soldiers are struggling to free themselves that they may give the alarm

at once. And *they* know the direction that we took!"

"Mexico is one huge trap!" sighed the doctor. "Easy to get into, but hard to get out!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEA TRAGEDY STAGED.

THE movements of the prowling party changed in direction. Twenty minutes later some thirty rebel soldiers, led by a young lieutenant, came out on the beach from a point to the northward. They marched down, halting on about the spot where the two Americans had captured the rebel outpost. With them was a figure more portly than is common in Mexico.

"You said there was an outpost here," hinted the voice of Li Shoon.

"They were posted here before dark," replied the lieutenant. "But they are new men, not veteran soldiers. It is plain that the rascals, finding it nearing daylight, decided that their duty was done. They have returned to Matanegua, or else they have stolen into the woods to sleep."

The discarded half dozen rifles and bandoliers would have given a hint to the searchers, but fortunately Fleming, some minutes before, had crawled out and brought these things to the spot occupied by Carrick and himself. The two friends now listened and watched breathlessly, ready for any clash that might come.

"We are wasting time," said the lieutenant indolently. "Your Americano fugitives are making fast time through the forest, while we linger here. March!"

Away drilled the column, Li Shoon, despite his size, keeping tirelessly with them.

"There will be no more searchers here now," proclaimed Carrick, with a sigh of relief. "We must leave Li to attend to his affairs and give all our attention

to our own. You might stay here, though, with the arsenal."

Exploring an inside pocket, Carrick, on the beach, brought forth a small electric flash light. Forming a shielding cone with his hands, the Hound flashed the light seaward just seven times. He waited a few seconds, then flashed the light seven more times.

After that he seated himself on the sands. Ten minutes went by ere he could discern any answer to his signals. Then something merely dark and vague appeared on the water beyond. That something came nearer and nearer, resolving itself into a swift launch, propelled by a noiseless petroleum engine. It glided in like a thing of mystery to where Carrick stood on the beach waving his arms. Some forty feet from the shore it lay to on account of shallow water.

"Who's in charge?" hailed Carrick, in a hoarse whisper.

"Kerrigan, sir. Are you ready?"

"More than ready!" came the Hound's heartfelt answer.

Over from the launch sprang two barefooted sailors, their trousers rolled up for wading.

"Take these rifles and bandoliers first," whispered Carrick. "They are souvenirs the doctor and I have been collecting to-night."

With Fleming's help the sailors carried the rifles and bandoliers to the launch. Then back they came, lifting the two adventurers and bearing them, dry shod, to seats at the stern of the launch. As the two sailors sprang in, the launch turned and put silently out to sea.

"And now," observed the Hound, producing pipe and pouch, "I propose to enjoy a smoke."

The doctor preferred to roll a cigarette. They lit up with shielded matches, keeping their faces turned westward that the glows might not attract attention from shore.

"Straight out for five miles," directed the Hound. "Then return to ship."

That was done. In a little more than an hour Carrick and Doctor Fleming found themselves ascending the side gangway of the *Vulcan*, while Captain Mulford stood on deck to receive them. The yacht lay in a little indentation of the coast line some miles south of Mattanagua. She had a single anchor out, at a spot where a curving, projecting, wooded arm of land served to shield her from direct observation from the sea.

"If you've no immediate instructions, sir, will you be good enough to come into my cabin?" requested Captain Mulford. By the time the two friends had seated themselves there the skipper handed Carrick a sheet of paper on which were written a lot of gibberishy words.

"What's this?" smiled Carrick, as he read: "*Quong hing lee sing chui mien sen*—"

"That's a Chinese wireless, isn't it?" asked Captain Mulford. "Our operator took it down some time after you went ashore."

"It was intended for the operator on the *Budsibu*," laughed the Hound, "and he received it, as I happened to hear. This wireless was sent from San Francisco probably, and I was behind its being sent. These words have a Chinese formation, but they're code, not straight Chinese. This code message informed Li that the *Sea King*, partially disabled, is coming up the coast, needing help, and the further information that she carries eight million in gold in her strong room. But the gold isn't there. The captain of the *Sea King* has his own orders, furnished in the navy code, and knows just what he is to do. Li Shoon will attempt to board him this coming morning, and we shall be at hand also."

After looking at his watch, Carrick exchanged a few words with the *Vul-*

can's wireless man, next with a cabin steward on duty. Then he and Fleming went to their own cabin, where they lay down in their berths without removing more than coats and shoes.

At a few minutes after eight the wireless man knocked on the door. Springing up, the Hound threw the door open.

"The *Sea King* is wirelessly San Diego that her machinery is becoming more and more useless, sir, and to rush a tug to her," the operator reported. "Here is the message as I took it down."

"How far south is the *Sea King*?" Carrick asked, glancing at the paper.

"Twelve miles to the south'ard, sir, and making not more than four miles an hour."

"Has the *Budsibu* gone south yet?"

"She's not been sighted, sir, and must be still in Mattanagua Bay."

"There's time to spare, then," said Carrick to his friend, and hastened out to find Captain Mulford and give directions. On shore, in the top of one of the tallest trees on the projecting arm of land that hid the *Vulcan*, a quartermaster and a sailor kept vigilant watch.

His conference with Captain Mulford finished, Carrick returned to his cabin, selecting changes of clothing from the baggage he had brought on board. Then he hastened to one of the baths, the doctor to another.

Half an hour later, as they were dressing in their cabin, Carrick heard hurried steps on the deck overhead, followed by sounds of hoisting a launch that had been waiting to bring the quartermaster and sailor back.

"The *Budsibu* has started south," said the Hound. "You may depend upon that."

Once on deck, however, they learned that Li Shoon's pirate craft had only appeared outside of Mattanagua Bay. The launch had returned to shore with Mr. Olney, third officer, who went to

the edge of the land. It was an hour later when he reappeared, signaling for the launch. Olney came on board, reporting:

"The *Budsibu* is now steaming south at about eight miles an hour."

At a nod from Carrick the launch was once more hoisted on board. A machinist stood by the donkey engine, ready to begin hoisting the anchor as soon as the signal should be given. Just the barest glimpse of the Sumatran yacht was had after a while. Then she passed wholly out of sight. Carrick and Fleming now took up their post at the door of the wireless room.

Another age passed ere the operator turned to say:

"Message flying."

His pencil traveled over the paper as he listened. At last he leaned sideways to hand Carrick this message taken from the air:

The master of the *Sea King* will lie to and prepare to receive a boarding party. He will keep all passengers and all but two of his crew between decks.

"The message came very weakly, sir," reported the operator to the flushed, frowning Hound.

"That's because Li Shoon doesn't want the message to travel far enough to attract any attention," Carrick answered.

Again the operator's pencil touched paper. He handed over the sheet, commenting:

"Evidently the reply from the *Sea King*."

This message read tersely:

Why the devil should I lie to for boarders?

"The *Sea King's* master will soon learn," was Carrick's grim word.

The answer flashed back:

Because we carry cannon, which you will see our crew uncovering. If you don't lie to immediately we shall be obliged to sink you, with your crew and passengers. If you have any regard for the lives intrusted to you, you will obey at once. You are dealing with Mexicans, who will spare or de-

stroy you, as you merit. Will you obey, or shall we open a fire that will send you to the bottom in five minutes?

Back from the master of the *Sea King* came the response:

Don't fire! Have women and children on board. Will put crew and passengers below hatches and await boarding party.

Running forward, Carrick called to Captain Mulford:

"Time to get the anchor up, sir, and be under way at once. Full speed south, and straight to the *Budsibu*."

In a wonderfully short time the *Vulcan* was under way, passing out of the little inlet and out upon the broad waters of the Pacific.

"See if there are any more messages, Fleming," called the Hound, but the chemist swiftly returned with a negative answer.

Racing like a deer, the *Vulcan* was destined to come up within effective distance within twelve minutes. And now an unexpected thing happened, for, at a nod from Carrick, Mr. Olney stepped forward with a letter which he handed Captain Mulford. That skipper read and was astounded.

"It's all right, Mr. Olney," he exclaimed, glancing up from the letter. "This order informs me that you're Ensign Olney, United States Navy, and that the five seamen you brought aboard are United States navy seamen. Further, that when you decide to take command of this craft temporarily, I am to take your orders until the crisis is over. Go ahead, sir. I shall be up on the bridge, prepared to carry out any order I may receive from you."

Under Olney's crisp orders the forward hatch was thrown open, and tackle swung onto a 4.7 inch naval gun that all on board knew was there, for the track had been laid on the deck days before. With precision the gun was swung upward and laid on the track. Olney's five naval seamen, aided by the yacht's sailors, pushed the gun to posi-

tion over the port bow. All was made secure, the breech opened, and a shell rammed home. With closed breech once more, Olney stood by with field glass, while a naval gunner took observations through the sights.

"Three points to starboard, sir!" Olney shouted to the bridge. Afterward he added: "And now, sir, stand in more toward shore."

Every minute brought the *Vulcan* closer to the spot where the *Budzibu* lay to, while, half a mile to the southwest of her, the *Sea King* lay, motionless, on the waters. Two-thirds of the way from the Sumatran yacht to the liner, two launches rode the water. They contained a total of some fifty men, lascars and Chinese, as it afterward proved. Carrick and Fleming could realize the way the *Sea King's* decks would run blood to the scuppers if once this piratical crew got foothold on board.

So far the *Vulcan* had approached without discovery, so intent were all of Li Shoon's men on the eight-million-dollar prey that they believe the *Sea King* to be.

But now a man in one of the launches caught sight of the racing rescuing *Vulcan*, and stood up in the launch, signaling violently to the *Budzibu*.

CHAPTER XV.

TREASURE-TROVE.

A NAVAL battle between us and the Sumatran!" cried Doctor Fleming, athrill with the pepperish prospect.

Boom! sounded the *Vulcan's* gun. A few seconds later the watchers saw the shell strike one of the *Budzibu's* launches. There was a cloud of smoke, a geyser of salt water. Then the launch vanished, blown to atoms, while her late crew struggled in the water.

Boom! That shot struck fifty feet astern of the second launch, doing no harm. Wincing, Ensign Olney fired a

third shell. The second launch, after a few seconds, had followed the first.

"Go in to rescue the men, pirates though they are!" Olney shouted toward the bridge. At the same time the ensign kept his gaze toward the *Budzibu*, for he could see that she mounted two nine-pounder guns forward, and an effective shell from either of these would be enough to sink the unarmored *Vulcan*.

Carrick, at the port rail, a little behind the gunners, held glasses to his eyes, as did Fleming. On the deck forward they could make out both Li Shoon and Weng-yu—could even read the astounded expressions on their yellow faces. Ten feet behind them stood Ming.

And then the all-but-incredible thing happened. The *Budzibu*, as though realizing the hopelessness of conflict against the *Vulcan's* 4.7, swung around, her bow away from the gallant intruder, as though declining conflict.

"It's strange that one of Li Shoon's temper should prefer capture!" gasped the Hound.

"Maybe he doesn't," hinted the chemist.

"Butt he has pointed his guns away from us."

"Watch him! Doctor Li is a man of deadly resource."

Apparently Ensign Olney's suspicions, too, had been aroused, for he abandoned his humane purpose of rescuing the launches' crews, and ordered another change in the *Vulcan's* course.

"What can Li Shoon do?" Carrick wondered, as he saw the 4.7 trained on the Sumatran yacht.

"He won't keep us guessing long," Fleming ventured, nor did his guess go astray.

A minute of inaction passed—a minute of the kind that lives ever afterward in men's minds. Then a tremendous, half-muffled roar shook the air. Through the forward deck of the

Budsibu belched a crater of flame and smoke. Pitching like a living thing in the death throes, the *Budsibu* began settling by the head.

"Run in as close as you dare, sir, to rescue survivors!" shouted Ensign Olney.

Ahead forged the *Vulcan*, yet before she arrived the *Budsibu* had vanished from sight under the waters.

"Not even my gun could have worked half the havoc of that internal explosion," gasped Olney, turning to Carrick. Your Chinese prince of crime must have given thorough thought to mining a ship like that."

While the *Sea King* still lay to, the *Vulcan* searched in vain for trace of a single survivor, either from the *Budsibu* or her two launches. The destruction had been complete. Li's pirates, knowing well their fate at the law's hands, if caught, had preferred to drown. All the mystery of master and owner, of the yacht's strange charter, had gone down with the *Budsibu*.

"Li Shoon has at last given up, by his own hand, his ninth and last life!" uttered Donald Carrick solemnly.

When all chance of saving survivors had been given up, the *Vulcan* ran over alongside the *Sea King*, lying to at a safe interval, to be greeted with tumultuous cheers from the liner.

"I want to tell you, Captain Bickford, that you did your part in a magnificent manner!" Donald Carrick shouted through a megaphone to the *Sea King's* skipper. "You will find yourself well, though not sufficiently rewarded by the Blue Stack Company when you reach Frisco. You will now, of course, proceed on your way under the speed you prefer."

With another interchange of cheers, and much blowing of whistles, the *Sea King*, which really carried no gold at all in her strong room, and which had acted under secret naval instructions,

altered to a course farther offshore and proceeded on her homeward way.

The *Vulcan* kept somewhat inshore, going at full speed until she overhauled a Mexican coastwise fishing smack a few miles north of Mattanegua. To the master of that little craft Carrick shouted information as to where the half dozen soldiers of Calvoras' rebel outpost would be found tied to the trees.

From there a nearly record run was made to the spot indicated on Li Shoon's map. Between the aid furnished by that document, and what he had overheard in the talk between Li and Weng-yu, Carrick was occupied but a few hours in finding an artificial cave, wonderfully constructed and concealed, in which was found, intact, the hoard of four and a half million dollars taken from the *Halcyon* and the *Spokane*. This money was transferred to the *Vulcan*, and started on the way to its rightful owners in San Francisco.

In San Francisco the ever-active reporters got wind of enough of the story so that the rest of it was given out at the Blue Stack line offices. Over the United States and the world flashed the news that Doctor Li's ninth and last life had been offered up and canceled by Li himself.

Carrick and Fleming did not linger in the city of the Golden Gate. After settling their financial affairs with the Blue Stack Company, they hastened East.

On the day of his arrival in New York, Doctor John Fleming was joyfully able to confide to his friend his hour-new marriage to Miss Sylvia Dorrance.

"I shall not again have to fear for her safety in connection with Doctor Li," Fleming declared, with a heartfelt sigh.

"For any other human being's tragic death I might feel sorrow," Donald Carrick answered. "Li Shoon's death, un-

der even more terrible circumstances, can only fill me with entire satisfaction."

"Will the Ui Kwoon Ah-how live after this?" inquired the doctor.

"It may," replied the Master Hound,

"but it will be confined to China. Only the evil genius of a Li Shoon could make the Ui Kwoon a world-wide menace, and there is but one Doctor Li born in a thousand years!"

JAPS WARY OF "DEATH" PHONE NUMBERS

IT is interesting to find science and superstition locking horns in connection with telephones in Japan. It is not strange to find convenience "cutting a figure" in the choice of numbers of instruments. A single-figure phone sells in Tokyo for from eight hundred to one thousand yen—three hundred and ninety to four hundred and ninety dollars per year. The luckiest number, in the estimation of business men, is eight, because the character for it spreads downward and suggests the idea of gathering in prosperity. No. 753 is also a lucky number, because children are presented at Shinto shrines on their third, fifth, and seventh birthdays. Indeed, odd numbers are lucky. Three-figure numbers are not objectionable, if they are easy to remember, like 123 or 555. The most unlucky numbers are 42 and 49; because the former may be pronounced "shini," which means "to die," and the latter may be pronounced "shiku," which means "death" and "suffering." Therefore, it is said that these numbers are avoided by individuals, and are generally taken by government officers, schools, police stations, and other invincible institutions.

Another interesting point, not of superstition, but of convenience, rather of inconvenience, is the fact that numbers are not abbreviated as in America, but are always given in full. But the Japanese will doubtless before long see the time-saving elements in saying "one, two, three, four," instead of saying "one thousand two hundred and thirty-four." As yet they are not in a great hurry.

BACK IN THE TOILS

CAPTURED as he was preparing to enter the home of George P. Royster, in Sacramento, California, John Adams has been identified as a professional burglar, who has already served three different sentences for robbery. Since 1895 he has spent practically all of the time behind prison bars.

When taken before Max P. Fisher, identification expert, Adams was recognized at a glance as the burglar who was captured in Sacramento in 1911 by Detectives Ryan and Kramer, and Policeman Koenig, after he had burglarized the home of City Commissioner Gus Turner. For that offense he was sentenced to serve five years in Folsom.

He was released from Folsom prison in July, 1915, and the following month was arrested in the State of Nevada, and sentenced to serve one and one-half years for burglary. He had just been out of the Carson City prison eighteen days when captured. His first offense, of which Fisher has records, was committed in San Francisco in 1895, and he was sentenced to serve twenty years in San Quentin. This term was later reduced.

The Mysterious Highwayman

By Sergeant Ryan

THE inspector in charge of the detective bureau at police headquarters was talking to half a dozen reporters; and at the same time was exchanging a dress coat for one of dark blue, which was not part of a uniform, though suggestive of it.

"I don't know any more about this case than you do," he was saying. "I'd been to a theater, and was eating supper afterward, when I got word of it. The report that came to me was that a man named Prescott Carroll had been arrested for the murder of Oliver Brundage—'Ollie' Brundage; you all know him."

The reporters nodded. The name and fame of Ollie Brundage were quite familiar to them. He was a young man of good family, a bachelor and clubman, who managed to move in the highest society without any visible means of support. They also knew Carroll, who had gone out of journalism into literature eight or ten years before, and had won a certain measure of recognition.

"The arrest was made by a patrolman and Detective Hines of my staff," continued the inspector. "It seems that Carroll knocked Brundage down with a sand club or something of that kind, and was going through his pockets. It was on West Seventy-eighth

Street, just opposite the new church. The prisoner was taken to the station house, but I sent word to have him brought down here. Brundage's body is at the station now. That's all I know."

The reporters exchanged glances. Then one of them asked: "What's this about a millionaire's pocketbook being found in Carroll's pocket?"

"I heard a rumor to that effect," said the inspector, "but I'm not prepared to answer any questions."

"Isn't it a fact," queried one of the reporters, "that there have been a good many holdups in the neighborhood, and that your man Hines was up there on that account?"

"There have been some wild stories in the newspapers," the inspector began, but checked himself as he perceived a lieutenant entering by a door upon the left. The lieutenant executed a sort of military salute, and departed without having opened his mouth.

"You boys will have to get out of here now," said the inspector. "I'll see you later."

The reporters filed out like so many pallbearers. Every one of them looked at his watch, though there was a clock in plain sight on the wall. It was half past one in the morning, and minutes were precious.

No one remained in the room except

the chief and a man in a dark-gray suit who sat against the wall opposite the door where the lieutenant had appeared.

"You know him, Carter, don't you?" asked the inspector.

"Three years ago," replied the detective, "I knew him as a brilliant and promising fellow; but he passed out of my sight."

"Writer, eh? I've read one of his stories. It was good, too. Why the devil should he have done this thing?"

Carter answered only with a gesture. The inspector glanced quickly toward the door; then, leaning forward in his chair, with his right elbow on the desk and his open hand against the side of his face, he waited in the shadow.

The brim of Carter's hat was nearly level with his eyes, and as the principal source of light was a cluster of lamps against the wall and almost directly over his head, his countenance was scarcely visible.

The door at the left swung open, and two officers appeared with the prisoner between them. They paused an instant, so that the man seemed to come alone into the white glare of light and the oppressive silence.

