FLYNN'S WEEKLY

DETECTIVE FICTION

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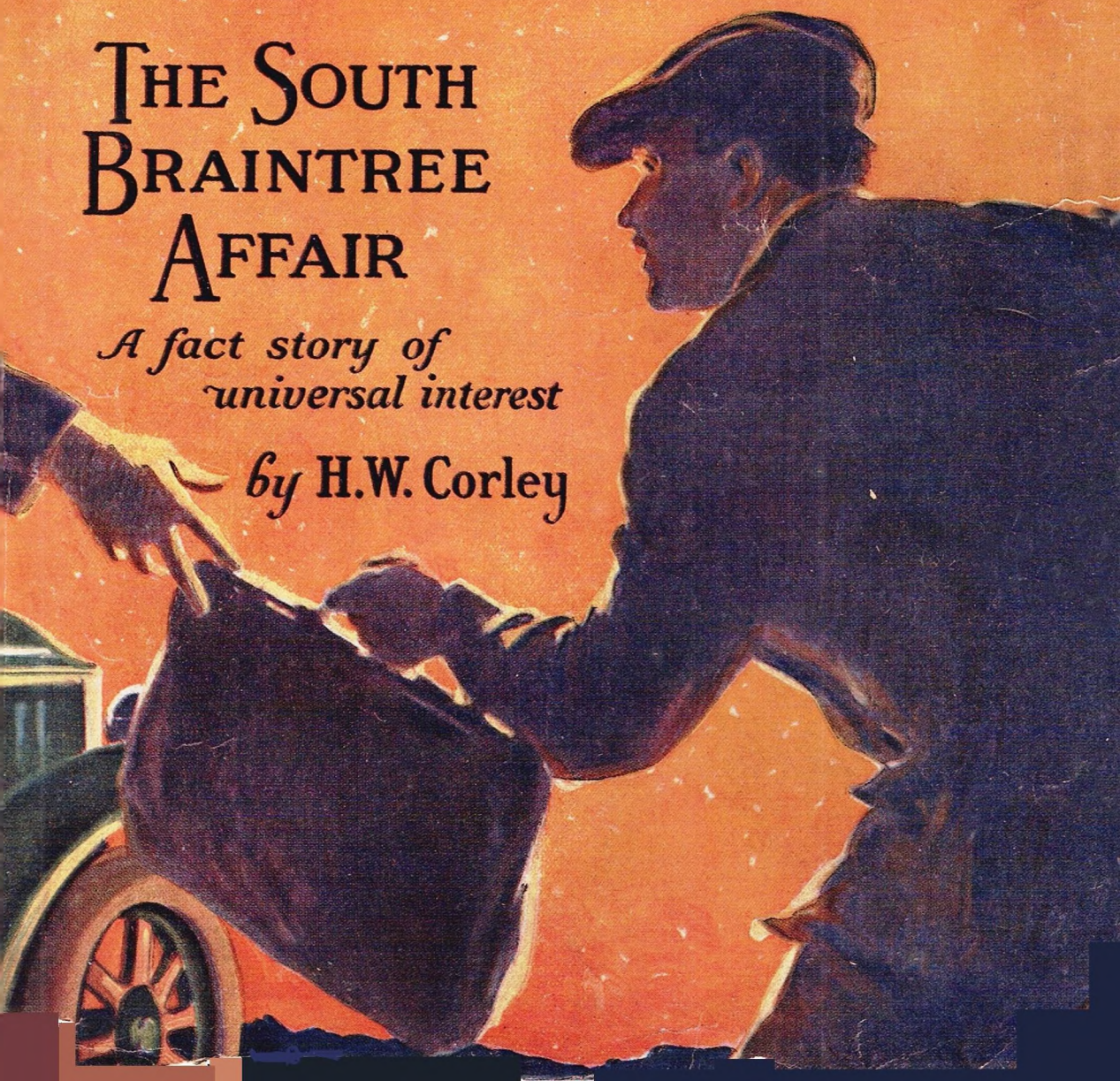
With the Thrill of Truth

THE SOUTH BRAINTREE AFFAIR

A fact story of universal interest

by H.W. Corley



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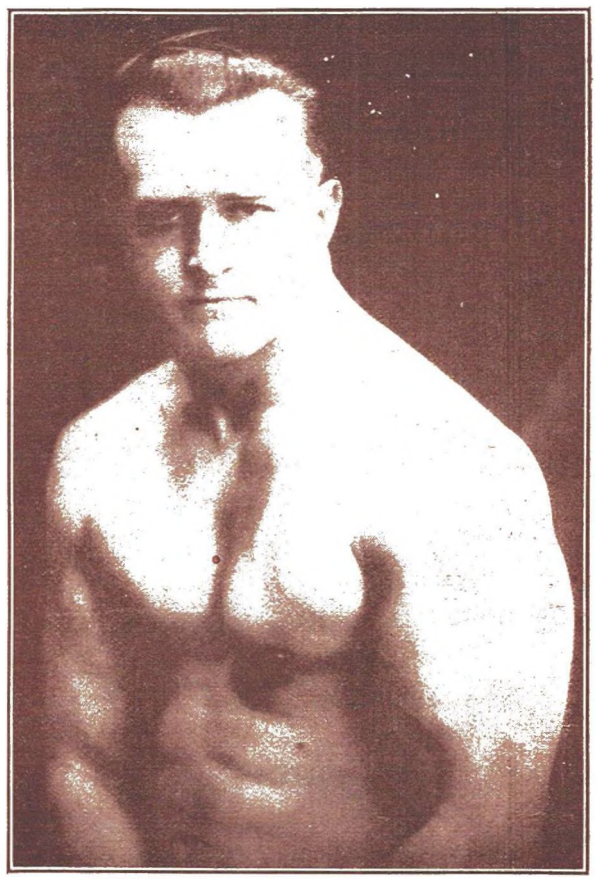

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Flynn's Weekly Detective Fiction

WILLIAM J. FLYNN, EDITOR

Twenty Five Years in the Secret Service of the United States

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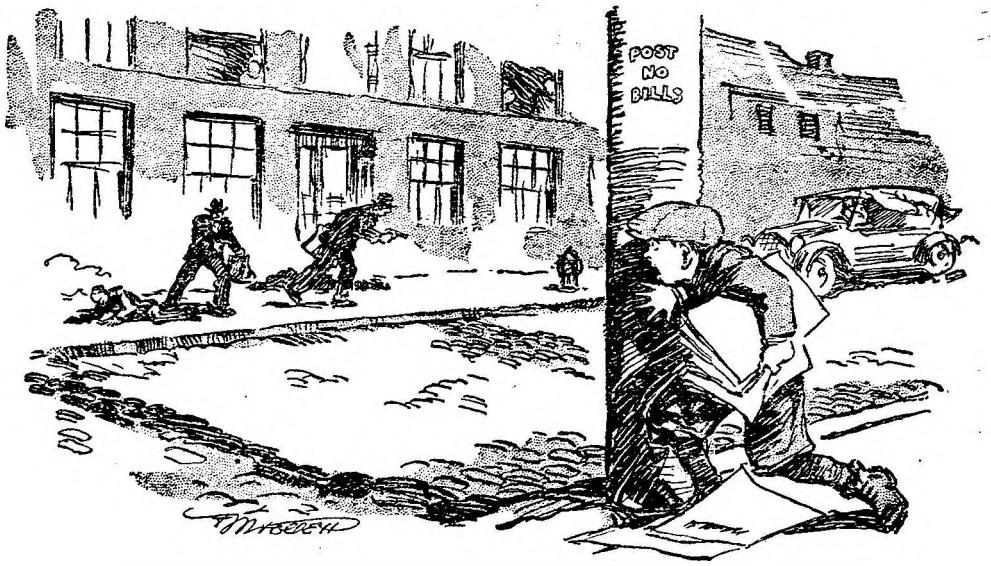


There was a newsboy who fled behind a telegraph pole when the shooting began

THE SOUTH BRAINTREE AFFAIR

By H. W. Corley

"THE CONTROVERSY WHICH SURROUNDS THESE TWO MEN IN DEATH IS ALMOST AS GREAT AS THE STRUGGLE WAGED WHILE THEY WERE LIVING"

A Story of Fact

ONCE again, with the appearance of this account of the Sacco-Vanzetti affair, FLYNN'S WEEKLY DETECTIVE FICTION takes occasion to comment on the great scope of the material it publishes.

It has been our policy with special articles to choose those that contained the most of any one of these facets of interest:

Unusual detective work;

An engrossing problem in criminal psychology;

A legal battle of brilliance;

Or a complexity of clews set at cross purposes in such fashion as to make the whole case bizarre.

"The South Braintree Affair" has all of these elements. So great was the public agitation at the time when the case was fresher in the popular mind that its elemental facts were usually obfuscated. Now FLYNN'S WEEKLY DETECTIVE FICTION feels that it can present this simple and direct account and entertain its readers by not attempting to look back of the basic foundations of the case.

We want to show you a little of the actual sleuthing; a bit of the battle of wits in the court room; a glimpse of the contradictory and confusing clews that led up innumerable blind alleys; and a suggestion of the weird psychological factors that developed during the run of this *cause celebre*.

Probably this is the first time that a magazine of popular appeal has found these things worthy of presenting for public interest in this case. But see for yourself what an amazing story remains when the unnecessary side issues have been stripped from the frame work.

CHAPTER I

LINKS IN A CHAIN

ON April 15, 1920, Frederic C. Parmenter, paymaster of the Slater-Merrill factory at South Braintree, Massachusetts, and his guard, Alessandro Berardelli, were shot to death and robbed by bandits.

On May 5, 1920, Niccola Sacco and Bartolemeo Vanzetti were arrested for that crime. On September 11 of that same year they were indicted. On September 28, 1920, they pleaded not guilty. On July 14, 1921, they were found guilty. And more than seven years later, on August 23, 1927, during which time the case had been continuously in the Massachusetts courts, they were electrocuted at Charlestown State Prison.

Interest in this long delayed case during that seven years was literally world wide. Appeals for clemency came in from virtually every corner of the globe. Comment on the lengthy court workings has been universal. Those who sympathized with the prisoners called the delay "legal cruelty"; those on the side of the State felt that she erred gravely in not meting out a swifter punishment.

All—those who believed the two men innocent or guilty—agreed that it was indeed a most brutal murder, for which Sacco and Vanzetti paid with their lives.

After the execution officers of the court and members of the Massachusetts bar offered many opinions as to just what caused the unprecedented delay in the trial of the case. Why, people asked, had what seemed like a simple murder case dragged through the court for seven years? All knew that it was expensive. All admitted that it was unduly torturous both to the accused and the families, who were kept in suspense for a tenth of a lifetime.

First, those who would explain it said, the counsel for the defense conscientiously took advantage of every technicality in order to prolong and, if possible, save the lives of his clients.

Second, the Commonwealth, in its desire to be fair, was disposed to allow the defense the greatest possible latitude.

Third, more important as a contributory factor, the large amount of propaganda issued, and the sharp division of public opinion over the case, aroused the defense to resort to, and the prosecution to condone, motions so tenuously technical as to have been beyond consideration under normal conditions of the public mind.

Fourth, the trial began under laws of procedure, since amended, which lent themselves peculiarly to dilatory measures.

Two hundred and fifty exceptions were taken to rulings from the bench in the trial of the case, and the trial judge alone heard nine motions for a new trial. There were, aside from these, many motions in other courts and appeals therefrom.

The history of the crime itself, which so inflamed the world, is much like that of any other crime. Without question it was cold-blooded and brutal. Undoubtedly, since capital punishment exists, the crime deserved such measures.

Those who sympathized with the accused asked, not for clemency for the guilty, but for justice for what they believed were two innocent men.

When Frederic C. Parmenter and his young guard stepped out into the mid afternoon sunshine from the offices of the factory of the Slater-Merrill Company they had but two minutes' walk before them across the tracks of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, with their two satchels containing the factory pay roll of some fifteen thousand, seven hundred and seventy-six dollars.

Who Owned the Car?

Across the street, leaning against the fence of the Rice & Hutchins company were two men. This was not strange, however; at least it never occurred to Parmenter and his young guard to think it strange.

Then suddenly two shots rang out sharply. One of the men sprang across the street, seized Alessandro Berardelli, now riddled with bullets, and sent another and another shot into his bleeding body. Berardelli was supposedly armed, and the most dangerous, while Parmenter was not armed, and was older and could not put up a fight.

The young guard sank in a pool of blood, dying almost instantly. One of the assailants grabbed the two satchels from Parmenter, who, though shot several times, was trying to drag himself across the road.

An instant later a Buick car with drawn curtains drew up to the curb. The two men tossed the satchels inside, jumped in, and the car swerved and tore up the road.

By this time the windows of both factories were crowded with frightened people. They saw the car reach the tracks, saw the trackman, with great presence of mind, lower the gates; saw a black gun wave menacingly at him, and watched him as he was forced to lift the gates again and let the murderers through.

They watched the car careen wildly along, with its flapping curtains and its broken back window, through Pearl Street.

On and on through Pearl Street it tore at high speed, attracting the attention of many in shops who did not even know that a holdup had been committed. On and on it tore at high speed through the country roads toward West Bridgewater.

Two days later the car was found abandoned in Randolph Woods, and was identified by the broken back window and the flapping curtains.

But there was no clew as to who owned the car. The police had no idea as to who had been its occupants. Only one flimsy clew presented itself. On the previous Christmas Eve a similar holdup—unsuccessful, it is true—had taken place in Bridgewater. The object of the bandits had also been a shoe factory pay roll. It seemed plausible to link the two crimes.

The West Bridgewater chief of police watched and waited. There had been many "red" activities in that vicinity, many red raids in which literature of an inflammatory sort had been seized.

A few days after the South Braintree crime he received a report. Michael Boda and Riccardo Orciani, two known reds, had driven a 1920 Overland into a garage for repairs. This, of course, was not strange. But the license plates had been removed, and the garage owner felt it his duty to notify the police.

Two Arrests Are Made

"When Boda returns for the car, notify us immediately, and hold him upon some pretext," the police chief ordered.

He wished, he said, to question Boda upon some of his recent activities. Boda and three other men appeared at the garage on May 5 for the car. The garage owner was ill in bed, and his wife answered the call.

The men, she said, looked rather menacing and she dared not phone the police from her own house, where they might hear her.

So she told them that her husband was ill, and that she was just then on her way to a neighbor for milk for him. Would they mind waiting a few moments until she returned?

The men, she said, looked at each other a little anxiously. Two of them left immediately on their motor cycles, and the other two, after watching her cross the yard with suspicious eyes, boarded a street

car while she was out of sight inside the house. When she came back to her own home, none of the men were there.

The two men on the motor cycle got away—not so the two who had utilized the street car. Just as the trolley reached the city line they were arrested. These two were Sacco and Vanzetti.

At the time of their arrest these two men were armed, and for the guns they carried they had not applied for permits. But this was explained later by their counsel. It was customary for Italians to go about armed. In their own country it was not necessary to obtain permits.

Crushed to a Pulp

Sacco said that he frequently served as night watchman—a statement borne out by his employer—and needed a gun.

Vanzetti said that he frequently returned late through lonely roads with his fish wagon and that he often had eighty, perhaps one hundred, dollars in his pocket; too much for a poor fish peddler to lose. He had a gun, he said, to protect himself against holdups.

And the State said both men when arrested had a consciousness of guilt. They lied, admittedly, as to their most recent activities.

Their counsel admitted this, as did the defendants. They had been active in red affairs in the vicinity. Sacco, a shoeworker, and Vanzetti, a fishmonger, hawking his wares through the streets of the neighboring towns, were known as radicals. They had been active in organizations composed of Italian workmen in the vicinity of Boston. Vanzetti, indeed, had once led a strike in the cordage works at Plymouth.

In 1920 there was a wholesale deportation of reds, including a certain friend of Vanzetti and Sacco, or at least a man known to them, by the name of Salsedo.

After his arrest he had been held, *incomunicada,* in a room in the department of justice on the fourteenth floor of a Park Row building, New York City.

One day shortly before Salsedo was to have been sent out of the country, he was found on the sidewalk below, crushed to a pulp.

He was said to have jumped out of the window, but the fear which made him jump filled the hearts of Sacco and Vanzetti and made them falsify their answers to the police, whom, they thought, might cause them to be deported. This would mean not only uprooting of home and family, but also the fear which had caused their friend to leap to his death.

When arrested they were afraid of trouble because of these things, they said, and they concealed the movements of the day of the crime and lied about the people they had seen. Vanzetti, for example, said that he did not know Boda; whereas it later came out that he had tried to borrow Boda's car to pick up some red literature and take it to hiding in preparation for what he thought was to be another red raid. Their mission was also to warn their friends to conceal any indication of red activities.

Their connection with the red literature and red activities accounted, according to the defense, for the "consciousness of guilt."

The Bridgewater Crime

"A radical," their counsel explained, "in the presence of the law, is always more or less conscious."

It was not until two days after the arrest, however, that Sacco and Vanzetti were held as suspects in the South Braintree affair.

Late in May, they were arraigned in the Quincy court formally charged with the South Braintree murders.

While the South Braintree crime was under investigation the police were also wondering about the Bridgewater crime committed the night before the previous Christmas.

The crimes seemed similar, both were gang work, both were done by Italians, both were done in cars. The car in leaving the Bridgewater crime took the general direction of Cochesett. The police of Bridgewater, then, were looking out for a car run by an Italian and coming from that town.

Now Boda had a car, an Overland, and he lived in Cochesett. He had, moreover, lived with a radical named Coacci who had received orders to depart these shores for his home clime.

The day after the South Braintree affair the police called at Coacci's house to see why he had failed to appear at a hearing regarding his deportation.

Coacci was packing his trunks with what they later thought was undue fervor. Somehow Coacci slipped through their fingers and took with him the trunk which he had been packing and which the police later thought, might have held the South Braintree money.

A thorough investigation by the police who met him at his Italian port turned up no money, however.

Orciani was arrested the day after Sacco and Vanzetti were taken into custody. Boda, alleged owner of the Overland, was never heard of again.

Orciani could prove that he was at work on the day of the crime and was let go.

We are told that it is not customary to examine men under arrest for one crime, in regard to another; nevertheless Sacco and Vanzetti, under arrest in connection with the South Braintree murders, were examined in regard to the earlier holdup at Bridgewater.

Orciani proved, again, that at the hour of the Bridgewater holdup he had been working.

Nor could Sacco be connected with this crime. The time clock at the factory showed that on December 24, 1919, he was very properly at his bench. It is less easy for a wandering fish peddler to fix an alibi. Vanzetti, to be sure, produced twenty witnesses who said that he had been selling fish in Plymouth on the day and at the hour of the holdup. Several people swore they had bought eels from him for the Christmas feast.

Others testified as having seen him at the scene of the crime at that same hour.

The identification of Vanzetti hung on such testimony as that of a certain newsboy, for example, who fled behind a telegraph pole when the shooting began—a very thin newsboy, who found this sufficient shelter.

This boy knew, he said, " by the way the man who had done the shooting ran that he was a foreigner." None could dispute, of course, the fact that Vanzetti was a foreigner.

Again, four months after the Bridgewater affair, several shells of the type similar to those found at the scene of the shooting were found on Vanzetti.

Vanzetti, therefore, was indicted in June, went to trial in July, was found guilty and sentenced to twelve to fifteen years in the State's prison at Charlestown. He began his sentence in August.

CHAPTER II

WITH THE AID OF FRIENDS

ON September 11, 1920 the grand jury returned an indictment against Sacco and Vanzetti for the South Braintree murders. On September 28 they were arraigned and pleaded guilty. No appearance of counsel in their behalf was filed until November 18, 1920.

Now the extraordinary thing about the history of this case is the extreme devotion to Sacco and Vanzetti shown by their friends. Three of these, at least, gave up their entire time during those seven years in feverish albeit unsuccessful struggle to aid them.

One man reduced himself to a physical wreck riddled with tuberculosis from overexhaustion and worry. Hundreds of fellow Italians gave every possible penny to the cause for over seven years.

Two days after the arrest of Sacco and Vanzetti, Aldino Felicani, an Italian linotype operator working in the north end of Boston, constituted himself as a Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee whose purpose it was to inspire interest and raise funds to carry on their defense.

Felicani had been born in Italy. He had arrived in America in 1914, and had worked in Cleveland and in New York as a printer.

In a cold, dark little room on Hanover Street, Boston, he opened his office. In it were a few rude chairs, a desk and a rickety typewriter. Alone and unaided, during the first month he collected three thousand, one hundred and seventy-eight dollars.

Then, to his aid came one Eugene Lyons, a former Columbia University student, who thereafter directed the publicity of the organization.

Lyons was about twenty-seven years old, slender and dark and mild-mannered. He

spoke several languages fluently. He was characterized by those who met him as soft spoken, immature, well-educated and sincere. He worked as if a demon possessed his frail body.

To their aid came Lopez, a Spanish carpenter, a jovial man, quick to smile, thickset, slow-thinking, slow-moving.

Lopez was made secretary of the organization. These three men, sincerely believing in the innocence of Sacco and Vanzetti, worked untiringly and unceasingly, and lifted what might have been just another murder trial into the network of international affairs.

From that little room in Hanover Street Lopez sent out appeals for aid to Mexico, Cuba, South America, and Spain. He sent letters to individuals and to organizations and newspapers asking for their interest and money.

Lyons sent statements to all radical papers not only in America, but in England, and to all foreign language papers in America.

Felicani sent appeals to Italians whom he knew abroad, and through them spread an appeal throughout all Italy.

Newspaper men aided them. One wrote a pamphlet containing a gruesome account of an electrocution which was distributed all over the world. Another wrote magazine articles and a third covered the trial for a syndicate serving one hundred labor papers.

Back of the defense committee were numerous organizations believing steadfastly in the innocence of the defendants. Back of it were trade unions and individuals identified with radical matters.

Back of it, too, were women of social standing who lent their influence and gave funds.

These women lent their support and an undoubted dignity to the committee. But they were overbalanced by persons known to be extremists who, it is believed now by many sympathizers, failed to do the cause the good they intended because of this fact.

Through the efforts of the committee agitation followed in every corner of the globe. Italy protested; the case was discussed in the Italian Chamber of Deputies. Workmen in Hungary went on strike; Dutch radicals protested; communist meetings in Brussels adopted resolutions of sympathy. Switzerland protested, as did Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. Demands for freeing Sacco and Vanzetti came from South Africans, Algerians, Russians, Chinese.

The American embassys at Tokio, Buenos Aires and Sofia were threatened, and there was an attempt to bomb the American legation at Lisbon.

In Paris, the home of Ambassador Herrick was bombed. Ten thousand fought in the streets of Paris for possession of the boulevards, two hundred were wounded, two hundred were jailed.

Boycotts on American goods were instituted in every quarter.

In February, 1921, the court set the date of the trial for March 7, 1921. At the request of the defense, however, it was postponed until May 31, 1921, and the case went to trial on that date.

CHAPTER III

IDENTIFIED

THERE was much difficulty in finding a jury, fully five hundred men being examined during the process. No one, it appeared, wished to serve in a case which had, even at the outset, attracted so much attention throughout the world.

At one time a court officer literally gathered in men from the street and, on one occasion, invaded a masonic meeting from which he brought back nine men.

There were fifty-nine witnesses for the Commonwealth, and fifty-nine for the defense.

The theory of the Commonwealth was that Sacco did the shooting and that Vanzetti sat in the car and was, therefore, a conspirator to the deed.

Witnesses for the prosecution said that both Sacco and Vanzetti were in South Braintree on the morning of April 15. They said that Sacco was the man who seized Berardelli and shot him.

Both the defendants, Sacco and Vanzetti, had alibi witnesses who swore that they could not, therefore, have been at the scene

of the crime at the time of the fatal shooting.

Sacco said that at that hour he was at the Italian consulate in Boston, seeing about a passport. He was considering a trip home to Italy, he said, because he had just heard from his father that his mother had died.

A deposition from the clerk at the consulate who declared that he himself had served Sacco at that day and hour, was offered in evidence by the defense counsel.

A Matter of Identification

Vanzetti, an itinerant fishmonger, could not offer such definite alibis. He had been selling fish, he said, from his wagon which he had driven to Plymouth, some thirty-five miles away from the scene of the crime. He had stopped to speak to a man who was painting his boat along the shore and who corroborated this statement. While they were there a woolen goods salesman had happened along and Vanzetti had bought a length for a suit. He took the cloth with him and when he stopped to sell fish at the house of a woman he knew he had asked her opinion of the material. All these people duly upheld this statement.

Including these people, eleven witnesses swore that they had seen Vanzetti in Plymouth on that day and hour, all of whom had definite ways of fixing the time.

Thirty-one witnesses swore that Vanzetti was positively not in the murder car as it darted away from its victims.

Five witnesses for the Commonwealth identified Sacco as in the car or on the spot at the time of the murders.

Two of these were young women who were working on the second floor of the Slater-Merrill factory, with windows which gave onto the railroad tracks of the New York, New Haven and Hartford.

In establishing the identity of Sacco, the prosecution seemed to chiefly rely on the testimony of one of these young women.

From her window she had seen the car eighty feet away while it ran thirty-five feet at a speed of twenty miles an hour. The car, therefore, was under her observation from about one and a half to three seconds.

Her testimony ran as follows:

"He was slightly taller than I, he weighed about one hundred and forty-five pounds, had dark hair, dark eyebrows, thin cheeks, was clean-shaven, with peculiar greenish-white skin and hair brushed back.

"His hair was, I should think, between two inches and two and a half inches long. He wore no hat. His shoulders were straight and square. His face, clean cut, clear cut. His hands were powerful; he was muscular and active-looking."—As a matter of fact, Sacco's hands were smaller than the average.

She said this at the trial. At the police court, a little more than a year earlier she had been unable to identify Sacco, and said so three times.

At the trial on one day she denied having said at the police court that she could not positively identify the prisoner. The following day at the trial she stated that she had failed at the police court in her identity, but maintained that now she was "sure." Her certainty, she told the court, came from reflection.

Of Psychological Interest

Commenting on her testimony, Dr. Morton Prince, professor of abnormal and dynamic psychology at Harvard, said:

"Such perception as she stated is impossible psychologically. What can we think of the animus of a State that introduces such testimony knowing that a jury is too ignorant to disbelieve?

"Every psychologist knows this—and so does Houdini.

"How did she become acquainted with these personal characteristics of Sacco? She had seen him at the jail and court on several occasions. Every one knows that under such circumstances the image of a person develops in the observer's mind and becomes false memory.

"Such a memory is produced by suggestion. Every lawyer knows the unconscious falsification of memory due to later acquired knowledge.

"Why was she not asked to pick him out of a group of men? Had this been done the unconscious falsification of memory would have been avoided."

Approved police methods, we are told, do not bring an accused into the presence of a witness singly, but on parade—that is, with several other men, in order to allow the witness to select the guilty person rather than affirm or deny identification in the matter of a single suspect.

Sacco was brought into the presence of this witness, not in parade but alone, at the police court a few days after the arrest.

Then Sacco and Vanzetti were bound over to the grand jury at a hearing. At this hearing the witness had not identified Sacco—saying that she felt as though the opportunity afforded her did not give her the right to say he was the man whom she had seen.

"I Am Tired!"

At the trial, she positively identified Sacco as the man whom she had seen at the scene of the murders more than a year earlier.

A little over a month later the other girl could not identify Sacco positively. At the trial, however, she also was positive.

Immediately after the arrest, probably on May 6 or May 7, a young shoe cutter was unable, as he admitted during the cross-examination—to make any identification. Yet at the trial he identified Sacco.

On cross-examination he said, however:

"I did not see enough to be able to identify anybody."

Three workmen in the room with this man bore out this last statement.

Far from gazing coolly out of the window and making identification, this witness, they said, was beneath the shelter of a bench as the shots rang out to avoid a chance hitting.

The following day one of these workmen declared that he heard the shoe cutter say, "I didn't see anybody."

A young woman, who, at the time of the robbery, was at the Slater-Merrill factory applying for a job, testified that she saw a car outside the factory and that when she came out fifteen minutes later, she asked a dark man who was "under the car fixing something," the way to another factory where she thought of trying her luck with the employment bureau.

Then, when Sacco was arrested, she was taken to Dedham jail and identified Sacco as this man beneath the car to whom she said she had spoken.

At the trial later she likewise identified him.

On her way home from her first trip to the jail, however, she was hailed by a man who kept a store on her neighborhood.

"Hello, you look tired!"

"I *am* tired," she responded, "the government took me out to Dedham jail to identify a man. They are bothering the life out of me about recognizing these two men. I don't know a thing about them. I have never seen them and I can't recognize them."

This man testified as to this conversation at the trial, and was asked why he didn't get in touch with the government or the men whom the young woman witness had specified as taking her to Dedham jail.

At the trial she testified that the man whom she had seen at the scene of the murders had a "funny face, not a good-looking face—yet not a brutal face."

"Something Is Wrong!"

"When I heard of the shooting," she explained naïvely, "I somehow connected in with the man I saw with the car."

Four witnesses, however, discredited her testimony.

A woman who was with her at the time, denied flatly that either one of them had asked the man under the car anything at all.

"We asked a man in khaki who was standing near," she insisted.

Then a witness who gave the name of Goodridge, testified that he was in a pool room in South Braintree when he heard some shots and he rushed to the door. An automobile was coming toward him, and as he reached the sidewalk a man in this car pointed a gun at him. He dodged back into the pool room.

Seven months later he identified Sacco as the man who waved the gun and also identified him at the trial.

Now the man who ran the pool room, Magazu, who had the pool room with a shoe store on the side, was, at that moment, showing a customer a pair of shoes.

Goodridge came into the shop, he testified, and said:

"My God, something is wrong down the street!"

The pool room man, according to his testimony, asked: "What?"

"I think they killed the paymaster at Slater-Merrill's," Goodridge answered, "and got away with the pay roll."

"Did you see the men?" asked Magazu.

And Goodridge answered: "Yes, they pointed a gun at me."

"How do the men look like?" asked Magazu.

The Gate Tender Testifies

"He was a young man with light hair, a light complexion and he wore an army shirt," Goodridge replied. "This job wasn't pulled by any foreign people."

To his employer, a music store owner, Goodridge had reported that he had not yet offered to aid the State in the identification. And the employer said:

"I told him to go and see if he could recognize the couple—Sacco and Vanzetti. I said that I would pay him just the same while he was away. I told him to go and see if he could recognize these people and see whether they were the ones or not."

"Oh, I can't do that," Goodridge answered. "When I saw the gun I ran right away from where I was. I can't remember the faces."

A week after the murders, Goodridge went to get a shave at a barber shop in South Braintree. Here he related his connection with the murders which at that time as well as later was occupying much local attention.

Again he told the story.

"I was in the pool room when I heard some shots and I looked out and saw the bandit car come up and I saw the man in the car, but if I have got to say who is that man, I cannot say."

This testimony was borne out by the barber's boss, who stood near the chair while the conversation was carried on.