He was tall and of a strong frame, but excessively thin. He had wavy, dark-brown hair, a high forehead painfully wrinkled above the bridge of the nose; pale-blue eyes, with that faded look one sees in the eyes of tired women; a light mustache, and a well-molded but rather weak chin, with a dimple in it. He wore a shabby, black overcoat above what seemed to be expensive and fashionable evening dress.

Carter, who remembered Prescott Carroll as he had been, was shocked at the change in him. He seemed to have lived a dozen years between twenty-nine and thirty-two.

There was a straight-backed wooden chair, which, standing alone in the middle of the big and bare room, had a

singular effect of isolation. Carroll looked at it, perceived that it was for him, and sat down with a shudder.

At that moment Hines, the headquarters man who had assisted in the arrest, appeared at the door. The inspector beckoned to him, and he came forward; while Carter, crossing the room, whispered to one of the policemen who immediately went out.

"Well?" said the inspector, addressing Hines.

"At ten minutes past twelve," responded the officer, "I was going west along Seventy-eighth Street toward Berkeley Avenue. There is an apartment house on the southeast corner, with an alley behind it which runs half-way down the block and then turns to the avenue. There's an iron fence with a gate on each end.

"Close by this fence, where there isn't much light, I saw this man stooping over a body that lay on the sidewalk. I ran up, and at the same time Patrolman Bruce came from the direction of the avenue. We had the man between us, and when he saw that he surrendered. He seemed to be dazed, and we couldn't get him to say anything to us.

"I recognized the man on the ground as Oliver Brundage. He was alive then, but unconscious. He died before the ambulance came. There was no weapon. Brundage was killed by striking his head in falling. We had the body taken to the station house, and took this man there. He talked to himself on the way. He said, 'Don't worry; don't worry. I'll be all right. It's the best thing that could have happened.' He admitted having killed Brundage, but that is all we could get out of him."

The inspector turned to Carroll and asked him whether he had anything to say, warning him, in accordance with the law, that whatever he said could be used against him on the trial.

He remained silent for perhaps half

a minute, during which interval Hines laid upon the inspector's desk a package containing all that had been taken from the prisoner when he was searched at the station house.

"Denial is useless," said Carroll at last. "I was taken in the act."

His manner was indefinitely strange. If one may attempt description, it was more like an invalid's than a criminal's. This man of cultured mind and delicately sensitive nature seemed to feel neither remorse nor shame. There was evidence of considerable anxiety, but this state was repeatedly interrupted by involuntary outbursts of reassurance, almost of satisfaction.

"What was your motive?" asked the inspector.

"Robbery!" replied the prisoner cheerfully. "I was driven to it by poverty."

The inspector looked hastily at Carter, who returned the glance meaningly. Both men perceived that the prisoner's answer was a lie, and that it covered a mystery. This case which, on a casual view seemed so clear, being the arrest of a highway robber beside the body of his victim, became at once to these experienced men a problem for close and rigid investigation.

"I thought you were successful in your profession?" said the inspector.

"I might have been," was the reply, "but I had bad luck and many burdens. There were people dependent upon me. I never worry about myself. I suppose nobody does. It was about others."

He became excited as he spoke, and his self-control slipped away. It was obvious that he did not mean to tell his story, but that it told itself, just as the first words he had uttered in that room had overridden his will.

It appeared that he had been married five years before, and that his wife had almost immediately begun to lose her sight, as the result of a malady rare

and little understood. Gradually, with that steady deliberation which nature commands, and human torturers vainly strive to imitate, the shadows had closed around her. Carroll had beggared himself with doctors; he had become a borrower under the pressure of a need that could not be postponed. His friends had turned from him, and some of them, for the sake of the spite that grows out of money, had raised up other enemies when their own power to injure him had seemed inadequate.

Meanwhile, his strength had declined, and his imagination, too much occupied with images of his own increasing sorrow, had ceased to suggest the pictures which his art required. His earnings had decreased as his needs grew. He had labored under that enormous disadvantage of visible misfortune; he had become the lame wolf which the pack rends.

Throughout the latter part of this wretched period his sister and his brother's widow with two children had been dependent upon him. His wife, at last, had gone to a private hospital where the charges were excessive and the benefits few.

The wonder was that the man had not gone mad, laboring with a brain so clogged with miserable thoughts. Yet he did not seem to be insane, though surely on the brink of it.

Neither Carter nor the inspector interrupted Carroll's recital which he himself finally broke off with an exclamation of despair.

"You see I can't help telling this," he said; "though, upon my soul, I did not mean to do it."

The inspector glanced at Carter, and touched his forehead, unperceived by Carroll. The detective made a negative sign.

"Let us see what we have here," said the inspector, opening the packet which Hines had brought.

It contained a few trifles separately wrapped up, because they were obviously the prisoner's, and the things that he was supposed to have taken from Brundage. The latter consisted of a handkerchief, some letters, a cigarette case, a cardcase, and several keys. Another handkerchief—a woman's—and small coin to the value of sixty-four cents were marked as having been found in Brundage's pockets by the police.

"Then you got no money at all?" said the inspector.

"I got a pocketbook," replied Carroll, with hesitation.

"Do you mean to say that you got this from Brundage?" demanded the inspector, holding up the wallet.

"Certainly," answered Carroll, but he did not meet the eye of the questioner.

"Do you know whose pocketbook it is?"

"They told me at the station house," said Carroll faintly, "that it was Stanton Ripley's."

Stanton Ripley was a young man about town, possessed of great wealth, and a barnful of wild oats. The pocketbook bore his initials, and the crest of his family in gold and enamel. It was a plain, light Russia leather book, of the sort that folds in the middle with one large compartment on each side. Carter received it from the chief's hand, and discovered that it contained three thousand and ten dollars—one one-thousand-dollar bill; four of five hundred dollars and two of five dollars, all new.

"They found this in the prisoner's coat-tail pocket," said the chief. "Were you aware," he continued, addressing Carroll, "that this was in Brundage's possession when you attacked him?"

Carroll pondered upon this question.

"I couldn't know that," he said at last, in a faint voice.

Carter observed that he had taken hold of the sides of his chair, as if to

keep from falling out of it, and that a bluish pallor had overspread his face.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" asked the detective kindly.

"Could I have something to eat?" said the prisoner, in an embarrassed tone. "Of course, if it's too much trouble——"

"I have already sent out for some supper for you," replied Carter, looking closely at him. "It occurred to me that you might like it. I wonder it hasn't come before this."

Carroll expressed his gratitude, and while he was doing so, a policeman entered with several packages. The detective drew up a small table, and set forth a bottle of milk and a loaf of bread, at sight of which the prisoner's eyes shone. Behind him the policeman was opening a box from which he took a steak and potatoes on a wooden plate, and a knife and fork. He held up the knife, and looked inquiringly at Carter, who nodded; and the utensils were laid upon the table.

The prisoner ate well. Many times he spoke aloud in praise of the food, clearly not meaning to do so, for he always checked himself with shame.

"Now," he said at last, "I feel first-rate. Heavens!"

The exclamation came suddenly. Carroll half rose, and then sank back. He passed his hand across his forehead which had become wet in an instant.

"My wife and my sisters!" he cried. "How shall I tell them?"

"I am afraid that the newspapers will anticipate you, unless you telegraph," said Carter.

He took a pad of blanks and a pencil from the inspector's desk, and laid them before Carroll, who, after many attempts, wrote this message:

Be prepared for very bad news; yet all for the best. Don't try to understand. Don't come here. Will send money.

He puzzled a long time over the last sentence, but finally let it stand. The

message was addressed to his sister, Miss Hilda Carroll, in a small town in Massachusetts. At the bottom he wrote a request to repeat the telegram to his wife, in care of the physician in charge of the hospital where she then was.

Carter gave the telegram, with money for its transmission, to one of the policemen who went out with it immediately. The inspector, meanwhile, was answering a call upon the telephone that stood on his desk. He received a long report, at the close of which he ordered that the prisoner should be taken into an adjoining room.

"Nick," he said, as soon as they were alone, "I've just got word from the man who was sent to Ripley's rooms when the pocketbook was found upon Carroll. Ripley has just come home with a bad wound in the head. He seems to have been wandering around the streets, dazed, for quite a long time. He was at his club until about eleven o'clock, when he started out for a walk. On Fifth Avenue, alongside the park, about Sixty-third Street, he saw a man step out from behind a tree. As he turned to face the fellow, he got a rap on the left side of the head, and the next thing he remembers, he was on the other side of the park way up by Eighty-first Street, and it was more than two hours later.

"Where he had been in the meantime he doesn't know. His pocketbook was gone, and his watch. Nothing else was taken. He says he probably could not identify his assailant, though the man looked familiar. He knew Carroll very well; they were in college together. He lent him some money, a year or more ago; then they had a falling-out, and he hasn't seen Carroll since. He doesn't think it was Carroll who assaulted him. What do you make out of this?"

"Well, it seems somewhat extraordinary," said the detective, "that a man on the verge of starvation should not

have used one of those five-dollar bills to buy a meal. It occurs to me that we haven't found Ripley's watch; and I am also puzzled to know why a man who had made a haul of three thousand dollars should take the desperate chance of assaulting Brundage, who is well known never to have any money."

"Perhaps Carroll didn't know him," suggested the inspector.

"It's as bad one way as another," replied the detective. "He wouldn't have risked three thousand dollars and his liberty on the chance of what might be in a stranger's pockets. However, we might ask him about it."

Carroll was brought back into the room, and was informed of what had been learned about Ripley. He made a strong effort to cover his emotions, but Carter was of the opinion that, for some mysterious reason, the prisoner was not only surprised but pleased.

"It is true," he said. "I did not take the pocketbook from Brundage. I took it from Ripley."

"Where?" demanded the inspector, who had not mentioned the place designated by Ripley.

"In Central Park," was the reply. "I followed him from his club."

At this point the prisoner showed his first disinclination to answer questions; yet he consented to hear a few from Carter, and this exchange resulted:

"Were you acquainted with Brundage?"

"I knew him by sight and by reputation."

"When did you first see him this evening?"

"When he turned out of the avenue into Seventy-eighth Street."

"Did you recognize him?"

"Yes."

"Did you speak to him before attacking him?"

"No."

"Where did you get that dress suit?"

"Ripley gave it to me, a year and a

half ago, when he got me to go to a dinner at a club."

"Do you mean that he bought it for you?"

"No; it was his. He had just had it made. It was one of his freaks to give it to me."

"What is that stain?"

It was a reddish mark as if from a blow with a rusty iron bar, and it extended across the back of the overcoat about the waistline. The garment was lying on a chair. Carroll looked at the stain with mild surprise, and said he did not know what it was.

"Your dress coat was torn in the struggle with Brundage, I suppose," said the detective, indicating a ripped seam at the back of the left shoulder, and some further damage, here and there.

Carroll nodded.

"You had your overcoat on when you were arrested, didn't you?"

"Yes; I just slipped it on, after the—the struggle."

"Why didn't you run through the alley when you saw the policemen coming?"

"I didn't know there was any gate in the fence," replied the prisoner.

This closed the examination, and Carroll was consigned to a cell.

"It is a singular coincidence," said the detective, "that I happen to be very familiar with the spot where this arrest was made. I waited there some hours, on a recent evening. The gate in the fence could not be overlooked by any one, and just within it there is a rusty iron bar extending from the gatepost to the side of the house. From the appearance of the mark on Carroll's coat I should say that he had leaned against that bar. I came very near doing it myself. So Carroll had a neat way of escape, and did not take it."

The inspector drummed with his fingers upon his desk, and gently whistled a little tune.

"For a case that opens with a confession," said he, at last, "this is a beautiful muddle. To begin with, the man is such a purposeless liar——"

"I would hardly say that," rejoined Carter. "He knows what he is about. A liar he certainly is—one of the most perverse and incalculable that I ever encountered—but his statements help to clear the view. Obviously, he is willing to say anything which will tend to show that he attacked Brundage for the purpose of robbing him.

"Now, of course this crime was not robbery, though Carroll tried to give that color to it, and on a hasty inspiration, too, or he would not have committed the absurdity of taking the man's handkerchief, to say nothing about this rubbish of cigarette and cardcases."

"You mean that he killed Brundage for some other reason?" asked the inspector.

"Did you observe the weather?" rejoined Carter, with a smile. "It has been snowing a little, and the pavements are a mess. Carroll's coat shows a considerable struggle, and by all the evidence, the two men must have fallen to the ground, one gripping the other's throat. It was then that Brundage's head struck the projection of the iron fence, but the assailant could not immediately have known the result. Without doubt, they rolled there together in the dirt. Yet there isn't a mark on Carroll's knees."

"That's so, but the elbow and left sleeve of his coat are soiled: not the overcoat; he'd taken that off."

"It is all very singular," said the detective. "I am being gradually led toward a remarkable conclusion; but I am not ready to talk about it yet. I suggest that we put the whole thing off till to-morrow."

"The case is in your hands," said the inspector, "if you will be kind enough to take charge of it."

On the following day the detective

called upon Stanton Ripley at his rooms, which have sometimes been mentioned in print as the most luxurious bachelor apartments in New York. Ripley was under a doctor's care, but had almost ceased to require it. He had a contusion on the left side of his head behind the ear; but was suffering principally from mental strain, the result of his adventure of the previous night.

It was necessary to avoid exciting him, and the detective proceeded with the utmost caution. Ripley declared positively that his assailant was not Carroll; and after an hour of shrewd questioning, he admitted his belief that it was Brundage. Then he seemed to regret having made the statement, and he concluded by asserting his ignorance of the highwayman's identity.

It became necessary, therefore, to trace Brundage's movements on the previous evening, and this proved to be easy. From nine o'clock until a few minutes before his death, Brundage had been in the apartments of a young widow, a Mrs. Haskell, who lived with her mother and sister in that building on Berkeley Avenue, behind which ran the alley that has been referred to. There had been three other guests, a man and two women, and Brundage had put them into a cab just before going to meet his fate. It had undoubtedly been his intention to walk across to his home, which was on Central Park, West.

This negated any idea that Carroll could have found Ripley's pocketbook in Brundage's pocket. But where had he obtained it, since Ripley was sure that he was not the robber? And what motive could have induced Carroll to play his singular part in this affair?

A study of the locality could not fail to raise the presumption that Carroll had been lying in wait for Brundage. The spot was well chosen. Yet Carroll was unknown to the Haskells, and

could hardly have had any means of knowing where Brundage would spend the evening. Indeed, all the evidence that Carter could collect seemed to show that Carroll and Brundage had no common interest, and no possible ground for animosity.

There were rumors of ill feeling between Ripley and Brundage on account of the fascinating Mrs. Haskell, at whose home both were frequent visitors; but even upon the wild supposition that Ripley had been sufficiently jealous to employ Carroll as his bravo, he would hardly have paid him with his watch and pocketbook. Nor would Carroll have collected his price with the aid of a sand club.

The newspapers saw in Carroll a mysterious highwayman. They exaggerated one or two small robberies in the neighborhood into a great list of desperate crimes, and the young author was pictured as one of the famous degenerates of the age. But the real puzzles of the case remained unanswered. Nobody could account for Carroll's retention of that pocketbook; for his senseless risk in attacking Brundage while carrying so great a plunder from another crime; for his failure to take an easy chance of escape.

In the evening, Carter called at headquarters; and found Carroll's sister, his sister-in-law, and the latter's two children. The women had come to the city with a vague idea that their presence was required, and without enough money to take them back again. They and the children were in tears, and the scene was intensely distressing. It became positively harrowing when the inspector yielded to their entreaties, and summoned the prisoner from his cell.

Somewhat to Carter's surprise, the man was greatly improved in appearance. His bearing was marked by a sad serenity. He beheld the tears and accepted the reproaches of the women

with perfect composure, and it was only when they spoke of their immediate need of money that he showed any considerable anxiety. He referred them to a lawyer whom he had retained during the day, saying that he would probably assist them. Otherwise he said nothing to them except vaguely reassuring words; and though they said that they would come again on the following day—a suggestion which the inspector did not see fit to contradict—Carroll bade them farewell with an air of finality.

When the prisoner had been removed, Carter inquired about his lawyer, and learned that a corporation attorney, practically unknown in criminal courts, had been retained. Carroll had given the name and address, and the attorney had been summoned.

"To the best of my judgment," said the inspector, "he had never seen the prisoner before. Carroll was arraigned, and waived examination—as you know, of course."

During the evening, Carter obtained a bit of evidence not altogether unimportant. It appeared that when Ripley left his club on the night of the crime, a man answering Carroll's description, who had been loitering for more than an hour in the neighborhood, had followed him. Two cabmen were the witnesses on this point, and they were perfectly confident; but they said that Ripley had gone up Fifty-ninth Street, instead of Fifth Avenue. Carter called upon Ripley in regard to this contradiction, and was informed that the young man had walked a little way up Fifty-ninth Street, but had returned. He had not seen Carroll following him.

About noon the next day Carter called upon the inspector, who began conversation by stating that he had been devoting a good deal of thought to the Brundage case.

"And you have evolved a theory,"

said the detective, with a smile. "Shall I tell you what it is?"

The inspector shut one eye and scrutinized Carter closely out of the other.

"Go ahead, confound you!" he said. "You'll tell me what it is, and then you'll show me why it isn't good for anything."

"On the contrary," replied the detective, "it is very near the truth. In fact, there can hardly be two theories of this affair. I happen to know that one of your men compared the stain on Carroll's overcoat with the iron bar I spoke of—as to height from the ground, general appearance, et cetera. The conclusion that Carroll knew about the gate, and the way of escape through the alley is thus verified. Why didn't he run? The obvious explanation is that he remained to cover the retreat of some one else."

"Precisely," said the inspector. "If the snow hadn't melted so soon we would have found tracks."

"You believe," continued Carter, "that this young man, in his half-crazy desperation, had formed an alliance with some thug; that it was the thug who attacked Ripley; that the ease with which Ripley was disposed of, sent them both upon a mad career of depredation, with the intent of doing one big night's work and then quitting the town."

"Well, something of that sort," admitted the inspector.

"Then it is the pal who has engaged this lawyer, and has supplied Carroll's relatives with money——"

"Have they got some?"

"Plenty," replied the detective, "and they have gone back to Massachusetts. And I can tell you something more agreeable. Two of the leading medical experts of this city have 'taken an interest' in Mrs. Carroll—who, by the way, is a very charming woman, whose needs, but never her importunities, have

burdened our friend, for she is different from the others."

"You have seen her?"

"Yes; this forenoon. She does not yet know of her husband's misfortune. It was deemed unwise to tell her. But—would you believe it?—those experts who were so much interested by the accounts of her case published yesterday in connection with this affair, tell me that she has a good chance of recovery; that the treatment hitherto has been all wrong, and that she may fully regain her sight."

"Well, I'm glad of that," said the inspector.

"The experts are great men," said Carter, "but they are not philanthropists; they are sure of their money. By the way, have you seen Carroll today?"

"Yes, and the change in him is wonderful. Upon my word, he has gained pounds of flesh, and he looks positively handsome."

"His mind is relieved," responded Carter. "You remember that he never worries about himself. That is the truest word he spoke to us. Worry for others has driven him half crazy—money worry—and now that it is over, he sees the electric chair before him, and is cheerful."

"I was near forgetting," he continued, after a brief pause, "that I have recovered Ripley's watch. Some of my men searched the west side of the park from Seventy-seventh street northward, this morning, and they found it where some one had thrown it over the wall. A portrait on the inside of the case, at the back, has been scratched with a knife; but the job was done in the dark, and the face is still recognizable. It was Mrs. Haskell's."

"Why in blazes——"

"My friend, it is as clear as a bell. Match it with my discovery that Carroll's coat showed every mark of the fight with Brundage, in which, singu-

larly enough, his nether garments seem not to have shared."

"Do you mean that he changed coats with the real assailant?" gasped the inspector.

"Beyond a doubt."

The inspector sprang up and seized his hat from the rack on the wall.

"Let's go down to the Tombs," he said. "Carroll is there."

In a private room of the famous prison—the prisoner in the Brundage murder case, freed from his cell he knew not why, found the inspector and the detective waiting for him.

"Mr. Carroll," said Carter kindly, "the cat is out of the bag."

The prisoner started violently, and his face flushed.

"You were in desperate straits," the detective continued; "you knew not where to turn for help. You had quarreled with Ripley, who once had befriended you, and yet, in your emergency you could think of no one else. You dressed as well as you could, in the suit that he had given you, and yet when you came to the club, your shabby overcoat kept you from asking for the man you wished to see. When he came out, you followed him, hesitating to speak. For miles along the streets, in the winter night, you kept him in sight, while he, with a foolish burden of jealousy on his mind, did not see you."

"At the corner of Berkeley Avenue and Seventy-eighth Street, he stopped. Presently he turned back, and you stepped within the iron gate to let him pass. Then Brundage appeared. Before you realized what was happening, the sharp struggle was over. Ripley had gratified his jealousy far more fully than he had planned to do. Brundage lay dead on the sidewalk, and Ripley, bending over him, groaned in agony."

"A sudden, grotesque, and terrible thought leaped into your mind—to exchange burdens with Ripley, to take his deadly sin, and give him your care,

that would rest so lightly upon this Cræsus. With what insane relief he accepted your offer; what promises he made in those few thrilling moments, we can readily imagine.

"He had taken off his overcoat that he might be the more free to punish his rival. His clothes showed the struggle. As your two suits were identical, the change of coats was a natural suggestion. The purse with the money was forgotten; but Ripley, after he had escaped through the alley, remembered it, and his story of robbery was the only invention that could meet the situation. The rest comes naturally, including your queer lawyer whom Ripley recommended."

"Curse you!" cried Carroll, leaping to his feet. "You have ruined me."

"In return, let me promise my help," said Carter. "I pity you, driven mad by care as you have been. There is no reason in the world why you cannot bear your burdens when you have had rest, with an easy mind. I can promise it to you."

Carroll sank back into a chair, and began to weep hysterically.

The inspector viewed him with professional self-control, yet with some signs of sympathy.

"Shall I send a man for Ripley?" he whispered.

"I have attended to that," responded the detective. "He is on his way to headquarters by this time."

"Manslaughter, I suppose," muttered the inspector. "I'll bet a hat that he doesn't get over five years."

POLICE COURSE AT HARVARD

HARVARD UNIVERSITY is to extend its instruction to police officers. It became known recently that plans for a course in the duties of officers were well under way.

Raymond B. Fosdick, of New York, regarded as an expert in some branches of police methods, has been invited to become the first instructor. His teaching, which will be in day and night classes to allow members of all police shifts to participate, will deal largely with the matter of organization, the keeping of station-house records, identification systems, and, to some extent, with psychology as it relates to the interrogation of persons arrested.

The police of Cambridge will form the first class, Harvard having decided to inaugurate the course at the suggestion of Mayor W. D. Rockwood. According to Professor William B. Munro, this course, which he termed an experiment, will be the first of its kind conducted under university auspices in this country.

JAILED AFTER TWO MONTHS' HUNT

FOR two months the police of Detroit recently searched for four men who held up the pay car of the Burroughs Adding Machine Company and escaped with thirty thousand dollars. One of the men wanted by the police was James Walton, twenty-three years old.

Walton is now in the Detroit jail, having been arrested in Dallas, Texas. According to the police, he confessed that he fired the shot that wounded one of the guards accompanying the paymaster. He is said to have implicated his brother. The Dallas police found four hundred dollars in bills in Walton's room, and a pass book showing he had about five hundred on deposit in a Dallas bank.

The Return of Red Raven

III. THE ABSCONDER

by Scott Campbell

I'LL hand it to him. Mark me, Paddy, I'll hand him a good one." Ravenswood's voice had a sinister ring, his eyes a threatening glint. "If Glidden is called on, or butts into the case, I'll woolly-eye that infernal dick to a standstill, and hand him a jolt he'll long remember. Paste that in your hat, Paddy, for reference."

"Faith, it listens good to me, Dickie, all right," Nolan vouchsafed dryly. "But can it be done so easy?"

"As easy, Paddy, as a railroad company can grant a rebate."

"Some easy!" Drogan grinned broadly. "Some easy, Dickie, for fair."

"But will there be enough in the job?" Nolan questioned, more seriously. "Will it pay, Dickie, for the cost and the risk? This swell lay-out has taken a good bit of our capital. Our store of birdseed is running low. Red Ravens fly high, mind you, and we must figure to get in right."

Ravenswood gazed at both from a swivel chair at his large roll-top desk. It stood in a handsomely furnished room on the second floor of an office building on Broadway. Two wide, plate-glass windows overlooked a side street. Both were emblazoned with large, gold-leaf letters, stating the recently established business of the occu-

pants, or presumably so, as was true of a highly polished brass sign on the corridor door:

**RELIANCE DETECTIVE BUREAU,
Henry Dale, Manager.**

The entire interior had a corresponding veneer of probity and eminent respectability. There was another roll-top desk in the main office. A large safe occupied one corner. A case of law books stood against one of the walls. A handsome leather-top table was laden with reference books and publications bearing upon the business. A costly Persian drugget covered most of the floor. A door to the right led into a finely furnished private office. One to the left opened into a rear room, in which were other equipments and several less expensive desks, ostensibly those of men employed as private detectives by this bureau of secret criminal investigation.

"What blind could be more effective?" Ravenswood had forcibly argued when advocating the audacious project. "What field could be more broad and rich with possibilities? Where could safer headquarters be found? What police official, not excluding Joe Glidden himself, would even dream of such a subterfuge, or of

seeking in such an environment and seeming vocation a flock of thieving Red Ravens?"

Ravenswood was right. The very audacity of it rendered it reliable. Nor would lynx-eyed Joe Glidden, even, have recognized in Henry Dale, the directing genius of the artful enterprise, with his gray-streaked hair, his flowing mustache, and drooping imperial, the versatile and resourceful knave by whom he had been repeatedly outwitted and was so anxious to apprehend.

"Pay, Paddy, indeed! The game is well worth the candle," Ravenswood replied, with assurance, drawing up in his chair. "I have looked over the entire ground. I have covered every foot of it. Osgood has been the bank messenger for seven years. He's as honest as the day is long. But custom dulls the sense of responsibility and the edge of caution, Paddy, and of that we can take advantage."

"But suppose, Dickie——"

"Suppose nothing!" Ravenswood interrupted. "I am not building on suppositions, Paddy, but upon reasonable certainties. Osgood's habits are very regular. His round of collections does not vary materially after a big day in the stock market. He covers nearly the same ground. When he arrives at the Waite Building, where he invariably calls on Sage & Slocum, the bond brokers, the leather bag he carries chained to his wrist always contains from fifty to eighty thousand in cash, bonds, and negotiable securities. That surely warrants taking chances."

"Long chances, Dickie," Nolan readily admitted. "There's no denying that."

"We'll take them, then, Paddy."

"But what about his trailer, Butler, who is always close behind him, with his hands on a ready gun in each side pocket? We must figure on getting him, Dickie, as well as Osgood."

"Sure thing." Drogan appeared a bit doubtful. "Get him, Dickie, is right, and get him first, or his canisters will start barking right off the reel."

"How can that be done?" Nolan questioned. "It's not easy to down two such chesty blokes, one with a brace of gats, and get away with the coin in broad daylight. Outside of that, Dickie, it looks easy."

"I have it perfectly planned," replied Ravenswood confidently.

"Say how, then. Out with it."

"To begin with, Paddy, there now is a vacant office adjoining those occupied by Sage & Slocum. It is directly back of the two private rooms of the firm, and the door must be passed by any one going there from the elevator or stairway."

"Faith, that's clear in my coco," Nolan nodded. "What more?"

"That vacant office must be rented. We must establish two of our red birds there, as if in legitimate business. That done—stop a bit!" Ravenswood broke off abruptly, with a glance toward the rear door. "Call Fallon, Murdock, Badger, and Billy Green. All hands will be needed in this job. I will state my plans to all, therefore, and show you how we can pick this plum without even scratching a finger. Slip the catch lock, Paddy, and bar out intruders."

Two men, both of rugged and resolute aspect, were walking briskly up Broad Street one morning a week later, one about fifteen feet behind the other. They were approaching the heart of the financial district.

Edgar Osgood, in advance, was the trusty messenger of the Fidelity National Bank. He carried a strong leather satchel, closed with a strap and fastened to his left arm with a steel chain, concealed by his sleeve and cuff. The other, trailing him constantly, was one of the bank detectives, David But-

ler, the messenger's bodyguard, or convoy, so to speak, with vigilant eyes and his hands gripping, as Paddy Nolan had said, a ready gun in each side pocket.

None of the throng of men in busy Broad Street appeared to have any interest in them. As Osgood was approaching a corner, nevertheless, which he turned almost daily to go to the Waite Building, a Red Raven in an opposite doorway signaled to Murdock and Badger, then waiting in the side street.

Guided by these signals, both men arrived at the corner just in time to pass Osgood when he turned it and strode on toward Broadway. Upon rounding the corner, however, which Butler was at that moment approaching, they pretended to resume a bitter altercation, coming quickly to ugly oaths and vicious blows, when directly in front of the bank detective.

Butler stopped short, suspecting nothing, but naturally impelled to interfere. He thrust Badger aside, crying sharply, as he separated the two men:

"Cut that! This is no place for a fight."

"Cut what?" Badger retorted, confronting him. "What are you butting in about?"

"You'll learn what for, you ruffian, unless——"

The threat on Butler's lips was never completed. He turned upon Badger while speaking, when, as quick as a flash, Murdock seized the opportunity and dropped him with a blow from one side, a blow that would have felled an ox. Then, while the few startled observers near by stood aghast, for the brutal deed was done in a dozen seconds, Murdock and Badger ran across Broad Street and entered a motor car, driven by Fallon, and in a moment they were speeding north, safe from immediate pursuit.

Butler was lying on the sidewalk,

senseless, blood flowing from his nose and ears. A crowd quickly gathered. Two policemen appeared upon the scene. A physician forced his way through the throng. None knew the stricken man. The physician examined him hastily, then ordered his removal to the nearest hospital. The ambulance came and departed. The crowd dispersed, and the street resumed its customary appearance—and the first move in the knavish game was successfully made.

Ravenswood was right. Custom dulls the edge of caution. For, in the meantime, without a backward glance in search of the man supposed to be following him, and without having heard the brief disturbance around the corner, Osgood proceeded quickly to the Waite Building, where he ran up the stairs to the second floor and approached a suite of offices in the end corridor.

As he came nearer, he noticed a mason's tools and a pail of cement on the floor. At the same moment, too, a man in a long linen coat, with a pen over his ear, appeared at the open door of—the recently rented office.

"Ah, it is you, Mr. Osgood!" Ravenswood could be very suave and impressive on such an occasion. "This way in, sir, if you please."

"That way?" Osgood paused involuntarily.

"Sage & Slocum are enlarging their quarters so as to include this office. Their doors are temporarily blocked by the workmen's stagings. You can enter this way, however, and——"

"Yes, yes, certainly."

Osgood suspected nothing. He walked blindly into the trap. He followed Ravenswood into the office, just as a supposed clerk, Paddy Nolan, was rising from his seat at a desk. At the same moment, too, he heard the door behind him closed noisily and the sharp

click of the lock—but he saw and heard no more.

Drogan, darting from behind the door, felled him with a single blow of a sandbag.

Ravenswood caught him when he fell, placing him quietly on the floor, and saying, as calmly as if no desperate deed had been done:

"Bring in those tools, Paddy, and the pail of cement. Our web has caught the fly. The rest should be easy."

"Like breaking straws, Dickie." Nolan laughed audibly. "Pipe the leather bag. Stuffed like a holiday bird. It has the golden goose skun a mile. Faith, Dickie, it's like money sent from home."

II.

Detective Glidden spread both of his muscular hands on his broad knees and gazed grimly at the venerable cashier of the Fidelity National Bank, in whose private office he was seated about an hour after the two crimes were committed. He very soon had become, as Ravenswood had anticipated, an active and aggressive figure in the case, the result of an urgent appeal to police headquarters, and he now wore a look that challenged opposition.

"An absconder! That's what your man Osgood is, Mr. Harvey, in spite of your faith in the fellow," he was forcibly insisting. "The circumstances admit of no other conclusion. There's nothing else to it. I know what's what, all right, in a case of this kind."

"But it seems incredible, Mr. Glidden, utterly incredible." Mr. Harvey shook his head doubtfully. "Osgood has been in our employ for a dozen years. I have known him ever since he first——"

"Since the Lord made little apples, perhaps, but that has no weight with me. I can size up a job of this kind, Mr. Harvey, with half an eye."

"But our bank detective, Butler, also is——"

"Oh, I've talked with Butler," Glidden cut in gruffly. "He's down and out with a broken head. Luckily, however, his mind was clear and he told me just what came off in Broad Street. There was nothing to it."

"Do you meant that the fight——"

"That was a frame-up, nothing else," Glidden again interrupted. "It was pulled off only to detain Butler and give one of the ruffians a chance to down him. Then both of them bolted and got away in a waiting motor car, as I have learned from several observers. All this speaks for itself. The whole infernal job had been carefully planned."

"Planned by Osgood?" Mr. Harvey anxiously questioned. "Is that what you think?"

"Think be hanged! I know it was." Glidden was nothing if not positive. "Osgood took that way to elude Butler. That had to be done before he could bolt. He hired those two ruffians to turn the trick, while he pretended to be hurrying on to the Waite Building. That, Butler states, is where he was heading. But did he go there? Not by a long chalk. I have telephoned to Sage & Slocum. The bare fact that Osgood did not call on them clinches the case against him."

"Unless he was waylaid, and the victim of foul play," Harvey suggested.

"Nonsense!" Glidden growled. "It was only half a block to the Waite Building. The street was alive with people. He could not have been waylaid. That's out of the question."

"Well, you may be right. Still——"

"I know I'm right. Take it from me, Mr. Harvey, Osgood was the only man back of any foul play. He has absconded. There's nothing else to it—save to run him down and recover his plunder."

"You may be right, Mr. Glidden, but

it seems utterly incredible," Mr. Harvey repeated, wringing his hands. "I could not have believed it. I had absolute faith in Osgood."

"Too much faith, far too much." Glidden arose abruptly. "Osgood has taken advantage of it, as hundreds have done under like conditions. But don't you be down in the mouth. He'll be some slick, mark me, if he can slip through my fingers. I have set the wheels in motion. He'll be nabbed in some quarter within twenty-four hours. How much did he get away with?"

"About sixty thousand dollars, as near as I now can tell. Chiefly in bonds and negotiable securities."

"We'll recover them, take it from me." Glidden jammed on his hat. "We'll get him. I'll be off with Armstrong, now, and try to pick up his trail. He may have been seen near the Waite Building. I want a word with Sage & Slocum, too, as he is known to have been heading for their office. You'll hear from me later. Now, Jack, we'll be off."

Glidden did not wait for an answer. Followed by Armstrong, who had been assisting him in the investigations already hurriedly made, he strode out of the bank and entered a waiting taxicab, gruffly giving the chauffeur his directions. He had not a shadow of doubt. Uncertainty was foreign to Glidden's nature. He felt sure he was right, sure he had sized up the case correctly, and sure that he soon would be hot on the trail of the supposed absconder. All this seemed to be entirely warranted, moreover, when he entered the Waite Building and talked with the superintendent, whom he chanced to meet on the stairway.

"One moment," said he, stopping him. "You're the man, I judge, who looks after this building."

"I am, sir. Martin Ready by name, sir," he replied.

"Do you know a bank messenger who

frequently comes here, named Osgood?"

"Faith, sir, I do," Ready nodded. "I've known him for years by sight."

"Seen him lately?"

"He was here to-day, sir, along about noon."

"He was, eh?" Glidden's grim eyes lighted. "Where did you see him?"

"Turning in the end corridor, sir, on the second floor. He was going to Sage & Slocum's office, sir, I think. He often goes there."

"Do you know that he went there?"

"No, sir. I only saw him heading that way."

"How did he look? Did he appear excited, or in haste?"

"Well, he seemed in a bit of a hurry, sir, but not more than common. He always walks brisklike."

"Did he have the leather satchel he usually carries?"

"He did, sir. I can swear to that."

"You did not see him leave the building?"

"I did not." Ready shook his head. "He left by the other door, mebber, which leads into the court at the end of the building. He often goes that way."

"I see." Glidden's brows knit closer. "That's all, Ready. He went through this building, Armstrong, only to avoid observation and don a disguise. I see his game. It's a safe bet that his own mother would not have known him when he went out through the end corridor."

"Not from a side of leather," Armstrong agreed, while they moved on up the stairs. "He aimed to break off his trail right here, Joe, hoping to mystify the police, or lead them to think he was killed and robbed somewhere in the building."

"Mystify be hanged!" Glidden growled derisively. "He can't blind me. I'm not to be fooled in a case of this kind. I'll trace the thieving rat,

Armstrong, in spite of all he can do. This way to Sage & Slocum's office. We'll stop there for a moment only, then head out through the end court. There's the stairway yonder. We'll find some one, believe me, who saw him leaving and can tip us to his disguise."

Glidden found both bond brokers in their main office, but they could only repeat what they already had told him by telephone, that they had been expecting Osgood with a quantity of bonds, but that he had not delivered them, nor been seen that day by any of their clerks.

"He was seen in the adjoining corridor, nevertheless, within five minutes after Butler was assaulted," Glidden confidently informed them. "I know one man who saw him, and there may be others. If so, I want to find them."

"Try the new tenants in the next office," Mr. Sage advised. "They may have seen him."

"New tenants?" Glidden snapped like a hungry trout at the possibility suggested. "How long have they been there?"

"Less than a week."

"Do you know them, or anything about them?"

"Only that two men are occupying the office."

"What's their business?"

"I cannot say, not having inquired." Sage smiled expressively as he spoke. "They have not appeared to be doing much."

"Haven't, eh?" Glidden swung around with a growl. "I'll mighty soon find out. Go with me, Jack—but not you two gentlemen," he quickly added, when both brokers were about to follow him. "We'll look after this business. You attend to your own."

"By Jove, Joe, there may be something in it," said Armstrong, as both returned to the corridor. "New tenants, right here and at just this time, may be more than a coincidence."

"That's the very point," replied Glidden, striding to the office door. "It warrants suspicion, at least."

He tried the door and found it locked. Gazing through the keyhole, he could see a cheap chair and an ordinary flat desk, much defaced and entirely destitute of writing materials, a fact which instantly increased his suspicions. Starting up, he jerked out a ring of keys, saying, with bulldog determination:

"We'll go in there. It looks leery to me, Armstrong, and not on the level. I'll bet my roll against a bean pod—ah, this key will open it."

Glidden opened the door while speaking and stepped into the deserted office. The pail of cement was on the floor, in one corner. Near by was a trowel and a few small tools. A plaid, woolen suit, somewhat worn, hung over the back of a chair. Upon seeing it, Glidden vented a wolfish snarl and cried exultantly:

"I was right, by thunder, as right as a rivet. That's the very suit Osgood is said to have worn. Harvey mentioned it when describing the rascal. We're hot on his trail, Jack, all right, as sure as there's skin on a lemon. But it's no lemon for me, Armstrong, not this time. You can bet on that."

"But what do you make of all this?" Armstrong questioned perplexedly, gazing around. "Why was this office rented? Who are the tenants? What's this stuff in the pail? It looks like cement."