The prosecution offered as witnesses to identify Vanzetti as occupant of the bandit car two men, one of whom said that he had seen Vanzetti at the scene of the hold-up. The other said that he had seen him a few hours before the murders in South Braintree.

The first was the gate tender on the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad who had been scared by a gun flourished from the bandit car.

The other man said that he had seen Vanzetti on the train going from Cochesett to Boston and that Vanzetti got out at East Braintree at nine fifty-four.

Three railroad men, however, contradicted that testimony.

The gate tender identified Vanzetti as the man who was driving the car. But his testimony was discredited by a locomotive fireman, who said that three-quarters of an hour after the shooting the gateman had told him that he would not know the men in the car if he saw them again, because all he saw was the gun and then he ducked.

Another witness said that at a quarter after four on the day of the murders, the gateman told him that the man driving the murder car was light complexioned.

"A Tough-looking Bunch"

A freight clerk testified that the gateman said just after the shooting, "It will be hard to identify those men."

At the Matfield crossing some miles distant from South Braintree, Reed, the gate tender there, put down the gates as the murder car came near and a man in the car cried out in clear and unmistakable English:

"What in hell are you holding us up for?"

Reed said that he recognized Vanzetti as the man seated in the *front* seat.

The Commonwealth had held that Vanzetti was in the *back* seat, a theory which did not discredit Reed's testimony.

Then another witness testified that he saw a car going past him in South Braintree with five people in it, and that one was Vanzetti. The car, he said, appeared strange to him; the occupants looked like foreigners.

"I felt that I was looking at a tough looking bunch."

"But," he was asked at the trial by the

counsel for the defense, " there is nothing unusual in seeing a car with five or seven foreigners in it, is there?"

The witness admitted that it was not unusual. He could not give any description of the men who were on the front seat of the automobile.

" One man attracted my attention "—the man whom he says was Vanzetti. He could not say whether the other men had mustaches or beards, whether they wore slouch hats, or caps with visors or without visors.

Other identification witnesses admitted after the trial that they lied in their testimony. Later they recanted their recantations, saying that they had been coerced. Subsequently, too, they returned to their original testimony.

CHAPTER IV

TWISTED TESTIMONY

THE testimony of the gun and bullet lasted just three days of the trial. Experts for the prosecution said that the bullets found in the body of the slain guard came from the gun found on Sacco when arrested, and which, at that time, was fully loaded. Experts for the defense were equally positive that the bullets had not come from Sacco's gun.

A gun had been found on Vanzetti at the time of his arrest. It was a .38 caliber Harrington and Richardson, with a new hammer.

The gun which Berardelli had carried into the ambush which brought his death was missing when the murder car careened away from the scene. The gun had previously been fitted with a new hammer. And the jury was asked to believe that Vanzetti's gun, therefore, had been taken from the body of the slain guard.

Yet the State brought forward no one who testified that Berardelli had a gun at the time of his death, nor did any one see him lose it.

Mrs. Berardelli thought that the gun often carried by her husband had a black handle, but she said no more to aid the assumption that Vanzetti's gun was that gun.

In March, 1920, Berardelli had taken his gun to Boston to be repaired. An employee of the shop which did the repairing—affixing a new spring—testified that the gun found on Vanzetti " looked like " the gun Berardelli had brought in at that time.

No evidence was offered to indicate that the spring on Vanzetti's gun was new. The defense offered undisputed testimony of two experts for the defense who said that the spring on the revolver was no newer than the other parts of the revolver. Further, the defense found a witness who swore that he had sold the gun in question to Vanzetti.

Wadsworth, in charge of the gun repairing department at Iver Johnson's where Berardelli had taken his gun, said that Berardelli brought in a .38 caliber Harrington and Richardson revolver but the gunsmith said that it was a .32 caliber revolver. The records at the repairing shop did not show that the gun had ever been returned to Berardelli.

Mrs. Berardelli said that she did not remember the delivery of the gun. And just after the funeral Mrs. Berardelli said to a friend, who so swore in court:

" Oh, dear, if he—Berardelli—had only taken out the revolver he would not be in the condition he is to-day."

Two motions for new trials grew out of the gun and bullet testimony, namely the Hamilton motion and the Proctor motion.

Hamilton, an expert of fifteen years' experience in microscopic examinations of exhibits used all over the United States, gave an affidavit to the effect that in his opinion minute comparison made of the scratches of the bullet and of grooves inside the barrel of the gun—Sacco's gun—conclusively disproved the theory of the State that the bullet was fired from Sacco's pistol. Hamilton had made a compound examination of the bullet and had photographs made under powerful magnification to uphold his statements.

The Proctor motion was a motion less simple but even more significant.

For the State, there testified Proctor and Van Ambergh to the effect that the fatal bullet had gone through Sacco's gun on its course to the heart of Berardelli.

But Proctor had said that this was not his belief. At the time of the trial he was

head of the State police. He had been making examinations for twenty years and had testified, in reference to guns and bullets, in one hundred capital cases.

The State, therefore, offered his testimony as that to which the most importance of all should be attached.

" My opinion," said Proctor, " is that it is consistent with being fired from Sacco's pistol."

This was said at the trial, and by the court was interpreted for the jury as meaning that the bullet was fired from the gun in question.

After the trial, however, Proctor said in an affidavit:

Pistol Experts

" One of the bullets was fired from *a* Colt automatic pistol of .32 caliber. During preparation for the trial my attention was repeatedly called by the district attorney and his assistant to the question whether I could find any evidence which would justify the opinion that the particular bullet taken from the body of Berardelli—which came from *a* Colt automatic —had come from *the* Colt automatic taken from Sacco.

" I used every means available to me for forming an opinion on this subject. I conducted with Captain Van Ambergh certain tests in Lowell, about which I testified, consisting in firing certain cartridges through Sacco's pistol.

" At no time was I able to find any evidence whatever which tended to convince me that the particular model bullet found in Berardelli's body which came from *a* Colt automatic pistol—which, I think, was numbered three and which had some other exhibit number, came from Sacco's pistol.

" I so informed the district attorney and his assistants before the trial.

" This bullet is commonly called a metal-patch bullet and although I repeatedly talked over with Captain Van Ambergh, the scratch or scratches which he claimed tended to identify this bullet as one which must have gone through Sacco's pistol, his statements concerning the identifying marks seemed to me to be entirely unconvincing.

" At the trial the district attorney did not ask me whether I had found any evidence that the so-called mortal bullet which I have referred to as Number Three, passed through Sacco's pistol, nor was I asked that question on cross-examination.

" The district attorney desired to ask me that question, but I had repeatedly told him that if he did, I should be obliged to answer him in the negative; consequently he put to me this question:

" ' Have you an opinion as to whether bullet Number Three was fired from the Colt automatic which is in evidence?'

" To which I answered, ' I have.'

" Then he proceeded, ' And what is your opinion?'

" I answered, ' My opinion is that it is consistent with being fired from that pistol.'

" I am still of the same opinion. But I do not intend by that answer to imply that I had found any evidence that the so-called mortal bullet had passed through this particular Colt automatic pistol, and the district attorney well knew that I did not so intend, and framed his question accordingly.

The Mortal Bullet

" Had I been asked the direct question, whether I had found any affirmative evidence whatever that this so-called mortal bullet had passed through this particular Sacco pistol, I should have answered then, as I do now, without hesitation, in the negative." (From Brief for Defendants on first appeal.)

In filing a reply, District Attorney Katzman and his assistant, Mr. Williams, said nothing which contradicted Mr. Proctor.

Mr. Katzman said, "—prior to his testifying, Captain Proctor told me that he was prepared to testify that the mortal bullet was consistent with having been fired from the Sacco pistol; that he did not repeatedly ask him whether he had found any evidence that the mortal bullet had passed through the Sacco pistol, nor did he repeatedly tell me that if I did ask him that question he would be obliged to reply in the negative."

Mr. Williams said, " He—namely, Mr. Proctor—said that all he could do was to determine the width of the marks upon the bullet. His attention was not repeatedly called to the question whether he could find

any evidence which would justify the opinion that this bullet came from the Sacco pistol.

" I conducted the direct examination of Captain Proctor at the trial and asked him the question quoted in his affidavit.

" ' Have you an opinion as to whether bullet Number Three was fired from the Colt automatic pistol which is in evidence?'

" This question was selected by Captain Proctor himself as best calculated to give him an opportunity to tell what opinion he had respecting the mortal bullet and its connection with the Sacco pistol.

The Cap They Found

" His answer in court was the same answer as he had given me personally before."

In the argument, Mr. William Thompson of counsel for the defendants said:

" In your closing charge, your honor, you disclosed the importance you attached to the testimony of these experts. The former district attorney and the present district attorney do not deny that the jury got an erroneous understanding and that your honor got an erroneous understanding of the testimony of one of the witnesses.

" They heard your honor's charge. Did they rise in their seats to correct you? No, they sat by and never said a word. They profited by Captain Proctor's testimony. How can they be reconciled with a desire to be fair to men on trial for their lives? The more I reflect on the matter the worse it grows."

On this matter the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts handed down an opinion of sixty pages on May 12, 1926, in which it said that it found " no error " in any of the rulings of Judge Thayer. The verdict was allowed to stand.

On the cap found near the scene of the murders, the prosecution laid much stress and importance. They did their utmost to identify the cap as belonging to Sacco, the man who, witnesses had said, was bareheaded.

Now this cap was a common variety, furlined, and with earflaps, such as any one might have had. There are hundreds, even thousands of them sold. It had no distinctiveness, was of pepper and salt variety, and while it fitted Sacco roughly, did not, many said, fit him as a cap would fit a man if purchased with any care in selection.

There was no evidence in direct identification of the cap; though Sacco's employer said in a hesitant manner that it bore a general resemblance to one which he had seen hanging on a peg near the bench at which Sacco worked in his factory.

The resemblance, he said, was in its color. But no one who had ever seen Sacco wear such a cap could be produced.

" And," he insisted, " this statement is not meant to identify the cap as Sacco's. I merely say that it seems to be the same color as one which was hanging near his bench."

Mrs. Sacco, however, denied that her husband ever wore such a cap in his life.

" He never wears a cap with earflaps. He doesn't look good in them. I wouldn't let him ever wear such a cap," she protested. " I don't like him in them."

The defendants acknowledged their consciousness of guilt when arrested and admitted lying in answer to questions then put them. But they insisted that they were afraid of deportation or rough treatment at the hands of the police because they were admitted radicals.

Where Was the Stolen Money?

They had been with Boda to the garage, they said, as part of a plan to get rid of some radical literature because further raids were expected, and the car was to have been used to transport it to hiding.

Sacco carried a pistol, he said, because he often acted as night watchman at his place of employment—a fact which his employer corroborated, at the same time giving Sacco a good character as an honest, faithful man.

The prosecution made no attempt to connect these two men with professional bandits or to explain their connection at the time of the South Braintree murders. Nor did it make an effort to trace the stolen money, nor find any indication that Sacco and Vanzetti had been in possession of any unusual amount, or show that for the three weeks after the crime until arrest that the conduct of these men had been anything

save the usual going about on their normal business.

The contention of the sympathizers with Sacco and Vanzetti was that the defendants were being tried, not as bandits but as radicals.

CHAPTER V

WITHOUT BEARING ON THE CASE

ON the stand Sacco and Vanzetti both spoke imperfect English, and showed many times that they did not understand the questions which were put to them or the material which was being placed before the jury and the judge.

They told what they did on April 15, and they told why they had acted with consciousness of guilt when arrested by the police on the trolley car.

They testified as to their radical activities, their pacificism, their escape to Mexico to dodge the draft.

Now, in 1921, the temper of the times was such that it was the duty of the court and prosecutors engaged in trying two Italians, radicals, and pacifists, before a jury of native New Englanders, " to keep the instruments of justice free from infection of passion or prejudice."

The Yale *Law Journal* in remarking on this phase of the case said: " The commonwealth was allowed to ask at a time of intense popular feeling against anarchists and all opposed to the established order, questions emphasizing in a picturesque and telling manner the political views of a defendant on trial for a crime which admittedly had not the slightest relation to those views."

Mr. Katzman, conducting the cross-examination, did so as follows. (We quote verbatim from the trial records.)

Q: So you left Plymouth, Mr. Vanzetti, in May, 1917, to dodge the draft, did you?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: When this country was at war, you ran away so you would not have to fight as a soldier?

A: Yes.

Q: You were going to advise in a public meeting, men who had gone to that war? (They had found in Sacco's pocket a notice of a meeting at which Vanzetti was scheduled to speak.) Are you that man?

A: Yes, sir, I am that man. Not the man you want me. I am that man.

Examining Sacco, Mr. Katzman said:

Q: Did you say yesterday you loved a free country?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Did you love this country in May, 1917?

A: I did not say, I don't want to say that I did not love this country.

Q: Did you love this country in that month of 1917?

A: If you can, Mr. Katzman, if you give me that, I could explain—

Q: Do you understand the question?

A: Yes.

Q: Then will you please answer it?

A: I cannot answer it in one word.

Q: You can't say whether you loved the United States of America one week before the day you enlisted for the first draft?

A: I can't say it in one word."

Q: Did you love your country in the last week of May, 1917?

A: That is pretty hard for me to say in one word, Mr. Katzman.

Q: There are two words you can use, Mr. Sacco. Yes, or no. Which one is it?

A: Yes.

Q: And in order to show your love for this United States of America when she was about to call upon you to become a soldier, you ran away to Mexico. Did you go to Mexico to avoid being a soldier for the country you loved?

A: Yes.

Q: And would it be your idea of showing your love for your wife that when she needed you, you ran away from her?

A: I did not run away from her.

Mr. Moore: I object.

A: I was going to come after her if I need her. (Sacco said this.)

Q: Then I will ask you—didn't you run away from Milford so as to avoid being a soldier from the United States?

A: I did not run away.

Q: You mean you walked away?

A: Yes.

Q: You don't understand me when I say " run away " do you?

A: That is vulgar.

Q: That is vulgar?

A: You can say a little intelligent, Mr. Katzman.

Q: Don't you think that going away is a vulgar thing to do when she needs you?

A: I don't believe in war—

Q: You don't believe in war?

A: No, sir.

Q: Do you think it is a cowardly thing to do what you did?

A: No, sir.

Q: Do you think it is a brave thing to do what you did?

A: No, sir.

Q: Why didn't you stay down there in that free country and work with a pick and shovel?

A: I don't think I did sacrifice to leave a job to go to pick and shovel in Mexico.

Q: Is it because—is your love for the United States of America commensurate with the amount of money you can get in this country per week?

A: Better conditions, yes.

Q: Better country to make money in, isn't it?

A: Yes.

Q: Is your love for this country measured by the amount of money you can earn here?

A: I never loved money.

Q: Is standing by your country when she needs a soldier evidence of love of country?

Mr. J. McAnarney: That I object to, if your honor pleases. And I might state now that I want my objection to go to this whole line of interrogation.

The court: I think you opened it up.

Mr. J. McAnarney: No, if your honor please, I have not.

The court: Is that not your claim, that the defendant, as a reason he has given for going to the Johnson home, that they wanted the automobile to prevent people from being deported and to get the literature all out of the way? Does he not claim that this was done in the interests of the United States, to prevent violation of the law by the distribution of this literature?

A: Are you asking that as a question?

The court: Yes.

Mr. McAnarney: Absolutely not. We have taken no such position on that, and the evidence at this time does not warrant the assumption of that question.

The court: Are you going to claim that what the defendant did was in the interest of the United States?

Mr. McAnarney: Your honor, please, I now object to your honor's statement as prejudicial to the rights of the defendants, and ask that statement be withdrawn.

The court: There is no prejudicial remark made that I know of, and none was intended. I simply asked you, sir, whether you propose to offer evidence as to what you said to me.

Mr. J. McAnarney: If your honor please, the remarks were made with reference to the country and whether the acts that he was doing were for the benefit of the country. I can see no other inference to be drawn from those except prejudicial to the defendants.

The court: All I ask is this one question, and it will simplify matters very much. It is your claim that in the collection of the literature and books and newspapers that that was done in the interests of the United States?

Mr. McAnarney: No, I made no such broad statement as that.

Mr. Katzman: Well he—Sacco—stated in his direct examination yesterday that he loved a free country, and I offer it to attack that statement made in his examination by his own counsel.

The court: I will let you inquire further first as to what he meant by the expression. What did you mean when you said yesterday that you loved a free country?

A: Give me a chance to explain.

Q: I am asking you to explain now.

CHAPTER VI

"NO WAR IS FOR CIVILIZATION"

A (by Mr. Sacco): When I was in Italy, a boy, I was a Republican, so I always thinking Republican has more chance to manage education, develop, to build some day his family to raise the child and education if you could.

But that was my opinion, so when I came to this country I saw there was not what I was thinking before. . . . . When I been started work here very hard and been work thirteen years, hard worker, I could not afford much a family the way I did have the idea before. I could not put any money in the bank. I could no push my boy some to go to school.

The free idea gives any man a chance to profess his own idea not the supreme idea. . . . . I could see the best men intelligent, education, they been arrested and sent to prison and died in prison for years and years without getting them out. And Debs, one of the great men in his country, he is in prison still away in prison because he is a Socialist.

Sacco Discusses War

He wanted the laboring classes to have better conditions and better living, more education, give a push his son if he could have a chance some day. But they put him in prison. Why? Because the capitalist class they know, they are against that. Because the capitalist they don't want our child to go to high school or college or Harvard College. There would be no chance, there would be no— They don't want the working class educated, they want the working class a low all the time, be underfed, and not to be up with the head.

So sometimes you see the Rockerfellers, Morgans, they give fifty, I mean they give five hundred thousand dollars to Harvard College, they give a million dollars for another school.

Every day, say, " Well, D. Rockerfeller is a great man, the best man in the country."

I want to ask him who is going to Harvard College? What benefit the working class they will get by those million dollars they give by Rockerfeller, D. Rockerfeller? They don't get, the poor class, they won't have no chance to go to Harvard College, because men who is getting twenty-one dollars a week or thirty dollars a week—I don't care if he gets eighty dollars a week, if he gets a family of five children—he can't live and send his child and go to Harvard College if he want to eat everything nature will give him. If he wants to eat like a cow, and that if the best thing. But I want men to live like men.

I want men to get everything that nature will give best, because they belong—we are not the friend of any other place, but we are belong to nations. So that is only my idea has been changed.

So that is only I love people who labor and work and see better conditions every day develop—makes no more war. We no want fight by the gun and we don't want to destroy young men, some day need a little more bread. So when the time our mother get some bread or profit out of that boy, the Rockerfellers, Morgans, some of the peoples, high class, they send to war.

Why? What is war?

The war is not shoots like Abraham Lincoln's and Abe Jefferson, to fight for a free country, for the better education, and give chance to any other peoples, not the white people, but the black and the others because they believe and know they are mens like the rest. But they are war for the great millionaire.

" Why I Love Socialists "

No war is for civilization or men. There are war for business, million dollars come on the side.

What ought we have to kill each other? I have been working for the Irish, I have been working with German fellows, with the French, many other peoples. I love them people just like I would love my wife and my people for that did receive me. Why should I go to kill them men?

What he done to me? He never done anything, so I don't believe in no war. I want to destroy those guns. All I can say the government put the literature, gives us educations.

I remember in Italy a long time ago, about sixty years ago, the government they could not control very much those two—devilment, went on, and robbery. So one of the government in the cabinet, he say: " If you want to destroy those devilments, if you want to take off all those criminals, you ought to give a chance to Socialist literature, education of peoples, emancipation, that is why I destroy governments, boys."

That is why my idea I love Socialists. That is why I like people who want education and living, building who is good, just as much as they could. That is all.

Q: And that is why you love the United States of America?

A: Yes.

Q: She is back more than twenty centuries like Spain, is she?

A: At the time of the war they do it.

Q: Do you know why Fruzetti was deported?

A:—Through an interpreter—Yes.

Q: Was it because Fruzetti entertained anarchistic opinions?

A: One reason, he was an anarchist. Another reason, Fruzetti, been writing all the time on newspapers and I am not sure why the reason he been deported.

Educational Books!

Q: Was Fruzetti, before deportation, a subscriber to the same papers that you had in your house on May 5?

A: Probably he is. (Objection.)

Q: Did you believe that they—Fruzetti and two other men deported—had in their homes books similar to the ones you had in your home?

A: Yes.

Q: And the books you intended to collect were books relating to anarchy?

A: Not all of them—

Q: How many of them?

A: Well, altogether we are socialists, democrats, any other socialist information, socialists, syndacalists, anarchists, any paper—

Q: Bolshevist?

A: I don't know what that means.

Q: Soviet?

A: I do not know what Soviet means.

Q: Communism?

A: Yes. I got some on astronomy, too.

Q: You weren't going to destroy them?

A: I was going to keep them.

Q: You were going to keep them and when the time was over you were going to bring them out again, weren't you?

A: Yes.

Q: And you were going to distribute circulars?

A: Education literature.

Q: And you were going to destroy circulars, werent' you?

A: It cost money to sacrifice.

Q: You were going to distribute those papers, weren't you?

Mr. J. McA— The question, were you?

Q: Were you?

A: What do you mean, destroy?

Q: No, not destroy them. After the time had gone by, you were going to bring them out—to distribute this knowledge?

A: Certainly, because they are educational for book—educational.

Q: An education in anarchy, isn't it?

A: Certainly. Anarchism isn't criminal.

Q: I didn't ask you if they are criminal, or not. Nor are you to pass upon that, sir. Was it equally true as to books and papers and periodicals that you expected to pick up at your friends' houses—that they were not to be destroyed?

A: Just to keep them, hide them.

Q: And then bring them forth afterward when the time was over?

A: I suppose so.

The Prosecutor's Latitude

Q: And you are a man who tells the jury that the United States of America is a disappointment to you?

Mr. J. McA— Wait a minute, I object—

Mr. Katzman: On the question of intelligence if your honor please.

The court: Not quite—and you assume, too.

Mr. Katzman: I assumed on the question of intelligence?

The court: You assumed "you are the man."

Mr. Katzman: Are you the man? That, this man passed judgment on the United States.

The court: He may answer yes or no.

Mr. J. McA— Will your honor save an exception to the question and the answer?

The court: Certainly.

Q: Are you, Mr. Sacco?

A: I don't—I don't understand the word—

Q: Passed judgment?

A: Yes.

Q: Well, tell the jury about how disappointed you were and what you did not

find and what you expected to find. Are you that man?

A: Yes.

(End of quotation from trial records.)

From this extract of the trial records it can be seen why the Yale *Law Journal*, and many lawyers all over the country, condemned the manner in which the prosecutor was allowed to ask questions and bring out facts that had no bearing on the crime with which the defendants were charged, but which could not help but prejudice the jury against the defendants.

In the past, court precedent has been not to allow the prosecutor to go that far, and verdicts were reversed on that ground.

To quote from the case of August against United States: "In those days—1918—it was not necessary to inflame the passion of jurors by talking about the enemies of our country, rather was it a time to caution jurors against allowing their prejudices and patriotism from swaying their judgment.

"But the assistant district attorney so far transcended his duty as a prosecuting officer that we are clearly of the opinion that the conviction of the defendant ought not to stand. The language used, speaks for itself. It must have provided a situation in the minds of the jurors that destroyed a calm consideration of the rights of the defendant. The United States cannot afford to convict in this manner."

Thus was the case of August *vs* United States restricted. Yet, as far as we can find, not a single such hint of restriction appeared in the case of Sacco and Vanzetti.

CHAPTER VII

DELAYS

ON July 14, 1921, the verdict of guilty was returned.

Then, there followed the greatest delay of the entire operation, that between the verdict and the first presentation of the case to the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts. For between the end of the trial and the presentation, the defense asked for and received five extensions of time.

In Massachusetts it seems to be unanimously believed that the largest contributory factor to the delay was the then existent method by the law for exceptions and appeals. For in appealing, the defense had to prepare and present to the trial court a bill of exceptions which, after being filed, was required to be examined by the prosecution. Amendments then had to be reached by agreement between the opposing counsel and the whole presented to the trial judge for determination.

Volume one of the bill of exceptions was filed in court on February 22; volume two, on February 25, 1922. A single appeal—and there were several—made it necessary, therefore, for the entire bench to digest and agree upon seventeen hundred pages of record.

This law has, however, since been amended and Massachusetts bar leaders believe that this will eliminate the greatest cause of delay in capital cases in the future.

The exceptions were allowed on September 13, 1924.

On October 19, 1924, Mr. Fred N. Moore, who had been of counsel for the defendant's from the beginning, resigned from the case. Almost immediately the contributions dwindled, partly because many contributors withdrew their support with the departure of Moore, and partly because by this time many sources had been drained dry.

Then the committee came to Mr. Thompson and in despair begged him to take the case. Because, as he knew, the defense fund was depleted enormously and hope of getting much more was slight, Thompson set his fee at an obviously low figure, namely, twenty-five thousand dollars.

The committee had in its coffers in available cash, sixty-five hundred and thirty-six dollars. They borrowed, in November, 1924, twenty thousand dollars from the American Fund for Public Service and paid Mr. Thompson's fee before the close of that month.

For the next two years Mr. Thompson worked, endlessly, tirelessly. He allowed his other business to slide in his devotion to his two clients, Sacco and Vanzetti.

Later he received some twelve thousand dollars more, paid for work after an argument, before the Supreme Court on Jan-

uary 11, 1926. For three years' work, therefore, he received thirty-seven thousand dollars, a sum which, many declared, to be less than he normally would earn in a single year.

Among the reasons for motions for a new trial was the so-called Ripley motion.

Ripley was the foreman of the jury and a former chief of police in Quincy. According to affidavits in the possession of Mr. Thompson on which he based a plea for a new trial, Ripley met a man named Daly in the railroad station a few days before the trial.

Motions for New Trials

They spoke of the case. Daly said:

"I do not believe that Sacco and Vanzetti were guilty of those murders."

Ripley said, according to Daly's affidavit:

"Damn them, they ought to hang, anyway."

This, the defense claimed, was sufficient cause for a new trial on the ground that the jury had a member or members who were prejudiced.

Another motion, also denied, was the so-called Gould motion.

Gould was a man who sold razor paste among the employees of the Slater-Merrill shoe factory.

In his affidavit he said, in effect:

"I arrived in South Braintree on April 15, 1920, at about 3 P. M."—the murders were committed at a little after three.

"I asked where the men were going to be paid off, and when.

"Some one answered me:

"'There goes the paymaster now,' and pointed to Parmenter who with his guard was stepping out into the yard.

"Then, shooting began. An automobile passed me within five feet and a man with a revolver in his hand climbed from the back to the front seat of the car. He pointed the gun at me and the bullet went through my overcoat.

"I had a better view of the man than any other person there, for the reason that I was nearer. I gave my name and address to a policeman, but was never called upon to testify."

After the trial, according to the hearers, he was "flat and unqualified" in his statement that "neither Sacco or Vanzetti was the man I had seen in the car."

This motion was denied by Judge Thayer on the ground that Gould had not seen Sacco from April 15, 1920, to November 10, 1921, when he saw him at the jail. He could not, therefore, it was argued, be expected to carry a correct picture of Sacco in his mind for so long a time and, accordingly, his testimony would have little value.

Yet—as the defense pointed out—Gould had said positively that it was *not* Sacco. He had never seen Sacco until he encountered him in jail.

In denying motions for new trials based on the discovery of witnesses with better opportunities for observation than any of the witnesses on either side, who in an affidavit swore that Sacco was not the man in the car, Judge Thayer ruled that the:

Signs of Insanity

"—evidence simply means one more piece of evidence of the same kind and directed to the same end. In my judgment it would have no effect whatever on the verdicts. For these verdicts, in my judgment, did not rest upon the testimony of the eyewitnesses, for the defendants, as it was, called more witnesses than the Commonwealth who testified that neither of the defendants was in the car.

"The evidence that convicted these defendants was circumstantial as was evidence that is known in the law as consciousness of guilt."

But, although the lawyers changed, the judge did not change during the entire trial. It had been formerly the practice for capital cases to be tried before two or more judges, which, members of the bar believe, would in this case have hastened the progress of the trial.

Every appeal, however—since in Massachusetts an appeal must go before the judge who sat during the trial—came to Judge Thayer. His friends said that he would have been grateful to have been relieved of the entire burden.

Year by year his shoulders sagged beneath the weight of the responsibility of

conducting a case on which were the eyes of the world and concerning which the tongue of the world wagged.

He underwent an operation, too, which delayed the consideration of one appeal. His strain indeed was enormous. And the strain on the two men in prison, their lives held in jeopardy for more than seven years, was terrific.

At least once Vanzetti showed signs of insanity and was removed from prison to be committed to an asylum. Sacco maintained two hunger strikes lasting thirty-one days in 1923, and for thirty days fasted in 1927, breaking his fast only at the beseeching of his wife who had read of the unpleasantness of forcible feeding which was being threatened by officials at the prison.

CHAPTER VIII

MADIEROS'S CONFESSION

IN the same prison was another man awaiting death in the chair for the shooting of an aged bank cashier during a holdup at Wrentham. This was Celestino Madieros, who finally died with Sacco and Vanzetti in August, 1927.

He had seen Mrs. Sacco and the children visiting the prison and one morning sent a note to Sacco who hurriedly sent for Mr. Thompson.

The note read as follows:

> I hereby confess to being in the South Braintree holdup and that Sacco and Vanzetti were not in that crime.
>
> (Signed) CELESTINO F. MADIEROS.

Now it is true that a confession from a criminal which assumes a crime laid at another's door—particularly at the door of a fellow prisoner—is never taken very seriously by the authorities. The one accusing himself may often be touched by the plight of the other, and believing that there is no hope for his own life, willingly adds another's crimes to his own burden. He may as well, in other words, be hung for a sheep as for a lamb.

Madieros, sentenced to die, they argued, had little to lose.

But, it was pointed out, Madieros, in assuming the guilt of another holdup, had much, if not everything, to lose. He had won a new trial on a technicality, and why would not a confession implicating himself in a crime similar to the one for which he was about to be tried, be used against him?

The theory of the district attorney and his own counsel as well as the theory of Thompson amounted to just that, and for this reason they decided to withhold the confession from the public until the courts could pass on Madieros's case.

But in the meanwhile Mr. Thompson worked feverishly.

Madieros, in his subsequent talk with the attorneys, refused to give such details as might involve any other persons in the South Braintree affair. He took the blame upon himself. That is, he said that he had played a part in it, but refused to identify the gang with which he had been working.

Mr. Thompson, therefore, made a searching investigation. Sacco told him that several times, when opportunity arose, young Madieros had mentioned the South Braintree affair, but Sacco, believing him to be a spy placed in prison to work against and not with him, had disregarded him.

In an interview with Mr. Thompson, Madieros made a detailed confession and offered several affidavits and a deposition of about one hundred pages.

He obviously had a bad record. When he was eighteen years old, in 1920, he had lived in Providence, where he operated with a freight car gang.

One evening, he said, when they met in a saloon, the gang invited him to join them in a new kind of job, namely, a holdup affair in South Braintree.

"You have done lots of jobs of this kind," they told Madieros, and he consented to join them.

There were six men, he said, in the party, and he, the youngest and the novice, was given a very minor part in the affair—to sit on the back seat and use a gun on any one who tried to rush the car during the get-away.

"There were three Italians," Madieros said, "and a slim fellow with light hair, who drove the car."

In order to hinder identification the gang used two cars, a Hudson, in which they embarked from Providence, and a Buick in which they did the job. The Hudson, Madieros said, they left in the woods near Randolph, and there took the Buick which was waiting in the hands of another member of the gang.

The two oldest Italians, Madieros said, had done the shooting. Then they drove the car up during the shooting, took the money and the murderers aboard and were off down Pearl Street to the woods, where they abandoned the Buick and rode in the Hudson, back to Providence.

The English They Spoke

They were to meet in a certain saloon on the following night and get their various shares. But, whether they received the money or not, Madieros refused flatly to answer.

But as astute a lawyer as Mr. Thompson was, he wasn't able, by the cautious details which Madieros told, to piece together a very plausible theory.

He decided that the gang spoken of by Madieros was the Morelli gang, well known to the police of both Providence and New Bedford. At the time of the South Braintree murders the gang had been under indictment in the United States District Court of Rhode Island, for stealing from freight cars.

Five out of nine indictments charging shoe thefts from freight cars were for stealing consignments from the Slater-Merrill factories.

The gang, accordingly, must have had a confederate at the railroad station in South Braintree who tipped them off as to just when shipments were being made. And such a tipster, standing in the station's shadow, could not help but see the paymaster every week on his errand from the office to the factory with his guard and his money!

Now, though the Morellis were under indictments, they were out of jail and in sore need of money to carry on an adequate defense. How could they get the money?

They always had met emergencies with crime, and it is within the realm of possibility to assume that now in an extremity they may have turned to crime again.

A description of the Morelli gang fitted in every detail the description of the gang which committed the murders in South Braintree.

For instance, there were those who said, as Madieros had said, that the shooting had been done by an "older man." Joe Morelli was thirty-nine—old, indeed, in the gang world. Two men from the Slater-Merrill factory identified Steve the Pole, of the Morellis, as the man they had seen standing outside their window for half an hour on that day. Two other witnesses identified Joe Morelli as the man who did the shooting, and another witness identified Mancini as the second killer.

The Morellis, though Italian, were American born, and did not, therefore, speak broken English. This coincided with the gate tender's testimony as well as that of other witnesses.

Sacco and Vanzetti, on the other hand, spoke very broken English.

An Appeal to the Supreme Court

The bullet which inflicted the fatal wound came from a revolver similar to that carried by Joe Morelli, and examination showed that it might have come from the identical gun.

Mancini's gun was of the type to account for the other bullets. And Joe Morelli had a Buick which disappeared immediately after the murders on April 15.

Further, they had been suspected of the crime, but the New Bedford police dropped the investigation after Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested as suspects.

Shortly after the South Braintree job, Madieros was sent up for larceny, but a little later he went on an extended trip through Mexico and the western part of this country, and was known to have had in his possession twenty-eight hundred dollars, a logical split on a job netting fifteen thousand, seven hundred and seventy-six dollars, and done by six men.

Joe Morelli, moreover, while in Atlanta, made an arrangement with a fellow prisoner which placed him in New York on April 15, 1920.

With Madieros in the Wrentham shooting had been convicted a man by the name of Weeks, who was now serving a life sentence.

Weeks admitted, as did Mary Monteros and her husband, that Madieros had told him about the South Braintree shooting, and had admitted his connection in the matter. All three swore that Madieros had told them that his gang, and not Sacco and Vanzetti, was guilty.

Then, too, the theory that the Morelli gang did the shooting was far more consistent with known facts than the theory that it had been done by the defendants.

The Morelli gang accounts for all the members of the murder car.

The Sacco-Vanzetti theory accounts for but two members.

Why, Mr. Thompson asked further, should men with nearly sixteen thousand dollars in their pockets go about, spending an entire evening trying to borrow a pathetic and miserable six year old car, which later proved itself unable to run on its own power from West Bridgewater to Dedham, where it was put on exhibition.

This was what Sacco and Vanzetti were doing the night of their arrests.

The Madieros confession was, the defense believed, evidence of much importance. But it could not be used immediately.

Madiero's life hung in the balance, and his confession of guilt in one crime could not be used against him in a trial for another, and it was argued and agreed by counsel for both sides to withhold the confession from the public until the courts could pass on Madieros's case. Madieros won a new trial on a technicality, but was again convicted.

On May 20, 1926, Mr. Thompson filed his motion for a new trial in the Supreme Court at Dedham. The motion was argued before Judge Thayer on June 17, 1926. In spite of the Madeiros confession, he denied the appeal for a new trial on October 24, 1926.

Judge Thayer did not believe the confession, in spite of the fact that at the time of the argument Mr. Thompson had made the uncontradicted assertion that E. J. Geary, counsel for the Morelli gang, five brothers, knew that they had committed the crime, for they had told him so.

"If the Morellis had not told their counsel so," Mr. Thompson stated, "it would have been his duty to have filed an affidavit to that effect."

Mr. Geary himself, when asked, refused to testify on the grounds that it might incriminate his clients.

Again Mr. Thompson appealed to the Massachusetts Supreme Court, and again, on April 5, 1927, the appeal was denied.

CHAPTER IX

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR

ON April 9, Sacco and Vanzetti were sentenced to die in the electric chair during the week beginning July 10, 1927.

There was nothing left now but an appeal to the Governor of Massachusetts, Alvan Fuller.

The world protested, and the cables were burdened with appeals for clemency.

But Thompson, worn and weary, protested, too.

"We don't ask for clemency, we ask for justice," he said.

An appeal sent to Fuller was signed by some of the most eminent clergymen, lawyers, educators, and writers of America and elsewhere. Thirteen members of the faculty of Columbia University signed. Six members of the Mississippi Law School and the entire faculty of the Minnesota Law School enrolled in the petition.

From Smith College came appeals from one hundred and twenty-three members of the faculty. Clark University, in the home town of the judge on the bench, added twenty-five more faculty names to the list. Faculty members and six hundred and fifty students from the University of California joined the plea.

Every newspaper in New York City added its petitions. And on June 1, Governor Fuller decided to review the case himself before answering.

But this was a stupendous task. The record contained twelve million words. Governor Fuller felt that he alone could

not review it in the time allotted. He gave a stay, then, until August 10.

He also named an advisory committee, consisting of President A. L. Lowell, of Harvard, President S. W. Stratton of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the former Judge Robert Grant.

Governor Fuller did not believe the confession on which the defense based their hopes. The advisory committee did not believe it. And they returned an adverse report on July 28 to the Governor, who refused to intervene.

The World in an Uproar

Mr. Thompson, sick in body and sick at heart, resigned from the case.

Felix Frankfurter, of Harvard, who believed implicitly not only in the innocence of the two men, but that in any case the evidence had not warranted conviction, prevailed upon his friend, Arthur D. Hill, of the defense counsel, to do his utmost.

Thirty minutes before the time set for the execution he obtained a stay until August 23, and for the third time he took the case before the Supreme Court of Massachusetts.

This stay gave Vanzetti's sister, Signorina Luigia Vanzetti, time to reach America before the execution of her brother.

Vanzetti had hoped, he said, that she would not come.

When told that she was already in America and hurrying to him at the prison, he said:

"It were better that she remained in Italy and cherished her last remembrance of me as a lad of twenty than to see me here in my last moments of anguish, tortured and waiting for death."

Signorina Vanzetti and Mrs. Sacco were received by Governor Fuller, who denied their plea for clemency.

Justice Harlan F. Stone, of the United States Supreme Court, and Chief Justice Taft, routed out of their summer homes at the eleventh hour, refused to intervene and stay the execution.

The world was literally in an uproar. Protestations poured in over the cables. Meetings were held in every corner of the globe. Embassies were again threatened.

The American Embassy at Sofia was bombed. The court at Buenos Aires was bombed. On August 2, a terrific bomb explosion occurred in New York at the Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit subway station at Twenty-Eighth Street, where a man was killed and a score injured.

One of the jurors came home one night to find his house wrecked by a bomb. It was rebuilt again by the townspeople.

Personal appeals as well as official ones poured in over every wire, and flooded the Governor's desk.

Dreyfus, universal symbol of persecuted innocence, the historic victim of a miscarriage of justice, which stirred the world, and now grown aged and feeble, sent an appeal.

Crowds gathered on Capitol Hill the night of the execution. Crowds kept a somber watch, too, over Charlestown jail. Many people came from far cities to join the sympathizers in their watch.

In New York crowds gathered in Union Square and ten thousand people wept aloud in the rain as the time for the execution approached, lingered and then passed, taking the souls of the two men that half the world believed innocent and for whom thousands had labored nearly seven years.

The End of the Battle

More than a thousand cars blocked the traffic on the main streets at Charlestown. It was literally a tangled mass of vehicles.

Charlestown jail was armed and garrisoned as if to withstand a siege in battle. There were machine guns, riot guns, gas and tear bombs, pistols, revolvers.

Five hundred patrolmen and forty mounted police guarded the jail. The alleys and short small streets were patrolled constantly to prevent gathering of those who might try to frustrate the law in the execution of sentence.

Marine boats patrolled the river with flares and searchlights. There were searchlights on the State House. It was the first time in the history of Massachusetts that such a scene was ever enacted.

The last visit of the two women, Mrs. Sacco and Miss Vanzetti—who were there three times on the last day—was at seven o'clock in the evening. No farewell em-

braces were permitted. Words were whispered and faces pressed together through heavy bars and coarse networks of steel.

Musmanno, an attorney for the defense tried at the last moment, to make a last dash to the prison to say farewell. Earlier, he had refused to accept a book from Vanzetti as a farewell gift because he insisted that he had not given up hope and that such an act would not be consistent.

The two men were just going into the execution chamber as he arrived, hatless and breathless.

"Please, warden, let me say good-by. A last request."

His voice was broken and faint.

The warden himself was unnerved by the occasion. He tried to be stern in his refusal, but tears trickled down his cheeks as he said, "No."

Musmanno left, weeping bitterly.

"I only tried to see them for the last time," he said, "and I was refused."

Thus ended a legal and extra legal battle unprecedented in the history of American jurisprudence.

CHAPTER X

THE AFTERMATH

NICCOLA SACCO and Bartolemeo Vanzetti died in the chair early in the morning of August 23, 1927. They were weary and worn with seven years' long strain and struggle.

Celestino Madieros, whose life had seven times been saved because of his confession in their behalf, died with them.

"Long live anarchy," shouted Sacco.

He added a plea that his wife and children might be cared for as he died.

Vanzetti said, "I forgive some people for what they are doing to me."

They died while two thousand city policemen and a hundred members of the State constabulary kept the crowds who sympathized with them moving over Capitol Hill.

Even after the current had been applied the defense counsel was feverishly seeking avenues of escape for the clients.

A lawyer was even then on his way, by airplane, to ask Judge George W. Anderson at Williamstown for a writ of *habeas corpus,* though unknown to him Sacco and Vanzetti lay dead.

The warden was nearly overcome when he bade the two men farewell. His grief was particularly intense at parting with Vanzetti. And after it was over his voice trembled so that he could hardly repeat the solemn formula made necessary by the law:

"I pronounce you dead, the sentence of the law having been legally carried out."

After some discussion the ashes of the two men were mingled and divided between Mrs. Sacco and Signorina Vanzetti, who took her half back to Italy for burial.

The seven years' fight was over. Felicani, who had remained faithful to his belief in the innocence of the two men, emerged a broken man, emaciated and well along in the first stages of tuberculosis.

On August 29 he brought the death masks of Sacco and Vanzetti to New York City.

Seven years of futile effort, seven years during which he had set his own affairs aside, had devoted himself to the losing fight, lay behind him.

"But," said Felicani, "I would go through it twice over, twice over willingly, if they—if they"—his voice broke—"might have been saved," came after a few moments.

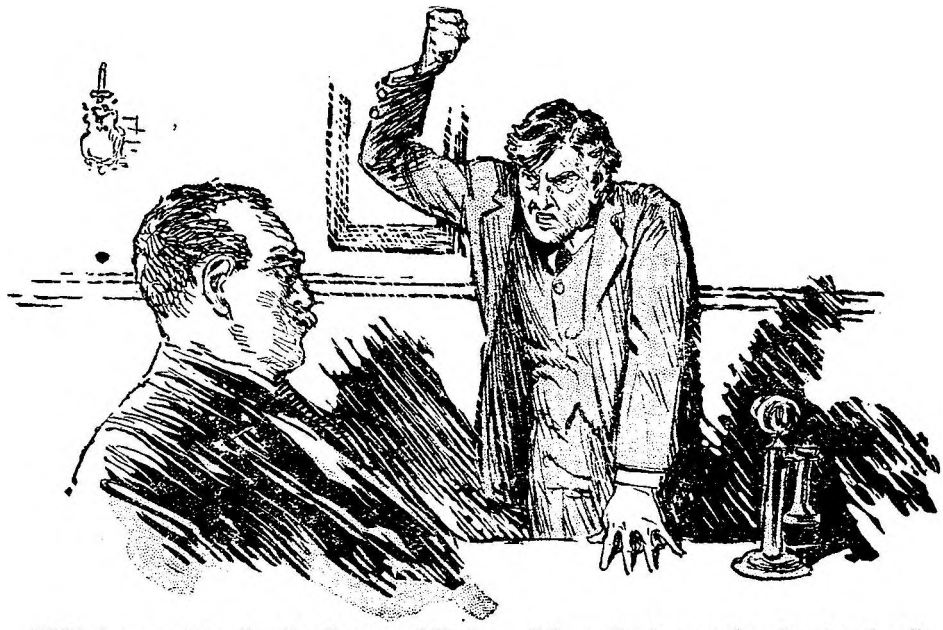
A later chapter of the Sacco-Vanzetti case was opened in December, 1927. On December 3, Powers Hapgood, Harvard graduate and nephew of Norman Hapgood, was convicted of a charge of delivering a speech on Boston Common *re* Sacco and Vanzetti without a permit. The jury deliberated nearly twenty-four hours.

On the second charge, that of inciting a riot, they disagreed.

Another jury previously had found Hapgood and seven others not guilty on lesser charges.

These eight were arrested in front of the State House while the eleventh-hour battle in behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti was being waged.

Sacco and Vanzetti are dead. But the case is not ended. The controversy which surrounds them in death as to their innocence or guilt is almost as great as the struggle waged while they were living.



"This is a question of justice," snapped Norton. "Sympathy has no place in a jury box."

THE LIMP

By Maxwell Smith

TRUE, HE HAD INVOKED THE LAW OF THE JUNGLE—BUT WHAT DIFFERENCE WAS THERE BETWEEN THAT AND MAN-MADE LAW?

"CUTLER is guilty," asserted the district attorney. "I'll stake my reputation on that. He killed Farmley. That's all there is to it."

"Guilty as hell," agreed Inspector Turnbull, "but that isn't quite all there is to it. I wish it were. He killed Farmley, all right, but getting a conviction is something else again. What we need is a couple of witnesses, and unless we can dig them up we're stuck."

"*We'll* get 'em," said the district attorney, "if I have to make 'em. There were people in the street when Cutler walked out of Farmley's apartment. Somebody must have seen him, and I'm going to put somebody on the stand to say he did if," he repeated, "I have to manufacture him."

"I wouldn't go that far," said the inspector. "This Farmley wasn't so much of a much. I don't get any sob out of his killing."

"It isn't a question of sobs," said the district attorney. "It's a question of murder."

The inspector squinted at him with a sly twinkle.

District Attorney Norton was young and earnest, wearing the recently acquired mantle of office heavily, eager to make the reputation which he was willing to stake on the outcome of the Farmley case.

"Sure," said Turnbull, "it's a question of murder, but there are murders and murders. It depends on who it is and how it's done.

"A butcher's job, now, makes you kind of mad, but a clean killing like this isn't

so bad, especially when nobody can scare up much sympathy for the dead man."

Norton frowned on him critically.

"Murder is murder," he insisted, "whether it's a millionaire or a tramp, whether the killing is done with an ax or—or with kindness. If we're not going to punish the guilty we might as well close up the courts and open the doors of our jails."

The policeman, with more experience behind him than the young prosecutor ever would see, smiled tolerantly.

"Well, anyhow, as I said, I can't get steamed up over this Farmley. From all I can hear, he had it coming to him. Love 'em and leave 'em, seems to have been his motto.

"That sort of guy rates only one kind of cross with palms, and that's the palms the undertaker lays out around the black box, and the stone cross over his head."

"You're anarchistic," said Norton condemningly. "The law is government, and government must be upheld. We are not exercising any personal inclination in striving to convict Cutler. We are simply being true to our oaths to uphold the law and so are upholding the Constitution upon which the whole structure of the Nation rests."

"Are we? I wonder." Inspector Turnbull chuckled: "Or should I have said 'aren't we?'"

The young orator, who was facing his first murder case, looked at him sharply.

"Are we or aren't we what?"

"What you said. Are we simply being true to our oaths? Aren't we—how did you put it?—exercising a personal inclination in prosecuting Cutler? Maybe and maybe not."

"Of course we are. I—"

"We are what? Which proposition are you answering?"

"The first, naturally. We are sworn to administer the law, and that's what we're doing. I have no personal feeling in the matter, no personal interest."

"Haven't you?" asked Turnbull cynically.

"Why should I have?"

"Why, indeed?" murmured the inspector.

"You seem to think I have," bridled the district attorney, pricked by the sarcasm. "I assure you that I have none. I never heard of Farmley until he was killed. To me he is only a figure, a human being whose life was—ah—violently and untimely taken."

"Yeh," the inspector yawned, "I know. It's funny, though, how it helps a man along if he makes a success of his job. Gives him a rep, don't it, that he expects to be able to cash in on?"

Norton sat up straight while he digested this imputation.

"How do you mean that?" he demanded stiffly. "You're not implying, are you, that I have any selfish interest in prosecuting Cutler? You don't think that I would hang him merely to advance myself?"

"Not if you don't like it," replied Turnbull amiably.

"May I ask if you have any such selfish interest?"

"Not a damn bit. I'd just as soon see him beat the case. He seems a decent sort of lad, and that's more than anybody can say for our dead lady-killer."

"That's quite beside the point," declared Norton. "No matter what Farmley was, he was murdered and his murderer must be punished."

"Jail all the birds who should be jailed," said Turnbull dryly, "and the eight or ten who stay on the outside would die of lonesomeness. I'd go slow about going to trial with this case. Trials cost money, and the taxpayers don't like to see their money wasted.

"They remember things like that when a man's running for reëlection; remember them longer than they do a killing that he didn't send somebody away for."

District Attorney Norton shook his head.

"I'll do my duty."

"Sure; most of us do. But how are you going to convict Cutler?"

"We have a strong circumstantial case against him."

"Circumstantial evidence is a hell of a thing any way you look at it. I've seen a lot of it that didn't mean a thing.

"I've seen a man hog-tied by circumstantial evidence when he wasn't any more guilty than I was myself. A jury hates to

take a chance on hanging the wrong man."

"It's legal evidence," said Norton, "and we have a case against Cutler. He killed Farmley. We know that."

"Uh-huh. And we know how a jury will bring in a verdict for petty larceny or something when it should have been murder in the first degree or nothing. What you going to ask for Cutler? First degree?"

"It was first degree murder. Nothing else. We have the motive. We have the fact that he followed Farmley to this city."

"The motive," said the inspector softly. "Sure—Cutler's kid sister. You'll never get first degree with that motive."

"I suppose not," admitted Norton. "Stupid sentimentalism will interfere with the rendering of a just verdict. That's another argument against the jury system. Jurors are much too easily swayed by their emotions."

"Very stupid," said Turnbull, inwardly laughing at him. "Still, it don't hurt anybody to have a bit of emotion hidden away somewhere inside him. How good a verdict do you expect to get?"

District Attorney Norton appeared to ponder.

"I'll take second degree."

"I'll bet you don't get manslaughter," said Turnbull, "even if you dig up half a dozen witnesses who saw Cutler doing the job. I wouldn't give you a dime for your case."

Norton smiled smugly, but did not bet.

"Don't forget," he said, "we have the gun."

"I'm not forgetting. I'm remembering that we haven't succeeded in proving it belongs to Cutler."

"He practically admits ownership."

"I didn't notice. How so?"

"He admits having one similar to it."

"He'd be a fool to deny that," said Turnbull, "when there's folks can swear he had such a gun. But you can't convict a man of murder just because he had a gun like the one the killing was done with. You have to show the murder gun actually in his hand."

Norton resented the lesson.

"I'm quite aware of that, thank you."

The inspector stretched, yawned again.

"I'd drop it, if I were you. You're up against a losing proposition. If you don't believe me, go ask the first man or woman you meet what he thinks of it. Cutler has all the sympathy. Nobody cares a damn about Farmley."

"This is not a question of sympathy," said Norton, "but of justice. Sympathy has no place in a jury box."

"But it gets in there just the same. All right, go ahead. We'll help you all we can, but you can take it from me that you're licked before you start. You need plenty more than you've got now to convince a jury that Cutler ought to burn."

"I convinced the grand jury and got an indictment."

"You whipped over a fast one there. The newspapers hadn't had a chance to splash the dope about Cutler's kid sister. You couldn't indict him to-day."

"I think I could," said Norton, self-sufficiently. "Motive, means, opportunity, intention—what more do you want?"

"Somebody who saw Cutler there—and a jury of wooden men who never had any kid sisters nor never knew anybody who had."

The district attorney brushed that aside.

"We'll show," he said, tabbing on his fingers, "that Cutler threatened to kill Farmley. We'll show that he had no other apparent purpose in following Farmley to this city. We'll show that he had a weapon with which to do the killing. We'll show his motive."

"How about opportunity? How are you going to prove he never was in Farmley's apartment?"

"He had been seen loitering near it."

"That don't put him in it."

"He can't prove he was elsewhere at the time of the murder."

"You can't prove he wasn't home, as he claims he was."

District Attorney Norton regarded him severely.

"I'm afraid, inspector, that I haven't your entire and proper coöperation in this case. The police department, I always supposed, is expected to furnish the evidence upon which the district attorney

proceeds. That rule does not seem to obtain in this instance.

"I might even be excused for assuming that you hold a brief for the defense."

Inspector Turnbull ruffled his gray hair and laughed.

"After awhile, son, you'll learn that the well-known law as written in the book don't always go as it lays. Circumstances alter cases, you know. This is one time."

"And circumstantial evidence makes cases. It is not my duty to interpret the law, but to present what I consider to be admissable evidence of crime."

"All right. You needn't worry about whether we're coöperating with you. We don't like to leave a killing open on the record any more than you do."

"You appear willing to leave this murder apparently unsolved when we have the solution in our hands. Everybody knows Cutler is guilty."

"Sure," said Turnbull, "and so nobody's going to blame us for not solving the case. You don't see anybody holding street corner meetings to demand his conviction, do you? You don't happen to have a kid sister, do you?"

"I don't."

"I thought not."

"See here, inspector," lectured Norton, "you're all wrong on this, and you know it. You—"

"All right, all right, I'm all wrong."

Turnbull looked at his watch ostentatiously.

"I've got a conference with the chief," he hinted bluntly. "Glad you stopped in to talk things over. We'll let you know if we manage to trace that gat to Cutler—or if we locate anybody who saw him near Farmley's flat that day. We're still working."

Norton became sarcastic.

"Still, inspector, very still. A little more movement would carry you farther. As, for instance, if you were to take Cutler into the cellar and step him around."

Turnbull wagged his head with exaggerated solemnity.

"The district attorney," he rebuked, "should not come out so openly in favor of the third degree. You want to remember there's a yell about it every now and then. You'll get yourself a bad name as a rough guy if you're not careful."

"It's justifiable."

"Hell!" Turnbull lost patience. "We pounded this lad for eighteen hours on a stretch without cracking him open. I give him credit for that, too. You've had your own chance at him. You've had him over to your office three times, haven't you?

"Take him again and bat him around if you want. Do your own damn dirty work, Norton; we're not doing it for you on Cutler."

District Attorney Norton again bid his most important possession:

"I'll stake my reputation—"

"Then," interrupted Turnbull acidly, "I hope you don't find it too tough sleddin' for the rest of your life without a rep."

II

CUTLER was guilty. He had exacted vengeance, but he was not satisfied with just that.

There was no intention to sacrifice himself; he could see no reason for that. He desired to retain his life and liberty.

He had taken the law into his own hands—which the law said he must not do. But since he regarded his act as one of simple justice, he perforce regarded it also as within the law.

He had taken upon himself the function of the executioner. That was all.

True, the law he had invoked was that of the jungle—but what difference was there between that and man-made law?

The jungle said: "Find the life-taker and kill him out of hand."

Civilization said: "Find the life-taker, take time to make sure that he is guilty by giving due consideration to the evidence against him, and then kill him."

What difference?

A life for a life—they said the same thing.

That was Cutler's idea. He had charged a life against Farmley and in payment had taken Farmley's life.

In this affair man-made law would not have served. For it would not have held Farmley to account, although a life was

chargeable against him. It quibbled on the matter of culpability.

The jungle's didn't quibble. It claimed the penalty and let it go at that.

A life for a life.

When the penalty was paid the scales stood adjusted. The jungle went about its business without blaming the adjuster.

To effect the balance which he deemed just, Cutler had to follow the jungle law. Man's law refused to take cognizance of the blotting out of a life which he had held dear.

Because Farmley had not with his own hand killed Cutler's kid sister, civilization did not say that he had committed murder. It said that she had killed herself.

But Cutler held that Farmley had killed her just as surely as if he had strangled her. If Farmley had not taken her for awhile and cast her aside when he tired of her, she would not have killed herself.

So Cutler elected himself to take the life which he believed Farmley owed for the life which he had caused to be taken.

And, if he could avoid it, Cutler did not purpose paying for the taking of Farmley's life.

Why should he when all he had done was balance the scales?

He was an executioner, not a zealot.

There had been no holy fire of vengeance in what he had done. Only the collection of a debt.

Had he not considered the transaction closed with the killing of Farmley, he would have admitted his act and in turn paid with his life. But an executioner is privileged, and cannot be blamed for the service he performs.

Thus, Cutler calmly denied guilt. Without wrongdoing there can be no guilt. He did not believe that he had done wrong.

Yet he had taken no great pains to escape arrest.

The police found him two days after the killing.

A letter to Farmley from a friend in Cutler's home town had pointed to him. Dated only a month ago, it had warned Farmley that Cutler had followed him to the city with a threat to kill him.

There was the mistake he had made. Farmley had given him an inkling of the existence of that letter.

"I heard you were coming," said Farmley, cool, sneering. "Well, here you are. What are you going to do about it?"

Cutler didn't speak, but shot him dead.

He should have searched for such a letter and destroyed it.

In a cell, under indictment for murder in the first degree, awaiting trial for his life, he thought often of that and of how he might further have protected himself. Scheming things out with experience to guide him kept his mind occupied.

He should have gone to work, established some reason for being in the city, instead of simply waiting and watching for an opportunity to kill Farmley.

Perhaps he should have disappeared, fled and hidden himself, immediately after the killing. He had remained because of the possibility that the police would want to question him and would construe flight as confession.

Perhaps he should not have left the gun beside Farmley's body in the effort to make it seem a case of suicide. The gun had not been identified definitely as his, but the presumption was strong.

He could only say that he had lost his gun months ago. That Farmley might have taken it while still a more or less welcome visitor at the Cutler house.

And there was the opinion of the coroner that Farmley could not have committed suicide. It was a revised opinion, given after a first statement that the wound appeared to have been self-inflicted, but it now stood as official.

Also, he might have done something in the way of an iron-clad alibi. He had been in his room asleep when Farmley was killed; so he said.

Other occupants of the house could say only that he had retired at least an hour before the time at which the coroner said the killing had been done, and that he apparently had not left the house until morning. He might have contrived better than that.

So now he had to gamble with the law.

That wasn't right, but he waited calmly.

If liberty or life was taken from him, the balance would again be uneven.

But for the moment the scales hung perfectly true.

III

DISTRICT ATTORNEY NORTON put Cutler on trial. He had two witnesses to swear they had seen Cutler leaving the apartment building at the time of the killing. Not leaving Farmley's apartment but the building.

"Rotten," said Inspector Turnbull. "You should be indicted yourself, Norton, for subornation of perjury."

"They're real witnesses," indignantly protested Norton. "They came to me of their own accord. They live in that building."

"Two weeks after the killing," jeered Turnbull. "Hell, that stinks!"

"They were out of the city," insisted Norton, "on vacation. They went tramping in the mountains and didn't even hear of the murder until they got home. They saw Cutler when they were starting for their train."

"Friends of Farmley," said Inspector Turnbull.

"They only knew him to see—never talked with him."

"Sausage," said the inspector inelegantly. "How much are you paying them?"

Norton frothed, but could not persuade him that these witnesses were honest. Nor could they themselves.

With respect to Cutler, Inspector Turnbull was disposed to fall just a trifle short of his duty. He wouldn't do anything to obstruct the prosecution, but further acquaintance with the prisoner had not diminished his hope that Cutler would beat the case.

These witnesses were honest. And the case hinged on their testimony. Even Norton admitted as much. He saved them for the finish.

They identified Cutler. They had seen him on one previous occasion outside the apartment house.

District Attorney Norton smiled at the jury. He waved a hand after concluding the direct examination of the first of these key witnesses. That, said his gesture, is that.

He smiled also at defense counsel as he said: "You may examine," and at Inspector Turnbull who scowled disbelief in return.

"You say," said counsel for the defense, "that you identify this defendant positively as the man you saw leaving the building in which Farmley lived at approximately the time Farmley was killed?"

The witness nodded, slightly nervous in anticipation of this unfriendly examination.

"Speak up," said counsel; "don't nod your head."

"I do," said the witness.

"How do you identify him?"

"Why, by his general appearance."

"How do you mean general appearance? What is distinctly characteristic about him that you recognize?"

"I'd seen him before—I recognized him as a man I'd seen before."

"Recognized him by what?"

"Why," the witness looked around, grinning foolishly, "I recognized him by his face."

"Do you remember the faces of every one you see?"

"No—but—"

"But you distinctly remember this man?"

"Yes. You see—"

"Wait a moment. On direct examination you said the man you saw leaving the building limped. How much did he limp?"

"Quite a bit."

"On direct examination you weren't asked how much he limped, were you?"

District Attorney Norton objected. He didn't want to go too deeply into the matter of the limp.

The answer was allowed:

"No, sir."

"Simply that he limped—that was all?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. Now tell us just how bad was this man's limp. Was he crippled?"

"He seemed to be."

"Seemed? Don't you know?"

The witness looked uncomfortable; looked at the district attorney.

Norton scowled.

"Well," came the answer, "I thought he was crippled."

"Had he any physical deformity that you could notice?"

"Why—I thought so."

"Don't you know?"

The witness dodged: "It was pretty dark."