Glidden did not reply immediately. He caught up the plaid suit and hurriedly searched the pockets, finding them empty. He then drew out the desk drawers, glancing into each and violently closing it. All were as empty as a drum. Next he strode to the window and looked down on the narrow court, then out to the near street.

"Hang it, Armstrong, it's as plain as twice two!" he cried, turning back. "It

clinches my theory. No business has been done here, bar knavery. There's not a pen, pencil, or scrap of paper in the desk. It was picked up second-hand and brought here, along with the rest of these traps, only for a blind. Osgood was one of the tenants, perhaps, coming here at times in disguise, or possibly the two ruffians he had hired to down Butler this morning. That's dead open and shut."

"You think that this office was rented, then——"

"Only to provide Osgood with an immediate, temporary refuge," Glidden plunged on, interrupting. "One in which he could change his clothes, and so disguise himself as to preclude recognition and prevent being traced. There's nothing else to it—nothing, Armstrong, absolutely nothing."

"By gracious, Joe, I think you're right." Armstrong always had faith in Glidden's theories. "There certainly seems to be nothing else to it."

"Seems be hanged! It's a copper-riveted cinch," Glidden declared, glancing at the tools and cement on the floor. "Those things cut no ice. They were brought here only to suggest a legitimate business. The birds have flown, Armstrong, and we must get after them. We waste time in searching an empty nest. Come on. Go with me while the going is good. There's a fellow outside, I think, who can hand us something."

Glidden had caught sight of him from the window. He was in nearly the same place and position, too, when Glidden hurried down the end stairway and emerged into the narrow court, now feeling doubly sure that he was hot on the trail of the absconder.

His immediate quest, however, was a miserably clad man who was leaning against one corner of the entrance to the court, selling an occasional lead pencil to passing pedestrians. He was a pitiable-looking fellow. His hair and

beard were unkempt. His garments were soiled and in rags. His eyes were protected with blue spectacles, denoting that they had in some way been injured.

Glidden approached him and took a pencil, giving him half a dollar.

"That's nêar enough," he said gruffly. "Have a good time with it. I reckon there's not too much coming your way. How long have you been standing here, my man?"

The blue glasses, turned squarely upon the detective, seemed to light up with a look of surprise. The man chuckled audibly, eagerly pocketing the coin, while he replied huskily:

"Thankee, sir! I've been right here all day. I'm here every day. It's where I pick up a living."

"Seen any men come out this way from the Waite Building?" questioned Glidden tersely.

"Only two, sir. Not many come this way. I wouldn't have known of them, sir, bar hearing them talking in the court, where they waited a minute for a taxi. They didn't see me. I was just around the corner."

"What were they saying?"

"One was telling about a swell lodging house, where he'd got a room for the other, and where he could hang out safely, the landlady not being wise to something. I don't know what he meant. They talked so low I only heard a little."

"I see." Glidden's eyes were glowing exultantly. "Do you know either man?"

"I don't, sir, and that was all I heard."

"Was one of them carrying a leather bag?"

"He was, sir, the one with whiskers."

"Whiskers, eh?" Glidden laughed grimly, with a significant glance at Armstrong. "That does settle it. Did he leave in the taxi?"

"He did, sir, and the other walked up the street. That's all I can tell you—bar one thing."

"What's that, my man? Out with it."

"I know the taxi driver by sight."

"Fine! Come across."

"He's a tall man, with broad shoulders and a big, black mustache. You might find him near the Imperial. I've often seen him waiting there to pick up a passenger."

Glidden lingered to hear no more. He felt, in fact, that he had learned all that the pencil vender could tell him. He had swallowed it as easily as a Concord grape. He drew Armstrong away, crying exultantly, while he hurried him up the street:

"Hand us something was right. It was a cinch that he must have seen Osgood, if he fled through the court, as I suspected. We'll get him, Armstrong, all right. There'll be nothing to it, now, if we can round up the taxi driver."

"That should be no great task."

"No task at all." Glidden was aglow with confidence. "It will be some feather in our bonnets, all the same, if we snap bracelets on Osgood before sunset. We're hot on his trail, all right; hot on his trail and going some, Jack; going some. We'll soon get him."

It was seven o'clock, nevertheless, when Glidden, after impatiently watching in the locality mentioned, saw in Forty-second Street a taxicab driven by a powerful man of the description given him by the pencil vender. Hailing him to the sidewalk, Glidden displayed his badge and asked gruffly:

"Did you have a passenger about one o'clock to-day, a man with a beard and carrying a leather bag?"

"I sure did, sir," the driver quickly admitted, leaning out. "I got him on a telephone call."

"Where?"

"Down near the Waite Building. He was talking with another man near the end court."

"Do you know either of them?"

"Nothing doing. I never saw them."

"Where did you take the man with a bag?"

"To a house in Columbus Avenue. I'm not sure, but I think it's quite a bang-up lodging house. I heard the man ask for the landlady."

"Do you remember the house? Can you take us to it?" questioned Glidden, as Armstrong approached.

"Sure, sir, I can," said the cabman. "Dead easy."

"Do so, then, but—stop on the opposite side, and a few doors away. Get me?"

"Bet you! I'm no bonehead."

"Tumble in, Jack." Glidden pushed Armstrong into the cab. "We've got our man. We've got him, Armstrong, as sure as death and taxes. By Heaven, this was good work, Jack, though I say it, who shouldn't. We've got him, all right."

It was half past seven when the taxicab stopped nearly opposite a block of handsome brownstone dwellings. The detectives sprang out, and the cabman turned and said:

"It's the second house in the block. The name on the door is—Barnard."

Glidden gazed over at the house, noting that the vestibule and hall were brightly lighted, though all of the front rooms were in darkness.

"Wait here, cabby," he said gruffly. "We have a crook to take to headquarters. Bring two policemen, Jack, and station them at the front and back door. We'll make dead sure of him. You'd better enter with me."

Five minutes passed.

A burly policeman then was guarding each door.

Glidden mounted the front steps and rang the bell.

III.

"It's worth it, Paddy, worth every copper of it." Ravenswood gazed at Nolan from a luxurious armchair in the handsomely furnished library. "Think what this infernal dick has done to me and my brood of precious red birds. He's due for a jolt. I told you I'd hand him one. Mark me, Paddy, I will make Joe Glidden the laughingstock of headquarters."

"Faith, Dickie, that sure is worth something," Nolan thoughtfully allowed. "But three hundred dollars for the use of this crib——"

"It's worth it, Paddy," Ravenswood insisted. "I have a leaning, you know, toward luxury and refinement. I wanted attractive quarters in which to turn the trick. That will add to Glidden's chagrin and cut him the deeper. Wait until the force learns, Paddy, that the absconder he was running down was handed to him by the very crooks who did the job. Take it from me, he'll never hear the last of it."

"He'll beef some, Dickie, all right." Nolan grinned broadly. "But you took a long chance in bringing Osgood here. We could have left him where we downed him, and got safely away with our plunder. He might have squealed on the way."

"A man doesn't squeal, Paddy, who knows he will be instantly silenced with a blade of steel. He had no alternative but death. What matters, now, since the safe in our detective bureau, our unsuspected headquarters, contains the plunder?"

"But suppose——"

"What need?" Ravenswood cut in again. "There is no contingency on which I have not figured. I had the job itself perfectly planned; I have not provided less carefully for the sequence."

"Sure, Dickie, there's no denying that," Nolan admitted admiringly.

"It was a foregone conclusion," Ravenswood went on, "that Glidden would be called into the case, that he would immediately suspect Osgood, that he would visit Sage & Slocum, that he would learn of the new tenants in the next office, that he at once would suspect them, and—but, bah! why re-view it? I provided him with a soft trail, Paddy, so soft that I knew he would follow it."

"He sure has, Dickie, if——"

"There are none, Paddy. His every move has been reported by telephone. Our Red Ravens have not been idle. It is nearly half an hour since he entered the taxicab. He already may be—but have a look. Slip into the front room, Paddy, and have another look."

Nolan darted back of a portière and disappeared.

Ravenswood arose and laid aside the cigar he was smoking. He bore no likeness to Henry Dale, of the audacious detective bureau which he was planning to turn to vast advantage, nor did he resemble any personage previously assumed. His fine figure was nearly enveloped in a handsome smoking gown, from the side pocket of which, while he paused near the table, he drew a revolver, which he briefly examined. He was doing so when Nolan hurriedly reappeared, saying, a bit excitedly:

"They're here, Dickie. The taxi is waiting across the avenue. Glidden has just crossed over. He——"

Ravenswood silenced him with a gesture, pointing again to the front room.

"Wait there, in the darkness," he directed calmly. "Have things ready for me."

"Trust me for that."

"It will take me only a few minutes to hand him what's coming to him. If he ventures to——"

Ravenswood broke off abruptly. The doorbell was ringing noisily. He

waved Nolan away, drew his smoking gown around him, replacing the revolver in the pocket, and then he walked out deliberately through the brightly lighted hall. There was a subtle gleam deep down in his fine eyes, however, when he opened the door and saw Glidden and Armstrong in the vestibule, and a burly policeman at the base of the steps.

"Good evening, gentlemen," he said suavely. "Why——"

"Where's the landlady?" Glidden bluntly interrupted, stepping into the hall.

"Wait!" Ravenswood opposed him haughtily. "You have not been invited to enter. Mrs. Barnard is absent. I am her husband, however, and will attend to any matter concerning her."

There was a look in the eyes of the Red Raven that briefly quelled Glidden, even, for he drew back a little and said, more courteously:

"Her husband, eh? You will do as well, then. We are from headquarters. My name is Glidden."

"Glidden? Detective Glidden?"

"The same."

"I have heard of you," said Ravenswood, with subtle dryness, brows drooping. "But why do you come here in this way? This is a reputable house. I can see no occasion for——"

"Oh, we've got nothing on your house, Mr. Barnard, or on your estimable wife," Glidden again cut in, quite gruffly. "You're all right, no doubt, but you have been imposed on."

"Imposed on? How so?"

"You have a lodger here who is a crook, an absconder. We want him, and will do you and your house a service in taking him."

"A crook!" Ravenswood appeared greatly shocked. "Impossible! We have only one stranger here."

"Came to-day, didn't he?"

"Why, yes, he——"

"He's the one." Glidden drew Arm-

strong in and closed the door. "He still is here, isn't he?"

"Why, yes, the man is in his room. But——"

"Show us the way. We'll do the rest. He——"

"One moment!" Ravenswood barred the way to the stairs, protesting firmly, with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice. "You detectives may be mistaken. I suppose it is possible that even you, Detective Glidden, may be mistaken."

"Maybe, but not this time," Glidden growled impatiently. "We have a cinch case against him. Come, come, Mr. Barnard, show us to his room."

"Well, if I must." Ravenswood yielded with seeming reluctance. "But let there be no disturbance, no violence, or——"

"There won't be," Glidden cut in. "We'll take him as quietly as a baby takes a bottle. Get a move on."

"This way, then, but please be quiet. The house will be ruined, gentlemen, if this leaks out."

"We'll choke that off, also. It's enough for us to get our man."

"This way, then. He has our best back room. The door is ajar, I see, and I think he is reading. Yes—see for yourselves!"

Ravenswood opened the door while speaking. Neither detective saw that the key was on the outside. The large, square room was brightly lighted. Above the top of a large armchair, near the fireplace, well across the room, the back of which was turned squarely toward the door, could be seen the top of a man's head—that of the victimized bank messenger, then deeply drugged and wholly insensible.

Ignorant of the last, of course, both detectives rushed into the room to seize him—when Ravenswood's voice rang out like a trumpet:

"Stop! All hands up—or there'll be a dead dick here!"

Both detectives had caught sight of

the senseless man, and both swung around as if electrified. Then their hands went into the air.

Ravenswood stood erect on the threshold, his disguise gone, one hand on the partly closed door, the other covering both officers with his revolver. He laughed derisively, and a half-choked roar broke from Glidden.

"Good Heaven!" he cried. "It's Ravenswood—that Red Raven leader!"

"Right!" Ravenswood's voice had a vicious snap. "I've not forgotten, Glidden, that day on the aviation field. Here's where I hand you one. You see that even you, Glidden, may blunder and be mistaken. Is this what you call a cinch case?"

"Blast you——"

"Oh, there's nothing in that!" Ravenswood laughed scornfully. "There's your man, your absconder, Glidden—but the Red Ravens did the job, and have their plunder. The Broad Street fighters were Red Ravens. The pencil vender was another. The taxi driver is another. You see, Glidden, I fixed

a soft trail for you—and you fell for it. I'll make sure that the force and the press learn all about it. Come and get us, Glidden. You know how to catch a bird. Put salt on his tail."

Ravenswood did not linger longer. He closed the door with the last and quickly turned the key, then darted down the hall stairs. He heard what he was expecting—the crash of both detectives against the door, and then the bang of a revolver, and the splintering of one of the panels. He ran down to the front door and called to the policeman.

"Glidden wants you up there. He's in a fight with three crooks in the back room."

The policeman rushed in and tore up the stairs at top speed.

Ravenswood turned to the parlor door and threw off his smoking gown.

"Now, Paddy, my coat and hat," he said quickly. "This way out, lad, and lively to the taxi. Fallon will whisk us to cover. Glidden has his man—but we have the sixty thousand."



MAN WHO COULD NOT REMEMBER CRIME PROBATED

THOUGH Edward Burke pleaded guilty of burglary at Sacramento, California, recently, he will not go to prison for his offense. Instead he will be sent to an institution where he will be treated for the affliction which is believed to have brought him within the shadow of penitentiary walls.

Burke was convicted of having burglarized the room of Florence Adamson last August. Policemen caught him as he emerged from the room with a revolver in his hand. He made no effort at resistance.

It was claimed that Burke committed the crime while his mind was a blank. He steadily professed to have had no recollection of the occurrence. Character witnesses came to his defense. Testimony was submitted, showing that on several other occasions he had lost all memory of prior events.

Upon recommendation of the probation officer, Burke was placed on six years' probation by Superior Judge Malcolm Glenn. He also is to be sent to an institution for the treatment of inebriates.

A Battle for Right

by Douglas Grey

CHAPTER XXXII.

MURDER WILL OUT.

WHEN Thomas Jarvis, with a grim expression on his tightly closed lips, came into the room, there was a look of curiosity on the faces of both Loudon Powers and Andrew Lampton.

The man who had been called Howard Milmarsh was the only person in the large circle about the massive mahogany table who seemed not to be interested. He was sitting opposite Thorndyke Flint, his head bent forward, so that his chin almost rested on his chest, and his eyes fixed vacantly upon the table.

"Now that we are all here, you may go," said Flint, dismissing the two men-servants.

"Don't we have anything to drink?" asked Loudon Powers. "Or is this to be a dry session?"

"We won't drink," replied Flint. "But I don't think it will be so very dry. We shall see."

Flint did not say anything more until Dobbs and Kelly had withdrawn. Then he made a motion to his assistant, Judson, who locked the door and handed the key to his chief.

"Now, Mr. Jarvis, we'll hear you first," announced Flint. "What are you here for?"

"I'm here to take possession of my

property," replied Jarvis. "I have had my attorney go through all the necessary legal forms, and I demand that you all leave this house forthwith."

Loudon Powers and Andrew Lampton laughed aloud, and even Judson and Ray Norton indulged in a quiet smile.

"I don't think there is anything to be said about that, Mr. Jarvis, except to inform you that Howard Milmarsh is here, and that therefore your claim is nothing at all. Your attorney should have known that."

"I'm my own attorney!" snapped Jarvis. "I have been a lawyer long enough to know my rights."

"Your knowledge of law may be fairly good—very good," returned the detective. "But the action of law must be based on sound facts, and it seems as if you have overlooked them. I tell you that Howard Milmarsh is here to claim his inheritance."

"You mean that man at the table?" barked Jarvis. "*He* is not Howard Milmarsh."

"You're wrong," interposed Loudon Powers. "That's just who he is."

Billings had been gazing curiously at the man Powers pointed to, and who still sat with bent head, taking no part in the proceedings, and seeming hardly to know that he was there.

Thorndyke Flint understood what was passing in the big truckman's mind.

"There are things that seem to you

contradictory, Billings," said Flint, as their eyes met for a moment. "I will explain to you later. You will find that I told you the truth."

Bonesy Billings shook his head in an embarrassed way, as he answered hastily:

"I hadn't no thought of nothing else, Mr. Flint. But I saw that gentleman over there, and I didn't know what it meant."

"Now, that is all I have to say," interrupted Jarvis. "This is my house, and I should like to have it to myself. In the absence of any other legal heir, I am the owner. The property passes all to me, as next of kin. My son would have inherited it had he lived. But he died."

"He was killed!" suddenly thundered Flint. "He was struck down by a champagne bottle. There are witnesses to prove it. I have one of them in this room——"

"Now, Flint!" interrupted Captain Brown, jumping to his feet. "You have kept that quiet all these years. Why should——"

"I'll tell you why, Captain Brown," broke in the detective. "There is an effort on the part of Thomas Jarvis to rob the owner of this property of his rights, and I am obliged to say what I do, in the interests of justice."

"Justice?"

It was Loudon Powers and Andrew Lampton who uttered this word in unison in an apprehensive tone. There seemed to be something about it that grated on their sensibilities.

Thomas Jarvis was sitting stiff in his chair, his eyes fixed upon Flint's face, while he tried to mumble some protest.

"I intended to keep this a secret to the end, because I have always felt that the slayer of Richard Jarvis had great provocation, and doubtless was carried away by the excitement of the moment to do a deed that he has been remorseful for ever since."

"Didn't it come out at the time?" asked Bonesy Billings. "Murders don't often get away from the police in these days."

"You're right, Billings. I don't suppose this would have been hushed up if a person who—who has some influence had not prevented all the facts becoming known."

"I'd let it go at that, if I were you, Flint," pleaded Captain Brown, his usually bronzed face a grayish white. "There's no sense in raking up such a thing as this."

"Yes, there is," rejoined Flint. "Jarvis here has challenged me, and I will take it up. He claims this property is——"

"It is mine," put in Jarvis doggedly. "Because your son is dead?"

"Yes."

"And when you knew that Howard Milmarsh had run away from this part of the country, you figured that he never would dare return, and that your son Richard would be the heir."

"You can say what you like. The property is mine," growled Jarvis, as if determined to stick to one idea."

"If your son Richard were to die, it would leave you the next of kin, so far as legal forms go. Therefore, it might be to your interest if Richard were to be put out of the world. He was not really your son, you know, but your stepson."

"How did you know that?" demanded Jarvis, half rising. "It isn't true, anyhow."

"Oh, yes, it is. I can prove it, if necessary," was the detective's answer. "You knew that Howard Milmarsh the elder was in poor health. You had learned that his doctor gave him only a few more months of life, and predicted that he would die suddenly. All that was part of your knowledge."

"I don't care to stay here any longer," abruptly declared Thomas Jarvis, rising to his feet. "I will go. But there will

be proper officers here during the day to eject the rascals who are trying to steal my estate. Good morning!"

But the door was locked and the key in Thorndyke Flint's pocket.

"Better sit down till I have finished speaking," he advised coolly. "I do not intend to let you leave this room until I am ready."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll tell the rest of my story, and then you can answer your own question. You will know what I mean."

"Rot!"

Thomas Jarvis resumed his seat and stared at the detective. Those about the table observed that he seemed to have grown very much older in the last minute or two. His eyes had become dull, his jaw sagged, and he did not appear to be as truculent as he had been when he came into the room.

"The truth is," went on Flint, "that you killed your son Richard in a quarrel, in the Old Pike Inn——"

"Flint!" protested Captain Brown. "This will ruin my house!"