"Light enough for you to recognize a face, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"But not to classify an apparent deformity, eh?"

"Well," said the witness, and stopped at that.

"Go on," said counsel. "When you saw this man you're talking about the first time did you notice his deformity?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"He was standing still."

"So that the deformity you thought you noticed the second time, the night of Farmley's murder, was noticeable only when he walked? Is that the idea?"

"Not exactly; no, sir."

"Then tell us about it. Explain to us how he was deformed."

"Well, he had a funny foot."

"He had a funny foot? Didn't you say a minute ago that you couldn't classify what was the matter with him?"

"No, sir. I said—"

"Never mind what you said. He had a funny foot, did he? How funny?"

"Well, it seemed to be twisted."

"Twisted? How? Backward or what?"

"Not backward; no, sir. It was, well, twisted to the inside, so he sort of walked on the outside, I mean."

"Twisted to the inside so he walked on the outside," repeated counsel. "Make that clearer. Show us what his foot was like."

"I object," said Norton.

"Why? Your witness saw the foot, didn't he? He ought to be able to show us what it was like."

"Answer," said the court.

The witness demonstrated by stooping and turning his right foot inward at right angles to the left foot.

"So that's how it was," said counsel. "And how did he walk?"

The witness started to demonstrate.

"Never mind that. Tell us how he walked. Was his leg crooked?"

"No, sir—I don't think so anyhow."

"The knee seemed straight enough, did it?"

"I—yes, I guess so."

"Don't guess. Was it?"

"I think so."

"Don't think. Say yes or no."

"Why, I guess—I mean, it seemed to be."

"You wouldn't swear to it?"

The rattled witness thought he was helping himself.

"Uh—yes, it was."

"Was what?"

"Straight."

"What was straight?"

"His knee."

Counsel smiled blandly.

"Now," he said in gentle tone, "show us how this man walked, as near as you can with your foot turned in like his."

The witness tried, but could not turn his foot in anything like the manner he had described without crooking his leg.

"Stand up, Cutler," said his counsel.

Cutler got up.

The lawyer again addressed the witness:

"And this is the man you saw that night? Wait a moment. Take your time. Be sure of it."

The witness wet his lips—and looked at Cutler's right foot. It appeared to be normal. So was Cutler's right leg.

The witness looked at his face, started to nod, hesitated.

"You're not so sure now, are you?"

"Object," said Norton.

"Why?" smiled counsel.

"Overruled," said the judge.

"Now," said the defense slowly, "tell us again whether you identify this man absolutely."

The witness squirmed.

"He looks like him."

"Is he the man?"

No answer.

"Is he?"

"I—think so."

"Where's his funny foot?"

The witness shook his head helplessly.

"He probably left it home," said counsel. "Is he the man you saw?"

"I—he looks like him."

"He is or he isn't the man. Is he?"

"I—don't—know."

"You won't swear that he is?"

"No, sir, I can't."

Counsel embraced the jury with a pleasant smile.

"You're excused."

IV

DISTRICT ATTORNEY NORTON examined his second star witness more carefully, striving to cinch the identification. But that individual had been made wary by his friend's confusion and wasn't sure about anything.

Norton stormed at him.

The witness became antagonistic and damaged the prosecution.

Defense counsel treated him sweetly and scored on him.

"The people rest," growled Norton.

The defense made the usual motions to dismiss the case; which as usual were denied.

"The defense rests."

"Without offering testimony?" said the judge.

"It isn't necessary," said counsel.

The jury went out and smoked a cigar and found Cutler not guilty.

"You got away with murder," said District Attorney Norton to him meanly.

Cutler shrugged. He had nothing to say.

When he walked out of the court room, Inspector Turnbull was chatting with the judge. Norton stood beside him.

"He got away with murder," said Turnbull, "but, hell, this is one time I'm not sore. You know what this bird Farmley did to Cutler's kid sister, don't you, judge?"

The judge nodded.

"A jury," he said learnedly, "is sometimes a power of wisdom."

"You said it."

Inspector Turnbull turned to look at the retreating Cutler.

Cutler looked back, grinned.

Turnbull's eyes popped. He laughed—grabbed Norton and spun him around.

"Look, Norton, look!"

District Attorney Norton swore furiously.

For a single step he had seen Cutler limp, with his foot twisted inward, while his left remained straight.

"You couldn't cook me up a recommendation for a nice blind man with gobs of money?" asked Helen

BLACKMAIL

By John Wilstach

SWEETLY SHE SANG HER SIREN SONG: "YOU MAY MEAN THE WORLD TO YOUR MOTHER, BUT YOU'RE AN AWFUL WASH-OUT TO ME"

HELEN TREXEL gazed at her reflection in the oval glass above the dressing table, but the sight evoked no tingle of pleasure.

"Kid, this is the nearest your face will ever get to a close-up," she murmured with a sigh. "You've all the appeal of a beautiful picture with its face turned to the wall."

She smiled, wistfully, continuing the finishing touches to her toilet. To a girl, this is the moment of judgment. Happy, indeed, if her image twinkles an intimation she wouldn't exactly be lost in a crowd —not without a few males taking notice.

Alas, Helen knew exactly what was wrong with this picture.

A purchaser of all the aids to loveliness advertised in drug store windows, she knew beauty might indeed be only skin deep, but too deep for her.

Not, she thought, that any one feature was obviously out of proportion, merely that the total effect was ordinary and plain. In the sea of faces, so well-known to the newspaper reporter, she would surely be an unnoted wave.

To-night, of all nights, she longed to look —not her best—that wasn't anything to brag about—but the pattern of one of those attractive if ignorant Irenes who make fellows lose heartbeats without an effort.

Well, no miracle was going to transform her into a fairy princess; she was doomed to be one of those countless Cinderellas without slippers.

Eight o'clock. Hilda had promised to call by that time. For Grant Leslie, her

boy friend, with a chum, would be on hand shortly afterward to take them to a dance.

The bell from downstairs rang three times. That was the landlady's signal for her room. Helen hurried to the hallway and leaned over the banister.

"Young lady to see you, Miss Trexel."

The voice was shrill and petulant.

"Send her up, please, Mrs. Kendall."

So Hilda was on time after all. When Grant had spoken of his buddy, and asked her to provide a girl, Helen had invited the quiet little stenographer who worked near the bookkeeping cage, as a pleasant and harmless addition to the party.

She waited at the door until her visitor arrived, panting from the climb of three flights. They pecked at one another.

"Am I on time, dear?"

"On the dot. Come right in and wait."

Helen had to admit, with surprise, that the dove of the office seemed to have turned into a dainty bird of paradise outside it.

For Hilda was ravishing in a rose colored dress, cut a bit daringly, that set off the mellow ivory of her skin, that certainly had *not* been made by loving hands at home.

Her hair had that slickness that was eloquent of a beauty parlor, and she was certainly made up for overture in a musical show, Helen thought cattishly, but none the less attractive for that.

A sudden fear gripped the girl who knew she missed that vital thing called sex appeal, but she shook it off; Grant must like her for herself alone, and, besides, he had brought a fellow for Hilda.

"Tell me all about whom I'm going to meet," said the visitor, darting straight toward the mirror like a needle to a magnet.

"Grant Leslie is my steady boy friend—but he is bringing a buddy for you, Dick Blair, who works in Wall Street."

"How thrilling! I could love a broker; they're all Bears or Bulls, aren't they? I suppose you're engaged to Grant?"

Helen flushed a bit beneath the rouge. Hilda was very familiar.

"Well, not exactly," she stammered.

"Just an understanding?" queried the other.

"Why, Grant is just making his way, and—"

"Never mind, cutie, I don't mean to pump you, or keep Santa Claus away from your stocking. That broker will satisfy me—if he isn't a false front."

Hilda was in the best of spirits. Mr. Gaynor, the office manager, at the place where they worked, would have doubted his eyes and ears, so completely had she thrown off her wage earner's trained docility.

Just then the bell in the hall again rang.

"The boys must be downstairs," murmured Helen. "It is against the rules to have 'em up, and I wouldn't want them to see this bird's nest."

She waved disdainfully at the shabby furnishings.

"Always meet 'em at the door, kid, with a where do we go from here?" perked Hilda. "Girls who entertained at home went out—and stayed out—ever since the movies came in."

With this wisecrack she preceded Helen, who turned the lights off, and locked up, and then followed her downstairs. Grant Leslie and Blair were waiting on the first floor landing.

They wore tuxedoes and soft felt hats, college style. Introductions were a jumble, but Helen noted, with a pang, that her boy friend was agreeably surprised.

"Where did you pick the little peach?" he whispered.

"Just a girl at the office."

"Gee, I thought you robbed the first row of George White's Scandals. If she has any folks, tell them they'd better keep their eye on her."

The foursome straggled into a waiting taxi. Blair, a heavy set, imperturbable being, wedged in last, after directing the driver. On the ride to the dance the atmosphere seemed electric, and Helen saw that she didn't supply the current.

Hilda, soft and kittenish, with an intriguing air of innocent enthusiasm, appeared to look up to the big, overwhelmingly manly beings, and created that protective impulse, with a thirst for monopoly, so fatal to the male peace of mind.

A little trusting creature, with confiding brown eyes, she had the air of calling for some one to guide her.

Cute tricks, Helen realized bitterly. A girl saw through the flattering pretense instantly, but fellows were dense. She sat back in the leather seat and looked out of the window.

Grant, beside her, was half turned toward Hilda, and Blair, in a turn-down seat, was smiling at Hilda's bubbling manner. Helen, who knew herself lacking any such little bag of tricks, felt as if painted on a back drop.

No one noticed her preoccupation or silence, nor imagined she was stiff and hurt, a bit neglected like the old house dog when a champion is brought around.

Grant was intent on the new find; he had come to take Helen for granted—which was very near like *not* taking her at all!

The taxi took them swiftly to a Legion Post dance at an uptown hotel. By the time they emerged from the machine Hilda was calling the boys by their first names and playing with the lapels of their coats. Also, wondering—aloud—if she'd be a wallflower with all those pretty girls who'd be there.

Helen knew who might possibly be among the chair warmers. No, not quite. She would be fair—in the only way possible for her. It wouldn't be as bad as that. It wasn't.

Grant danced with her, and introduced her to friends, if a bit urgently, so there was no neglect. Blair did his part. She had no cause to complain; but how formal and set the dances—and the intervals.

Once she caught a glimpse of Hilda, in Grant's arms, weaving in perfect unison to the soft seduction of the waltz. She had never awakened such a rapt expression on his face, as if just being sold a building lot in Paradise. Never could, or would be able to so move him.

And yet they were secretly engaged; one of those informal things, of course, with a practical eye on the future.

How the evening dragged. Helen wouldn't have been exceedingly human if she hadn't felt vexed and jealous at Hilda being such a knockout.

Why be mad because she knew her stuff? Maybe she wouldn't have been if—if Grant only didn't show that hungry, eager look every time he thought he could glance at the girl unawares.

Even a dance where a plain jane has a hopeless time has an end, when the boys, in cordwood harmony, sing "Good Night, Ladies"—and the orchestra isn't sorry to see them go. Even though by that time her face feels like putty from the strain of a set smile. And the trip home in the taxi wasn't long.

After depositing Helen at her door, Grant said good night, quickly, on the sidewalk, murmuring something about the survivors all going the same way, and hopped back in the car.

Fumbling with her key, Helen looked after the car, and as it passed under an arc light she could see through the little glass window at the back. Three heads were very close together.

II

THE next morning Helen was at her usual stand over a huge ledger at the office and Hilda at the same typewriter, a flower in a glass on the latter's desk, as if to say beauty and business together.

Nothing was actually changed, though something had been started. Helen had a premonition of it which she couldn't shake off under the task of double entry.

At noon the office force straggled out, and the two girls had a frugal lunch together in the cafeteria downstairs. Helen listened quietly while the other enthused over the dance and how nice the boys had behaved. Blair had all the signs of wanting to rush her. So that, Helen hoped, was that.

But when she reached home at five thirty she felt unaccountably depressed. On the table in the hallway were two bulky envelopes addressed to her. She picked them up without even a discouraged quiver. An old story—or stories.

They were returned manuscripts of tales she had tried to sell; because she reeled off bright letters friends had persuaded her that she could write. The editors were giving the other side of the argument with those cold, politely worded rejection slips.

After a time she had become accustomed

to the fact that she didn't register, either, as an author.

Grant was to call up at six o'clock about some tickets he was trying to get for "The Honeymoon," a musical hit. Helen left her door slightly open, waiting the jingle of the phone.

He was on time, as ever, but that little warning bird hadn't piped in her ear in vain.

"Hello, that you, Helen?"

"Yes, dear, don't you recognize my voice?"

"No, but then I don't feel well. Everything went wrong to-day. Phoned the theater twice, and they are all sold out for to-night. On top of that Sheldon, the chap I work under, wants me to go up to his house to-night and go over a new account with him. Great compliment, but I shall miss seeing you."

The words were hurried and precise, as if memorized, the girl thought.

"That's all right," she drawled. "Business before pleasure—if it is pleasure. Anyway I don't feel like going out. How did you and Mr. Blair enjoy yourself last night?"

"Fine. Blair phoned me this noon. Just hopping off on the rattler to Chicago, on a business trip. He gave me a ring from the station."

"Well, good night, Grant. I think you're right not to neglect your chances."

"Sorry, dear; I counted on seeing you to-night."

There was a sharp click as he rang off.

Helen gazed intently at the mouthpiece.

"Liar!" she exclaimed aloud. "I don't believe a word of it."

The following noon little Hilda enthused over what a wonderful time she had the previous evening. Mr. Blair had tickets for "The Honeymoon," and afterward they had gone to the Frivolity Club and danced and danced.

A tiny knife seemed to shudder a way into Helen's breast. The show Grant and she were supposed to see; and last night Blair was on the train bound for the West.

She felt like choking the truth out of Hilda, or hotly denouncing her for going out with Grant; instead she asked her to pass the salt and pepper.

No matter how painful, she must remember she was a lady. Even if the one romance of her life was being shipwrecked on reef of a pretty face.

Grant didn't call up that night—nor the next. An adroit talk over the telephone with the girl at the switchboard at his office brought confirmation that he was not ill, but working. So the disabled alibi was out.

But Helen was not exactly surprised. A girl is generally ready for anything after a first shock and suspicion.

In the past, though, Grant and she weren't together every night; there had been a habit of his always calling at supper time for a few minutes' chat. Hilda? Yes, probably she had won him away—if not she, another of her tribe.

Who had stolen him wasn't important. The bald fact was that she had proved not to be attractive enough to hold her man.

About eight o'clock Helen took a walk along Riverside Drive, and finally seated herself on a shadowed bench out of the glare of the infrequent arc lights.

A lovely spring night, couples strolled by as if in a procession, making her feel all the more lonely. The loss of a fellow isn't much to a girl who can go out and grab herself another, but with her it was different.

Just then a chap slid into a seat beside her, took a few uneasy glances and hurriedly got up and strolled away. That was the way it went.

And a little later she could have sworn she saw Grant and Hilda in the misty golden light at the edge of the moving throng.

She couldn't be sure; maybe it was just her imagination, but it might be them. Well, why wait, anyway, for further proof he didn't want her. She had her pride. There would be no useless recriminations.

Returning to her room, Helen wrote a short letter asking for her letters back—and inclosing his. There was no ring for her to return. It hadn't been that kind of an engagement.

She knew the worst, in a couple of days, when Grant didn't protest in person. Her

letters were returned in a big plain envelope.

The girl read them over with tears and laughter, a half conscious wonder and bitterness that she had so lavishly wasted the treasures of her heart.

"It is so easy—dead easy," she murmured to herself, "if you're pretty, to swear that some one will have to pay—pay for all the heartaches and all that lost faith and hope that can never live again.

"But there must be some way for me to make a fool of some man, and make him come across, with his pride and egotism ground in the dust. And if I can only make him pay so that he will never forget the plain little girl who did the trick, my revenge on men will be more complete.

"Men! How I hate them—with the bland arrogance that will stoop to nothing—except an empty, pretty face!"

She read over some of her letters and knew, from a literary point of view, they were not half bad. If only she could express herself so in short stories.

But the naturalness that flowed from her in correspondence seemed to be dammed when she attempted to write for publication.

Trouble comes in droves. The following morning Helen was called into the private office of Mr. Grayson, the office manager. That individual stuttered and stammered, yet made himself clear.

The office force was being cut down at the start of the vacation period. Certain individuals were being eliminated; no criticism of their work, of course, was to be considered to enter in.

"Then I'm let out," said Helen, with staring eyes.

"Yes, my dear."

"Who else goes, may I ask?"

"Miss Berton and Miss Hazzard," he replied, slowly, not looking at her.

Two other unattractive girls, reflected Helen.

She thought of several "favs" of the heads of the firm, short on stenography but long on looks. Oh, if she could only put a few footnotes to those lying articles on women in the business world!

"Of course, Miss Trexel, you will receive on Saturday two weeks' salary for what would be your vacation period. And we will always be pleased to give you a recommendation as an honest and efficient worker."

"You couldn't cook me up one," said Helen wickedly, "for some nice blind man with gobs of money?"

Grayson coughed. Humor, in his opinion, was out of place in a business office, and he considered the flip remark in very bad taste. It was good she was going, he thought, as Helen flared out of the room, rebellion seething in her bosom.

III

RECITALS, public and private, of women with midnight hair and tropic eyes who revenge themselves on society—or rather mankind—are common enough. But in each case it is understood that beauty is an accessory to the crime.

Helen knew she could nurse vengeance and rancor until the cows came home without it doing her any good. The girl had grown to hate men and longed—not to wrest only a living—but luxury—from them. But not being good-looking, she realized that she must be more clever.

The Sunday following her exit from the office she figured up her resources. There was a little nest egg, untouched, left by her mother, who had followed her father within a year.

She had gone to work at once and never dipped into this money; her way had been one of steady plugging. And what had it got her? Nothing.

She had an urgent feeling that she would like to take a chance, even if more or less desperate, for some big bank roll. But how? Where was the plot and plan?

Idly she picked up a library book on the table and started to glance through it. A collaboration between a brilliant English writer and a country woman, it had created something of a sensation. Helen read on and on.

The novel was told in the form of letters between a middle-aged bachelor and a young actress. Suddenly, as she read, an inspiration came to her—the idea of a new game, for which she was fully equipped and

qualified, which had every chance of spelling success.

Ninety-eight per cent of feminine plans start with the acquisition of a wardrobe. Helen's was no exception. She transformed that nest egg to a war chest and acquired the necessary outfit for a late spring campaign.

For several years she had been reading, in notes written for highbrow literary supplements, about Westbury, Connecticut. Here was a colony of literary and artistic lights who could afford it, a place for dilettantes with incomes; and those who had been able to make the public pay high for their wares.

There was one big hotel, the Elmhurst, a Colonial structure facing the Sound, with a fireplace in every room and atmosphere thick enough to cut.

Helen laid her plans carefully. Her wardrobe complete, she purchased a new trunk, packed, and had it sent to Grand Central Station.

She followed in a taxi, purchased a ticket to Westbury, and checked the trunk there. The three-hour trip in the parlor car didn't seem long, and she felt the satisfaction of being dressed for the occasion in a mannish tailor-made suit that had set her back plenty.

Arriving at Westbury, she took a cab directly to the Elmhurst, where she engaged a room and bath by the week. As the summer season was not yet on the price was not prohibitive for a stay of a certain duration.

The first few days Helen became acclimated to being a lady of leisure. She kept very much to herself, but now and again chatted with a Mr. Brewster, the manager, who accepted her at her clothes' value. Through him she learned something of the few permanent guests.

There were the old ladies, well fixed, usual regulars at a resort of this description; several families, the male members of which commuted to Bridgeport or New York; a few nondescripts; and a portly, important middle-aged gentleman who occupied a table alone whom she was told was Brenton Blackwood, the poet.

"I don't seem to have ever heard of him," said Helen vaguely.

The manager laughed shortly.

"Maybe not. He writes as a hobby—immensely wealthy, but since his wife died has had a suite here instead of bothering with a house.

"Somewhat superior, you might say; never even passes the time of day with me. But he can stay right on his high horse if he so desires. We have all kinds of guests, you know, Miss Trexel."

"I am sure of it," returned the girl and, nodding, passed out to the grounds, where she took a path leading toward the one street of Westbury, modeled somewhat on the style of an English village.

Prominent among the stores was "Ye Bookstore," and a gushing woman clerk darted forward as she entered.

"There is a book of poems by Mr. Brenton Blackwood, the poet," said Helen. "Have you it in stock?"

"You mean 'Crimson Moons'?"

Helen nodded, and the clerk brought her a thin volume from the poetry shelf. She purchased the slim black book and returned to her room at the hotel to give it the once over.

As she expected, "Crimson Moons" was one of those free verse things, opulent with adjectives, containing lots of white space and rows of dots galore. Dots mean a lot when verse gets very free.

The reader was reminded of the flapper ditty: "You may mean the world to your mother, but you're an awful wash-out to me." The stuff was a mile over her head, but it might serve a purpose.

At supper she dallied with the courses, keeping an alert eye on the table where Blackwood dined alone in state. She kept tab so that they were both served coffee at the same time.

Then she picked up the copy of "Crimson Moons" she had brought to the table, arose, and deliberately marched over to the ponderous poet's table.

He glanced up, with scant interest, and a supercilious air, as she approached.

"Pardon me," said Helen, in a husky, actress-like voice, "but I wonder if I am correct in my surmise? Is this Mr. Blackwood, the author of 'Crimson Moons'?"

She held out the black volume.

Blackwood smiled, his fishy eyes gleaming, and scrambled to his feet.

"Yes, I am he. Won't you be seated—"

"Miss Helen Trexel," she supplied, and slipped into a chair, "and I'm a guest here. I couldn't resist this unconventional opportunity of telling you how much I have enjoyed your perfectly wonderful poems."

He sighed heavily and beamed all over.

"In this day and age," she went on, "true beauty is so rare, and it is so seldom an opportunity is presented to really thank the artist in person."

"Miss Trexel, you have touched me in my most vulnerable spot," he murmured, "that of artistic vanity. You liked my little creations?"

"*Liked!*" exclaimed the girl, "that is putting it too mildly. I *loved* them. I can't understand why they haven't brought you enduring fame. None of the moderns approach you."

He sighed again. Helen couldn't possibly have picked a better start for a wonderful friendship.

She laid it on heavy, with a trowel, but Blackwood ate up her apparent adulation.

In the pleasing consumption of flattery he warmed to the flatterer and invited Helen to his suite for an after dinner cigarette; he had some expressly made for him that he'd like to try on her discriminating taste.

The ice broken, Helen continued to pose as a fervent devotee of Blackwood's genius, and bided her time. It would never do to be premature in announcing her plans.

In the days that followed she made a close study of her man, a not attractive type of wealthy high brow, self indulgent, conceited, and certain of possessing great gifts he had only started to use.

Public inappreciation only made him the more sure of his genius.

Being rich, through inheritance, he did not have to make any dreary attempt to make a living by his pen. All his interests centered about himself.

Helen let drop the fact that she was interested in literary work, but was glad when he showed no desire in seeing any of her published stuff. Since there wasn't any such animal.

This made her approach easier. But not until after numerous chats with the egotist did she broach her subject.

The opportunity seemed pat when he mentioned a novel he had enjoyed.

"Do you know, Mr. Blackwood," she said, "I have been thinking of an English book I read recently, the collaboration of a man and a woman.

"It made a great hit, telling a story in letter form. The masculine and feminine letters, intertwined, carried on the plot of the tale. I have been thinking considerably about it lately."

"Yes," returned the other, listlessly.

They were seated in the sitting room of his private suite.

"It has occurred to me," Helen went on, "that a great poet could bring something new and vivid to a collaboration of this character.

"Say, for example, you take the rôle so becoming to you of the poet in your letters, the unfettered master of wonderful prose, pouring out your soul.

"The girl—impersonated by me—will be cold, modern woman, thinking only of society and creature comforts, who does not understand the man's genius."

Blackwood's eyes kindled.

"You mean—"

"That we two Americans could together write a novel, in letter form, that would put that English book to shame. Of course, Mr. Blackwood, a man with your gifts might not think me—worthy—of—"

Quickly he reassured her.

"It sounds delightfully interesting," he said, "but what about the plot?"

"Well," continued Helen, as if hesitating for words, though she was prepared for this moment, "why not develop the story, first to their engagement, then to the marriage, and the disillusion of the poet and his eventual leave-taking, since he refuses to be dragged down from the heights by the woman's worldliness."

"You don't place the girl in such a good light, my dear Miss Trexel."

"Women," said Helen scornfully, "are not the artists and poets of the world. Few of them have a soul above clothes."

"I see you have observed your sex," ad-

mitted the other, " and are frank enough to face the truth. Then the poet would supply the romance and color to the tale?"

" Exactly, and that is why you will make an ideal co-author of this book. Just put your poetry into prose. And I," she added modestly, " have something of a gift for letter writing myself."

Blackwood became interested and they agreed on an early outline of the plot. The little game was entered into with gusto.

Hereafter, for two weeks, every evening, at supper time, they exchanged letters, replies to one written previously.

Helen did have a gift for correspondence; indeed it was this that had given her to think she might make a hit with short stories. On the other hand, Blackwood elaborated his purple patches into eloquent, emotional prose.

The letters between a supposed romantic poet, fervent and filled with a passion for beauty, and an alleged woman of the world, would have some merit.

Blackwood was enabled to pose as he was not—but would be, perhaps, in his subconsciousness, a devil of a fellow who wanted his love to go to the end of creation with him.

In his letters he always strove against the loved one's desire for society, and said how happy they would be as a simple married couple in a little country nook. The woman always brought him back to cold facts, drew him down from the sky to earthly considerations.

" My only love," he wrote, in one letter the girl thought quite good, " can't you see that a poet is, after all, a very simple creature.

" All I need is the earth and the sky, sunrise and sunset—and you, just you, forever by my side, my own little wife, to cherish as I would the pink tints of dawn or the sun majestically sinking to a golden doom in the West.

" I am not one of those who can stand alone—great figures that seemed carved in marble—I need you, dear, every minute, every hour, every year, all my life. When I can call you my wife, my existence will have turned a corner into the sunlight, for I will have you, always you."

This give and take went on into the third week, a constant exchange of letters between the two, working out the story, but Helen's stake was quickly dwindling, and a loan from Blackwood was impossible; she had discovered he was mean and petty in money matters in anything that did not concern his personal comfort.

Chance came to her aid. On Wednesday of the third week of their working together Blackwood was called to New York to smooth out some business connected with his estate. He informed Helen at breakfast that he would not return until the following day.

Nothing, the girl thought, could be more fortunate. Success, if she were only lucky, was in sight.

After breakfast she went to her room and went through Blackwood's letters, written in a fine Spencerian hand, with a fine tooth comb. They progressed, according to the plot laid out, beyond the engagement, but not quite to the marriage. Far enough, however.

That evening, after supper, Helen stayed reading in her room until late. Her chamber was at the front of the house, a window looking out on a second floor veranda that encircled the hotel.

Things were made easier, she thought, by the fact that Blackwood's suite was around at the side of the building on the same floor.

Waiting until long after midnight, Helen secured a little electric torch and knife she had ready for such an opportunity and swung herself out of the window to the veranda.

The door leading to it was locked at night. On tiptoe she crept by shrouded windows around the corner, hoping that it would not be necessary to force the lock on Blackwood's window.

It wasn't; the window yielded to her fingers, and she let herself into the black recess of the sitting room. Then she turned on the electric torch and felt, as the light stabbed the darkness, all the delicious thrill of being a burglar.

Often she had observed Blackwood slip manuscripts into the drawer of his mahogany desk. She crossed to it and pulled

the knob; it opened at her touch, and the round white circle from the torch showed a neat pile of the letters she had written, her share of the literary partnership.

Noiselessly she made her way back to her room. At times, when it was cool, guests made fires in the grate. Helen made one that night.

IV

AT the meeting of her lawyer, Mark Carter, and the representative of Blackwood, which took place several weeks later, Helen insisted upon being present. So Carter stationed her at the window, behind a screen, at a stenographer's desk.

The two men conducted the preliminaries in a pleasant and cordial manner, the general demeanor of barristers outside of the court room.

"Correspondence, Mr. Warner, has, I think, cleared the way," began Mr. Carter, suavely, to the other. "My client, Miss Trexel, has a clear case for a successful breach of promise suit. These letters of Mr. Blackwood—"

He pointed to a sheaf of copies on his desk.

"These letters are absolute proof that your client admitted his engagement, and that he was looking forward to an early marriage."

"Fiction—fiction," protested Mr. Warner. "Miss Trexel and Mr. Blackwood were literary partners."

"Indeed, Miss Trexel is not a literary woman; she has never had anything published. If you claim these letters part of a fictional collaboration, where, may I ask, is the proof? Where are *her letters? Your client dares not produce them?*"

"He'd give a pretty penny to lay hands on them," growled Warner. "They were stolen from his rooms while he was away."

Carter laughed. That story would sound well in court. Great material for the cartoonists, but it would never be taken seriously.

"You cannot explain away that in his letters Mr. Blackwood is in character as a poet—acting himself—why we could even read some of his poems from 'Crimson Moons'—though that would be rather painful for the jury."

"This is the cleverest form of blackmail I ever came across," thundered Warner savagely.

"Now, don't go on like that," said the other soothingly. "As your detectives have doubtless discovered, Miss Trexel is a young lady of fine moral character. You can trace her back to childhood with our entire permission.

"The question is, will Mr. Blackwood settle—or shall we try this case in court? The reading aloud of the letters will, I am sure, be sufficient."

Warner squirmed in his seat. "Unfortunately, as you must have learned, my client is the trustee of several large estates. He cannot stand a scandal—"

"Especially a losing one—"

"He cannot quite come up to your figure, but he offers ninety thousand dollars for a quit claim of this case, and a return of the letters."

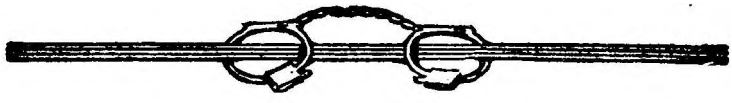
Helen coughed from her station at the window.