"You knocked him down with a champagne bottle, as he came toward you to strike you. He fell flat, with his head against the corner of the iron fender. But the blow against the fender was a trifle. It glanced and hardly cut the skin. The stroke that killed him was delivered by the champagne bottle in your hand!"

Bonesy Billings, Captain Brown, Loudon Powers, and Lampton were all on their feet, in their excitement. The man who was supposed to be Howard Milmarsh and Thomas Jarvis were the only persons who remained in their chairs. Judson and Ray Norton had both arisen, as if to prevent any demonstration by Powers or Lampton.

"Sit down!" commanded Flint. "There is nothing to be done. The man who killed Richard Jarvis cannot escape."

The others dropped into their seats

again. The two crooks showed more terror than had been in their faces since first they knew Flint was in the house. If this shrewd, deep-seeing detective could wind the toils so easily about Thomas Jarvis for a crime committed years ago, why would he not put them in cells for offenses of yesterday, as it were?

Both Loudon Powers and Andrew Lampton were uneasy. It is true that the latter had practically a promise of safety if he delivered T. Burton Potter into the hands of the detective. But he was not prepared to produce Potter except as a last resort to keep himself out of prison.

As for Loudon Powers, he was a bold scoundrel, and he intended to make a desperate fight to get away if he found Flint and his men closing in on him. Only, he wished he were not locked in a room like this, with the odds in numbers against him.

"There's Flint and his two men," he mused. "Captain Brown, I guess, and that big Billings. That would be five against one—for I don't suppose I could count on that weak-kneed Lampton. He has some sort of pull on the detective. I wouldn't mind betting he's a 'squealer.'"

"Now, Mr. Jarvis," continued Flint. "You have forced me to take this action. If you had not attempted to cash in your crime, I should have been inclined to let it rest in the oblivion to which you thought it consigned. The fact that you have compelled me to remind you of it, in the presence of these witnesses, emphasizes the world-old truth that 'murder will out.' What have you to say?"

There was no answer. Thomas Jarvis' gaze was fixed on the opposite wall, and he had slumped curiously down in his large armchair.

"Look here, Flint," broke in Captain Brown again. "You don't have to drag me into this."

"You were a witness," replied Flint coldly. "As a good citizen, your duty is to tell the truth—if you are asked."

It has been remarked already that Captain Brown was a business man. He thought more of the Old Pike Inn and its reputation than anything else on earth probably. He groaned at Flint's suggestion.

"Chief!" suddenly shouted Judson.

He and Norton rushed to Thomas Jarvis simultaneously. But they were not in time to prevent his slipping to the floor.

Half a minute later, as Flint, on one knee by the side of the prostrate man, with a finger on the stilled pulse, looked up and said solemnly:

"You need not worry about being called on to testify, Captain Brown. The matter will never come up."

"Is he dead?"

The response of the detective was to reverently cover the face of Thomas Jarvis with his own handkerchief.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

STILL HUNTING.

OF course, Thomas Jarvis never was a real factor in this matter," remarked Flint, fifteen minutes later, when all that was mortal of Jarvis had been removed to another room. "But we will go into the claims of that young man who has been sitting silently at the other side of the table from the beginning of the conference, and who——"

The detective broke off. The chair occupied by the man who had been declared by Loudon Powers and Andrew Lampton to be Howard Milmarsh was empty, and he was not in the room!

Norton and Judson had both helped remove the body of Thomas Jarvis, and no one had taken any notice of the young man. He had been sitting there when everybody else went out, watching the disposal of the still form on a large sofa in the library.

They were just returning, with Flint in the lead, and speaking as he came, when he saw that the alleged Howard Milmarsh had disappeared.

There was a search all about the house and grounds which lasted for an hour or more. At the end of that time, when not a trace of the missing man could be found, Flint decided that there was nothing more to be done there, and he told Judson and Norton privately that he was going back to New York.

Louden Powers and Andrew Lampton had both taken an active part in the hunt. They were loud in their protestations that he was the real heir, and that somebody must have spirited him away in the interests of enemies.

"What do you mean by enemies?" asked Flint quietly, when the whole party were again assembled in the dining room. "Do you mean that persons who believe him to be actually Howard Milmarsh have hidden him so that they can bring a spurious one in to take possession?"

"You guess well," grinned Loudon Powers.

"Mind I don't guess a little too well for your peace of mind, Powers," was Flint's rejoinder. "This estate has not been settled yet. Besides, those people waiting at the station for Billings might come up here again and hold you personally responsible for the fraud of Paradise City. They count you partly in the swindle, as you know."

Powers sniffed scornfully, and lighted a cigarette, to show how much at his ease he was. Andrew Lampton was discreetly silent. He had not the bravado of his companion.

"The crowd has gone back," announced Ray Norton, who had been at the telephone. "They got tired of waiting for Bonesy, and they took that train which went out an hour ago. It's lucky for these two guys that they didn't come back. The station agent tells me they

was as hot as fresh tamales. If it hadn't been a three-mile walk, some of 'em was coming back to lick the pair of 'em, just for luck."

"Gone, eh?" exclaimed Boney Billings.

"It is just as well," put in Flint. "Come over here, Billings. I want to talk to you."

The result of a minute or two of private converse between the detective and Billings was that the big truckman smiled grimly and stood by the door of the dining room, to indicate that he was ready to obey orders at once.

"You see, Judson," explained Flint to his principal assistant, "I want you to come back with me to New York, and it would be asking too much of Norton to guard those two men alone."

"He could do it, all right," returned Judson. "I don't think they would get away if Ray wanted to hold them. Besides, there are menservants in the house."

"I don't depend on servants, Judson—especially when they are new and have no personal interest in the place in which they are employed. You remember we heard two of them talking about their situation when they did not suspect that they were overheard.

"When we were behind that big picture?"

"Yes. So I've engaged Billings to stay here and act as a sort of sergeant at arms while we are away. He and Norton together will insure Loudon Powers and Andrew Lampton being here when we return."

"What are we going to do about Howard Milmarsh?" broke in Loudon Powers, who had been wondering what the detective was talking about, but could not very well inquire. "I think I'd better go down to New York and look around."

"Where would you look?"

"In places where he generally hangs out. There's a lot of joints where you

could find him 'most any time, and I——"

"I never knew Howard Milmarsh to hang about in New York," interrupted Flint. "I think you have somebody else in mind."

"Who?" demanded Powers defiantly.

"T. Burton Potter, for instance."

"I'm talking about Howard Milmarsh."

"Well, we will let you remain in the house here, while I look for Howard Milmarsh. I'm quite as anxious as you are to find him," was Flint's reply. "Come on, Judson!"

"You want Andrew Lampton and me to stay here?" asked Powers, with a suspicious inflection. "That's something different from what you've been giving us. You were handing it to us that we had no business in this house."

"You have business in it now, Loudon, because I believe you may help to solve the problem of the missing heir. Captain Brown, you will take us down to the station, won't you? My car has gone back to New York."

"I'll take you down with pleasure," was the prompt response of the manager of the Old Pike Inn.

Captain Brown was so relieved to know that he would not be called on as a witness to prove that Thomas Jarvis killed his son, that he was willing to do anything for anybody.

"I'll go with you if you like," volunteered Lampton. "Even if I can't find Howard Milmarsh, I might get my hands on T. Burton Potter. You remember you wanted me to find him."

"I did want you to do that," admitted Flint. "But not now. I'm in hopes that I can find him myself. Even if I don't, it won't make much difference as things have turned out. You remain here with Loudon Powers. Billings, you know what to do. You too, Ray!"

Thorndyke Flint and Judson swung out of the dining room, with Captain Brown. No sooner were they outside

than the door closed, and they heard a key click in the lock.

"Ray Norton and Billings are not taking any chances," observed Judson, smiling.

"That is the only way to deal with men of that stripe, Judson. Captain, if we hurry, we can make that two train for New York."

They just made the train, and, as Flint and his assistant sat silently side by side, while the train rushed toward the metropolis, each was occupied with his own thoughts.

"Where shall we go first?" asked Judson, as they left the train at the Grand Central and walked through the lofty concourse to Forty-second Street. "Home, I suppose?"

"Yes. We'll go there and see what mail there is, and if anything special calls for attention. Then we'll visit the Universal Hospital."

"What do you suppose has become of that fellow who vanished from the house up there this morning—the man who called himself Howard Milmarsh?"

"That I don't know. And I don't much care, at present. But I should like to correct you in one little particular, Judson. It is Loudon Powers and Andrew Lampton who have been calling him Howard Milmarsh. You did not hear him say much about it."

"That's true," assented Judson reflectively. "Here's a taxi. I called him up just now."

"There's an old man and a young lady waiting for you in the library, sir," said the butler, as they went into Flint's quiet house. "I told them I didn't know when you would be back, but they said they would wait half an hour, anyhow. Perhaps by that time you might be home. They've been in the library an hour already. I was up there ten minutes ago."

"They must want to see me rather badly," was Flint's comment, as he ran

lightly up the stairs. "Did they give you their names?"

"No, sir. They said they would tell you when they saw you?"

"Very well!"

Flint opened the door of his library. As he stepped inside, he knew who his visitors were.

"Why, it's the young lady who was in the fire that night," he exclaimed, in a tone of warm welcome. "Miss Silvius, isn't it?"

"Yes. And this is my father. If it hadn't been for you, we couldn't be here now. We wanted to see you so much, Mr. Flint. I didn't know till to-day who it was that got us out of that fearful fire. I have not seen Mr. Gordon—I mean Mr. Milmarsh—since."

Flint shook hands with Bessie Silvius and her father, and then introduced Judson, who thought the girl wonderfully pretty, and showed it in his face.

"I—I—wanted to thank you for what you did, Mr. Flint," faltered the girl. "And also—to ask if you knew where Mr. Milmarsh is."

"I know where he is," replied Flint gravely.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE GIRL IN THE CASE.

"WILL you take me to him?" asked the girl, with a blush. Then she went on, in a more resolute tone, and as if she knew she had nothing of which to be ashamed: "He has asked me to marry him, Mr. Flint."

"Ah!"

"Yes, that's what I told him," she continued innocently. "I said it could never be."

"I didn't say anything," smiled the detective.

"I know you didn't. At least, you only said 'Ah!' But I know what you meant, and I agree with you."

"I wish you would explain, Miss Silvius."

"You mean that he is a multimil-

lionaire, if he chooses to claim his own. If I were to marry him, people might say he was throwing himself away on a poor girl."

"I don't think it would matter what people might say."

"It would matter a great deal to me," she interrupted, with decision. I am getting a living by teaching music. My father teaches the violin. We both play when we get a chance. And—and—sometimes the places we play at are not at all—at all nice."

"Poor girl!" murmured Flint, below his breath. Then, aloud: "We all have to do things we don't like sometimes, Miss Silvius. I can assure you, knowing Howard Milmarsh as well as I do, that if he asked you to marry him, he will insist on your doing it—provided, of course, that you care for him."

"I do," burst out the girl involuntarily. Then she blushed again. "I did not mean to say that. I've told him I shall never marry, and I intend to keep my word."

"No doubt. Girls always intend to keep their word when they make a rash assertion of that kind," said Flint, with a laugh. "You say you haven't seen him since the night of the fire?"

"No. We were all so much excited, and my poor father, who had rheumatism, was in such a dangerous state, that I was only too glad that some of the neighbors took us in and cared for us. When I came to myself, and could make inquiries about Mr. Gordon, no one knew where he was. I couldn't find any one who remembered seeing him after he came down the ladder, except that a policeman said he was hurt."

"I took him away in my motor car," said Flint quietly.

"You did? And is he well? Can you take me to him? Is he here, in your house?"

"Not at present. But what made you think of coming here to-day? Why did

you connect me with the disappearance of this—er—Mr. Gordon?"

"The same policeman who told me he was taken away in a motor car saw me on the street this morning. We have always been on speaking terms since the fire. He said to-day he had heard that the motor car in which Mr. Gordon—as everybody called him where he lived—was taken away belonged to the detective, Thorndyke Flint."

"Yes?"

"It was not difficult to find your address. So my father and I came down to try to see you. I was so disappointed when your man said you were away. We had come a long way, and I was determined to see you if I could. So we said we would wait."

"You have been here more than an hour?"

"Yes, but we didn't mind waiting, so long as you are here at last. We should have waited another hour, and more than that. And if we had not seen you to-day, we should have been here again to-morrow."

"That's true, sir," added Roscoe Silvius, who had hardly spoken. "I can't say all I should like, but I don't think I need speak my gratitude. You surely must *know*. Why, Mr. Flint, you plucked me out of the very jaws of a horrible death!"

"I'm very glad I happened to be there," returned Flint earnestly. "At such a time as that any man would have done what I did. Mr.—er—Gordon was as active as I was."

"Yes, but he couldn't have done it alone, although I saw that he would have given his life to save us. Then there is the young man over there at the other side of the room—Mr. Judson. I remember how he helped to get my father down that ladder when it was breaking in the middle. I wish I could say something to him that would seem only partly adequate."

"Don't say anything, Miss Silvius,"

put in Judson, blushing like a girl himself. "It was the chief who did it. I only helped him a little. And—and—it was all in my day's work. Nothing to talk about!"

"Well, now, Mr. Flint, will you take me to him?" asked the girl, going back to her former request.

"I should hardly like to do that without first seeing him," answered the detective kindly. "You see——"

"He is still ill? Isn't that it, Mr. Flint?"

There was an agony of anxiety in her voice that caused it to tremble as she looked eagerly into his face.

"Yes, he is ill," admitted Flint. "I am going to see him at the hospital."

"Is—is he very bad?"

"I don't know. I do not think so. The last time I saw him, some days ago, he was up and dressed. The trouble is with his mind. The shock of the injuries he suffered at the fire still affects him. I hope—and expect—it will soon pass away."

"I wish I could see him."

"I intend that you shall—but not just now."

"When?"

"Let me see. It is now four o'clock. I will go to the hospital. You may have an opportunity this evening. I cannot promise, but it may be so. Will you remain here until I get back. You have spent over an hour in this room," he added, smiling. "You won't mind another half hour or so, I'm sure."

"How kind you are!" she murmured.

"Not at all. As Judson says, it is all in my day's work."

"Judson brought a bundle of magazines to her, and placed a chair for her at the big table, with another for her father.

Flint smiled inwardly as he noted the assiduous attentions of his assistant. Bessie Silvius *was* a pretty girl.

With a cheerful nod of farewell to Bessie and her father, and another for

Judson, the detective went out, picked up a taxi at the next corner, and sped away to the Universal Hospital.

He knew his way about the big building, and did not require anybody to show him how to reach the private room he had engaged for Howard Milmarsh. It was on the fourth floor, and there was good elevator service. In fact, there were two passenger elevators, besides others for taking patients, on cots, from one floor to another, and for other hospital uses.

Most of the doctors and nurses knew him, and he had to stop and speak to several of them before he was allowed to enter the elevator and tell the attendant to put him off on "the fourth."

As he walked down the long corridor on his way to the room, he met the nurse who was in charge of Howard Milmarsh at night.

"How is he, Miss Jordan?" asked Flint.

"He had a good night, Mr. Flint. But I haven't seen him since seven this morning."

"His mind?"

"I fancy it is better. He seems to remember things a little. I feel sure he will quite recover in time."

This nurse had had long experience, comparatively. She was nearly thirty years of age, and was considered one of the most competent of her profession in the hospital. When she said a patient was better, there was reason to believe she was right.

"I'm glad to hear it, Miss Jordan. Were you going to see him now?"

"Yes. I don't go on till seven. But as I am in the hospital, I'll go in, of course, to see my patient. I am deeply interested in the case. It is a sad one, it seems to me, for I hear that he is a very wealthy man."

Miss Jordan looked inquiringly at Flint. But if she expected to receive any information from him as to Howard Milmarsh's private affairs, she was

disappointed. The detective was not given to idle gossip.

The young man was known in the hospital as Robert Gordon. If he had been entered in the name of Howard Milmarsh, there would have been altogether too much curiosity about him, in Flint's opinion.

The two reached the door of the private room, and Miss Jordan tapped at the door.

It was opened quickly, and Flint saw that there were three doctors and as many nurses standing between him and the bed, and all were talking with more excitement than is usual in a sick chamber.

"Is anything the matter?" demanded Flint.

"He's gone!" replied one of the doctors, with a jerk. "The patient has left the hospital, and we are questioning Miss Sawyer, the day nurse, to find out how it happened."

"Gone?" echoed Flint sharply. "Do you mean he ran away without anybody knowing he had done so?"

"No, no, Mr. Flint. Not so bad as that. Such a thing could not happen in a well-managed institution like the Universal Hospital. But he went for a stroll about the building, and on the lawn, and slipped out of the front door without anybody in the office on the main floor noticing him. That is the report."

"Oh, that's the report, is it?" observed Flint dryly.

CHAPTER XXXV.

GETTING TO A FOCUS.

DO you mean that he was allowed to go walking about the hospital by himself, so that he could slip away unnoticed?"

It was Flint asking the question, and he was seated in the room from which Howard Milmarsh had vanished, talking to the day nurse, Miss Sawyer,

while the night nurse, Miss Jordan, listened.

"I did not say that," replied Miss Sawyer. "His brother was here."

"His brother?"

"Yes. He was the very picture of Mr. Gordon—except that he was not pale, from staying indoors, like the patient. In everything else they were so much alike that you knew they were twins."

"Oh, you knew it?"

"Yes. You could tell it from their remarkable resemblance to each other. Besides, the other Mr. Gordon said they were twins."

"Had you ever seen the visiting brother before?"

"No."

"He had never paid a visit to the patient till to-day? Did he explain why that was?"

"Yes. He said he had been away from New York for a long time—in the West. He had heard of his brother being sick, and had come to the hospital as soon as he arrived in the city."

"And then—what?"

"He talked to Mr. Gordon for a little while, trying to make him understand. He spoke of being in the West, and mentioned a place he called Maple."

"Well?"

Mr. Gordon appeared to recognize that name, for he smiled and said something that sounded like a girl's name."

"What name?"

"Bessie or Letty or Nelly. I could not be sure what it was, for he does not talk plainly, you know. He never has had complete control of his tongue since he came here."

"Was that all you noticed when they were talking? Was there any other word that seemed to penetrate to his brain?"

"Not that I saw. They talked for about fifteen minutes. Then Mr. Gordon, as he said his name was—the visitor—proposed that he should walk his

brother about the hospital and out to the garden at the back."

"And you let him do it?"

"Yes. It seemed reasonable that they should like to be together, after so long a parting. Reasonable for the visitor, that is. The patient did not make any sign one way or the other. Beyond a half smile, as if he were pleased when the name of the girl was on his tongue; he was just as he always is."

"It might have been better if you'd gone along, too, Miss Sawyer," remarked the detective. "You would then have seen them when they went out of the front door. The patient had his hat, I suppose?"

"Yes. He wore his usual clothing, hat and all. There was nothing in his appearance different from hundreds of men you may see on Broadway or Fifth Avenue at any time. I wish I had gone with them. But I argued that he would be quite safe with his twin brother, and his absence gave me an opportunity to look after little things about the room which are difficult to attend to when he is there."

Flint saw the nurse's point of view, and resolved not to make a complaint at the office, as he might easily have done. Instead, he walked out, stepped into his waiting taxicab, and hastened home.

He told exactly what he had found at the hospital, leaving it to Judson to make any comments that occurred to him.

The girl and her father simply looked bewildered. They did not feel that any harm had been done by the patient leaving the hospital with his twin brother. Indeed, Bessie smiled, as if pleased that he was well enough to go out.

"You know who the twin brother is, of course, chief?" observed Judson.

"It is not hard to guess."

"What is the game?"

"That we must find out."

"When?"

"Now."

"Where are you going to do it?"

"The Milmarsh residence, it appears to me," replied Flint.

"Milmarsh, did you say?" asked the girl. "Do you suppose he has gone there?"

"It seems probable."

"So it does," assented Bessie Silvius. "Oh, Mr. Flint! Perhaps he is quite well—recovered his memory and everything! Well, if he has, that is all I want to know. It is all I have a *right* to know. We'll go now, my father and I. You won't mind my coming again—to-morrow, or the next day—to hear how he is, will you?"

The pitiful appeal in her tones would have touched a much harder heart than the detective's. He walked close to her and took one of her hands in his.

"Miss Silvius, I hope you will not have to wait until to-morrow to hear how Mr.—Mr. Gordon is. I was about to ask if you would go with us to Milmarsh."

"Milmarsh?"

"That is the name of the little place where the residence of the Milmarshes is up on the hill. There is not much else there besides the Old Pike Inn and a cluster of small stores to supply the country homes around. We shall take a train in three-quarters of an hour."

"It will get us up there in less than an hour," added Judson. "It's an express. The chief has that train schedule down fine. He never has to look at a time-table."

"Meanwhile, I will have the housekeeper give us a meal of some kind. She is a wonder at preparing a tasty luncheon or supper at short notice."

"I don't think I'm hungry," protested the girl.

"I know better," contradicted Flint, smiling as he saw that Judson was already at the house telephone, giving directions to the housekeeper. "And your father needs something, too. You wouldn't deprive him of the refresh-

ment he needs, I am sure, even if you were to refuse it for yourself."

Thus chatting, to prevent Bessie Silvius objecting further, Flint led the way into the dining room, where, in a wonderfully short space of time, there were tea, coffee, cold meat, cake, pie, and other articles of food, set forth in appetizing array.

Roscoe Silvius evidently was hungry. The old gentleman attacked everything set before him, and praised each dish as it reached him. Bessie also was hungry, although she was not so ravenous as her father, while Flint and Judson disposed of their food in the business-like manner of sensible men, who did not know when they would get a meal again, and were determined to make the most of the one they had.

The taxi that was to take them to the Grand Central was at the door when they went downstairs, and they were comfortably seated in a parlor car two minutes before the time for the train to pull out.

"It all seems so wonderful," declared Bessie, smiling, as she settled down in the comfortable, roomy chair, and looked along the car. "This morning I had no thought of finding him again in this world. Now, in the evening, I am on my way to see him."

"You are almost too optimistic, I'm afraid," said Flint, with a smile. "We may not find him at Milmarsh. Only, I think that he may be there. I have reasons of my own for believing so, but they may all turn out fallacious. There goes the train."

In less than an hour they were in a motor car, hired at the station, and on their way up to the Milmarsh mansion.

"Hello! What's all the fuss on the porch?" exclaimed Judson. "Look, chief! It isn't the poor people that were fooled on Paradise City there again, is it?"

"I see Billings moving about very

actively," said Flint. "Hurry, driver! Let's get there!"

The chauffeur put on more power and sent his machine along at a headlong pace, which brought it up in front of the porch at the main door with a rush.

"What is it?" shouted Flint, at Ray Norton, who was by the side of the big truckman.

"The guy they called Howard Milmarsh is back again," was the reply hurled back by Norton.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHERE THEY FOUND HIM.

FLINT jumped out of the car, leaving to Judson the congenial task of helping out Bessie Silvius, and bolted into the house.

"Where is he?"

"In the dining room, locked in with the others," reported Billings coolly. "As soon as he came snooping up, I shoved him in with Loudon Powers and Lampton, and let them have it out between them. Then I came out, to see who it was coming up the road in an automobile. It was you. The other guy came only just a little while ago."

"You mean the man you have in the dining room?"

"Yes. He said he walked up from the station, talking to another fellow who was with him, when suddenly he missed him."

"Who?"

"The other guy he was talking to."

"Do you mean to say that he allowed a man to get away from him while they were actually talking, and didn't see where he'd gone?"

"That's what he told us."

"I don't believe it, for one," put in Judson

"Unless this mug in the dining room is daffy. Then it might have happened," suggested Norton. "Who is he, anyhow?"

Flint did not stop to answer, although he could have done it. He went over to Bessie Silvius, and asked her to wait in the drawing-room with her father, for a little time, while he straightened out a little misunderstanding that had occurred.

"But, Mr. Flint, is that Mr. Gordon in the dining room? I mean, the man they say came walking up the road with somebody else? Or was it he who suddenly left the other?"

"I shall have to go into the dining room to see the man before I can answer that question."

He directed Judson to stay in the drawing-room with Bessie and her father. It was a mission that Judson undertook with cheerfulness. Flint saw him leading Bessie and Roscoe Silvius to the drawing-room with Chesterfieldian politeness, and did not trouble any further about him.

Billings opened the door of the dining room with the key he had in his pocket, and Flint went in.

He saw just about what he expected. Louden Powers and Andrew Lampton each had a cigar going, and between them, still slumped down in his chair, as if he never had moved, was the individual who had been put forward as the real heir of the stupendous Milmarsh estate.

Flint went to this man and shook him until he looked up vacantly.

"Where is he?" demanded Flint.

"I don't know. I was bringing him here, because you wanted him. But he wouldn't come the whole distance, and it was no fault of mine. I guess he is somewhere about the grounds."

"Why didn't you search for him, instead of coming up to the house?"

"Because I believed he'd come here. It is what anybody would have believed. But as soon as I came up to the porch, some of these fellows of yours saw me and dragged me into this room."

The speaker was not exactly stupid.

He seemed to be rather dazed by a rapid surge of events. That was the way Flint regarded him, and doubtless he was right. He bent over and whispered in the man's ear.

The result was a brightening up, and a much firmer tone of voice, as he said aloud:

"Of course, I'll go with you, and I reckon I can find him, too. But you will have to keep these two men off me," pointing to Powers and Lampton. "They feel that things are slipping away from them, and they will kill me if they have a chance."

"That is quite probable," murmured the detective inaudibly.

Flint led the cowed man out of the room, and saw that Norton followed. He turned to his young assistant and told him not to let anybody out of the house till they returned.

Once in the open air, Flint's companion seemed to become a different man. His step was springy, and when they came to a fence separating them from a part of the grounds that was full of high grass and tangled shrubbery, he vaulted over it as lightly and cleanly as Flint himself. His voice was almost firm, as he said:

"I saw him looking over here as we came up the road, and once I heard him mutter something about the west meadow. He seemed to know that part of the estate, although I did not hear him say anything else."

"The west meadow," repeated Flint. "Yes, I think I know where that is."

They walked for some little distance through the bushes and grass, until Flint stopped and pointed to what was evidently a recent trail.

"See! Somebody has walked through this high grass and made a deep, wide furrow. We shan't have much trouble in finding him now, I think."

Perhaps Flint was surprised to find that the trail ended at the stone foundation wall of the house, at the back,

where the cover of the tunnel that used to be part of the 'underground railway' was made to look like the surrounding stones. This tunnel has already been described.

"Get in there!" commanded Flint.

This man was not inclined to obey. He seemed to fear it meant getting him at a disadvantage—perhaps locking him up in some dungeon from which he might never emerge save to go into a regular prison.

But Flint was not in a mood to be held back by anybody—least of all by one whom he felt had no right to consideration.

So the man went down the chute, just as Judson had, not so long before, and Flint followed him.

There is no necessity to tell bit by bit how they went along the secret corridor which finally brought them to the back of the large picture in the dining room, where Flint and his assistant had listened to the conversation of the conspirators—one of whom was now actually in the corridor himself.

Suddenly a man sprang out of the blackness and seized Flint by the throat, forcing him backward and almost to his knees.

It was only for an instant that the detective was held at a disadvantage. He hurled his assailant away, and, bringing out his pocket flash, saw the man who had come with him lying on the floor in the narrow space, while facing him, with wild, vengeful eyes, was the sick man from the Universal Hospital!

It was evident that the escaped patient did not recognize either Flint or the other man, and equally certain that he regarded them both as enemies.

Even as the detective watched, he could see the long fingers, lean and clawlike from long illness, twitching to get at his throat, while the madman's feet shuffled slightly, as if preparing for a sudden spring.

Flint took the initiative. Telling the

man on the floor to get up and lend a hand, he threw one arm around the strange creature who had found his way in some mysterious way to this secret corridor, and seized his wrist from behind. By this wrestling trick, the detective had both the hands of his captive firmly held.

"Hold him for a moment!" he commanded the other man, who had arisen by this time. "Poor fellow! He is too weak to resist much. Had you any notion where he was?"

"How could I have?" was the rejoinder, in an injured tone. "I never was in this hole before. Where are we, anyhow?"

"I'll show you," replied Flint.

He felt along the wall until his finger touched a small knob.

The next moment a panel turned open silently, and they were looking through a doorway some four feet wide, down into the dining room, where sat the men they had left there half an hour before.

A shriek of horror burst from Andrew Lampton. But Loudon Powers only smiled derisively. He had an iron nerve, and nothing could surprise him very much. He had always known there were secret passages about this strange old house, although he never had found them for himself.

The appearance of the two ghostly personages in the bedchamber on that night had confirmed what he had heard about the hidden places in the house. So it did not seem so very extraordinary that Flint should suddenly show himself in the wall, by two of the large pictures.

At first only Flint was visible to the people in the dining room. But, as Flint stepped forth upon a chair, and thus to the floor, he led the escaped sick man from the hospital, while following him was the person the two conspirators had declared to be Howard Milmarsh.

"What, chief?" shouted Ray Norton, in delight. "Did you get him?"

"By hooky " roared Boney Billings. "There's two of 'em! They look just alike! Now I know how you told the truth, Mr. Flint, while it looked like—like the other thing."

The detective only nodded, as he put a large chair for the pale-faced invalid, and forced him into it gently.

The belligerence had gone from the face of the newcomer. He seemed to be wondering—that was all.

The most peculiar thing in the whole affair was that the man who had been set forth as the real owner of the Milmarsh estate, and who had appeared so dazed and in such terror of Powers and Lampton, now held up his head and actually smiled, as if a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

Louden Powers scowled at him, but he replied only by a stare of defiance.

"That mug is going to give the whole snap away," muttered Andrew Lampton, in the ear of his fellow conspirator.

"I'll kill him if he does," whispered back Louden Powers.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE RIGHTFUL HEIR.

BRING in that young lady and her father, with Judson," ordered the detective, as he swung the secret panel shut and nodded to Ray Norton.

"Gi' me the key, Boney."

Billings unlocked the door, and, while Ray was absent, he stood guard. Not that it was needed, for nobody made an attempt to get out.

"Here they are, chief!" cried Ray, as he came in with the three persons he had been sent for.

The girl would have run to the sick man as soon as she saw him, and it could be seen that a cry of recognition was ready to spring from her lips.

"Not yet!" warned Flint. "Patience for a just a moment!"

She nodded obediently and sank into

the chair Judson set for her. Her father, bewildered, was already seated.

"Now, gentlemen," went on the detective, "in the first place, I will ask this man, who has been posing as Howard Milmarsh, what his name really is."

"What is the use of my saying?" grumbled the man he addressed. "You know it, and, of course, these other fellows do." He pointed to Louden Powers and Andrew Lampton. "They thought it was a slick game, and that we could get away with the bluff. I knew we couldn't."

"You could, if you'd had any nerve," snarled Louden Powers. "But you never could see a thing through. You are all right at the beginning. But you haven't the pluck to stay with a thing to the end. You're like a wet fire-cracker. There's a whiz and a puff, and you're done! You make me sick, T. Burton Potter!"

Potter smiled. He did not care what was said, now that the truth had come out.

"Then, if this guy's name is Potter, the other one must be——" began Boney Billings.

Flint held up a hand to silence him. Then he whispered to Bessie Silvius.

"Yes, Mr. Flint," she answered aloud. "I believe he'll know me. I'll try him."

She stepped over to the man who had spent so long a time in the Universal Hospital, and laid a hand on his arm. He started and looked at her.

"Bob!" she whispered. "Don't you know me?"

It was very difficult for him to draw his senses together, but it could be seen that her voice had touched a responsive chord in his being. He held out his hand to her.

As she took it, he murmured brokenly:

"Bob Gordon? Yes, that is what they call me. But—but—it isn't quite right. How is it—Bessie?"

She laughed half hysterically.

"Did you hear that, Mr. Flint? He knows me! He called me by my name! He is coming to himself!"

The detective shook his head doubtfully. He was willing to admit that remembering the girl's name was a good sign, but it was not enough.

"Let me try," he said.

Touching the young man on the shoulder, he bent over and whispered sharply in his ear:

"Howard Milmarsh!"

There was a slight movement. But it could not be said that the name had brought him to his senses. He slumped down in his chair again, and in a weary voice murmured: "Bessie!"

"The only thing he can think of," remarked Judson. "He's a lucky man."

"I don't see where the luck comes in, if he's off his nut," rejoined Ray Norton.

Bonesy Billings, Judson, and Ray Norton were all gathered about him, each one watching for some other indications of returning intelligence besides that contained in the single word, "Bessie!"

It was this moment of which Loudon Powers took advantage. With a sign to Lampton, Loudon crept toward the door.

But Flint was on the alert, even though so deeply engaged.

"Not yet, Loudon!" he shouted, as he rushed forward to cut off the rascal's escape.

"Get back!" roared Powers. "You'd better, if you don't want to get this."

He had picked up a heavy, cut-glass water bottle from the table, and was swinging it around his head.

Flint dashed at him, and Loudon let the bottle go with all his force.

The detective ducked, and the bottle went past.

A shriek from Bessie Silvius made him turn quickly.

Howard Milmarsh—the real one—

was lying back in his chair, and a thin, red stream trickled over his forehead.

"Get that fellow!" shouted Flint, over his shoulder, as he rushed to the wounded man crumpled up in the big armchair.

"I've got him, all right," replied Bonesy Billings.

Billings had backheeled Loudon Powers just as he got to the door, and now was kneeling on the chest of the discomfited scoundrel.

Lampton, scared, was in his chair. He had jumped up when Loudon tried to get away. Then, seeing that the attempt would fail, he prudently resumed his seat in a hurry.

Flint was examining the wound, putting his handkerchief to it and noting at the same time that the sufferer was talking rapidly.

"It just caught him with a glancing stroke," announced the detective. "It jarred him, but that is all. It is not serious. Just enough of a concussion to——"

He stopped and looked around him, with a hopeful look in his keen, dark eyes.

"What's this?" the wounded man was saying, in a natural, though weak, voice. "Are we off the roof? Is the fire still burning? We didn't go through, did we? Where's Bessie?"

"Here I am! Here I am!" she answered eagerly.

He took her hand and stared into her face. Then he smiled. This time it was with as much intelligence as her own.

"Mr. Flint! Mr. Flint!" she screamed.

"Yes?"

"He has got back his senses! Look at him!"

"Do you know who you are?" asked Flint, close to him.

"Howard Milmarsh to you, Mr. Flint. Howard Milmarsh! What is the use of my saying my name is any-

thing else? You know me. I don't care who knows it now, anyhow. I had determined to give myself up. I killed Richard Jarvis."

"No, you didn't. You're mistaken. You did not kill him," declared the detective emphatically. "You will take my word, won't you?"

"Take your word, Mr. Flint? Of course I will—I must! But are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. I can prove it."

"Then is Richard Jarvis alive?"

"No. But he died by an accident—after he had quite recovered from the blow you gave him. It was only a knock-out. He came to in a few minutes. You were scared unnecessarily. Now you will come into your own."

"But—my father? Ah, yes! I know! My poor father!"

Tears—real, comforting, natural tears—flowed from his eyes. They would have proved, if there had been nothing else, that Howard Milmarsh was again himself, and that he was prepared to face whatever might be his fate.

Flint turned away, to see what Boney was doing to the prostrate, cursing Loudon Powers.

"Take him away, Billings. Lock him up in a cellar, till the police come."

As Boney Billings promptly obeyed, by yanking Loudon Powers to his feet as if he had been a sack of oats, Andrew Lampton exclaimed, in a terrified tone:

"Police? Have you sent for the police?"

Flint waited till Loudon Powers was out of the room. Then he went close to Lampton, and spoke to him quietly:

"Look here, Lampton, I promised that if you brought T. Burton Potter to me, I would do something for you. I will keep my word by giving you half an hour's start of the police. Get out! I'd advise you to get over the Canadian

border as soon as you can do it. Don't ever show up in New York again. If you do, I won't answer for the consequences. Understand?"

Andrew Lampton did understand. He was out of the house almost before the detective had finished speaking.

"Are you going to bring any charge against me?" whimpered T. Burton Potter. "Or may I go?"

"I know you are a crook, Potter. But in this case I recognize that you were led into mischief by stronger wills than your own. Your attempt to defraud Howard Milmarsh of his rights would mean, perhaps, ten years in Sing Sing if the charge were pressed. But you helped me to find the right man at last, and I believe you are really sorry for what you have done."

"Yes. And——"

"Get out of this house," interrupted Flint. "The same advice I gave to Andrew Lampton applied to you. Lose no time in jumping over the line into Canada. You may escape that way. It is your own lookout. Go, and may you lead a better life in future."

"I will!" returned T. Burton Potter earnestly. "I have had such a scare this time that I'm through with crookedness for all time."

"I hope that's true."

"You bet it's true," insisted Potter, as he hurried from the room.

"It seems to me that you're letting all the crooks get away, chief," protested Judson mildly. "I think both Potter and Lampton ought to have been handed over to the police, with Powers."

"Strictly speaking, according to the law, I suppose they should," conceded Flint. "But I have to consider Howard Milmarsh. He has recovered his senses, it is true—thanks to that bottle over there—but it will be some time before it will be safe to put him through another mental strain."

"I guess you're right."

"Of course he's right," put in Ray Norton. "He's always right. It seems to me that you had a lot of nerve to tell him he wasn't."

"That will do," interposed Flint, smiling. "I can't afford to have my two men—both of them the most loyal lieutenants a man could have—arguing over me."

"But he said——" blurted out Norton.

"I know what he said, and he was right, in a way. But there are circumstances that make it desirable that Howard Milmarsh should take possession of his estate with as little fuss as possible. I promised his father that I would see he was allowed to do so, and that's what I have to do."

It was three months after that exciting night at the great Milmarsh mansion on the hill. Another night of an exciting nature may be mentioned. The excitement this time was of a much more pleasant nature, however. The

wedding of Howard Milmarsh and Bessie Silvius had just taken place.

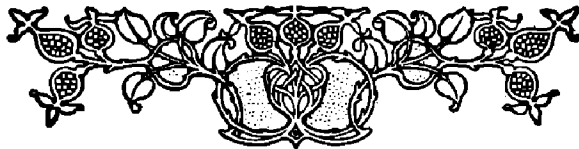
Thorndyke Flint, Judson, and Norton were all there, together with Billings—who wore evening clothes, for the first and only time in his life. Judson had been the best man at the ceremony, and a niece of Captain Brown's was the bridesmaid.

Among the guests were all the people who had been swindled over the Paradise City land project. They had all got back their money, with a large bonus to each person in addition, and now were there to cheer the finest man who ever had lived in that part of the country, in their opinion, Howard Milmarsh.

"That's all right, so far as it goes," remarked Ray Norton to Judson, sotto voce, "but where would Howard Milmarsh have been to-day if it were not for the chief?"

"That's so," agreed Judson. "Howard is like all of us. He has to take off his hat to Thorndyke Flint."

THE END.



STEALS HAIR OF SLEEPING GIRL

A "JACK THE CLIPPER" is at work in Port Chester, New York. Twice within a week young women have had their hair cut off. The latest victim is Miss Isabelle Knowlton, of Bryan's Hill. While she was asleep, two long braids were clipped from her head.