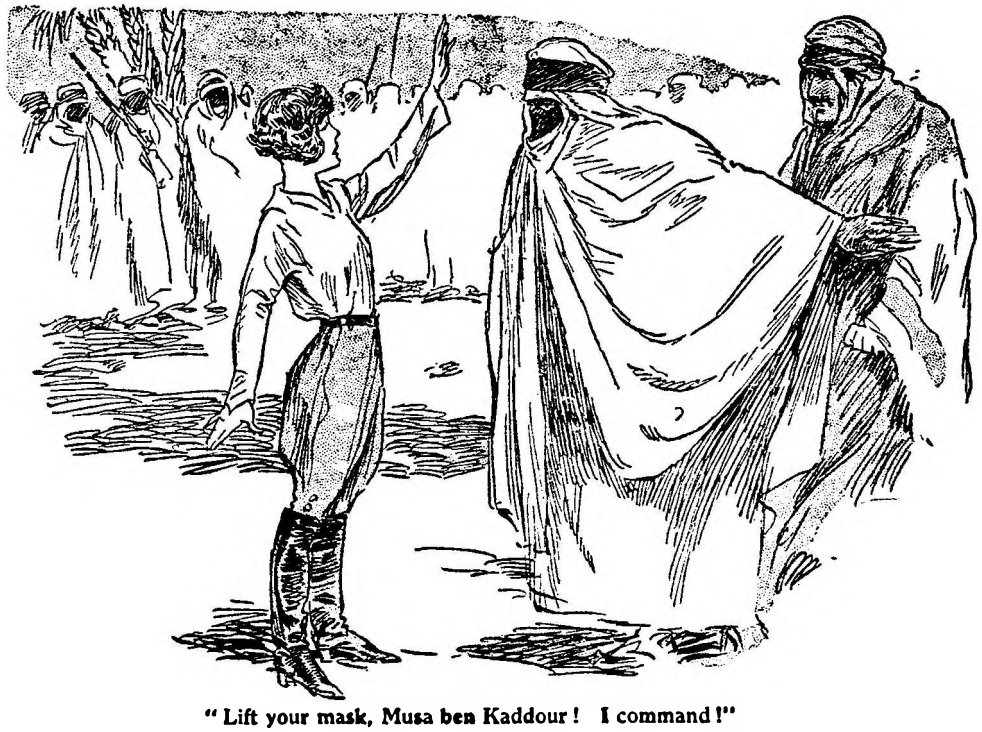
It was the signal of acceptance to her lawyer.

After Carter accepted the terms and Warner left, the attorney smiled at her.

"Well, we have won, Miss Trexel, hands down, without the trouble of court action. The check will be along to-morrow. Without going into the merits of this case I want to say that I consider you a very clever young woman."

The girl smiled. "If I had beauty I could be dumb and get away with murder. As it is I had to use my brain to—er—get away with this. I will be around late to-morrow afternoon for my check."





"Lift your mask, Musa ben Kaddour! I command!"

LALLA-MARI

By H. L. Gates

SOMETHING WAS SETTING THE DESERT AFIRE AND, SOMEHOW, SHARON TRENT WAS ESSENTIAL TO STAYING THE TIDE OF CRIMSON FLAME

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

IN some strange way, the Arabs of North Africa realize that Miss Sharon Trent, of New Bedford, United States of America, is a Tuareg, and their "Lalla-Mari," the soul of the desert. Hammid Bey, a scheming desert prince, plots to capture her, in order to wield power through her. M. André Dulac, of the French Secret Police—who is telling the story here—hopes to save her from Hammid's machinations, with the help of Dacine, Hammid's best dancing girl; Baba, a scribe; and the scholarly sheik Ahkmed, whom they meet at nightfall.

CHAPTER XXXV

THUNDERING ONWARD

FOUR other shapes took form dimly behind the Water Guide, Ahkmed. A meallim five! These, too, were masked, and thus identified as Tuaregs, like their leader.

No word passed between Baba and the waiting party. And, indeed, nothing required to be said of the events at Messara Zaide's kasbah. News of what had happened was in the air, audible, almost a chant.

While Dacine and I had ridden to meet Mahmoud Pasha, vibrant suspense had lain over the desert, but there were no moving forms. While Baba and I rode to the "nightfall" the distance was strewn with far shadows, weaving in and out, weirdly

This story began in FLYNN'S WEEKLY DETECTIVE FICTION for February 11

humming threads that laid a gigantic pattern.

To the desert eye they wrote as plainly as skywriters might that the girl who had stirred the Sahara from its lethargy was crossing the sand to a fate I could not even conjecture.

Ahkmed made no move until I had dismounted. I lost little time in getting my beast to the ground and piling off, fearful for a moment that I had forgot to keep my muscles exercised, and immensely relieved when I discovered that my legs were firm.

The Water Guide's greeting, then, was brief. "We meet again, monsieur."

The cultured French emerging from under the black mask of the yellow-robed meallim again struck me as incongruous, as it had in the Street of Cafés. Baba, standing by, scarcely would have found it familiar to his ear, which was attuned to the patios of the crooked streets of Touggourt. I was reminded also of my impetuous gunplay in the room over the Tuareg rendezvous, and the inscrutable meallim's majestic contempt of it.

I was eager to establish at once the confidence upon which we could go along quickly. "This time," I said, "I shall not doubt that we meet as friends."

"There must be no misconceptions between us," he returned. "We are not friends."

The words were churlish, but the tone suggested cool warning rather than rebuff. They gave voice to the meallim code, which those who penetrate below the surface in Africa long recognized as the weak link in the chain with which we bound the desert to France. It is the code of those who neither give nor take, but wait!

"I shall not believe, however," I returned, "that I was misled into coming here with a false assurance. If we are enemies, the meallim are at least honorable."

"I am no more an enemy than friend. A meallim's enmity, like his friendship, are bestowed by a higher hand than his own. Our choice is about to be made for us."

Dazed as I was by the day's distracting events and tangled revelations, I recognized his meaning, and shuddered. If only I could have warned Paris that I had learned why the meallim made up their fives and disappeared to the south; that they went to hear, from Sharon Trent, whether to be our friends or enemies.

What then would Paris do? Reach out to grasp at a tradition, a phantom, that had been harbored so secretly in the desert heart? They would scarce believe me in Paris could I explain that the phantom was the American girl with the wonderful brown hair and peopled brown eyes. They were not, like me, face to face with Ahkmed, a meallim leader who spoke with Academy French and said: "Our choice soon is to be made for us!"

Unthinking, I murmured aloud: "I should have gone to Ouargla. I would be there by now, or with a regiment behind me."

"You would not have reached Ouargla. Too many are watching for you. Few roumi travelers arrived to-day at your outposts. To-morrow there will be fewer."

I was silent, with my own meditations upon that. Whatever he might have to say to me, he would say in his own time and manner. He read my conclusions quickly, with a Tuareg's perceptiveness.

"Let this be spoken between us, monsieur," he said. "I serve that one to whom the desert has preserved its obedience. Twice has a Tuareg woman saved you from a power that decreed your death. First, a woman of the Ouled Nael. Then the woman of yesterday, who took you to the sand while Arab knives were being drawn for you."

That, of course, I hadn't known! I made exclamation upon it, but the meallim went on, unheeding.

"The one I serve also is Tuareg, and she calls now to you, in her heart. Let that stand as the reason, in your understanding, that I have waited here through the day. If there be other reason, it will remain between Allah and myself, until she permits me to speak.

"I will bring you into her presence, in full security. Beyond that I give you no guarantee."

"But I will see her? Be near her?"

"I offer no more. If it is not enough the Bou Medine scribe will try, faithfully, to steal you within the Ouargla walls. He will fail."

To say more would have been quite useless. That the meallim had another reason, one he did not disclose, for taking me along the path the Tuaregs had made, I was fully convinced. He, like Dacine, was opposed to Hammid Bey, though he later would be bound to him, just as Dacine was bound to him now by a different tie. I did not hesitate, for it seemed to me there was but one decision to make—and I had made it when I left the kasbah with Baba. I would not turn back.

Baba wheeled his mehari at a curt sign from the meallim. He did not look at me, and it seemed that he would disappear without leavetaking. He bent in my direction to fumble with his gurbah. I do not know whether Ahkmed heard or not, but the scribe murmured:

"Trust. If it is granted that the master speaks with her, perhaps he will remember his servant, and also the lady, Dacine."

He went into the night while Ahkmed and his companions mounted the meharis which were stretched some place near.

I judged from the stars that we struck sharply to the south. The meallim rode ahead. There was no moon, except for a few rare moments when it broke through heavy banks of clouds. Twice a word from Ahkmed brought us all to a sudden stop. Each time I sensed a nearness of some invisible company that rode swiftly and silently. At other times camel hoofs passed so close I thought of ships escaping each other in a fog.

While we covered mile after mile my spirits rose into a wild recklessness. I wanted to sing, which is a thing I never do. I fancied the night noises, that weird humming, as a mighty orchestra and I wanted to wield the baton and lead it. I pictured myself as stealing, with stealth and cunning, upon a desert raid. I felt abnormally crafty, and tingled with an eagerness to waylay and pillage a caravan.

So absorbing did my fancies become during the long hours in the midst of an unknown panorama, hidden by the lowering clouds, that I created an image to which I gave allegiance with abandoned fury. I set this fancied image all around me, in the sand, in the clouds, and on a mehari of its own that it might ride beside me.

It was wherever I looked, either with my eyes or my mind, and it called me on to ride and pillage and slay for it. Particularly did I want victims of a different religion than mine. And I saw victims who were complacent, unawares, quenching their thirst under refreshing palms at cool, rippling wells.

These angered me terribly. I wanted to get at their throats and choke them until the precious water they were desecrating should gurgle out. And the image spurred me on, spurred me on until I could not hold myself in. I had to cry out to it. And I cried out:

"Lalla-Mari!"

None of the meallim paid any attention. Perhaps my cry was not aloud, after all, but kept within those disordered fancies. But my image heard, and turned and smiled while it waved me on, a pagan smile with very red lips; a warm smile from very brown eyes. I shouted again:

"Sharon!"

My image was pleased, as if I'd just slain a whole caravan while it gurgled out its stolen desert water. She let me come up with her and let me take her in my arms and ride on furiously with her fingers in my hair and with her lips whispering:

"Kill the roumis, dearest! I'll make them thirsty so you may kill them. They don't belong among my people. Kill them for me—and hurry—hurry!"

Oh, but the desert took hold of me while the five meallims rode ahead! It got into me, and revealed to me its Lalla-Mari as Messara Zaide had not done. Surely Allah was great! Men fight for a woman, more stubbornly when there are so few other luxuries to while away leisure hours. He gave the desert a woman to fight for. And I was being taken to her!

I came back to a sense of myself and the realities. But I was breathless, and as weak in my rahla seat as if I had, indeed, participated in the rape of a lonely camel train, or a village. We had stopped.

The dawn was breaking. In a moment the desert floor would be tawny gold. Enough of that visitation of desert instinct remained in my excited blood to warn me that we were near human habitation.

"We will rest," said Ahkmed's voice from near by. His hand was stretched to me, and in it was a black cloth, a mask similar to his own. "Cover your face," he ordered, "and keep your mehari among ours. At the caravansary do not speak, nor let the mask lift."

While I arranged the cloth so that my eyes were behind its slits, and fastened it well under my hood, the carpet of sun was laid. Half a mile off an oasis loomed. "Ghardaya," Akhmed vouchsafed as we swung toward it.

It was here, I recalled, that Dacine had wanted me to come with Sharon after I should have killed Mahmoud Pasha. On the horizon beyond the well and its clustered palms, I saw a jagged line of hills. The Great Erg would be close.

Ghardaya proved to be a group of stone huts that leaned to each other over dark passages. Beyond these were broad spaces of lemon, orange, and apricot trees, and the ever-present date palms. Arabs in their winding sheets were astir, but gave no heed, other than sidelong glances from their limpid eyes, to the travelers who rode into the caravansary. Meallim are never questioned, and Tuaregs never interfered with. We were both.

I was glad to stretch on the stone floor of the walled-in, unroofed place set aside for camels and riders alike. I supposed I would be watched over, but cared little. I slept profoundly for six hours. Then we were off again.

Another night, broken by another six-hour period of sleep, brought us to the second dawn. For many hours we had ridden slowly through the Erg, where the great sand dunes, tall as great houses, move over the desert floor as sailing ships skim the sea.

Close to the ground the air is marvelously clear, despite the constant wind that circles the sand hills, paring one side and sweeping the parings around to the other, thus providing the "moving" effect. But above the dune peaks there is a canopy of fine sand as opaque as a storm cloud.

At some time in the distant past the Great Erg had been the home of the Tuaregs. They alone of all the desert people know its moods and how to baffle them. Why they migrated to the Hogaar region in the south, had long been a mystery until—the coming of Sharon Trent! Of that I shall speak later.

And now, something was going wrong.

What it was, and its cause, I could not define. It was hidden, somewhere ahead, behind the towering dunes. But its presence was vivid in the taut figure of Ahkmed, motionless on his mehari a few yards in advance of me. I heard only the singing of the dawn wind. But the meallim had heard more. Two of them had suddenly plunged away, swinging at top speed out of sight in a twisting of the path.

They returned at the same frantic pace, drew up beside their leader, and held a guttural conference in jerky phrases. Ahkmed rode back to me.

"Your pistol, monsieur, if you please!"

I began to demur. Above all things, borne in upon me while the hours of our journey piled up, was my conviction that my pistol was destined to stand me in good stead sooner or later. Many times I had drawn it, surreptitiously, and anxiously examined it for traces of seeping sand. Ahkmed cut in on my hesitation with something like a growl. "If you please!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

"WITHOUT SAFETY!"

I SURRENDERED my weapon. Ahkmed dropped it into a saddle pocket. I made a careful note for quick reaching. Yet I had no fear, and no premonitions. My confidence in the meallim, whose faces I couldn't see, had grown to completeness.

Suddenly I heard a surging thud of hoofs. Their sound broke upon me as a wave breaks, without warning. Half a minute later Tuaregs appeared, a vanguard of them, then a long, close-riding line that wound into view between the dunes. In sight, there were hundreds. How many were shut off by the hills I could not tell.

There was no mistaking that the black masks concealed an ill-portent for me. As many short-barreled rifles as I could comprehend in one startled glance were aimed past the meallim and at me, long before their meharis drew up.

My first sense of intervention was a leap of Ahkmed's camel which threw it directly in front of mine. The meallim's left arm shot upward, his right pointed into the sand, the Water Guides' signal. It was a long breath of relief that escaped me when the gun barrels were lowered.

Ahkmed now moved forward to meet the Tuareg chief. I thought I recognized the black-burnoosed figure as one of those that had waited, in Messara Zaide's courtyard, for the appearance of Sharon. I had no doubt that these were the fellows who had ridden away with her. They hardly could have made better time than we did on the march. Sharon, therefore, could not be far away, if, indeed, these were her captors.

I was curiously resigned to the outcome of Ahkmed's conference with the tribal leader. The hostile glare from between the innumerable slits merely interested me. After that fateful moment when a nervous finger would have canceled my existence, anything more must be in the nature of an anticlimax.

A combination of syllables spoken by the meallim leader and immediately echoed by the Tuareg chief struck my ears with a familiar ring. They were spoken again, and each time echoed by grunts and a mild commotion in the front ranks of the tribal column.

"Ahl el Trab!"

"Jinn of Water!" Apparently Ahkmed was invoking the "servants of Lalla-Mari," as Messara Zaide had called them. Somehow I began to wonder if Paris ever really existed, and if M. Renaud was not, in truth, a realistic figure out of a persistent dream.

When men like these, fierce and fearless, meallim who inherited a mysterious knowledge of desert secrets and guarded them from one generation to another, Tuaregs who were the wildest symbols of nomadic life, talked seriously of "Jinn of Water," it didn't seem as if the world I had known ever could have existed.

The Tuareg leader came to some sort of decision, and announced it brusquely. Ahkmed brought his mehari up to mine again.

"I pledged you safety into her presence," he said harshly. "I spoke as a meallim. We have not come swiftly enough. A warning has outridden us. The chief of the Tuaregs will not recognize my pledge, and bars your way into Es Souk. You may not enter safely."

Not before had he indicated that it was the unknown Es Souk, home of Lalla-Mari, to which he led. I had been certain, however, that was our destination. And it must be close! An oasis, or a haunt in some form, hidden in the midst of the Erg, among the sand hills that are never still, that are as relentless as juggernauts!

Now I was filled with a flaring rage. Futile again. And in the sand hills from which there could be no escape. A company of the Legion had been lost in them, one time, and the great dunes had become its tombstones. Yet a rage may not defy either Tuareg malevolence or the dunes. I stared at Ahkmed blankly.

"I withdraw my pledge."

There was a grunt from the Tuareg chief. Ahkmed answered in kind. Apparently he repeated what he had just said to me. The tribesmen behind their leader made sounds of morose approval.

I could summon nothing in reply save an ironical: "What is to happen now? If you will give me my pistol I will enjoy myself for a few moments anyhow. I would not have surrendered it, except with dependence upon you."

He ignored my challenge. "My word was given. You may return, unhindered, to Messara Zaide's house. I will guide you there."

A vague quality in his tone, a nuance I could not quite grasp, held me. My senses seemed to respond to a message my ears missed. I peered steadily into his eyes, exploring as keenly as I could through the grotesque slits. My look was returned evenly. A space of time passed, short or long, I do not know. Ahkmed waited, and I made up my mind. He was conveying to me that if I would not give up, he wouldn't.

"If there is an alternative that will give

me one sight of her, I will accept that," I said.

I had been right. The gleam under the mask revealed that.

"You may enter Es Souk if you choose. To that, Musa ben Kaddour, chief of my tribe, consents. He declares that you will not be allowed to leave, nor to hold communication with the one you seek."

His hand dropped slowly, as if in unconscious relaxation, from his rahla pommel to his saddle pocket. It hung over the spot where he'd dropped my pistol. It was a sign. I might go in, with the consent of his tribal authority. Once in, he, whatever his use for me, would serve me.

I merely nodded. He wheeled. The Tuareg column made a path for us, with much snorting by the camels. The meallim closed in behind me and we rode ahead, Ahkmed and the Tuareg in front.

Now I knew how many Tuaregs had ridden to meet us. We rode by thousands of them, a ghostly review.

I saw, suddenly, a peak higher than the others, that appeared to be not of sand, but solid rock. Sahara geologists have reported no stone formation in the Great Erg, and I was speculating upon the chance that I was looking upon the outskirts of a mirage when we swung around an intervening dune and I gave a startled gasp.

The hill I had observed was not a mirage, but very solid, a stone breaker that swerved the moving dunes to either side so that they described two far semicircles, clearing an elliptical space that was a carpet of luxurious green.

In the center of this effectually hidden oasis was a dense matting of low palm fronds that must have been of great age—the palms of Es Souk!

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE "LOWDOWN"

I MADE a mighty effort to keep my senses and perceptiveness clear. My best efforts produced only a confusion swamped in a torrent of kaleidoscopic impressions.

Shouting at me was an inner voice warning that this was Es Souk, annual rendezvous of the fraternity of Water Guides; for every detail of it that I might carry back to Paris, M. Renaud's ministers would pretty nearly pin a medal on my breast.

Here was the seat of that semifabled power, the known but still utterly unknown ruler of the meallim, holder of an invisible throne that inspired all the tribes of the desert by its authority over the men of water who might, at will, close the streams and dry the wells.

Here Hammid Bey would rule when he should have come into his heritage.

Paris and Hanatou and Duval would listen eagerly to my vaguest memory of the least of its crumbling walls.

And there was the "grove of palms" of which Nakhla had spoken. Under them would be "the pool that shines like silver," the Silver Pool, where, as Messara Zaide had so solemnly described, the Jinn of Water would come to "reveal themselves" to the desert's soul—to Lalla-Mari!

To Sharon Trent, the wisp of modernity from New Bedford—she had known of Es Souk! "It is the home of Lalli-Mari—I shall be at Es Souk," she had said while we rode through the night with her wounded father on my rahla.

What was it she had said that night at Château Madrid, or was it at the embassy, before we went to dine? "It must be nice to sing and dream away from the path the world makes!"

Here, if these fierce, grave children of the desert were to be believed—and how convincing they were—a mysterious Lalla-Mari, "of whose loveliness the meallim tell," sang and dreamed, far from any path the world ever made. But that was in the past—it was all past tense!

Yet Sharon—to-day! By George! Even I had been calling out to Lalla-Mari while I rode, last night and the night before, when the desert got inside of me.

How could I catch impressions and hold them?

My brain would garner only a mental confusion. At some time in that past to which it seemed Lalla-Mari must belong—despite the modernities of Sharon Trent—the oasis in the supposedly uninhabitable Great Erg must have been a great and thriv-

ing city. Ruins of the walls protruded from the sand, following the elliptical line which inclosed the great space avoided by the dunes. These remnants served now, as perhaps they had for centuries, as guard against the encroachment of the sand drift from the desert floor.

Within the walls, scattered against the base of the rock hill, were low, rambling houses. These, too, were remnant of former stability, but still were serviceable and tenanted. Their roofs were level and joined by arch-supported walks, the arches being of the same delicate pattern that supports the minarets and domes of age-old mosques.

I glimpsed narrow, covered passages boring in between the sand-blown houses. There were stretches of open spaces between walls divided into mazes of roofless rooms. Over all was a sky transformed into radiant glory. A pearl-white sand cloud hung high, with the sun breaking through, its rays disseminated as by countless prisms, a vivid, tenuous mass of scintillating colors. The brilliant effect stunned the senses.

And the oasis teemed with life. Jellabs and burnooses of every conceivable hue, dazzling white to jet black, flowed from passages and doorways over the cleared green. The roofs were peopled with women, unveiled and therefore Tuaregs.

I recalled the shadow in General Hanatou's face when, in his headquarters at Touggourt, he had shown his anxiety at news brought in by desert patrols that the Tuaregs had brought their women and children north from the Hogaar, and sent them into the Great Erg, " where we can't get at them!"

Here they were, spread on the roofs, white and uncovered, while their masked men moved with the easily distinguishable meallim groups in somber mystery on the streets and walks below. It was Es Souk that lay around me—strange, mysterious, tense, a whispering, muttering, droning Es Souk, a crowded hive humming to its queen. She was there—in one of those houses, or in the grove. Sharon!

I couldn't hold my thoughts to coherency. I hadn't even noticed that Ahkmed and the Tuareg chief had halted at the opening of a rift between two huts. I was reminded when a dozen pairs of Tuareg hands pulled me from my mehari and while I, so suddenly shocked and stirred to alertness, fought and scrambled madly, dragged me into a knot of conglomerate races, Tafilet Moors, Arabs, Negroid Moslems from the jungle frontiers, on through these and pitched me as they might have thrown a bag of dates, into a patch of blackness.

I was taken so completely by surprise that I hardly knew just what had happened. I was tugged at. I resolved to find out what it was about. A struggle. Here I was, a heap on a dirt floor! That was all.

There was a close rumble of sounds, murmuring voices, and moving feet. I got up cautiously, felt myself and decided that I was, at least, whole, filled my lungs, which had been breathless for a time, and proceeded at once to get what sense I could of my environment.

A few bitter imprecations against Ahkmed straggled up, but I smothered them. Either I had been mistaken when I thought I detected a secret assurance in his eyes, out there among the dunes, or I had been right. Scant good there would be in going back to think it over.

The room was a large one. While I moved about, feeling its bare stone walls, I traced the murmuring noises. They entered through two high openings, revealed by a faint light, high in the wall at one end. Outside, I supposed, would be some sort of an unlit passage, for the light coming in was merely a paler relief in the gloom of the interior. The voices would be in some room near that, perhaps, also skirted the corridor.

I could discover no furniture, though there were rolls of rugs and blankets strewn in corners. Not enough of them, however, to make a mound high enough to put me in reach of the wall opening. And the walls were too smooth to give a climbing foothold. It occurred to me, however, that it would not be difficult, given time for a little patience, to scrape a foothold in the crevices between the stone blocks. There were plenty of sizable pieces of stone on the floor.

I was turning over in my mind the thought of going to work at once when it

struck me that this was not to be my prison for any length of time. The glassless opening in the wall was unbarred. My jailors would realize that I could reach it handily after an hour or so of steady application.

For three or four minutes I stood quietly, leaning against a wall, speculating upon the probabilities of the next few hours. If I were not to be kept in prison, something else was planned. It was clear that Ahkmed had won a concession from—what was his name?—Musa ben Kaddour, of the tribe, when it was agreed that I was to be brought within the oasis. Ahkmed would have a plan. I could only wait. Any attempt to fathom the desert mind in advance would be useless.

I was contenting myself with this fatalistic argument when I nearly fell into a cavity yawning in the floor against one of the walls. My eyes, accustomed now to the not quite opaque darkness, made out descending steps. I investigated a few, perhaps twenty. I bumped against a wooden door, then, that was not even latched. But it creaked when I pushed it, as if it had not been used with any regularity.

I'd remember the door, I concluded, but let it alone for the present. If it would do me any good whatsoever it wouldn't have been forgotten. I thought myself rather crafty when I slipped back to the barren room, and gave over to trying to catch words from the drone of near-by voices.

But they'd quieted, now, the voices. Or they were lower. The sound of feet rose clearer. There was a faint clatter, too. Guns being laid on a stone floor! Suddenly there was silence, more pronounced because there penetrated in the low hum of life from the oasis outside.

Time passed. The silence was unbroken, save by that far humming. Yet I knew there were people near, many of them. In some sort of room, or hall or space, beyond the outer corridor that let the faint light through my high window. People in some silent conclave.

Inevitably I turned to the tormenting fact that Sharon Trent was, perhaps, within the sound of my voice. Baba had disclosed that Dacine was riding with Hammid Bey to Es Souk. He would be close at hand. The silence of men who had deposited guns on a stone floor near by was too irritating. I decided to push open that door at the bottom of the steps.

Its protests hit my nerves like shrieks, but I was reckless. There was welcome light beyond, not sunlight, but a paleness that indicated exits not far off. No new sound came from above. I moved along. It was a great storeroom with ceiling so high I could not make it out. Whatever was stored, was arranged in orderly masses, reaching up to the shadowy roof, and covered with overlapping tent canvases.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A MESSAGE ON DACINE'S FINGERS

I HAD little curiosity as to the contents of any warehouse just then. I was in mental tune for any sort of fancifulness, even great treasures, or subterranean halls done in gold with Allah himself sitting on a porphyry throne.

Allah might as well be in the midst of the desert, in person, loyally hidden from roumi knowledge for centuries, as a Lalla-Mari who had been so successfully harbored as his "human voice." In other words, Messara Zaide could have walked with me between those immense piles of stored something, and I would have listened soberly to any description he gave of them.

Was there not Sharon Trent? And was she not—Lalla-Mari? And was not this the Es Souk to which the meallim had disappeared in their menacing fives?

Certainly the tent canvases might cover the couches of Mohammed's forty lovely ladies. With mere idleness I tore aside a bit of loose canvas.

Guns!

A million of them, of the latest, deadliest models. In this great pile were stocks, packed densely. In the next were barrels. Over here the magazines, piled in geometrical precision by expert hands. An arsenal that would supply an army corps—so much within my view, and I could have no idea how far under the hill of rock this warehouse corridor stretched.

We in Paris had not been wrong when

we suspected Hammid Bey of gun running. Here was dreadful evidence of how successful he had been, despite the long arm and vigilance of my own bureau of the Secret Police.

A wild desperation got hold of me, tearing at every pulse beat. With these guns and the ammunition I'd no doubt was stored near, put into the hands of Arabs, Bedouins, Moors, and Berbers—to say nothing of Tuaregs and meallim—

The sand won't run white, Nakhla dear, for your monsieur of France! Red, Nakhla! Red, Dacine! Crimson red, mon père Hanatou! "Allah and the girl—"

"Monsieur! Monsieur!"

Of a certainty, now, I'd gone mad at last.

That was Sharon's voice, whispering, off some place among the guns.

"Monsieur!"

No, not Sharon. The dancer of the Ouled Nael. And closer. I must hurry back to the steps and into the room above, where I could work myself down into calmness again.

"M. Dulac—I am hunting you. Speak—but not loudly."

Dacine. Odd, how Baba always said: "The lady, Dacine."

"Dear girl!" I said, and not loudly, but she heard, and came upon me as she had that first time in the room over the Tuaregs in the Street of Cafés.

"Quickly!" she breathed while she caught my hand. "Back to where they left you. There will be no hope if they discover you've been in here."

"There is hope, then?" I breathed back while she guided me unerringly among the great piles I'd lost myself among.

"If Allah is merciful to his children."

It didn't quite seem as if she gave an answer to me at all. It was more as if she released a prayer.

We came to the steps. She pushed me so that I sprang ahead to the floor above. I heard her bringing the door to, a little. I waited at the top step and she came up, and got hold of my hand again.

While she steadied her breath I pondered that half prayer she'd whispered, "If Allah is merciful to his children!" Then there would be hope for me.

It was the clearest hint I'd yet had that I was being woven into a definite purpose—that I was agent for Dacine who loved her people—and for Ahkmed who would love them, too! I could make no sense of it, nothing tangible, but I was sorry I had for a moment distrusted the taciturn meallim of the yellow robe.

Somehow, a mind seems to work automatically to an end, but without logic, when one is far from the distractions of civilization

"Tell me of Sharon," I said when I was certain Dacine was calm. "Tell me of her first, and then of what I am to do—and why you came to me."

Then Dacine did a surprising thing. She took away the hand that had held mine, and put her other one in its place. She had remained on the top step, as if to be ready to disappear instantly. She drew me a little closer, and bent me down a little.

"Kiss my fingers, monsieur," she said.

I was confused, and ashamed at once. I had been too eager for news of Sharon. I should have had the tactfulness to express first my wonder over her—for women are women at all times.

She thought I hesitated too long and, of course, could not know the reason. She repeated her command. "Only my fingers, monsieur. The back of them, please."

And I kissed them, then, with far more sincerity and meaning than are included in any mere graciousness.

"That was her message, monsieur. She held my hand to her lips for quite a long time, while I was at her feet. She commanded, then, that I bring my fingers to you."

Her eyes shone up to me out of the dimness. They cried out to me; Lalla-Mari kissed my fingers.

"You are very good to me," I murmured, overcome—by her, her eyes, and her message. She withdrew her hand.

"I cannot remain. They will come for you soon. The Tuareg marabout sits in council now to decide about you. Please to listen carefully, monsieur, to what I ask of you."

"Whatever you say—that shall I do. But is there no chance for a fight? I can

fight alone, if I have to." I smiled a little here with memory of our last twenty minutes together, and of Mahmoud Pasha's fate. "If you can smuggle me a gun, or even a knife—"

"I was afraid for you—that you would make some such mistake. There is no chance here for resistance. Now you will listen.

"Ahkmed serves you. I, too, serve. You will hear Hammid Bey plead against you. Musa ben Kaddour is powerful. He is a Tuareg chief. He, too, will demand that you have the one meal. The marabout will talk with Allah to ask his will, but the marabout will hear the nobles of the tribe first, and there is great respect for Hammid Bey and Musa ben Kaddour."

"And you think Ahkmed will prevail against them? That he, alone, can save me?"

She was making this seem impossible, and she gave me no assuring answer as to the meallim. "Do not lose your self-control, monsieur. That is my warning. The Tuareg looks deep for wisdom. The nobles of the tribe will probe you while you stand before them. Be cautious. Of Hammid Bey we will talk again, if it is the will. But do not think of him while he asks your death and the Tuaregs study you. Do not think evil of Musa ben Kaddour while he pleads with his nobles. Think only of—"

She hesitated to pull me closer. "Of Ahkmed," I finished for her.

"No," she said. "As Baba, in Touggourt, had you think her while you were weighed, think of her now—of Lalla-Mari. But when you see her, give no sign."