The girl is seventeen. Before retiring, she arranged her hair in two long braids. When she awoke next morning, she found her hair had been shorn close to her head.

The screen had been removed from a window in her room and was lying on the floor. The "clipper" evidently entered her room from the porch roof.

Valerie Melko, a sixteen-year-old miss, had her long hair cut off while attending a street carnival. She did not know it until one of her friends told her.

The Letter in the Mail

by Alfred Plowman

IT was Saturday morning, and the hands on the dial of the great clock in the main banking room of the Third National stood at half past eleven.

Before the windows of each of the three paying tellers was a long line of impatient customers, cashiers of commercial firms, paymasters of factories, and the usual miscellany of the weekend. Some had checks in their hands which they fingered nervously; some shifted restlessly from foot to foot; all kept glancing impatiently down the line, half angry when a customer delayed a teller for a moment more than seemed necessary.

The line before the window of teller No. 1 was unusually troublesome. Teller No. 1, as the brass sign in the window announced, was Mr. Haskell, a middle-aged man with thinnish light hair on the top of his head, which made his forehead seem very high. He had watery blue eyes, a fair complexion, and when he was nervous or excited the blood would mount from his throat to the high wall of his forehead, seeming to lose itself under the thin strands of his carefully parted hair.

Mr. Haskell was a bachelor, had been with the bank for many years, and was head paying teller. Because the other tellers worked under him, he occupied cage No. 1; and because cage No. 1 was nearest to the door, Mr. Haskell

handled more customers than any of the other tellers.

On this Saturday morning the line before window No. 1 was so troublesome that even such an experienced teller as Mr. Haskell was to be excused for becoming peevish. The next man in line stepped up and pushed a check under the bars. "Good morning! Five hundred in twenty-dollar gold pieces."

Mr. Haskell grunted and looked up. The man was paymaster of a large hat factory. "Confound it! Everybody wants what I haven't got! Won't twenty-dollar bills do?"

"No. The directors voted tokens of appreciation to the old employees. My special instructions were to pay it in gold."

Mr. Haskell glanced at his stack of gold pieces. "I haven't got it here. I'll have to go down to the vault." The line moved angrily. "Confound it all! Look at the string—and almost twelve!" He picked up his bunch of keys, and turned around—paused—then threw the keys upon a desk in the corner of the cage, where a young man sat, listing checks on an adding machine. "Go down to my vault, Moore, and bring up that sack of gold lying on the floor just inside the door."

He turned to the window again. "Step aside, please; he'll be back in a moment." The next man in line moved up and laughed. Mr. Haskell looked

at him, saw that his eyes were directed to the corner of the cage, and glanced around. The assistant teller sat at his desk, immovable, his hand poised over the keyboard of the machine, his eyes fixed on the bunch of keys. "Looks like he's hypnotized," said the man.

"Well, well, get busy, Moore!" ordered Mr. Haskell sharply.

"Yes, sir—yes, sir!" And the young man sprang up, a frightened look on his white face. Mr. Haskell eyed him a moment, undecided, then turned reluctantly to the window again.

The young man pressed back the spring lock on the door in the rear of the cage, and passed out. He threaded his way through the maze of bookkeepers' desks, the bunch of keys clasped in his hand, his eyes fixed straight before him. He knew now that he would do it—knew that he had always thought of doing it—knew that he had only been waiting a favorable moment. The plan which had been lurking in the hidden chambers of his mind sprang into sudden birth, and he was powerless before the strong temptation.

He passed down the steps to the basement, where the vaults were located. As he approached, the bunch of keys swinging from his hand, the watchman rolled back the iron gate, and admitted him to the vault room. Before him was an immense cavern, with the great door of many tons thrown wide open. He stepped inside—into the money vault—into the very heart of the bank.

The vault was divided into compartments, each a miniature vault in itself, guarded by a steel door which closed with lock and key. In some were kept the reserve funds of the bank—currency and securities. There was a compartment, also, for each of the tellers, and the first one on his right was Mr. Haskell's. He inserted the key into the lock, and threw open the door.

When he had done this he was completely shielded from outside observation, as the door of the subvault extended more than halfway across the main entrance.

As he stood there, packages of money stacked high on the shelves—money in sacks—bills, gold, silver—the very air freighted with its odor—as he stood thus, a dizziness seized upon him. Impulse—that destroyer of multitudes of men—laid its hot hand upon his reason. He fought against it—hesitated—yielded.

With eager, trembling fingers, he unbuttoned his office coat, then his vest, then his shirt. He tightened the belt around his waist, reached up to the topmost shelf, and from the farthest corner took a bundle of bills. The top one was for fifty dollars, and upon the bands which held the package together was stamped two thousand dollars. He slipped the bundle inside his shirt, and reached up again, then again and again, until he had seven packages pressed close against his body.

Afraid that more might bulk too large and arouse suspicion, he quickly buttoned his shirt and vest and coat, ran his hands over himself to feel that the bundles lay flat and even, and stooped to pick up the sack of gold.

In that moment of stooping, a lightning flash of reason illumined the madness of his act. Outraged conscience sprang up in arms. He saw himself a malefactor, the hand of society against him, branded a felon by the law, lashed by the scourge of his own guilt. He straightened up, and began to tear open his coat; then he heard voices without the vault.

"I say, Tom, did you see Moore down here?"

"Yes; he's inside the vault," replied the watchman.

Footsteps approached. Moore hastily buttoned his coat, and reached for the sack of gold. The head of an office

boy appeared in the doorway. "Say, Moore, old Haskell's about to have a fit upstairs. He sent me to look for you," said the boy, with a grin.

Moore did not answer. He closed the door, locked it, and, with the bag of money in his hand, he left the vault. Fate had intervened. One mad moment had changed the course of his life.

At the rattling of the cage door, Mr. Haskell stepped back and released the lock. "It took you a long time!" he grumbled, taking the sack and keys from the young man's hand.

Moore muttered something about "stopped to get a drink of water," and, taking his seat at the desk, resumed his operations on the adding machine.

Soon the hands on the great clock touched twelve, and the official banking day was over. The last few stragglers were served. Mr. Haskell hung out the tin sign bearing the word "Closed" before his window, and began to count his cash. Moore worked steadily away on the machine. The other tellers, their currency counted, turned out the lights in their cages, and carried their trays of money down to their compartments in the vault. One by one the clerks and bookkeepers, through with the day's work, left the building.

Presently Mr. Haskell stepped back and looked down the line of darkened cages. "All gone, eh? Great Scott, this was a beastly day! I'm glad tomorrow's Sunday. About through, Moore?"

"Just finished," answered the assistant, clearing the machine.

"Good! Help me carry this stuff down to the vault. I've got to hurry. Got an engagement for two o'clock."

Moore picked up several sacks of money, and waited while Mr. Haskell turned out the light in the cage. They passed out into the deserted banking room.

"All right, Mr. Wade," said Mr.

Haskell, as they passed the cashier's desk.

The three of them—Moore first with the bags of money, then Haskell carrying the tray of bills, last the cashier—descended to the vault room.

The trying moment had come. Moore hardly breathed with suppressed excitement. Haskell thrust the key into the lock of his compartment, and threw open the door. He placed his tray upon a shelf, then turned and took the sacks from Moore. These he put beside the tray. He stepped back, shut the door, and locked it. As they passed out of the vault, Moore drew a long breath, and wiped the sweat from his face.

The cashier was setting the time locks. "Forty-three and one-half hours, Mr. Haskell," he said, working on the dials.

"Right!"

The watchman swung the ponderous door into place. The cashier laid hold on the wheel and turned it. There was a clicking of bolts, a falling of levers into place, and Moore knew that until half past eight Monday morning his secret was safe.

He wished the others "Good night" in a strange, unnatural voice. His lips were so dry that they cracked as he parted them to speak. He went upstairs to the lockers, put on his hat and coat, and five minutes later was on the street.

As he passed down the crowded sidewalk he was conscious of a curious sense of elation which mingled strangely with the hateful torture of his thoughts. Did he not have pressed warm and close against his body what all this hurrying throng was striving for? Money—money! Truly it was money made the world go round. He had it—it was his—a fortune—thousands of dollars. Power was his. Freedom was his. Could he keep them? He smiled grimly at the thought.

His plan began to shape itself in his

mind. He would take a train to Philadelphia in order to baffle pursuit, and at once embark for South America. By midnight he would be miles out on the Atlantic. With forty hours' start, he should be able to elude the hue and cry. He stepped into a cigar store and telephoned the railroad ticket office. A train left for Philadelphia at four o'clock. He had no time to lose.

He boarded a street car, and in twenty minutes dismounted at his corner. He walked halfway up the block, ran quickly up a flight of stone steps to the door, and thrust his key into the lock. As he opened the door he was met by the dank, musty smell peculiar to boarding houses of the second class.

He glanced down the empty hall, then, softly closing the door, he tiptoed to the stairway, and cautiously ascended to the second floor.

Safely in his own room, he locked the door, and, taking a cigarette box from his pocket, placed the last cigarette it held between his lips, and threw the empty box into a corner.

For a moment he stood puffing rapidly, his face pale and nervously twitching, his hand trembling as he took the cigarette from his feverish lips. At last he unbuttoned his shirt and took the money, package by package, from its hiding place, throwing it upon a small center table.

When he had taken it all out, he sank down upon a chair and stared at it.

And so it was for this—this handful of faded and dirty bills—that he had bartered his honor, his peace of mind, his quietude of soul? For this he had become an outcast, a wanderer upon the face of the earth! Who for all this wealth would give him back the right to walk with honest men? How now, could he look upon the world and say that it was good? All was black and murky, discolored by the guilt upon his soul. He laughed aloud discordantly,

and rocked his body to and fro in an agony of vain remorse.

If only the boy had stayed away one little moment longer! If only one of the other clerks had been sent for the gold! If only— Cursed, cursed fate that had conspired to undo him!

Once he thought of taking the money back and confessing. No, that was impossible. The irrevocableness of his act sickened him. How could he erase from men's minds the knowledge of his guilt? Would they not rather pity him as a weak fool, too cowardly to carry out the thievery he had devised?

And the others—clerks, bookkeepers, tellers, Mr. Haskell, honest men all, poor, hard-working, struggling along on meager salaries, heads of families all— all—upon all would fall the shadow of his guilt. Mistrust would light upon all.

Once before a clerk had stolen, and had been detected. It took six months to dissipate the vague suspicion which hovered over the bank.

Philip jerked upright in his seat, and seized a pad of paper which lay upon the table. He would do what he could in reparation. So far as lay within his power, he would make amends. Having no pen and ink, he took a lead pencil from his pocket and wrote:

MR. HASKELL: This letter will not be delivered to you before nine o'clock Monday morning, and by that time I will be out of reach. God help me, I cannot tell why I have done what I have done. It was a moment of madness. Already I repent and am miserable. I write you this, not in a spirit of bravado, but merely so that no innocent party shall suffer. I have no accomplices—no one else is guilty—I am alone. I hope that no one else will be implicated. I assume all responsibility. Thank you for past kindnesses.

PHILIP MOORE.

He put the note in an envelope, which he addressed to Haskell, care City Bank.

He sealed the letter, feeling a warm glow of charity and good will run

through him at the act of justice he had done. At least, he would bear the consequences of his wrongdoing. He felt almost heroic. His crime had been dignified. With returning ease of mind came thoughts of escape. He dragged a battered suit case from beneath the bed. Into this he packed the money, then filled the case with clothes from his trunk.

This done, he searched his pockets for a cigarette, then remembered that he had used the last one. He glanced at his watch. It was two o'clock. To idle away an hour or more without the solace of tobacco was impossible. He arose from his chair, and, picking up the letter, left the room, locking the door after him.

He dropped the letter into the mail box on the corner; then, as the lid fell with a clang, thought that he might just as well have waited until later. However, it did not matter—the bank's mail was not delivered until Monday morning. He purchased four packages of cigarettes from the corner druggist, and returned to his room. All was as he had left it.

He busied himself going through his trunk, seeing if there was anything else he cared to take, and burned a few letters. He moved about leisurely, taking a mental farewell of the cheap little room and its contents. He took a five-dollar bill from his pocket, and put it on the dresser for the landlady, then remembered that he would need money for his railroad and steamship tickets. It would not do to be always unpacking his bag.

Undoing the fastenings of the suit case, and, reaching under the clothing, he drew out a bundle of bills. He slipped ten or twelve bills from beneath the bands, and then—with mouth agape and starting eyeballs—stood looking at what he held. He dropped the package, and, in an ecstasy of madness, tore open the other bundles. All were the

same. They were dummies. Some one had been before him. The top and the bottom bill of each package were genuine—all between were worthless.

He sank down upon the bed, and for a long time he sat staring straight before him, his mind a wild jumble of unmanageable thoughts. What did it mean? Who had done it? What was he to do with this secret he had stumbled on? Flight was impossible now that he had practically no money. Should he go back to the bank on Monday morning and resume his duties as usual? And then there flashed across his mind the remembrance of the letter he had posted.

With the thought he leaped to his feet in an agony of fear. He had convicted himself of a crime of which, though guilty in intention, he was almost guiltless of execution. The room swirled around him, and he was near to fainting; and then out of his madness came the way of escape. He would go to Mr. Haskell, confess all, and throw himself upon the teller's mercy. No other course was possible. There was nothing else to do.

In feverish haste, he crammed the bundles into the suit case, locked it, and thrust it beneath the bed. He left the room, locking the door after him, and almost ran to the corner drug store.

Moore was so nervous that he could hardly find the number in the telephone directory of the hotel where Mr. Haskell lived. It seemed an age before the operator gave him the connection. He was told by the clerk that Mr. Haskell was not in his room.

He remembered that the teller had spoken of an engagement for the afternoon. He left the drug store, and wandered up and down the street. In a half hour he tried again, with the same result. He kept on telephoning every half hour, but it was almost eight o'clock when he got Mr. Haskell on the wire.

"Hello, Mr. Haskell! This is Moore. I must see you at once—but it is most important; it's about the bank. I will come to your rooms—all right; I'll be there in twenty minutes."

Hanging up the receiver, he wiped the sweat from his forehead. A clerk was watching him curiously, but he paid no attention to him, and hastily left the store.

He boarded a street car, and stood on the rear platform, trying to think how he should word what he had to say. Mr. Haskell was a bachelor, with apartments at the Buckingham Hotel. He had told Philip over the telephone that he had an engagement for the evening, and the young man was in a turmoil of anxiety lest the teller leave his rooms before he could get to him.

At last he reached the hotel, and was shown to Mr. Haskell's rooms by a bell boy. He knocked upon the door with a hand that shook until his knuckles rattled against the panel.

At the word to enter, he opened the door and stepped into the room. He was in a magnificently furnished library, or study, lined with books and pictures. The furniture was heavy and luxurious. In the center of the room stood a massive table, on which was an electrolier, whose colored globe threw the recesses of the room into shadow. Just beyond the table stood Mr. Haskell, in evening dress, a lighted match held to the cigar between his lips. Philip closed the door and crossed the room.

"Hello, Moore! What the deuce brings you here at this time of night? You'll have to make your visit short. I'm just going out."

Philip placed his hat upon the table, and, coming around, stood before his superior. "I'm sorry, Mr. Haskell, but I'm afraid that what I have to tell you will spoil your evening's pleasure. It's about the bank."

"Well, go on."

"Mr. Haskell, I've been a clerk at the Third National five years. I've always been honest, but lately something has been the matter with me. At first I had great hopes for the future, but advancement was slow—very slow. I didn't seem to attract much attention. I began to get discontented, and my life seemed gray and monotonous. Then there was the money—money everywhere. When a man gets to feeling like I did, he must watch himself all the time when there is money around.

"I can't tell you how I came to do it. I've been afraid of it for a long time. Several times I was on the point of giving up my position because I couldn't trust myself. I lost my head to-day, and did it."

"Did what?" asked Haskell, in a harsh voice.

"Stole. I had been thinking about it for six months—thinking that I would until I came to believe that I must. I tried to put the thought away from me, but I couldn't. The harder I tried to get it out of my mind the more I thought of it. By trying to reason myself into being an honest man, I badgered myself into being a thief. I'm sick—that's what I am—brain sick."

"Here's the deuce to pay!" ejaculated Haskell, pushing forward a couple of chairs. "Sit down. Why do you tell me this? How much have you taken?"

"Next to nothing," replied Philip, sitting down on the edge of the chair, and boring one hand nervously into the other. "You remember when you sent me down for that bag of gold this morning?"

"Yes; go ahead."

"While I was in the vault I took seven bundles of bills from your compartment, and put them inside my shirt."

"Good Heavens!" Haskell leaned forward in his seat, the blood rushing up his face in waves, his eyes blazing.

"From where did you take this money?"

"From your reserve currency on the top shelf," answered Philip, watching the other in amazement.

Haskell leaped to his feet and paced the room, cursing under his breath, puffing furiously at his cigar. Philip watched him—astonished at the other's passion.

"Well, go ahead!" burst out Haskell, after a turn or two. "Don't sit there like a graven image! What next? Did virtue triumph in the end?"

"No, sir, I'm sorry to say it didn't. I went home, fully resolved to take a steamer to-night and leave the country. When I got home I happened to open one of the bundles; then I opened them all. Mr. Haskell, some one has been tampering with your reserve funds. I had seven bundles of old Confederate bills. Only the top and bottom bills were genuine."

Haskell took out his handkerchief and wiped his face. "Good heavens, Moore, this is dreadful! Whom do you suspect?"

"Mr. Haskell, you don't know how glad I am to hear you say that. You believe what I am telling you?" asked Philip eagerly.

"Of course I believe you. If you were not speaking the truth you wouldn't be here. Why should I not believe you?"

Philip drew a long breath. "Thanks for your confidence. It makes the rest easy. I am sure you will help me."

"Why—what do you mean?"

"Before I discovered that the packages were dummies, I mailed a letter to you, confessing to the robbery and freeing any one else of suspicion."

"You—you did what?"

"Mailed you a confession. I didn't want any one else to bear the blame. The letter will be delivered to you Monday morning. I came here to-night

to ask you to give it back to me—unopened."

"The letter is in the mails now?"

"Yes, sir."

For fully a minute Haskell stood before Philip, staring into his face; then he turned away, put his cigar into his mouth, and, finding that it had burned out, lighted a fresh one. He walked up and down the room a few times; finally he came up to Philip, and, in slow, even words, said: "Moore, I am the man who tampered with the reserves."

"You!" cried Philip, staggering back.

"Yes, I. Do you think that no one ever steals except a professional thug and a half-starved forty-dollar-a-month clerk? I've lost money in speculation—all I had. Then I tried to get it back—with other people's money—like the fool I am! I fixed up the dummy packages, and stole from the reserve funds. I lost again, and stole more. I've lived in a hell for the past three months. Every time a teller asked me for money I thought I was discovered. Every time a bank examiner entered the door I broke into a cold sweat. At every meeting of the directors I had to half fill myself with whisky to brace myself for the shock I thought was coming. I've been walking the plank, and expected every moment to come to the end. Heavens! It's awful, awful, I tell you!" The words rushed from his lips in a torrent, tripping over each other. He paced the room, carried away with excitement.

Philip stared at him, speechless.

Haskell came quickly toward him, talking rapidly: "But that's all over now, Moore. We'll fix it—fix it so that we both get what we want. You—money. Me—peace."

They stood close together, staring each into the other's pale face. "Don't you see?" breathed Haskell. "I'll give you a thousand dollars to-night. You can catch a steamer in an hour. Mon-

day I'll express you nine thousand dollars to Paris. I'll take the money from the reserves. I've stolen so much now that a few thousand more will make no difference. I'll find excuses for your absence—lull suspicion—delay investigation. When you are safely out of reach I'll bring out your confession. Then we'll laugh at them, Moore—you in Paris—I here—safe—in peace!" He sank down into a chair, and covered his face with his hands, his body shaken by a paroxysm of hysterical sobs.