She was slipping down the black stairs. I held her. "I shall see her, then—while my life is at stake?"

I was horrified by the thought, though I well knew it might be the only time I would see her, for it seemed as if the odds Dacine enumerated were far too heavy.

"She has promised to save you. She will. But I repeat—give no sign. You will not be permitted to approach her, not while a Tuareg or meallim is near. I will find you afterward."

Now she was gone, and just in time. The door I'd been pitched through opened on a ray of shaded light. A summons was grunted. I went eagerly. I was to see Sharon, who had promised Dacine she'd save me!

CHAPTER XXXIX

BEFORE THE DEATH TRIBUNAL

TUAREGS closed around me silently when I stepped through the door. They led me into the bright sunlight, and through a roofless corridor which debouched behind a row of stone huts. The houses, I thought, would look out onto the oasis green. Masked faces banked in glassless windows to peer at me as I walked by.

After what may have been a hundred steps we turned into a darker passage. I glanced up. There were my window openings. A little further along we came abruptly upon a wide arch, hung with heavy rugs. A muttering from my guards directed me to push the rugs aside and proceed.

I had walked lightly, my spirits high. But I suffered something of shock before the atmosphere and scene which now confronted me.

Many vivid tales have been woven by desert romanticists around the tribal councils of the Tuaregs. They have given a weird and dramatic nuance to the baffling mystery of this strangest of tribes.

Despite my sudden dejection there was a bit of thrill in the knowledge that while many desert travelers have stood in the "Ihaggareen circle," in the fastnesses of the Hogaar hills, the Tuareg home, only one, so far as there is record, came away to describe the ordeal.

Would I be the second?

Dacine had said that I would.

Spread before me was a great room or, rather, barren space inclosed by walls. The hill of rock sloped upward to one side. The floor was sand. The roof was that glorious ceiling of brilliant sand cloud. Against the wall to my left sat the marabout—the adviser, priest, and law interpreter of the tribe, both holy man and judge. His dais was a limestone bowlder covered by a gorgeously red rug, on which he sat cross-legged.

Contrary to the custom of other tribes, the Tuaregs prefer their leaders to be men whose brains and bodies are active, rather than mellowed by age. Their chiefs and marabouts never are old men. This fellow who sat on the red rug might have been Joseph, friend of King Pharaoh. His coat was of many colors, his sandals green Morocco, and his trousers a flaming purple. He needed no symbol of his authority, an authority that transcends that of the tribal chief when it is invoked in "council." He looked his power and part. Small wonder that my stare at him took in all his details He would decide my fate.

And in a silent, malevolent semicircle, cross-legged on the sand in double rank, were the "Ihaggareens," the "nobles" of the tribe. Behind the nobles the "Imrads," young men who yet had to earn the fullest of their medals, stood with folded arms.

They might not vote, but must observe and under Musa ben Kaddour, their chief, would carry out the marabout's orders. It is the Imrads who make up the desert's "shadow cavalcades."

But to the "circles" I gave but a fleeting glance. Three figures who stood before the marabout, stiffly erect, each enveloped in an undescribable arrogance of his own estate, took possession of my every sense. Two were Tuaregs. The one in the black burnoose, funereal in its blend with black hood and mask, would be Musa ben Kaddour—"against me," Dacine had said. The other wore the yellow robe of Ahkmed.

The third was unmasked. He would not be Tuareg, though Tuareg blood flowed down from his ancestry—Hammid Bey.

I had seen him but once before, that night at Château Madrid. Then he was a debonair figure in faultless evening dress, dark and handsome, "of whom," Mme. Latour had murmured, "one wonders how he would make love." Now, his face turned from the marabout to glance at me, he was the Arab on his native sand.

Burnoose and turbaned hood were spotless white, relieved by a jellab, underneath, of blue. One wouldn't think to wonder how he would make love. Rather, what quarter he would give the women and children of an outpost or a city. Or what price he'd ask to sell a tribe.

I looked for meallim. There were none—only Ahkmed and Hammid. Evidently, disposal of me was purely a Tuareg matter. I looked, too, for women. Our knowledge is that the women of the Tuaregs participate in tribal affairs. It had something to do with the reason behind the masks—the "shame masks," as I had heard them described by Messara Zaide.

But there were no women. The scene had all the aspects of a tremendously grave court-martial. The figure in the yellow robe would be my pleader.

I had paused within the arch for several minutes. During this time there was no word spoken by anybody. The heads of the nobles on the floor were turned to me, and the marabout gazed in my direction, across fifty feet of intervening space. The three who stood in front of the marabout also regarded me steadily. I summoned all that I could from Dacine's strange warnings.

"Tuareg eyes probe deep," she had reminded me. "Think of Lalla-Mari, not the Tuareg chief or Hammid Bey." And she had recalled the test I had undergone in the den in Touggourt while Baba had coffee with me.

It was not difficult for me to think of Sharon. I wondered how she could oppose this grim company if Ahkmed couldn't.

Some sign, invisible to me, was passed. A hand from behind touched my shoulder. Another motioned me forward. I took fate, hope, and all my wariness into my own hands, and walked through the circle of nobles to confront the fellow on the red rug. I hoped he would speak in Arabic or French, for Tuareg was beyond me.

French, it appeared. Not fluent, like Ahkmed's, but a patois that would have amused me at another time; yet it was understandable and really impressive, clothed as it was in his cold dignity.

And he went directly to his point. "The desert raises its voice against you. For the other roumis who come unbidden into the sand, there is only scorn. For you there is hatred among the tribes. You have sought to gain a knowledge that the desert

has kept in confidence with Allah. Is that spoken between us?"

I thought quickly. I would save my threats and warnings, even my pleas if it came to that, until there had been more talking done by the other fellow. I echoed his phraseology as a matter of tactfulness.

"That much is spoken."

Instantly I was aware of a reaction behind me in that double rank of masks. It was a thing to feel, rather than to see or hear, for the murmur that went around was indefinable, and my back was turned. But my reticence was approved by such as could understand our patois, and my manner by the others.

The marabout continued: "The Tuareg people have given no vow of peace or friendship to foreigners. To the conqueror we have yielded, but have given no bond. Is that also spoken?"

Now I must study for a second. What would be the effect should I admit that? I looked, unconsciously, to Ahkmed. Curious how understandable the meallim's eyes were. He looked back, but I read his wish.

"That, too, is spoken."

Again the murmur in the Tuareg ranks.

And so, it seemed, preliminaries were cleared to the satisfaction of the marabout's conception of fairness. There was a grudge against me because I had met Sharon Trent at Château Madrid. And there was no treaty between Tuareg and France. So I could be disposed of out of hand with no right to demur. I could almost see him saying to himself: "So far, so good. Now we'll get on with the business."

He turned to Ahkmed. "Do you bring word to the Ihaggareen from Sidi bou Ibrahim?"

I'd not heard that name before. I wondered who Sidi bou Ibrahim might be. Ahkmed, it appeared, had brought no word from that one.

"I gave my word to the roumi. It was a meallim's word. I spoke for myself and my r'tass of five. For Sidi bou Ibrahim, I might not speak until I had brought the roumi into his presence, nor will I ask now that Sidi bou Ibrahim speak for me, or for the roumi he has not yet heard. My word was withdrawn, as has been said here. The roumi comes to the council without pledge."

I was not pleased with that speech. A fear that Ahkmed was throwing me over became disturbing. Yet what he had said was undeniably true. I had come into Es Souk without a pledge, save what I thought I read in the meallim's tapping on the saddle pocket that held my pistol.

But Musa ben Kaddour was satisfied with the meallim's reply. "My guns were stayed in the dunes," he said. "Let them be stayed no longer. The Tuaregs have returned to Es Souk. The roumi's feet have profaned their return. The Tuaregs have brought Lalla-Mari to her home. The roumi has looked upon the Sand Daughter with profane eyes. In Allah's name, I demand that food for one meal be put before the roumi."

Almost I lost my irking self-control. I wanted to spring at the throat of the black-garbed Tuareg. I must have moved a step, for there was an ominous stir behind me. I remembered Dacine's warnings just in time. Before I broke out, I'd let Hammid Bey deliver himself. I was anxious to know what his speech would be. But it was Ahkmed who spoke again.

"As Tuareg I speak to the council. A demand has been made in Allah's name. It has been said that the Tuaregs have returned to Es Souk, and brought Lalla-Mari. That is well spoken. But we return with our faces covered, as we covered them when Allah sent us from the sand dunes.

"Who knows yet that the Lalla-Mari who comes again to the desert will win for us Allah's permission to bare our faces to the sun? And may we, whose faces must be hidden, make demands lightly in Allah's name? I ask, for Lalla-Mari; for it would be her wish, that the roumi be granted nine days within the walls of Es Souk."

Both Hammid Bey and the Tuareg chief would have answered. Both stirred, but the meallim halted them with a gesture. He faced the tribal nobles and repeated his speech, or I suppose he did, in guttural Tuareg. At his first mention of Lalla-Mari hands came out from burnoose folds to cup their palms. I thought better of him now.

There was a muttering discussion by the squatting nobles. Some of them made brief speeches of their own within their masks. What they said was repeated down the line and commented upon. While I watched, straining my ears to detect the drift of their unfamiliar tongue, I was glad I had not broken in with warnings that the Legion would never give up, and that what was done to me, or to Sharon Trent, would be inevitably avenged.

Whatever was of my world was fearfully impotent just then, while the morose tribesmen discussed the measure of their hospitality to me—one meal or nine days' grace. It would be so much easier to serve me with a single plateful!

The marabout put an end to the talk within the circle. Hammid Bey spoke for the first time. I sensed, in a general shuffle, a respect for the future chief of the meallim that was accorded neither Musa ben Kaddour nor Ahkmed.

"There is none here save me who may speak for Lalla-Mari."

He paused, that his words might sink deep, and I thought he glanced at me from the corner of his eye. Perhaps this was my imagination, but my whole body chilled. Into his tone he put finality, and cold, calm presumption that whatever he said would outweigh all else. In the marabout's attention there was open deference.

When Messara Zaide lifted his curtain of the years and disclosed to me the fantastic power that was Lalla-Mari, all of our vague, unformed fears of Hammid Bey took definite shape. Dacine had wanted to keep Sharon Trent from him. Dacine knew much more than I, but hers was revealed as a fear that Hammid Bey would speak to the desert with the voice of—Sharon. That had become clear.

And Ahkmed, too—for that must be his fear also. Behind their anxieties there might be purposes far removed from mine, but our cause was a common one, a distrust of the future meallim chief. And I must listen now while he flaunted whatever victory he'd won that permitted him to speak, at last, for Lalla-Mari!

He was going on, and the marabout was heeding him. "It is rightly spoken that her tribe has brought the Sand Daughter to Es Souk. So much of Allah's will has been done. Those who lost her have paid with shame. It is Allah's kindness to them that they return her. May his name be praised!"

His name was praised in guttural chorus. Hammid Bey knew well how to sway! When Dacine promised me hope, did she think of this?

"I speak now with news for the Tuareg council."

He paused again, then resumed with a studied slowness that was impressive.

"Sidi bou Ibrahim waits for her tribe to bring to him the Lalla-Mari for whose commands the desert tribes are listening. The meallim wait for Sidi bou Ibrahim to follow her into the palms and to the Silver Pool.

"Sidi bou Ibrahim and the meallim are eager to sit with Lalla-Mari at the pool and hear the voice of Allah brought by the Jinn of Water. But Lalla-Mari will not go to Sidi bou Ibrahim, and with him and the meallim to the Silver Pool."

CHAPTER XL

LALLA-MARI COMMANDS

THE marabout leaped to his feet as if he had been struck. Ahkmed started, and half a hundred of the figures crouched in the sand sprang up. Hammid Bey seemed to have dropped a bombshell.

Those in the circle who understood what he had said, translated loudly to their fellows. Then the entire circle was on its feet and pressing in. For a moment it appeared that I was forgotten. I might have slipped away, But Hammid's "news" was mighty news for me also.

Something was wrong for Sharon! Or had she defied her captors? This couldn't be the meaning of the "news," of her refusal, as he reported it, to go to the Silver Pool, or to the Sidi bou Ibrahim I recognized now as the meallim chief who had been so like a wraith to us, for there was a ring of satisfaction in Hammid's voice.

A motion of the marabout's arm wrought heavy, tense silence. And again Hammid occupied it.

" Lalla-Mari has bidden me speak to Sidi bou Ibrahim in her name, and when he wills that the meallim assemble to hear, it is her wish that I speak to them for her. She dare not summon the Jinn of Water and speak through them with Allah, until the desert is freed from the chains of its enemies whose triumph over the sand is Allah's anger that the Sand Daughter deserted it.

" She bids me speak for her until Allah's anger is driven from the Sahara. In her name I ask of the council that this roumi, who would influence her with evil in his heart, be killed according to your custom. Food for one meal. For the meallim, to whom Lalla-Mari belongs, and for her, I have spoken."

And spoken to my undoing, it quickly seemed. He had aroused a blaze of conflicting passions. He'd told the council that the desert must rise, that it was Lalla-Mari's decision. He'd told them that Lalla-Mari was afraid to " talk with Allah " until we who had invaded the desert were swept out. They had expected a command to rise, I was certain—it had been in the air—but here it was, already spoken!

And he had told them she was on the side of Musa ben Kaddour.

Ahkmed swung upon the marabout and claimed a hearing. It was denied him. The marabout turned to the Tuareg chief. He, I realized, had known what Hammid Bey had in store. He alone of the assembly had shown no surprise. The din ceased that he might be heard. He did not deign now to employ his troubled French. My ears did not count.

But I knew that he was denouncing me, and my " evil influence." Perhaps he blamed me for Sharon's refusal to undergo whatever the ritual might be of marching to the Silver Pool. There was a decided edging upon me from all sides. I made a double decision.

I shouted a demand that I be heard and got as close to Hammid Bey as I could before I was stopped. He did not move. I measured his distance as one good leap, and determined that when I got him down, if I did, I'd hold onto his neck until the rest of me was beaten to insensibility.

The marabout signified a willingness for me to talk. He waved the Tuareg chief aside.

" You are being imposed upon!" I shouted. I would have spoken calmly, but the commotion all around was too violent. Passions were in play, and calmness would have been lost.

" She has given him no right to speak for her. If she were here she would give me that right. And in my own right I speak for France. Blood of the Tuaregs will flow in vain if she is not returned to her people or if a single French life is taken."

That much I got out, but no more. What seemed a hundred and probably were a dozen sinewy forms came down upon me. They held me beyond a struggle, and for a warning that I'd said all that would be listened to, one pair of hands quietly choked me.

The Tuareg chief motioned for silence and, this time, repeated in French, for me to enjoy, his request that my appetite be appeased but once. I surrendered everything of hope or opposition. I thought when he finished I'd ask for a portion of madjuns. I remembered how pleasantly they tasted when Nakhla served them with their hashish filling. I wondered if I'd see Dacine again. Sharon, of course not. Hammid Bey had her!

The unpleasant fellow gave over choking me. With terrific politeness I nodded into his masked face the appreciation I couldn't voice until I got my breath again. For an instant it seemed as if the strangling I had endured had affected my ears also. Where there had been a babel of voices, it was deathly still. I looked about, startled.

I saw the yellow robe of Ahkmed. He was stiff and erect. The marabout stood by his bowlder throne, frozen. There was no movement among the bunched nobles who, a second before, had been surging. My captors had released me. They, too, were immobile. And the hands that had held me were cupped!

She was coming! Sharon!

In through the same arch I had entered under. She'd paused within the hanging rugs. And she was alone!

I thought she'd fall, for I saw her one

hand go to her throat. Her eyes seemed to seek wildly, and the slender body, still in its riding kit, wavered. She was fifty feet away, but I saw that body stiffen; saw the brown head lift, as a flower lifts on its stem to a breeze.

And she walked as a princess might through the lane of masks made for her, up to me, but waved me aside when I sprang toward her, and did not stop until she reached the frozen marabout.

Dacine had said something to me, given me some warning of what I must do when I saw her. I couldn't remember—except that it must be something about waiting. And the spell of the silence, of her apparition, of the cupped palms, held me, too.

Hammid Bey was first to move. He strode toward her, an arm stretched to take her, his lips moving. I could not hear what he was saying, but I heard her, for the voice with the throb in its rang clear.

"Keep this man away!"

The marabout flung out his arm, blocking Hammid.

The Tuareg chief stirred them, but halted as if he had been caught in a firm grip when Sharon turned to face him.

"Lift your mask, Musa ben Kaddour," she said. "I command."

I think if she had so firmly ordered him to cut his throat the effect would have been less. He recoiled, and with what must have been a mighty Tuareg oath. Something akin to a startled cry escaped every throat in the great inclosure. I cannot think of anything to which that chorus sound might be compared.

It was the cry of a tribe of men who had covered their faces, long before, from the sight of man and God because of a tribal shame; the cry of men who, as the Legion had witnessed, would take their own lives if a fortune of battle uncovered their features.

Their own women accepted their embraces without a glimpse of the face that kissed them. And a girl in roumi garb was bidding their chief to uncover to her!

In that tense moment I had no thought of M. Renaud, of André Dulac, of the Bureau of Secret Police, or of Africa. Of only Sharon Trent. For I sensed verdict in every breeze ruffled burnoose, behind every patch of black.

Suddenly a greater power than that which would be hedged about by some weird formula at a Silver Pool was being flaunted. If it should fail, what then of this fragile, strange Lalla-Mari who had refused to perform her duties "in the palms?"

She spoke again, still with ineffable hauteur.

"I have come to tell the council that I am ready to take Sidi bou Ibrahim and the meallim to the pool. To me, you will unmask!"

I am sure that no one breathed, or thought of else than the lifting—slow, very slow, and trembling—of Musa ben Kaddour's hand.

It hesitated at the throat fold of his burnoose. It hung there, shaking. It moved again, as if with inhuman strength it pushed against a heritage that went back beyond our intimate knowledge of the desert, until at last it crumpled a bit of black cloth.

A shout that might have been heard far into the singing dunes rose from the unroofed walls. Then silence again.

Sharon took one step toward the crowded mass of onlookers. Her eyes swept the circle of them.

Other hands went up, not slowly now, and dropped.

The Tuareg nobles looked upon the faces of their brothers for the first time!

"The stranger lives. Lalla-Mari has need of him!" Sharon's voice said.

This time it was Ahkmed, his white face shining, who caught me when I swayed toward her. She walked past without vouchsafing me a glance.

CHAPTER XLI

THE UNFAITHFULNESS OF DACINE

WITH Sharon's dramatic exit an aftermath of awe settled over the assembly. There was motion, a streaming flow of burnoose, swirling like eddies in an agitated lake, but no voice.

I, too, was reeling. My hands were literally groping. My background of Europe,

of civilization and all its modern forms, had crumbled. Here was a barbaric, medieval setting, where time seemed to have been stayed.

My guards had been swept away. Ahkmed was not near. I looked about wildly, and caught a glimpse of the yellow robe. He was turning from the marabout and approaching me.

"You are left to Sidi bou Ibrahim," he murmured and pulled me along with him.

"That means another ordeal of this kind," I muttered.

I wanted to get such things over with. Out of my confusion one distinct sensation was beginning to segregate. It had to do with Sharon's announcement that she was ready to accompany the meallim and their ghostly chief to the Silver Pool.

I had studied her so well that I knew she delivered that, so soon after Hammid Bey's declaration that she had refused, with an air of defiance. I had seen Hammid's face. Incredulity, amazement, and anger had come into it. More and more it was coming to me, clearly, that she had taken a peril to herself to save me from the Tuareg venom.

If there was to be another session for me, before the meallim ruler, I wanted to get through with it. Then, perhaps, I could get near Sharon.

But it appeared that being left to Sidi bou Ibrahim meant all that Ahkmed wanted and I could hope for.

"She has spoken," was the Water Guide's reply. "The Sidi will wait."

"How long? Until when?"

My premonition, born of the new disturbance in my mind, was justified. "Until she is at the pool," he said.

He hurried me out of the corridor that flanked the inclosed space where the council had met. I was not to be taken back to the dark room with its descending steps. We went into the open oasis.

It seemed that every human being congregated in this alive Es Souk, which had been a nameless legend to us, had swarmed into the open. The passages between the tumbling houses were thronged, women moving freely among the men, meallim elbowing restless Tuaregs.

In every meallim face and in every pair of Tuareg eyes there was shining excitement. Word that the Ihaggareens had been forced to lift their masks had spread. And, too, that Lalla-Mari would summon the jinn to the pool. Her name and the pool was murmured in a hundred Arabic dialects, and I caught them on Tuareg tongues.

While I followed the yellow robe I dared do little looking around. The crowds were sullenly hostile. I might be tolerated, I concluded, because of that dramatic intervention, but no profane unbeliever, one who must in all reason be a spy, could be welcomed.

The oasis huts, clustered against the old walls, were an uneven square bordering the wells and the area given over to palms and vegetation. On the skyline was a low minaret souvenir of that forgotten time when this hidden spot in the dunes would have been openly populous.

Ahkmed hustled me across a corner of the green, to an opposite side of the flanking square, and to the doorway of a one-storied house that leaned against a huge, venerable palm trunk. The wooden door was fastened on the inside. The moment of waiting for some one to open gave me my first opportunity to glance out over the square.

The dense grove of palms I had noticed earlier—the palms of Es Souk!—was not far from where we stood. My attention went beyond them, however, to the wide, peaked roof of a great tent, glistening white. Around it a throng was pushing and milling. Gun barrels, and lance points, as of sentries, glittered in the sun.

Ahkmed's door had opened noiselessly. When he would have urged me within he saw that I gazed at the tent.

"Your fate and mine, monsieur, are with Sidi bou Ibrahim," he said softly. "Islam Africa's is in that tent."

"Then she—Sharon—is there?"

He nodded and took me through the door. When it closed behind me heavy bolts and bars were slid into place.

We had entered a small open space inclosed by house walls, windowless but uncovered. Three masked meallim, whom I recognized as Ahkmed's companions dur-

ing our long ride to the dunes, squatted on the floor of this corridor. I noticed each had his lelak, or wrist knife, drawn in his lap. Ahkmed made a report of some sort, in Tuareg.

A house door opened, swung inward by the fourth of Ahkmed's group of five. Within was a stone-floored room, lit by oil lamps, shaped from metal and suspended from the ceiling by heavy chains. Sleeping rugs were strewn around the base of the walls. A narrow stairway of rough stones rose in a shadowed corner to a closed roof opening, a means for women, if there were any, to reach their customary refuge.

These details I took in with a single glance; then I discovered, on a rug against the wall, a spread of food, fruit, piles of cakes, and a bowl like gourd of water. And Ahkmed was just receiving from the other meallim a metal urn in which coffee steamed. Breakfast had been prepared for me!

I faced the Water Guide, whose mask was in place again, but whose eyes still reflected the excitements of the last few minutes.

"Won't you admit now that there is a friendship between us? Hasn't the choice you waited for been made? You've proved too far from an enemy to be less than friend."

I thought if I could break through his wall of austere reserve I might get at the secret of the unknown purpose which had made a common cause of some kind. And more than that, I had in mind my one glimpse into his unmasked face.

It was a face in which my own world was mirrored, as well as the desert, grim, yet glowing with an inner kindness. I wanted him to know that I was ready to understand him. His reply came with Tuareg swiftness.

"Until now, monsieur, you have been of France, even of a Bureau of the Secret Police. It has not been decided if I may be friend, or must be enemy, of France. What is commanded I shall obey."

"You really believe that she, the girl you saw this morning—a few minutes ago—will bring about calamity for the desert, for your tribe and all others? That she will allow herself to turn the people of the desert against the military power of a great European country?"

I knew what the answer would be. I'd heard it given a hundred times, and when I could less conceive that such a thing could be brought to pass. But I still recoiled against the incredible.

"She will speak, and to what she says the meallim will listen. But as to friendship between you and me, that is possible now. When you came into Es Souk, you ceased to be of France and became yourself alone. France is nothing here. If we are to be enemies you will not return to it. In the meantime I give you my hand."

His grip was firm. It was so wholly an European gesture that my questioning must have been eloquent in my glance. I could imagine a thin smile about his lips under his mask.

"I have attended many lectures at the Sorbonne, monsieur," he said quietly. "I have traveled, even, as far as—her America. You have spoken of a New Bedford, and I've heard you murmur a reference to a plum orchard.

"I went to America to find New Bedford, when quite a little girl played among the plum trees. I watched from a distance, and then returned to the desert to wait until she grew up—and came to us. You will understand that I could have learned to shake hands."

In my wildest expectations of some revelation of Ahkmed, some enlightenment concerning him, I had dreamed of no such surprise as this. His easy-flowing, perfect French, a manner I had recognized as above Tuareg or meallim refinement, his interest in furthering my eagerness to follow Sharon and to oppose any plans of Hammid Bey, all had endowed him with a mystery second only to that of Sharon's.

Now, by the very enlightenment he shed, the explanation of so much, he immeasurably broadened the whole of my mystery.

"You knew that she was other than Sharon Trent? So long ago—as far back as the plum trees? And the desert knew she would grow up, and come?" I had now a sudden thought that was almost hilarious. "Then I have been right! She

is Sharon Trent and that is all! There is a mistake. All this is being forced upon her!"

My thought was incoherent, of course. He had just said the desert knew of her, and that she would come to it. But I had witnessed so much that few coherencies were left at my command.

And I had struck a wrong chord. The yellow robe shook. The form it inclosed stiffened. The impression he gave was that for a moment he had allowed his mind to dwell with the one who was, indeed, Sharon Trent, but remembered an awe-inspiring symbol to whom palms were cupped and who was called the Sand Daughter.

"That is saying too much," he said with a flavor of his old sternness, which I regretted. "When Lalla-Mari was born in the little American town, Sidi bou Ibrahim knew. If others knew, they kept counsel with him.

"From his youngest meallim he chose me to go into your world, and learn your speech and customs. When I was ready he sent me to America. I found her grown to her playdays in her orchard.

"I watched her for a year, then brought my news of her to the chief of the meallim company. When she would come to the desert, Allah alone knew."

"But you have said that you waited, that you expected her to come. And you were prepared for her. The desert knew when she still was in Paris."

I wanted him to say more, for I knew that he could—much more. But his mood had lost its impulse to relax at that time. "When you have heard an Arab or Tuareg mother croon to her boy children with only the stars and the sand close by, you will understand why the desert knew Lalla-Mari again would be at Es Souk."

He had softened a little.

"But you didn't want her, Ahkmed." I used his name for the first time. "It means danger for your people, and you would save her from that, and them. I think that is what you have meant all along. You have given me your hand. Will you not also show me the way?"

There was another slight convulsion under the yellow robe. "I have asked Allah many times that Lalla-Mari save the desert and its tribes. In his wisdom, he has not yet given answer. As he wills!"

He moved away, and I thought he prepared to eat with me, and was glad. But he summoned one of his five, with a mere grunt. I was to have another breakfast companion.

The other mounted the stairway and tapped with his knife hilt on the wooden trap. While the trap lifted he descended and went out with Ahkmed beside him. The roof opening closed on Dacine.

If Ahkmed had turned suddenly into glumness, at the very edge of a time when I was sure Sharon would have greater need of him than ever I had, Dacine had changed into radiance. The smile that had flitted across her face in the desert when she rubbed my legs was about her lips, and gayer.

She dropped a sheetlike wrap, one she had worn when she found me in the gun cellar, and was revealed in a tenuous kaftan, which reached below her knees, closed at the throat and caught with a sash at the waist.

Each new time that I saw Dacine, I could not help marveling in my memory of an extravagantly gowned woman of Paris, a woman of startling contrasts, cold, white skin, vermilion lips, and dead black hair, who had impressed as having a little scorn for the desirous glances of men. In her Tuareg personality she was fire, and rich, blended colorings.

Her smile was a pleasant bit of warmth that I might have welcomed as a relief, but it was too puzzling. And I had come to expect from her quick, terse hints of what was next to be done and how. While she was coming to me I framed my inevitable question—"Sharon?"

She caught my hands, so eagerly that the ceremony was almost an embrace. "She went! She promised me she would, and wasn't she glorious?"

Her exultation made it plain that not only Sharon's coming, in the nick of time, but the manner of it, had been planned deliberately.

"But what was it she did?" I demanded hurriedly. "Her promise to go to the

pool? There was meaning in that, and it made me afraid for her. Explain it to me and tell me when I am to really get to her."

She laughed. The first time, it was, I had heard her become really light-hearted. "I am too happy just now, monsieur, because she went into the council, to trouble with fears. There are many of them to consider, but I've been waiting to have breakfast with you. And we must hurry. Hammid is having the oasis searched for me. We have much to do before he finds me."

CHAPTER XLII

WHY SHE DID IT

SHE was sorry the coffee had cooled somewhat, but decided we must make the best of it. I wanted food—secure in the knowledge that it wasn't to be but once—and I wanted Dacine to talk to me, but I grudged the time. The balance was the other way, however, so I got onto the rug as comfortably as I could. She dropped, her legs under her, across from me.

So she had been hiding on Ahkmed's roof, with the knives of his men below drawn to guard her, while Hammid searched the crowded living quarters. I remembered Baba's hints. "The Bou Medine scribe told me that you suffered for our raid on Mahmoud Pasha. Won't you tell me of that? I shall want you to know how sorry I can be."

She dropped a pomegranate and rose to her knees. With quick movements she opened her kaftan, dropped it to her waist, and then, while I smothered a startled gasp, drew its only undergarment up over her head. She twisted, then, so that her back, bare to her sash, was spread to my view.

"See?" she said.

And I saw, with my blood running hot. The marble-white skin, tightly drawn on the thin body, was a lattice of crossing welts from her shoulder blades down. The crossed blue lines disappeared where the kaftan drooped over the sash. I knew they did not end there.

"There are fifty between my shoulders and my knees," she said. "I counted to twenty-two. The rest I don't remember. But I heard the order given, and I know none was missed."

While she put on the undergarment and rearranged the kaftan, I couldn't speak. It was so horrible. Then I managed:

"Hammid Bey—and you said once you had loved him!—did that?"

"Had it done," she corrected, and I noticed that her voice had hardened. "He borrowed an Abyssinian from the owner of the kasbah where he waited for Mahmoud Pasha, and gave him the task. A bullet had grazed me, too, but that didn't matter. When I came to, a camel was ready to bring me here."

She finished her pomegranate and laughed at the face I made over a tasteless cake. "Baba was handy," I said, still shuddering at what had befallen her. "He told me you had sent him to Messara Zaide."

"And to find Ahkmed. You see we had only half won when we gave Mahmoud Pasha his lesson. Now we've half won again."

She looked across to me, and I might have thought that her eyes were dancing, but I refused to consider such an absurd possibility. I would have gone stark mad if she had added dancing eyes to her gay humor.

The latter I could believe to be a symptom of hysteria, for if I had been a woman I could have been on the verge of it, with a continent toppling and very brown hair going down with it in some strange fashion, while I was penned in, restrained by sheer inability to discover what to do.

"We've turned out to be great good partners, haven't we, monsieur?" she asked. "If we are spared to our memories, perhaps you'll remember that—that we were partners?"

It was said in high spirits, her strange mood seeming to grow more and more pronounced, as if, for example, we were breakfasting at the Ambassadeurs, in the sun gardens off the Champs, but I sensed tragedy as an understone. I ate no more.

"Please tell me why," I urged with all the earnestness I felt. "Surely, the time

has come when you can put reserve aside. Whatever it is that I am in the midst of, whatever faces me, it is near the end. Tell me why you sent for me, that morning, in Touggourt."

She fluttered a hand between us. "No. First, I shall tell you why I am happy while we breakfast together. When I tell you what you haven't known, and want to know, I shall not be happy. I shall be as I was early to-day, when I prayed that I would reach you before they took you to the Ihaggareen circle.

"It is for the desert, monsieur, that I am happy. And for my tribe; my Tuaregs. Lalla-Mari has said that she will go to the pool. She said that for you, to save you, for it was the only way. And for a time I was afraid she wouldn't."

"That means?"

I was sure she was of the mind to tell me. It seemed to fit into her mood. And she did.

"It means that when Lalla-Mari stands again at the pool, and brings the Jinn of Water, the shame of my tribe will be lifted.

"You saw her, this morning, force the nobles to raise their masks and bare to her the shame they've suffered since their fathers lost Lalla-Mari. When the jinn come to give her Allah's voice, it will mean much to the other tribes; but to the Tuaregs it will mean that when they lift their masks again their faces will be proud, and glad, purged of shadow.

"And she wasn't going. Until she had listened while I pleaded for you. Then she made her decision, for they would not have yielded to her after Hammid had declared that she had refused. That is why I am happy, monsieur, for you, and for my tribe. Your Paris has taught me only to love the desert and my people more."

I drew upon her happiness. "Those guns in the chambers under the rocks?" I said. "Why do they think that she will release them, and turn the desert into a frenzy when she goes to this mysterious pool? Why must she do that? Can't we keep her—from that? You and Ahkmed and I. He knows the cost, as well as I."

If it was true that her eyes had danced awhile before, her fierceness drove all the dancing away. She was as I had seen her so often, utterly pagan and swayed by some inner spell. She made her half unconscious gesture, that, had she completed it, would have brought her palms in front of her, palms up, until her fingers touched her forehead. Her voice was a desert voice.

"Lalla-Mari will speak for Allah. There are many more guns than you saw, monsieur. If Allah bids, they will be released. Quickly the sand will be cleansed of all that is France." Now her voice dropped, as if she released pent-up breath with words that spoke more of her own concern. "All of France, save you, perhaps. She will keep you here, and let us remain partners, I hope."

A frown came into her face. She was occupied, I could see, with a changing thought. And I wondered what knowledge to ask next. Of the pool, I was convinced she would tell me nothing that would help. To dwell upon it, and Sharon, served only to ward her away from the moods that were on a level with my mind for the intelligible. Of Hammid?

"What is it we still have to win against Hammid Bey? Won't you tell me that now?"

She got up from the rug and ran to the door. Opening it a little she looked into the outside corridor. One of the meallim, still on guard, came up. They spoke together for a moment. She appeared to be satisfied, and returned to me.

"Now you have driven away my gladness," she said. "Ahkmed will not be long away. I will speak quickly. You will know why a mistress is traitor to her lover, even one who was to be her husband.

"Will you tell me first that when you know, Dacine and M. Dulac still will be friends?"

Her hands were out and I took them. "There are four of us who always shall be friends," I said, "if my God and your Allah permits us to live."

"Ahkmed?"

"Yes, he is the fourth. He has revealed much of himself."

"He will reveal more. Very well, we shall be friends, and I shall be happy. From

lips that kissed me, monsieur, I learned that the desert was to be betrayed. Lalla-Mari was to be kept from the Silver Pool. She was to be taken by Hammid Bey, who kissed me, and has scarred me, as you saw. She was to become the wife, not me."

I made some sort of move at this, but she reproved me and bade me listen, that time was short.

"That was not what made me faithless, but the crime he would have done in her name—would have done if she had not heard me before the dawn to-day, and changed her mind. He would have won from her the right to speak in her name, to say that Allah had told her she could not go to the pool until the desert had risen against our invaders—your people.

"The meallim would listen to Lalla-Mari, with her promise to give them Allah's voice after they had closed the wells and dried the streams, giving water only to the tribes. The guns would go out. That much I learned between kisses, and was not troubled. I was Hammid Bey's, to be put aside when he wished. But I was watchful, and listening, between more kisses, and then I sent for you, in the Street of Cafés."

She stopped for a moment, as if with some memory of my coming, and our experience in the desert. I did not intrude.

"He would have roused the tribes, monsieur, and then would have sold them to your ministers—to those who sent you that night to Château Madrid. They would have bought. It is your way. Desert blood would have been shed for nothing, for the tribes would have been lured to a massacre with treachery in Lalla-Mari's name."

At last I knew! How Hammid Bey had planned, at least, to use Sharon as his tool.

"If that has been prevented by bringing her to my rescue, do you question that we shall still be—your own word—partners?"

"Yes. We have saved her to the meallim. She will go to the pool. The jinn will come to her. If the desert is to be made free again, it will be the voice of Allah who commands and there will be no time for treachery in her name. Her commands will be Allah's, not Hammid Bey's. And I will be a woman of the Tuaregs, celebrating. You will be sad."

I groaned aloud. The inevitable was in her every word. She impressed that a predetermined fate was moving steadily on toward that upheaval whose shadow had lurked so long over the inner councils of Europe.

I had plunged blindly along until I came to the threshold of the tragedy, to discover that we had not to deal with men or circumstances, but an indescribable thing, the utterly non-existent! Jinn of Water—to-day! The only jinn that are of to-day are those that pester a man in the morning when he has partaken the night before of too much other than water.

It was my turn to laugh, according to habit, now that the "jinn" I'd swallowed as a dream that must explode of itself, were so dreadfully imminent. And I laughed heartily. "It's a jolly joke you've been having with me," I exclaimed in my merriment. "It would have been so much better for her and for me if I'd let her go on to Hammid. You see, we could have bought her away, as well as his men, and the jinn could stay drowned. I've only been helping them brew us a headache."

I laughed more.

She understood. Her hands were cool on my face. "Don't, monsieur. Remember, she said this morning that Lalla-Mari would have need of you. She has. Of you, monsieur. You will persuade her to be sure, very sure, that it is Allah's voice she reveals. Like Nakhla, of the Ouled Nael, I, too, believe in love.

"Tell her to think of love while she listens. Then she will hear the truth, and his will, not Hammid's, after all. It may be Allah will have other wisdom than death. If he has, and it comes truthfully from her, the desert will still be happy and content."

How wonderful you were then, Dacine! How cool your hands, and how gently your voice, with its world of meaning, brought me back to earth and to Sharon!

TO BE CONCLUDED

"Of course," said Counselor "Potty" Smith, "you'll declare me in for a slice"

THE QUEER GIFT

By Charles Somerville

IT'S TIME FOR A FUNNY, TRUE STORY IN FLYNN'S, SO HERE'S AN HILARIOUS TALE, FULL OF THE COLOR AND SPICE OF NEW YORK'S OLD CHINATOWN

A Story of Fact

ON a bright spring morning at the corner of Pell Street and the Bowery, New York, an infuriated undertaker seized a tall, gaunt, shabby man by the throat and had all but throttled him to extinction when a policeman intervened.

The undertaker, fury unabated, then flung the gaunt man in a flopping heap into the cop's arms.

"Whatissut he'll be after doing to ye, Mr. Polpettini?" the policeman asked respectfully, because not only was the undertaker the purveyor of the most gorgeous funerals in the original Little Italy, of the metropolis, but a political power among his countrymen as well.

He was high in the favor of the Tammany leader of the assembly district, and therefore a man to be respected indeed by any policeman. Now, to be frank, his name was not Polpettini, but for the purposes of this story the cognomen will serve as efficiently as his real one.

"Peencha da beeg bom!" he panted hotly to the cop. "Poosha da teet' out, Reilly! You know what he do for me? He swipa da coff'. One gran' coff'! Beega da silv' handla, beega da silv' plat'! Inside lovely da white sat'—outside poleesh mahog'! Four 'undra doll' da coff'. Mos' gran' coff' I got. He maka da swipe!"

On this extraordinary charge the man was taken to the old Oak Street police station. There, when his eyeballs had receded into their sockets and his tongue behind his teeth, he told the desk lieutenant he was "Hillary Cecil St. Cloud Berisford-Graeme, native of England, occupation, gentleman!"

Diction and accent were gentle and his long, lean figure, florid complexion, beaked nose, pale, blue eyes and yellow hair and mustache yielded indication that possibly, years back, he may have been a modicum of all his high-sounding string of names suggested.

But, if so, at the time of his arrest for stealing Mr. Polpettini's grandest coffin, he had performed a long nose-spin from exalted social station and was to be identified as one well known for several years past in the Inferno, The Fleabag, The Doctor's, Cripples' Creek, the Bismark, Barney Flynn's, Eat-'em-up Jack McManus's, Suicide Hall and many lesser known Bowery shock and flop houses as " Hard Luck Hillary."

"I'm Wise to That Bird!"

Now, the charge of stealing a coffin was certainly a most curious one—as strange as ever made, I reckon. I was a reporter on the New York *American* when Hard Luck was pinched on the accusation of the influential Polpettini, star mortician of Little Italy, and witnessed the arraignment of Hard Luck in the Tombs police court that same afternoon.

One thing was obvious. He hadn't wanted the coffin for himself. He was one of those ruddy-faced old boys of fifty or thereabouts who live to a ripe old age embalmed in alcohol. From the standpoint of the upright, considering his career, he might have been adjudged disgustingly healthy.

As to his career I was eager to know.

His correct speech, British university accent, general bearing even in his shabby clothing suggested better days. There might be quite a story in him besides the strange episode of his stealing a coffin. Regarding which arose the further query: " What on earth had he stolen a coffin for, not wanting it for himself?" I'll tell the world it was a queer explanation when it came. And odd also were the facts of Hard Luck's career.

These were poured into my ears by the estimable, illiterate but shrewd-minded, highly observant Chuck Connors. He's dead now, but of the Bowery in pre-Prohibition days, none knew more.

And the life histories of every one of its scores, nay hundreds of marked characters, Chuck, I invariably found, to have on the tip of his tongue. So when I asked him what he knew of " a gent named Hillary And then some Berisford-Graeme," he promptly replied:

" Youse means Hard Luck Hillary."

He followed this with a description so accurate I nodded.

" That's the gink."

" Sure," said Chuck, " I'm wise to that bird."

And proceeded to enlighten me.

Whatever his social origin, Hard Luck had of a certainty once been a member of the criminal aristocracy—an expert forger who gave Scotland Yard most serious concern.

Bank tellers invariably accepted as genuine the spurious signatures he offered and for some years Hillary made and spent an illicit fortune of considerable size.

For it would not be till long after the checks were cashed that the crime would be discovered and Hillary was a fox for hiding and covering his tracks.

On Top of the World

Disaster had befallen him only because he worked on poor information in regard to a certain victim. This caused him to present a check in the man's name for four times the sum the man had on deposit in the bank.

An official caused Hard Luck to be detained by the bank policeman while a telephone talk was had with the depositor who, of course, denounced the paper which had been presented as none of his issuance.

Hard Luck's past sins then found him out by way of bank tellers on whom he had previously passed forged checks. Mr. Berisford-Graeme got a large prison dose—twelve years at hard labor, of which he served about ten.

On his release he knew himself to be too thoroughly well-identified by Scotland Yard to attempt to do business again in London, Liverpool, Manchester or any other English money center and felt also he would be very quickly identified if he tried his tricks on the Continent.

He wavered between a trip to America or to China. He picked China as the best opening for his talents. He was penniless by this time and got there out of Liverpool as a member of a big returning ship's crew.

Soon he was back in fine clothing, money in pocket, monocle in eye, quite the gentleman again, bless 'im!

He had found the eastern banks delightfully easy and worked his pen and wits so deftly he remained in China for five years riding high on the "top of the world" in so far as luxuries of living go.

You may be asking by this time where does the Hard Luck part of it come in? Right here it began.

The Left Hand Goes

So many crooks were harvesting illicit gains in the Chinese ports that Scotland Yard was requested by the British diplomatic officers in the Orient to send operatives there to clean up the well known English swindlers, forgers and highwaymen to be found in Canton and Shanghai.

The tip came to Berisford-Graeme who, although well in funds, threw Scotland Yard off the scent by shipping again before the mast on a tea ship bound for New York.

On the night of a heavy storm he fell out of the rigging to the deck—a good thirty-foot fall it was. Of course, he might have broken his neck and didn't, but the consequences were nearly as dire.

For he smashed his left hand to a pulp, putting it out to break the crash as he landed. He put out his left hand because he was a southpaw. And, running true to Lombroso, the once accepted authority on criminology, Hillary's left was his expert forging hand.

The hand healed, but with the fingers shapeless and all but permanently benumbed. Hillary was afterward able to write with the maimed member, but only in a fashion and most laboriously. And soon had trained his right hand in the use of the pen.

But his left could never recover its deftness and it soon became apparent to Hillary that he would never be able to train his right to the skill once possessed by the left.

The fall must also have done something to his spine and through that source to his nerves, for he apparently was without ambition, for a long time, to attempt other criminal games to replenish his purse. So he had come to be the occupant of a cheap furnished room in Long Island City. And there Hard Luck gave evidence that it meant to claim him for its very own.

It was in the full of the moon, and Hard Luck, who was a fresh air fiend and liked to sleep with shades up and windows wide open, complained to his landlady that his bed was so placed the moon's glare fell full upon his eyes preventing sleep.

He asked when leaving the house at midday to have the bed removed to a more shadowy corner of the room. The landlady promised she would do this and did.

Hard Luck, returning home very late and very unsteadily, decided to retire without undressing. The morning request to his landlady must have completely skipped his mind for, observing a large white patch where his couch had always stood, he broke his left elbow trying to go to bed on a moonbeam.

The New Epoch in His Life

Pain and rage then caused him to arise and start smashing the furniture. The landlady's husband looked in to protest and Hard Luck used his one serviceable arm hitting him on the head with what was left of a chair. And thus the affair got into police court.

Hard Luck now seemed to have taken Hillary into an unrelenting hold. His funds melted completely. He had grown too fond of whisky to hold any form of regular employment and had sunk to selling shoelaces and pencils as a blind for begging.

But suddenly the clouds showed a silver lining. For a time—a brief time of bright vision—he was to hold old Hard Luck completely at bay. Even, it seemed, to have the dour old devil completely beaten off.

This new epoch in his life began on the corner of Bowery and Pell Street—the very corner where, later, Mr. Polpettini was destined to leap upon and throttle him.

He heard a warm, friendly cry of,

"Hello, Engleesh!"

Seconded by another of,

"Hello, Hillallee!"

It took him a minute or so to recognize in the two modishly attired—American fashion—young Chinese who accosted him Tom Sin and Sin Foy, messboys of the tea ship on which he had come to America.

He was pleased when they told him they had shipped as messboys only because it afforded them an opportunity to jockey their way into the United States, whose immigration authorities would have turned them back. They said in reality they were sons of well-to-do merchants and that through an uncle who had prospered for a long time in New York's Chinatown they themselves were now established as proprietors of a small but thriving chop suey parlor.

Chinatown's Top Honor

More pleasing information followed, for they cordially invited him to dine with them that very night.

Out of this chance meeting the future broke fine for Hillary. In his five years' sojourn in China he had picked up something more than a smattering of the Chinese tongue, especially the Cantonese dialect, the most common in New York's Chinatown.

On this account it was more than a fine, big dinner Hillary had from his Mongolian friends. They had several business letters to write in communication with American firms. This little matter the Englishman performed for them and they insisted on paying him for the service.

Not only that but took him the same night for an introduction to the wealthy uncle of Sin Foy. And this uncle had need for one who could understand him sufficiently to write many letters in English for him. And out of this connection, Hillary found many other clients.

He was always certain of his meals, of a stiff drink of rice brandy here and there and silver jingled in his pockets. He purchased a second hand suit of tweeds and was almost his gentlemanly self again.

He was able to look Hard Luck right in the eye with a cold and challenging stare.

Then Mr. Hillary Cecil St. Cloud Berisford-Graeme enjoyed what was considered a top honor in Chinatown. This was an introduction to the venerable Lou Lin See.

Lou Lin See was one of the founders of New York's Chinese colony. He established his little cellar store when there were only three thousand men of his race in the clutter of tenements in Mott Street.

He began in a very small way as an importer of fine Chinese silks, head dresses, feminine gowns and mandarin silk suits for men in that time before Chinese swells could bring themselves to wear the clothing of the Occident. To all this he added fine brands of Chinese teas. And then acquired a stock of exquisite ivory carvings and jade jewelry.

It was also said of him that in the old days he had made a pretty penny in sly opium traffic. He had never moved from his little basement store, never enlarged it. But in the passing of half a century and more, Americans were no longer strangers to his shop.

Grand dames of fashion would have no other teas brewed in their households than those purchased of Lou Lin See. And they paid him the prices he asked but never hoped to receive for his ivory and jade.

The Favorite of Good Fortune?

When Hard Luck Hillary came to know him Lou Lin See was very old indeed, bordering on ninety years. His yellow skull was bald of all but a thin wisp or two of white hair. His pig tail had long fallen away.

He sported a little round black silk cap with a red button on top. He puckered and wrinkled visage was so shrunken as to make appear extraordinarily large the big, horned spectacles he wore. A superb diamond glittered on a long, lean, yellow finger.

He lived entirely alone in a large room back of his shop with a single attendant, a fat, simple-minded Chinese of middle age who was cook, valet and store clerk for Lou Lin See, whose air toward the man was half-kindly, half-contemptible, the attitude of a master toward a stupid but well-meaning slave.

Hard Luck was taken to Lou Lin See because a friend of the old man knew he needed an English correspondent's services

and was just then auditing a quantity of invoices and other papers of like character.

Similar work had long been done for him by a one-time college professor who had gone to the bad in the opium dens of the quarter. This aid had died recently and hence the opening that came to Hard Luck Hillary.

Indeed, his pals in the Fleabag, the Inferno, Barney Flynn's and the other resorts had all but ceased calling him Hard Luck. It began to appear as if he were to turn the table completely and expand into full bloom as the favorite of Good Fortune.

Why He Schemed and Toiled

He kept up his work for his other clients but the one who paid most and gave him most to do was the venerable merchant, Lou Lin See.

One reason for Hillary's being so well liked by the aged Chinese, Hillary himself scarcely suspected. As a matter of fact Lou Lin derived immense amusement out of the Englishman's mangling of the Chinese tongue.

But as Hillary got considerable fun also out of the scant and distorted English that Lou spoke, the score between them was even there.

But he delighted Lou Lin with tales af such of his adventures in China as were respectable and occasionally he would escort the old man to an American theater and act as his interpreter regarding what the actors were saying and what generally the show was all about.

Thus in a year's time they had become very good friends, indeed, and it was at the end of this period that Hillary got his big idea.

A scheme came to his crafty mind by which he saw himself ending his own years as Lou Lin See was now ending his—on soft, satin divans, so to classify it. Just as Lou Lin was wealthy beyond all need of ever worrying, so Hillary would in the near future be fixed, if his plan went through.

It was old Lou himself who unwittingly brought the scheme into Hillary's head. For on a rainy afternoon, a drear, dismal cold day, as they sat in Lou Lin's back room, the old man squatted on a cushion of satin and velvet and Hillary sprawled at length on a long couch of jade green velvet, both men puffing at long stemmed pipes with tiny bowls and every little while lifting a delicate China cup which contained a jolt of a liquid far stronger than tea, seeing that it was potent rice brandy, the weakness of very old age nevertheless came upon Lou Lin See and tears of self-commiseration sprung in his eyes.

"What a lonesome, lonesome old man am I," he said in Chinese, speaking with a sort of chant. "I have wealth, but what is wealth to me who have no longer the vigor of body vital to the enjoyment of riches? Evil has fallen on me heavily, my friend Hillallee.

"I had in China a faithful wife and three beautiful and stalwart boys. Thrice blessed is he who has three sons. It was with thoughts of building a fortune for them that I toiled early and late, that I schemed and wrought.

"I wished to leave them such a fortune that they would always hold my memory in reverence and affection, for my spirit might not be at peace lest this was so. But an epidemic of disease in one year carried off my beloved wife and my most precious sons. All in one year, my friend Hillallee.

Hard Luck's Big Idea

"You who have lived among the Chinese, you know that one of us abhors death leaving none of male issue behind to carry on his line and revere his memory.

"When my eyes grew less blind with tears after the terrible misfortune which had robbed me of my natural heirs, I corresponded with my brother of whom I knew he had a son.

"This boy I then named to succeed to my name and fortune. He grew to sturdy manhood. But I, you see, have lived so long that this nephew now himself is dead, having run out his allotted span of fifty-five years. And whichever way I look now, Hillallee, my friend, I see dead faces. All the friends of my young and middle-aged manhood are gone—every one.

"Men of my country visit me, but it is only out of respect for my great age. Few of them have I ever known intimately,

With few of them do I spend a time so enjoyable as with you, for you are a cheerful soul, though doomed in poverty. Pass your cup, my English friend, for some more rice brandy."

Hard Luck did so with alacrity and a generous potion was handed him. They drank in silence and then Hillary suddenly arose, patted the old man affectionately on the shoulder and offered reasons for the necessity of a quick departure.

The big idea had hit him and he wanted to be alone for the purpose of mulling it over and arranging all its details in his crafty mind.

An Underground Lawyer

He hied himself over to Barney Flynn's at the corner of the Bowery and Pell and there ruminated over two more whiskies and fitted everything together.

He decided that first of all he must see in the making of arrangements was Counselor "Potty" Smith. And was soon climbing a rickety flight of stairs in an ancient Bowery hotel at Canal Street, where the celebrated Potty had a combination office and living room. Fat, ruddy-faced and large-bellied, the lawyer received Hillary.

He was attired in a ragged green bathrobe with red floral figures on it and old slippers, the toes of which were worn out.

He was bleary-eyed and there were two whisky bottles on his desk to indicate why. But nevertheless, he was apparently quite clear-headed and listened to Hard Luck with evident close attention.

The counselor, everybody on the Bowery said, and police court attendants agreed with them, would have been a mighty man but for whisky.

He had, as a matter of fact, begun his legal career brilliantly, but the very precocity of his success as a criminal lawyer had been his ruin. His fees grew too fat for a young man with wayward tendencies. Now he was fallen and had become a good deal of a mole, an underground lawyer of the underworld.

Shady though his practices had been for years, he had, however, never given the Bar Association sufficient evidence in any one transaction to enable it to take from him either his license to practice law or to take away from him his notary's seal.

"I congratulate you," said Counselor Potty Smith at the conclusion of Hillary's outline of his project. "It had ought to work nicely. But, of course, you'll have to declare me in for a fine slice."

"How much?"

"Thirty per cent."

"My jehominy!"

"Take it or leave it. What are you risking? You are only a bum. But I'm taking big chances. If I don't put it over I'll be in the devil's own pickle—disbarred for certain. Thirty per cent of the old boy's estate or make yourself scarce."

"Well," said Hillary, "after all, you seem to think well of the scheme and your confidence will be a big help as well as the very necessary things you must do for me. So then, Mr. Potty Smith, it's thirty per cent for you."

"And five for Mon Goy."

"Who the hell is Mon Goy?"

"A friend of mine who likes his pipes and dreams, but who is valuable to us, since he is known as a sort of lawyer to the Chinks and a will drawn up in Chinese in his hand will go a long way toward looking like the real thing.

Potty Smith Dictates

"To the eyes of other Chinks it will seem as a genuine document. And so as a witness in court at your back, he'll be a fine asset. We'll make him a witness to the will and so much the better."

"Very well then—five for Mon Goy," grunted Hard Luck.

"I'll give you his address and a note. You fetch him and we'll lose no time. We'll prepare the paper this very day."

Hillary was more than agreeable thus to expedite matters. He found Mon Goy a half caste, in a box of a room in Mott Street, all serene after the smoking of a pill, but not sleepy. He consented to return with Hillary to the quarters of the counselor, whose note in English he read with ease.

Mon Goy brought with him his pot of jet black ink, writing brush and three sheets

of a rice paper of the thickness and toughness of vellum.

Somewhat slowly, but this was because of the elegance with which he wrought his script and not because of any faulty understanding of the English Counselor Potty Smith dictated, which he translated into Chinese, Mon Goy drew up a document.

As he dictated, the lawyer wrote the same thing in English in blue-black ink on a sheet of his own stationery, which he finally turned over to Hard Luck Hillary, who read:

The Will Is Made

" On this day of October, in the Christian year of Nineteen Hundred and Nine, I, Lou Lin See, native of Canton, China, and resident of the City and County of New York for the past sixty-five years, being of sound mind, do hereby give and bequeath my entire property in money, jewels, ivories, silks, teas and all other things of which I am possessed to my best and most beloved friend, Hillary Cecil St. Cloud Berisford-Graeme, of the City of New York.

" In the acceptance of this bequest the said Hillary Cecil St. Cloud Berisford-Graeme does hereby agree and covenant to see that my remains receive proper burial according to the full rites and ceremonies of my faith, and further agrees to have my body hermetically sealed in a metal casket thus to be transported to China, where said Hillary Cecil St. Cloud Berisford-Graeme further solemnly and on his honor undertakes to purchase a suitable cemetery plot on a hillside in the vicinity of Canton, on which to erect a tomb where will be gathered from commoner graves the bodies of my ancestors in so far as they may be traced, and also the bodies of my three sons who have died before me.

" The execution of this will shall not be delayed until the accomplishment of these directions, the administrators to pass over as soon as legally possible all my belongings, but it shall be in the power of the executors whom I herewith name, Michael Smith, Counselor at Law, of the City and County of New York, and Mon Goy of the City and County of New York, to enforce this provision in case of the neglect of Hillary Cecil St. Cloud Berisford-Graeme to fulfill the conditions under which he receives my property.

" The foregoing paragraph I have inserted only on the direction of Mr. Michael Smith, acting as my legal adviser at the time of the drawing of this document, myself having fullest confidence in the honor and integrity of my best and most beloved friend, knowing well that he would know no peace until he had obeyed my last earthly injunction.

" Lest it should be thought in any manner strange or odd that I leave my entire fortune to a white man, be it known that my own sons are dead and the nephew whom I had adopted as a son is also dead and I am without kith or kin, and that the aforesaid Hillary Cecil St. Cloud Berisford-Graeme has been the comfort of my old age and has acted toward me even as I would have hoped my own sons to act had they lived.

" He has shown me honor and respect and has brightened the burden of my years. He has shown sympathetic understanding of my bereft condition in highest degree, and has performed many acts toward me such as a devoted son might show a father.

" To-morrow At Three! "

" It is, therefore, my dearest and strongest wish to provide for his future and his end in the same comfort that good fortune has been permitted to attend mine."

" Oh, I say, excellent," commended Hillary. " It will be the easiest thing in the world for me to make a tracing of the old boy's signature; so many of his papers pass through my hands.

" My left hand is still good enough to flourish a brush, though it can no longer manage a pen. I'll make a neat job of the old boy's signature, one that will pass your closest inspection, my dear counselor."

" When you do that, I'll slap on me notary's seal in a hurry and then you and Mon Goy and meself will make a call on the old man. We'll happen in one at a time, do you see?

" You'll be there because of your duties. Mon Goy and meself will just chance in

to pay our respects as the two of us have often done before with an eye out for a snack of his fine rice brandy. I've left the date blank as yet, so let us figure when it will be."

"To-morrow at three," said Hillary hastily. "There's a jolly good reason for it, Potty, old dear. For I happen to know that Lee Bean and Fon Duck are to make him a business call at about half past two and they'll be just finishing their business when you two come in. We could have them as witnesses to our presence in Lou Lin See's back room on the date of the drawing up of the will, do you see?"

A Job of Forgery

"Excellent—just as you said. You have heard, Mon Goy? Be sure that you show up. No smokee—smokee to-morrow afternoon."

"Sure—I show up," said Mon Goy. "Fi' per cent of what Lou Lin See got—money and all! Ho, ho! Sure, I show up!"

"Well, then, Hillary, you grand old schemer," said Counselor Potty, "all that's left for you to do now is to put your stuff over with the Hon. Giovanni Polpettini. He ought to fall."

"Quite," said Hillary Cecil St. Cloud Berisford-Graeme with a new dignity and decisiveness. "He not only should fall, but he shall!"

"Let's all have a drink for luck then," said the lawyer, and, gulping his, Hillary went forth.

The next three days Hard Luck Hillary spent in preparation for his visit to Polpettini, the affluent and influential undertaker of the Italian quarter who also was frequently engaged to pay the last attentions to the deceased of Chinatown.

This preparation consisted of indefatigable practice with a Chinese brush in the making of imitations of the signature of Lou Lin See. An original of this signature he obtained by a bit of simple guile.

Having written a letter to Lou Lin and had him sign it, Hard Luck subsequently announced he had discovered a flaw in the composition, copied the letter and had Lou Lin sign again. He retained the first signature and in his little box of a furnished room made many tracings from it, inked them in and then more tracings and more inking in.

It was slow work because of the crippled condition of his hand, but the strokes were broad and not many and there was a shakiness in the lines of the aged merchant's signature that were now a blessing to the man seeking to make a forgery of it that would not be questioned.

Finally when he could sign Lou Lin See's name with his eyes shut in a manner identical with Lou's script, he returned to the room of Potty Smith, took Mon Guy's Chinese will and Smith's English copy off with him and affixed a forgery to both.

Potty Smith afterward submitted these signatures to comparison with the genuine under an intense magnifying glass and announced positively the forgeries were so exact, so faithful to the original in every mark and slant and flourish that the bogus signatures would "fool the very divvle himself."

Hard Luck Explains

Then the lawyer and Mon Goy dropped in to call on Lou Lin See when Hillary was also present and before the departure of the two Chinese business men who had been spending part of the afternoon with the old man.

Thus having built the evidence of their presence in Lou Lin See's shop on the day of the date of the "will," a presence the two Chinese visitors might be called upon to verify, if need be, Potty Smith, up in his room, affixed his notarial seal to the fake documents, and Mon Goy signed up as witness as did Hillary.

Armed with this document Hard Luck visited Polpettini. On the plea that it was a very confidential matter he found himself alone with Polpettini in the latter's private office, Polpettini scanning the tall, gaunt, shabby man none too cordially.

But Hillary had three to four shots of Barney Flynn's best fire-water under his belt and felt equal just then to any effort no matter how difficult.

He first outlined his acquaintance with

old Lou Lin See and told of the services he had done him, magnifying these suitably, and of the great liking the old man of China had conceived for him.

"It's me only that he cares to talk to, to chum with, as it were, I assure you, sir. He is polite with everybody, of course. and has many friends among his own race. But none of them intimate.