Philip watched the bowed figure, striving to comprehend. At last—"I'll not do it!" he burst out passionately. "I'll not do it!"

Haskell lowered his hands and looked blankly up. "Not do it!" Then, springing to his feet: "Why, you fool, weren't you going to steal the money?"

"Yes; but I didn't get away with it, and I'm glad of it. Do you think I want to change places with you? Did the money make you happy? Look at what you are now—a wreck, a liar, a thief, and a coward—yes, a coward. You want to shift the responsibility for what you have done to another. Bah! I'm a hundred times better man than you are. I accepted the consequences of my wrong; I even wrote a letter proclaiming myself the thief. I didn't shirk. I was willing to pay for what I had done."

"Curse your heroics! Will you do as I say?"

"No—once and for all—no!"

Haskell looked steadily at him for a moment; then, going to the door, he locked it, and put the key into his pocket. Coming back to the table, he pulled open a drawer, and took out a revolver. "By Heaven, you will, though!" he said, with a snarl. "You'll take the money, and leave town to-night, or else to-morrow morning you'll be in jail."

"What do you mean?" stammered Philip, starting back.

"Simply that I'll have you arrested for stealing from the bank. Have you forgotten the confession you mailed me?"

"You wouldn't use that against me!" cried Philip wildly. "Why, I'll tell the truth! I'll tell them what you have told me to-night."

"That for what you'll tell them!" jeered Haskell, snapping his fingers. "Do you think they'll listen to you?" What is your word against mine, backed up by your written confession? I'll send you to the penitentiary for ten years."

"Let me out of here!" panted Philip, losing all self-control. "Let me out of here! I'll go to the postal authorities. I'll beg them to give me back the letter. You shan't have it."

"I will have it!" said Haskell coldly. "Now, sit down, and don't make a fool of yourself. Will you leave the city if I give you the money?"

"No—a thousand times!"

"All right—now, listen to me. I'm going to keep you here all night. I have a lock box at the post office in which all my personal mail, even if it is addressed to me in care of the bank, is placed. I rented it to receive my numerous communications from bucket shops and stockbrokers. It would never do to have such mail coming to the bank. I had no idea it would serve me such a good turn as it has to-day. Early to-morrow morning I will send a bell boy down for the mail. When your confession is in my hands I'll give you one last chance to decide. If you refuse my offer, I'll have you arrested, and accuse you of the theft as certain as that my name is Wilbur Haskell. Now, that's all. There is no use arguing about this thing. Go into my bedroom if you like, and lie down. I'll sit up and watch. If you prefer to keep me company, all right."

He took off his dress coat, and, putting on a lounging robe which lay on

a chair, he dropped the revolver into the capacious pocket of the gown. He brought cigars, cigarettes, and a decanter of brandy from a cellarette, and placed them upon the table. "Sit down, Moore; we might as well be comfortable. We have a long wait before us." He drew a chair to the table, and poured out liquor for them both.

Philip sank down into a seat, his face white and agonized. "Mr. Haskell—please—please don't make me do this thing! Look at me! I'm not a thief. Think of the temptation, think of the gray sameness of my life! Give me another chance!"

Haskell slowly placed his glass upon the table. "What's the use, Moore? You would do it again. You talk about the sameness of your life. What about mine? You couldn't stand it for five years; I've been up against it for twenty. I tell you, it would get you again—a man can't fight it down forever. Now, what's the use of sitting there hugging up to your misery like a sick kitten to a hot brick? Here are your friends, my boy—make the most of them." He tapped his fingers on the decanter, then rattled the loose silver in his pocket. His manner and speech chilled Philip to the heart.

The hours dragged wearily into the past. Few noises came up from the street. Passing footsteps ceased to echo in the corridor. In the brooding silence the two men sat, Philip rousing himself now and then to make a plea for mercy, plunging back again into a sea of trouble at the cold, heartless reply to his appeal, struggling vainly in the net which enmeshed him. Haskell, sure of his power, watched his victim, now sneering, now snarling, now amused, now half angry. Then would come a long term of silence, broken only by the scratching of a match or the tinkle of a glass.

The east began to redden. Presently a beam of sunlight flashed into the

room and put the electric light to shame. Haskell pushed back his chair and arose. "At last the day is here!" He went to the window, and, raising it a little, stood drawing the crisp air into his lungs with thrown-out chest.

Philip watched him, his face gray and drawn from the long strain. "Mr. Haskell," he asked, "do you still intend to do as you said you would?"

Haskell closed the window, and, coming to the table, turned out the electrolier. "I most assuredly do. Have you made up your mind?"

Philip did not answer, and after a moment's silence Haskell pressed a call for a bell boy. He came back to the table, and removed the decanter and glasses, whistling softly.

At a knock on the door, he took the key from his pocket, and opened the door a little way. "Oh, it's you, is it, Peter? I want you to bring me up some coffee and some sandwiches—any kind will do. Bring two cups and saucers, and come back here yourself."

In a few moments the boy returned with a coffee percolator and some sandwiches upon a tray. Haskell opened the door for him, and he brought the things forward to the table.

"Now, Peter," said Haskell, standing before the boy, with his hands in his pockets and a smile on his lips, "I want you to do something for me. Here is some money and a key. Take a taxicab, and go down to the post office. The key is for lock box No. 68. Open the box, and bring the mail here. You may keep the change. Hurry, now!"

When the boy had left the room Haskell started toward the door as if to lock it, then turned around, with a laugh. "No need to keep you under lock and key, eh, Moore? I guess you are just as anxious to stay as I am to have you." He went to the percolator, and drew two cups of coffee. "There's something will make things look brighter, Moore. Help yourself to

sugar and cream." He took up a sandwich, and began to eat.

"Mr. Haskell," said Philip, with dry lips, pushing aside the cup, "this is a dreadful thing you are about to do. Do you realize that, either way, you are ruining my life?"

"Oh, come now; I'm only obeying the first law of nature. You don't suppose I am anxious to change all this"—waving his hand—"for a striped suit and a four-by-eight cell? You wouldn't, either. I wish you would take my advice and my—or, rather, the bank's—money, and make tracks for Europe. You've helped me out of a mess, and I appreciate it. I'm not a bad sort; I'm mighty sorry for you. But as long as it must be one of us, why, naturally I'd rather it would be you than me."

"But why me?" asked Philip bitterly. "Why don't you play the man, and pay for it yourself? I haven't done you any wrong."

"Well, console yourself with the thought that it is often the innocent who suffer. I'm not going to argue my actions on moral grounds. I'm satisfied with results as they are." He lighted a cigarette, and sipped his coffee.

Philip arose, and began to pace the floor. As he neared the door he heard a step in the corridor, then a knock. Instantly he called out: "Is that you, Peter?"

"Yes, sir."

"How many letters have you?"

"Three, sir."

"One addressed in pencil—the stamp upside down?"

"Yes, sir."

"Remember that letter!"

He turned around, and faced Haskell. The teller was on his feet, his revolver leveled at Philip.

"Get away from that door!" Haskell snarled under his breath.

Philip's face was white, and the hand of death seemed on his heart. He did not move.

"Get away from that door, or I'll kill you!"

"You wouldn't dare! They'd know the letter wasn't in your hands."

Haskell's face was fearfully distorted. His eyes seemed starting from his head. He had the appearance of a man completely unnerved. The crisis had taken him off his guard.

Philip backed slowly toward the door, keeping his eyes fixed on the spasmodically working face of Haskell. It was horrible—the sight of this man trying to work himself up to the point of killing another man.

"You don't dare shoot!" Philip spoke in a whisper, forcing the thought rather than the words across the space which separated them. "You don't dare! You're a coward—that's what you are. You're afraid of blood—red blood. You're a coward—a coward!" His hand slid along the door and found the knob.

"You haven't got the nerve to shoot! It's an awful thing to kill a man. You see the death watch—the little door—the chair." He turned the doorknob slowly. "And then you're a coward—don't forget—a coward!" He waited.

"My God, you're right! I can't!" The cry was wrung from Haskell's agonized lips. "I can't—I can't!" He turned suddenly and rushed toward the bedroom, stumbled blindly, cursing incoherently, the revolver clutched tightly in his hand.

Philip jerked open the door, and, seizing the startled bell boy, pulled him into the room. "Get the police—quick! Something—something dreadful will happen!"

He grasped the letters from the boy's hand, then pushed him toward the door.

Suddenly a shot rang out from the inner room, followed by a groan and the crash of a heavy fall. Then silence. Philip stared into the blanched face of the boy. A wreath of blue smoke floated through the bedroom doorway.

Headquarters Chat

ONLY to the hosts of new readers that have become DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE fans during the past eight or nine months—and it gives us pleasure to take you into our confidence and tell you that the ranks of our admirers and friends have increased many, many thousands in that time—will it be necessary to introduce Rodger Cartwright, who wrote such novelettes as “Crossed Wires,” “Sealed Lips,” “Told in Crimson,” and “Marked Cards.”

These novelettes were printed in the earlier issues of the magazine, and helped vastly to give it the firm foundation upon which it has grown so rapidly into a great and flourishing publication. In the next issue,

INCOG

BY ROGER CARTWRIGHT

is the novelette. It tells of a murder, the perpetrator of which, with the aid of accomplices, hides all the clues so adroitly that the case is of a particularly unique character. Intensely dramatic, filled with vivid and startling climaxes, pulsing with human interest, this story cannot fail to make a lasting impression upon the most blasé reader of mystery and detective stories.

THE SEA FOX

BY DOUGLAS GREY

is a powerful novel of stupendous international import, which begins in serial form in the next issue. A submarine plays an important part in the action of the story. This timely feature is but one of many that threaten complications between the United States and European powers. Do not fail to order your next issue in advance, so that you will be sure to get it, and thus not miss the opening chapters of Douglas Grey's latest and best work.

Among the short stories are: “The Financier's Memorandum,” by Sergeant Ryan; “At His Own Game,” Scott Campbell's next Red Raven story; “The Madness of Matilda,” by William H. Kofoed; “A Dead Man's Money,” by Narena Brooks Easterling; and “The Thousand-dollar Thumb,” by George Bruce Marquis.

Austin E. McNeill, a police reporter in San Francisco, has interviewed the head of the police department of the City of the Golden Gate for the readers of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE. The article, “Chief White, of the San Francisco Police,” appears in the next issue.

UNDER THE LAMP

Lack of space prevented us from getting a puzzle in the last issue, but here is one that you can sharpen your wits on. Go to it now, lay your solution aside

in a safe place, and compare it with the correct answer that will be printed in the next issue of the magazine, out in two weeks, on January 20th.

CIPHER-MESSAGE CRYPTOGRAM.

Two "gentlemen" crooks successfully carried out a robbery of big proportions, and, for several months, continued to live in the neighborhood of the scene of their "job," without apparently arousing the slightest suspicion. One of the crooks, Jim, had a close friend, Dugan, with whom he spent a good part of his spare time. One night when Jim was dining with Dugan at the Mammoth Restaurant in one of our largest cities, a page brought him a small, white envelope. Excusing himself, he proceeded to examine the contents. A moment later he glared, wild-eyed, at Dugan, muttered a brusque apology for a hasty departure, and bolted from the room. Dugan sprang forward, to intercept him, but was too late. In his haste Jim dropped the message he had just received. Upon examining it, Dugan found it to be a cipher message, which, when translated, proved to be cause enough for a crook's hasty departure from that immediate locality. What was in the note?

8 5 2₀-8 1₆ 4 2₀-1₁ 1₃ 9 6 1 1₃ 3-3 1₀ 2 9 1-5 4-1 7 2₀-
 7 1-2₀ 1₄ 1₃-1₁ 1₃ 2₁ 1₃ 1₁-1₄ 1₃-5 4-9-2₂ 1₀ 1₁ 1₁-1₀ 1₁ 9 1
 1 5 1 2-2₀ 7-2₄ 6 9 2₆ 1₃-1₇ 7 1₀-9 1 3-2₀ 1₃-2₀ 7
 1 5 2 1₄ 2₀-9 2₀-2₆ 5 3 1 5 2 1₄ 2₀-2₂ 1₃ 9 2₀-
 5 2₀-2₀ 7-2₀ 1₄ 1₃-7 1₁ 3-1₄ 9 1 2 7 1₀ 2₀-
 1₇ 7 1₆ 6-1₀ 9 1₁-

The "Snitch"

By *Mert E. Smith*

THROUGH that mysterious subterranean news channel that links every big penitentiary with the rendezvous of crooks in the outside world, a message had come to a man who had long since lost his identity in the number, "7774."

The message was brief, but it spoke volumes to the convict. It had come from a pal, a former companion in the old days, who had shared in many a job that had required finely sandpapered finger tips to insure mastery over the tumblers of a safe.

Convict No. 7774 had come to number the days when good behavior would end a five-year sentence in less than

four. He had planned and resolved, as many men before him down æons of time, to allow no act or influence to deviate him from a life of honesty. But the message changed him. It set another purpose; made the days seem ages longer than before, although the man could count the nearness of liberation on one hand.

The day of his release came—a day with a dull-drab sky overhead, a day that enveloped his being in the purpose at hand.

Creeping stealthily along a passageway that admitted no light save that which came through a barred window

in a door at its end, Quong Wong, a fence for crooks, and keeper of an opium den, listened until a signal for entrance had been repeated with unmistakable distinction. Only until then did the Oriental approach near the door and open it slightly to scrutinize the features of his nocturnal visitor.

"It's me, Quong," a voice whispered, "Jimmy Dolan—don't you know me?"

The Oriental continued to stare. He knew the face only too well, but if he recognized the man, he gave no indication.

"Come on, Quong; let me in. You know me. I come your place all the time—long time ago—you remember—got arrested here—sent to San Quentin. Remember?"

After a moment, the Oriental asked: "You in trouble?"

"No—no trouble, Quong. Why you ask?"

The Oriental did not answer. He drew back and allowed the white man to enter. The visitor strode down the passageway with a quick, nervous step. At the other end he admitted himself to a dimly lighted room, where a row of bunks on each side gave it the unmistakable identity of an opium den. The Oriental followed quickly behind him.

"Where's the gang, Quong?" asked the man.

"All gone," was the reply. Then, after a pause: "Police-a-man come, raid. Slim, him get caught; the kid, too."

The name "kid" smote upon the white man, and if the Oriental had noticed he would have seen his eyes narrow.

"What'd they get the kid for?"

"Police-a-man say break safe."

He lies—some one snitched!" And the white man's attitude for the moment was menacing. Quickly he recovered himself.

"Who stooled?" he persisted, and his

eyes bored through the Oriental until the slant-eyed heathen had to shift his gaze.

"No understand." The Oriental has fortified himself behind two English words which furnish an impenetrable barrier for further questioning when the wily yellow race chooses to evade cross-examination.

The white man shifted on his feet. "Come on, Quong, get the layout; I haven't had a smoke in ages. Quit a five-year sentence this morning, cut to three and a half."

The Oriental went to a closet and returned with a large tray and a thick pipe. The white man took off his coat and prepared to smoke. The Oriental watched the man's every move—all but one. Had his eyes remained on the white man, he would have seen a quick substitution of the opium to a harmless, hard substance, with the same pungent smell as the deadly drug, that went into the pipe instead. The white man stretched himself on a lower bunk, and, drawing deeply on the pipe, dropped off into the apparent lethargy that the juice of the poppy brings to its slaves.

Satisfying himself that his visitor had gone to the land of dreams, the Oriental stole quietly from the room. If he had turned, he would have caught the white man's eyes following his movements. Half an hour elapsed. The white man never moved. Then the Oriental came back into the room. A figure followed him closely, but neither spoke.

"Him same dead," the Oriental said, after a silence, before which the newcomer had gone to the side of the sleeping man and raised an eyelid. "Him no smoke four years—sleep much now," the Chinaman continued.

"All right, Quong," the man spoke for the first time, "keep an eye on that bird and let me know every time he comes here. We don't want him now, but you can never tell. He's only out

a day. Give him time. He'll go back to a moral certainty. Thanks to you, Quong, his pal has a home in Folsom for a bit that'll keep him out of mischief for fifteen years. Clever job, Quong. Without the tip we'd never've got him. This bird ought to be at Folsom with him. Quong"—and the man started toward the door—"you've sent more crooks to the pen than the whole department. Might drop in later when this bird comes to. Want to break the news that the kid has gone on a long journey." Glancing back in the direction of the man who lay sleeping, he passed through the door.

An hour later, Detective Jos Goss, of the San Francisco Chinatown squad, rapped a signal on a door of a house in Wakeley Alley. There was no response. Then he tried the door and found it open. Groping his way along a passageway, he stumbled over a body. Stooping, he took an electric flash light from his pocket, and the first thing its

bright rays disclosed was a pool of blood; then the still, white face of Quong Wong.

The detective didn't stop to notify the morgue—there was more important business at hand. In twenty minutes a police net had been spread throughout the city for Jimmy Dolan, ex-convict, and, until that same morning, known as convict No. 7774.

It was almost dawn when Goss was summoned to the city hospital. At the door of the accident ward, he was met by a plain-clothes man.

"We got him, Goss, but he put up an awful fight. The doc says he's done for—light'll go out any minute now."

Stepping over to the bedside of the wounded man, Goss bent over him. Dolan opened his eyes when the detective spoke to him.

"You're going to die, bo. Why did you do it?"

"I should worry," the dying man gasped, "for I got that dirty yellow snitch."



SUSPECTS CARRY LOOT

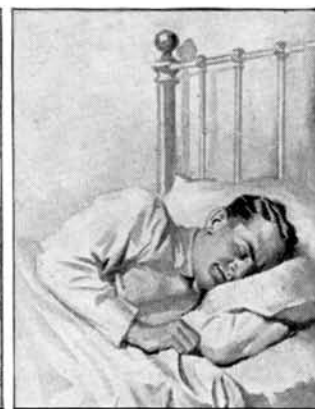
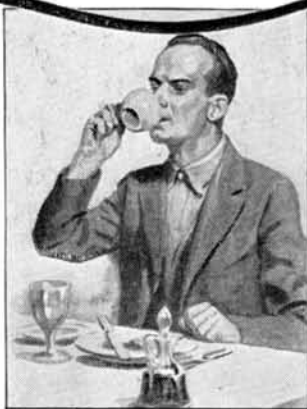
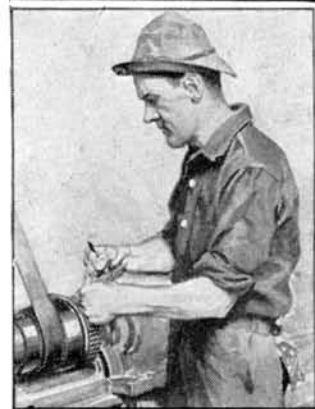
CHARGED with burglary, S. L. Cox and J. F. Hastin, alleged safe blowers, are in the jail at Yreka, California. The men are alleged to have attempted to blow open the post-office safe at Bray. The safe door was partly blown open, but the burglars were unable to take anything from the safe.

The men are said to have stolen a car near Bend, Oregon, and then to have crossed the line into California. Later they went to Bray, where the safe cracking was attempted. Sheriff Howard got on the wanted men's tracks, tracing them on the Ball Mountain Road and into Shasta Valley. He wired ahead to all points.

Finally the fugitives' automobile got out of repair at Castella, and one of the sheriff's deputies captured Cox there. Hastin escaped, but was later caught in Redding and returned to Yreka.

Much loot was found on the prisoners. They carried watches and jewelry, shoes and shirts, and also nitroglycerin, fuse, and caps.

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