"His real friends, the ones of the days when he was active, have all gone to Heaven. Or, wherever it is, good Chinamen go, you see?

The Gift of a Coffin

"He hasn't a relative in the world, sir, that he knows of or, at any rate, cares a rap about. Besides, all his property is in America. And he intends to leave it all to me. Every cent of it. And you have only to ask among his Chinese friends to know that his fortune isn't a shilling less than one hundred thousand dollars. Indeed, I know it is much more than that.

"But—well, come to think of it, he's rated by the big commercial agencies so you can find out for yourself, Mr. Polpettini, how he stands with them."

The undertaker waved a large, fat, brown hand.

"Well, what all thees gotta do weeth me?"

"It was necessary to tell you all this, sir, to arrive at the place where you come in. Lou Lin See is going to leave me every cent he has. And he's ninety years old and wasted to a feather.

"He can't live more than another year or two at the very bloomin' most, Mr. Polpettini. And I'm to be his sole heir. I've the original will here with me to show you. And a copy of it in English.

"Now then, where you come in is this:

"I've lived in China, sir, and know the customs of the people. And there are many peculiar ones to our eyes. But the most peculiar of all has to do with a gift that a dutiful son is expected to make to his father.

"When a boy goes out into the world, if he is a loving son, the minute he begins to make a little above his living, he starts in to save for this present which he must make his father if he is to be regarded as a truly worthy son. And what do you suppose this present is, Mr. Polpettini?"

"What the devil should I know what thees present is? I'm Napolitano, no Chinky-chink."

"To be sure, I merely asked by way of preparing you for the surprising fact. And that is that a good son has not proved himself such until he has presented his father with a coffin?"

"G'wan! What you tell me?" glared the undertaker. "Tha's crazy!"

"On honor," asserted Hard Luck, "it's the fact. Now if an English or an American or an Italian boy made such a gift to his father, we'd all certainly think he was crazy or giving his father a mighty nasty hint that his room on earth was better than his company. But it's not that way in China. I've seen it for myself.

"They don't look on a coffin as a horrible, ghastly thing as we do. They are—well—not afraid of them, you know. They are not nearly as scared of death anyway—all around, you know.

"It Must Be a Fine One"

"Why, when a son makes the present of a coffin to his old man his father is pleased beyond words. The occasion is always celebrated with a big feast. And the coffin becomes the chief ornament of the household.

"It's the first thing you see when you enter a Chinese house that has such a precious possession. I give you my word.

"They take the best of care of it. Keep the woodwork all shining, and if it has any metal trimmings, they are kept polished to the last degree. The coffin, of all furniture in the house, holds the place of honor until the time comes when father needs it for his personal use."

In all this, Hard Luck was telling only the truth, and Mr. Polpettini, who had long ago lost all feeling of revulsion or creepiness at sight of a coffin, was sufficiently interested and curious to let Hillary go on.

"Now, as I say," continued the pleader, "the old man has made a will in my favor. Some Chinese of his acquaintance, when he comes to die pretty soon, might be in-

clined to act up a bit nasty about it. Not that it could affect the will, because it is a genuine paper, I assure you.

"But, just the same, I could clench my position as the old boy's adopted son by following the customs of his people and presenting him with a handsome coffin. That's why I've come to you. You shall see the will and have it examined, if you please. All I want to do is to borrow a coffin from you. It must be a fine one.

Delivered to Lou Lin See

"I will present it to Lou Lin See, and when he accepts it and sets it up in his house that will be telling the whole world that I am the apple of his eye—in effect, his adopted son. There's no risk to you. You can be certain that his servant will be instructed to give the coffin the greatest of care.

"It will be dusted and polished twice a day.

"And when Lou Lin See dies, the first payment I make out of my inheritance will be to you for your coffin. Coffins aren't eggs or fruit—they can't go rotten on you.

"I'll be willing to pay well, Mr. Polpettini, as soon as I am able. What would you ask for a very first-class coffin?"

"Weeth bigga silv' handla and bigga silv' plate—fina da mahog', beautifulla da white sat' da fineesh?"

"Precisely."

"Five 'undra doll'."

"I should gladly pay it. With two hundred added for the accommodation if Lou Lin See lives a year, three hundred if he lives two years—"

"Five 'undra if he live three year?"

"He can't possibly—but, yes, five hundred extra if he lives three years."

"You gotta da will?"

"Right here. The original in Chinese—the other in English."

He handed over the documents.

"Oho," said Mr. Polpettini, "da Counselor Potty Smeeth ees the lawy'r for you?"

"Yes."

"Plenty drunk, but no damn fool."

"Indeed not. A very brainy man. He can tell you that the will is genuine."

Mr. Polpettini spelled over the English copy. Then he summoned a lad, who departed to return in a few minutes with a young Chinese who wore fashionable American clothing and the black rimmed spectacles of a student.

Mr. Polpettini requested him to translate the contents of the Chinese will and compare it with the English copy. The youth presently reported the translation to be entirely accurate.

But the best Hard Luck could get out of Mr. Polpettini just then was:

"I theenk eet over."

It was Counselor Potty Smith who went the next afternoon to see the illustrious undertaker of Little Italy and carried the day for Hard Luck Hillary. Polpettini consented to furnish the grand coffin.

It was delivered by the end of the week, and, to the delight of Hard Luck, the very day before its delivery old Lou Lin See suffered a fainting fit.

Lou Lin Has a Party

He was too weak to leave his couch when the coffin arrived, and when it had been brought out of its big wooden case in all its glitter of silver trimmings and polished wood, Hillary made Lou Lin a neat speech, saying that his affection for Lou Lin had become as if he were Lou's very son, and that, knowing his friend to be bereft by misfortune of sons of his blood, he, Hillary Cecil St. Cloud Berisford-Graeme, had thought to show him the honor and respect that would have been forthcoming certainly from the eldest son of Lou Lin See had that unfortunate youth survived.

There is no doubt the venerable Lou was touched to the core. He wept a little. He took Hillary's hand and clasped it at length. He even summoned sufficient strength to leave his couch and, with much sorting over a bunch of keys, opened a strong box within his safe from which he extracted a ring.

It was a beautiful and valuable piece of jewelry. The band was of heavy, white gold, into which adroit and exquisite symbolistic carvings had been wrought by a skillful and most patient hand, and the ring was set with a large oval of finest green jade smooth to the touch as a swan's throat.

Smiling gravely, the old man proffered the handsome object to Hard Luck Hillary, who, by keen effort, decently restrained himself from grabbing it, for Hard Luck knew a valuable ring when he saw it.

"It would be such a ring as I would have placed on the hand of my son," said Lou Lin See solemnly, "when he had paid me such an honored attention as has come from you, my friend, Hillallee."

In further show of appreciation of the grim gift, Lou Lin gave a big party. There was an entire day and night devoted to elaborate feasting and copious drinking at which more than three hundred guests were entertained in divisions in the little shop and back living room of the ancient merchant.

Like a Magic Talisman

The coffin was set upright on an especially prepared platform of plum covered velvet, the casket's lid taken off to display the beautiful white satin lining, the lid having its large silver plate engraved with the name of Lou Lin and the place and the date of his birth described, and also a space thoughtfully left for a record of what must finally befall him.

The coffin was extravagantly admired. There were wise Chinese who got the trend of the meaning of the gift. But they put on smiling faces just the same.

And Hillary had all he could do to restrain sparkles of pleasure coming into his eyes because of his observation of the reckless antics with viands and drink that Lou Lin See was performing.

The old man ate and drank in company with every squad of guests. He ate and drank from morning till night. He ate and drank abandonedly, passing doggedly through three fainting fits and each time coming up for more. It really looked like he was extraordinarily eager to occupy his coffin without delay.

The next morning he was a very sick old man indeed.

When Hillary called on him, he found Lou Lin engagingly white and weak. His groans were music to Hard Luck's ears. He saw himself master of bunches of jingling gold instead of sparse assortments of jingling silver within—within a month, possibly. By Jove, within the very week!

He felt his feet pressing the soft carpets of a fine hotel suite, his fingers handling the silver ware and linen napery of fine restaurants, his body clothed to the highest standards of London's Strand.

And as he left Lou Lin See's dingy but rich little shop he gazed at the heavy gold ring, with its heavy setting of jade, which stood forth on his long, lean red hand, and it looked to him like the magic talisman to untold wealth.

In this exalted state of mind, Hard Luck could not refrain from looking in on Barney Flynn's saloon. Lou Lin See's rice brandy was good, but Barney's old Irish was the sweetest of all palate shockers.

He received two shots from Barney's own hand, and whipped them down with a fine zest. Then he missed five-year-old Mary Flynn, whose habit it was to perch on an end of her father's bar and coquette with the early customers.

"Him Vell Solly Not See You!"

Hard Luck had a gentle spot in his heart for kids, as have most derelicts. He was fond of her prattle, and Mary was fond of the florid faced man who could crow like a rooster and do other things for her entertainment that were equally amusing.

He inquired for her.

"The little wan is sick," said her father.

"Oh, I say, you know, that's rotten!" exclaimed Hillary. "What's the matter with her, Barney, old cock?"

"I dun know. 'Tis the doctor himself that's not sure yet. Do you go upstairs and see her. She was askin' but the little while ago fer the funny man that makes rabbits with his noserag."

"That I shall," assented Hillary. "I'll go up and see this very minute!"

And immediately legged it to the floor above and the sick room of little Mary.

The next night Hard Luck Hillary was removed by the city authorities from his box of a furnished room in the Fleabag and transported to the hospital at Welfare Island, where, for two months—long after little Mary had resumed her morning perch on the corner of her father's bar—he was

cut off from all communication with the outside world, for he was under strict quarantine, held down by an exceedingly malignant attack of mumps, which is not only contagious, but raises the very dickens with adults when they are assailed by the disease.

He suffered excruciatingly mentally all the while, wondering of the state of health of the old Chinese, Lou Lin See. Was he still living? Was he dead and Hillary not present to assert his rights as heir to the property?

Why the devil didn't Potty Smith wedge in some kind of news of him—Potty Smith, who was master of all methods of working underground prison mail?

Or was Lou Lin See dead and Potty Smith taking everything over in his sick client's name and robbing him right and left? The torture of suspense kept Hard Luck writhing and doubtless delayed his recovery.

But at last came the day of his discharge, and, naturally, his first act was to make his way to the shop of Lou Lin See.

When he arrived there he stood facing it while his legs, none too strong yet, trembled beneath him and his mouth gaped.

Lou Lin was dead! Lou Lin had passed away while he, Hillary, was on a bed of sickness and of pain! It must be! For Lou Lin's shop windows were heavily boarded up. So was the narrow door at the bottom of the five worn stone steps.

There was a huge brass padlock on the door also. Definitely, with blasting certainty, Lou Lin See's shop was shut!

If he was dead—well, of course, if Lou Lin was dead—but why hadn't Counselor Potty Smith wormed some information in to the victim of the mumps in some manner or other? Why shouldn't steps have been taken of some sort to notify the heir to the fortune?

All manner of lashing uncertainties assailed Hard Luck. In order to clear them away he shot into the side entrance of the building and up two flights of stairs to the office of the dentist of Chinatown, one nearly as venerable as Lou Lin See himself.

"Lou Lin—where he be?" panted Hillary.

"Oh, hello, Hillalee? Lou Lin? Oh, yes! Him vell solly not see you befo' him glow home."

"*Home?*" demanded Hillary stridently.

"Oh, yes. Him glow China flee week aglow."

Sweat streamed down the white face of Hillary then.

"The coffin—the coffin, I gave him? Did he?"

"Oh, yes, cloffin. Oh, yes. Him takes cloffin for time he die in China. Velly fine for him when he go away too. Him packee all him things he need most in nice cloffin. Makee allee samee likee tlunk."

On Hard Luck's arraignment in the Tombs police court, after narrowly escaping complete strangulation, it is to be recorded that Mr. Polpettini appeared with fury much abated. He even talked things over with Hillary. As a result the charge of the theft of the coffin was withdrawn.

Further, Hard Luck and the undertaker, both apparently serene if not gushingly friendly, left the court room together.

But it was to be noticed when they did that a handsome ring of jade and gold was encircling the little finger of a large, fat, brown hand.

Standing in the middle of them she faced the baronet proudly

RETURN OF THE ADJUSTERS

By Valentine

WHEN GERALD CAME TO HE HAD A VAGUE IMPRESSION THAT HE HAD TAKEN A ONE-WAY TICKET TO HEAVEN AND HIS HEAD WAS IN AN ANGEL'S LAP

DAPHNE WRAYNE'S portrait in the Academy caused any amount of talk. The fact that it was by Feldwest insured of course that it would attract attention.

But the artist had evidently realized the possibilities of a girl whose name was gradually becoming almost a household word in London. And he had taken full advantage of the opportunity presented to him.

To those of the public who had never seen Daphne the picture was in the nature of an amazing surprise. They knew that she was in sole control of a concern called the Adjusters; knew that she sat in lavishly furnished offices in Conduit Street and professed herself ready to handle cases which the police had failed to solve; knew also that she never charged any fees, and, according to her own statement, had well known but unnamed people behind her.

All this the press had told them from time to time, and by degrees they had come to look on the Adjusters as a well-meaning but slightly eccentric concern. Daphne's pictures they had seen in the papers, but they had been a little skeptical of them.

They reflected that the process of art assisting nature obtained in the world of photography as well as in the world of reality. They preferred to visualize Daphne Wrayne as a somewhat serious-minded, blue-stocking type of young women who probably wore horn-rimmed glasses and flat-heeled shoes.

Girls who went in for law and criminology, they argued, seldom worried much about the really feminine touch.

Therefore it was that Feldwest's picture caused something in the way of a sensation when it appeared. People gazed at it in sheer bewilderment. They saw a slender, lovely young girl sitting well back in the depths of a great carved oak chair—a chair that made her look almost absurdly childish.

She wore a simple little black satin frock that reached scarcely to her knees. Her slim, silk-stockinged legs were demurely crossed. Her little high-heeled satin slippers barely touched the ground.

As she sat there with her curly head a little on one side and her pretty lips curved into a smile, she was the incarnation of happy, joyous, confident youth.

You found yourself almost groping for similes. Peter Pan, Puck, Queen Mab, you thought of them all—wide-eyed, fearless girlhood gazing out serenely upon the world. Gervase Wychelow, the famous art critic summed it up rather neatly after gazing at the picture for a full ten minutes.

" I've always been told," he said, " that there's a catch somewhere about these Adjusters. Now I know where it is. To look at her there, and then to reflect that Scotland Yard vouches for her cleverness, well —if I were a criminal I think I'd run a mile rather than cross swords with her!"

Daphne's colleagues, the Four Unknown Adjusters, drifted in at various times to view that picture, mingle with the crowd, smile at the various comments on it that they overheard.

Sir Hugh Williamson, famous explorer, studied it critically through his gold-rimmed monocle and opined to a friend that it was a " Dashed clever picture, don't you know."

Lord " Jimmy " Trevitter, perhaps the most popular young peer in England, was listened to with considerable interest when he stood in front of the picture and remarked to the girl who was with him, " It's positively lifelike. I've seen that expression of hers a dozen times. I'd like to know who *is* at the back of her!"

Alan Sylvester, the actor-manager, and Martin Everest, K. C., the brilliant criminal barrister, came together and surveyed it interestedly, yet apparently without any particular enthusiasm. Though as they moved away together they were both smiling.

" Isn't that Daph all over, Martin?"

" Absolutely, old man."

" Feldwest told me himself that she suggested every detail—the chair, the frock, the attitude. He told me," he chuckled softly, " that I'd no idea what an amazing brain lay behind that beautiful exterior. Me—I ask you!"

Everest laughed boyishly.

" She *is* wonderful," he admitted. " I've seldom met a woman who possesses such marvelous originality. She's not level-headed, of course, but then at that age she can't be. Not that that matters, of course, because we are behind her to use the control where it's necessary. But for fertility of ideas and resource she's got us all cold.

" I took a case to her the other day that had been puzzling me for a week. She presented me with a solution in ten minutes that fairly took my breath away."

" A great philosopher once laid it down," smiled the actor-manager, " that when in trouble we should always consult a woman.

" We men are so busy looking miles ahead that we invariably miss the one thing that a woman sees first—that which lies directly in front of her."

" Oh, quite true," rejoined the barrister, " but Daph's got so much more than that. She's got the rare capacity—and it is rare for any one—of being able to reject the obvious the moment she sees it's impossible.

" And, which is greater still, she has the most amazing knack of putting herself in the other person's place and viewing the whole case entirely from the other person's point of view. It's a rare gift, Alan."

" Oh, it is. Though one of these days I suppose we shall trip up somewhere and in order to save her and ourselves we shall have to disclose ourselves. It will be a tragedy, Martin. It will break her little heart."

" Yet perhaps before that happens we shall—"

As he stopped, his friend looked up and nodded.

" I hope so. But d'you think even that will make her give it up?"

" Frankly, I think so. She and Jimmy are madly in love with each other. She'd have married him months ago only she knows that the moment she does so the public will get a line on at least *one* of the Adjusters."

The actor-manager nodded thoughtfully.

" If, when she does marry Jim, we wind up the show," he said, " I can't help thinking we ought to tell the public that Jim was one of the Adjusters."

" Wait and see," replied Everest laughing. " The public may have discovered it for themselves long before then. Despite all our precautions we can't get away with it forever."

II

CARLTON, the stalwart, impassive-faced commissionaire of the Adjusters' offices in Conduit Street came noiselessly into Daphne Wrayne's luxurious room and laid down the card at her side.

" Who is it, Carlton?"

" Sir Charles Marlynne, miss."

" What's he want?"

" To see you most urgently, miss, he said."

Daphne laid down her pen with a little sigh, selected a cigarette from the silver box on her table, lighted it, leaned back in her chair.

" There's no darned originality in the world, is there, Carlton?" she queried blowing out a delicate smoke-ring. " Everybody who comes in here says exactly the same thing. Well, I suppose I've got to see him."

All the same, her curiosity was aroused, for Sir Charles Marlynne, baronet, an old friend of hers, was very much in the limelight at the moment. For June, his only daughter, was to be married in a few days' time and because Sir Charles was one of the oldest and wealthiest baronets in England, and a very pretty romance lay behind the wedding, the papers had seized on it with avidity.

Once more, though now with a wealth of detail, they retold the manner in which June Marlynne and her prospective bridegroom, one Gerald Montgomery, a wealthy young Australian, had met.

It was a pretty little story, one of those stories met with more often in fiction than real life. It was a story of a girl riding a spirited horse in the Row, a horse that shied and bolted, and a young stranger who dashed out, flung himself at the horse and was dragged for a hundred yards refusing to let go till he had brought it to a standstill.

All this, however, had actually happened. Happened furthermore that when Gerald Montgomery came to consciousness with a broken collar bone and odd minor injuries he had a vague impression that he had taken a one-way ticket to heaven and his head was in an angel's lap.

For all his preconceived ideas of angels were that they had soft, gentian-blue eyes and curly golden hair—though it puzzled him a little momentarily to discover that they wore riding habits.

The rest, of course, followed time-honored precedent, for when a beautiful young woman and a nice, wholesome young man who has risked his life to save hers are thrown into each other's society for any length of time no other finish but orange blossoms is humanely possible.

And June, because she was an entirely modern product and accustomed to have her own way in everything, went to see Gerry Montgomery every day. What is more, she decided that it was silly merely to leave a card.

She had an idea that personal interviews would be far nicer for herself and possibly more beneficial to the invalid. They were. And in due course the engagement was announced.

Therefore, Daphne's curiosity was aroused. She wondered what could have happened to bring the baronet up to Conduit Street so anxious to see her.

He came quickly into the room, a square built, good-looking man of about sixty with white hair and bristling white mustaches.

" So good of you to see me, my dear," he said as he shook hands with her. " Your man told me how busy you were. Yet when you hear what I've come about—"

" Not June's wedding, I hope?"

" I'm afraid so. Actually—she disappeared ten days ago."

"Disappeared?" Daphne stared at him. "Kidnaped, d'you mean?"

"Oh, no, not as bad as that. At least—"

"But why have you only just come to me?" asked the girl. "And if as you say it happened ten days ago why have I seen notices in the paper to say she's laid up with a chill?"

"Frankly, I was playing for time. I didn't dare to tell the truth. If the papers were to get hold of the fact that June and Gerald had quarreled and—"

"You mean this is all over a quarrel?" looking up sharply.

"I'm afraid I do."

For a moment or two there was silence. The expression on Daphne's face was one of annoyance and she was drumming the table impatiently with her fingers.

"Really, Sir Charles," she said, "if you can't control June—"

"Hear me out, my dear," he interrupted quickly, "and I think you'll see why I've bothered you with what, after all, must seem to you only a trivial affair. There are one or two things connected with it that made me bring it to you."

Daphne leaned back in her chair.

"Please go on," she said, but there was no particular interest in her voice.

"June, as I said," he began, "walked out of the house four days ago, last Friday, to be exact. She and Gerald had had a row over some rather trivial matter I believe and she had flung out—"

"Take any luggage with her?"

"A small suitcase, so her maid says. She packed it for her."

"Tell her maid where she was going?"

"Not a word."

"Go ahead."

"Now on Sunday afternoon I had a call from my prospective son-in-law who brought along with him Dmitri Aristide—you probably know him by name."

Daphne wrinkled her forehead.

"Seems familiar. Wasn't he in the papers recently?"

"Yes, that's right. His car was in a smash on the Portsmouth road."

"I remember. Well?"

"He's a chum of Gerald's—Greek millionaire. He's a most delightful fellow and he and Gerald are close chums. He's fabulously wealthy. He gave June a most magnificent rope of pearls only last week. They must have cost nearly ten thousand pounds."

Daphne nodded, her eyes gazing abstractedly before her.

"It appears," went on the baronet, "that he was motoring on Sunday morning in the Henley neighborhood and going through the town he saw June."

Daphne's eyebrows went up. "Bit of luck," she said. "Did he speak to her?"

"He did. I may explain that we've got a little riverside bungalow at Wargrave. I bought it specially for June two years ago. We keep it locked up, but June has been down there before for week-ends by herself.

"And in this case she admitted straight out to Aristide that she was stopping there, and if Gerry wanted her back he could come down and apologize.

"Well, Aristide, being a good fellow and knowing how worried we all were, took her out to lunch and talked and argued with her. And the upshot of it was that he persuaded her to ring us up there and then and say she was coming home that evening."

"Who took the phone at your end?"

"I did."

"What did she say?"

"Told me what had happened, said that she'd asked Aristide to drive her back, but he couldn't, as he had an engagement that afternoon, and that she'd catch the eight o'clock train up and be with us about ten thirty."

"And never turned up?"

"Not a sign of her or a word from her."

"What did you do?"

"Went down to the cottage on Monday. Place all locked up. Not a sign of June anywhere."

"Everything in order?"

"Absolutely."

"Suitcase?"

"Not a sign of it."

For some moments Daphne sat frowning.

"When you talked to June on the phone did she sound as if she was meaning what she said?" she asked at length.

"Absolutely. She admitted she'd been hasty and said that if Gerry would meet her at Paddington everything would be all right."

"And did he go?"

"Of course, he did. Waited at the barrier and saw every passenger who came off the train. There wasn't a sign of June."

For some minutes there was silence. Daphne's face was inscrutable.

"Does she often do this sort of thing?" she asked presently. "I mean—fail to keep appointments?"

"Emphatically no! She does mad impulsive things on the spur of the moment, like this clearing-out business. But she never plays fast and loose with appointments like this. That's what's worrying me."

Daphne nodded abstractedly. Then:

"To-day's Tuesday and the wedding's on Friday," she said thoughtfully. "Got your car outside?"

"I have."

"Like to run me down to Wargrave?"

"Most certainly. D'you think—"

"I never think," interrupted Daphne, as she got up from her chair. "At least, not at this early stage."

III

THEY left the car at the edge of the little narrow lane and walked down to the cottage, a small, delightfully pretty little thatched affair set in the middle of a well-kept garden with neat lawns surrounded by a high yew hedge.

"Lovely little place you've got here," said Daphne. "A bit lonely, though."

"June doesn't mind," replied the baronet. "She's never known much fear since babyhood."

He opened the front door with a key and led the way into a luxuriously furnished lounge room. Daphne stood and gazed around it with knitted brows.

He had heard enough of her to know that now her brain was hard at work, that her keen eyes wandering round the room were on the alert for the slightest detail that might be of use. Suddenly he saw her stiffen, walk across to the fireplace—bend down.

"June taken to smoking?" she queried abruptly.

"No! I've never known her to smoke in my life. It's one of the few modern things she *doesn't* do."

Daphne without a word put out her hand. On it lay an unfinished cigarette.

"Egyptian," she said laconically. "Let's go upstairs."

Up in the bedroom she stood gazing round the room, her brows knitted. For some moments she studied the neat bed with its white sheets and pale blue eiderdown.

Then she walked across to it, lifted one of the pillows, pulled out and held up a dainty, pale mauve and white silk nightdress. For a few moments the baronet stared at her puzzled.

"Funny June should leave that behind," he said slowly.

"It is," said Daphne dryly; "she hadn't got overmuch to remember."

Half an hour later they came out of the cottage and walked slowly down the lane. Daphne was very quiet and the baronet, seeing it, forebore to question her.

As they came to the car she stood gazing thoughtfully ahead.

"Does the road end there?" she queried, pointing to a small farmhouse that lay about a hundred yards away.

"Yes. The people who live there look after this place of mine while we're away. When we intend to come down we generally send them a wire and Mrs. Jepson comes and opens it up."

"I think I'll go down and see them."

"Would you like me to come, too?"

"I think not. Perhaps you'll turn the car while I'm there."

It was nearly half an hour before she came back. She was still very quiet and got into the car without a word, but there was a queer look of elation in her eyes.

"Have you formed any theories?" asked the baronet as the car slid away.

Daphne lit a cigarette and tossed the match away out of the window.

"Quite a lot," she replied with a smile, "and they may turn into facts. On the other hand, they may not."

All the way up to town she never said a word. As the car slid up to Sir Charles Marlynne's big house in Berkeley Square the door opened and a young, clean-shaven, bronzed young man came running out.

"Any news, Sir Charles?" eagerly.

"None, I'm afraid, Gerry." Then: "Miss Wrayne, this is my son-in-law, Mr. Montgomery."

The disappointment in his face was very obvious, but he did his best to hide it as he took Daphne's hand.

"I've heard such a lot about you, Miss Wrayne," he said, "that Sir Charles and I hoped you could help us and—"

"You must give me a chance, Mr. Montgomery," smiling. "I was only called in this morning."

"Come in and have some tea, Miss Wrayne," urged the baronet.

"Yes, do," said the other. "Dmitri's here and I know he'd like to meet you."

"I'd like to meet him," replied the girl brightly. "He's the one who persuaded June to return, isn't he?"

"Yes, and he's awfully worried now about it all. But he still persists that she'll come back in time for the wedding. He says he won't go away till it's over."

"Going away, is he?" queried Daphne carelessly as they went into the house.

"Yes. He's off to South America in his steam yacht—a veritable floating palace. But he refuses to go till he's seen us married."

"That's the spirit," answered Daphne. "I'm always an optimist myself."

Up in the drawing-room Dmitri Aristide was introduced—a tall, well-built, exceedingly handsome Greek of about thirty-five, with inscrutable eyes and a wonderful smile.

"If I say I had hoped you were bringing us good news, Miss Wrayne," he said, "it is only because I have heard such wonderful things about you that we ordinary folk almost look upon your firm in the light of magicians."

Something like a blush of delight showed in the girl's cheeks.

"We're not really, Mr. Aristide," she said. "We're just original folk who use their wits—that's all. The trouble, I find, is that we've got such a reputation that it's appalling to have to live up to it. They tell me you've given June a most wonderful present."

The Greek threw out his hands deprecatingly.

"Nothing can be too good for her," he said gravely. "I told my friend Gerald so when I asked to be permitted to present my poor gift."

"If Dmitri wasn't such a friend of mine," chimed in Montgomery with a little laugh, "I might almost be jealous of him. Miss Wrayne," the anxious note came back to his voice again, "what do you make of it all?"

Daphne shrugged her slim shoulders.

"Frankly, Mr. Montgomery, I shouldn't get unduly alarmed if I were you. My sex are proverbially unreliable, you know. When June comes back she'll probably give you a very ordinary explanation."

"That's what I say," murmured the Greek smoothly. "I have put off my departure till Saturday so that I can be at the wedding of my friend."

"I suppose you can't add anything to what Sir Charles has already told me?" asked Daphne presently. "When you took June to lunch at Henley she seemed quite her normal self?"

"Oh, quite," rejoined the Greek. "And when she had telephoned Sir Charles and arranged to come back she seemed in excellent spirits."

"H'm!" murmured Daphne thoughtfully, "it's very strange. There was something else I wanted to ask you," wrinkling her forehead, "but it's slipped me for the moment."

"Any questions I can answer I will do most readily."

"Sure!" after a slight pause. Then, "No, it's gone from me. Where can I get hold of you if I want you?"

"At my flat in Park Lane."

"You'll be in town for the next few days?"

"Certainly," with something like a rather tolerant smile. "As I told you just now, I shan't leave till after the wedding."

"Oh, of course," answered Daphne with a little frown. "I forgot. You're off on your yacht, aren't you? They tell me

she's a marvel, Mr. Aristide. Where's she lying?"

"In the Solent, Miss Wrayne. Like to see her?"

"I'd just love to, but—"

"Let me motor you down to-morrow."

Daphne, laughing, shook her head.

"Wish I could—but I'm too busy, I'm afraid. May I cadge a cigarette?" as the Greek drew out his case. "Thanks."

"That reminds me, Aristide," exclaimed the baronet. "We haven't told you that Miss Wrayne has—good heavens. Miss Wrayne are you ill?"

For Daphne had suddenly swayed and fallen sidewise onto the sofa. Her eyes were closed, and she was gasping for breath.

"Water," she murmured faintly. "Quick! It's—it's my heart!"

The Greek, who had rushed from the room, was back in a moment with a glass of water. Daphne gulped down some, smiled faintly.

"Thank you so much," she murmured. "I'm so sorry—but I get these attacks occasionally. I'll be better in a few minutes.

"I think perhaps, Sir Charles—I won't wait—after all. I wonder if you'd drive me round—to my doctor in Hill Street. He knows exactly what to do for me."

"Of course I will, Miss Wrayne, like a shot!" anxiously.

A few minutes later, as they pulled up at the doctor's house the baronet got out and helped Daphne to alight.

"Are you sure you're all right now, Miss Wrayne? Would you like me to wait?"

"No, really not, thank you! I'm frightfully sorry to have given all this trouble."

She stood for a few moments, evidently deep in thought. Then—

"I think, Sir Charles," slowly, "that I'd rather you didn't say a word to any one about where we've been to-day. I have my reasons."

IV

"YOU'RE wanted on the phone, Sir Charles. Miss Wrayne wishes to speak to you."

Sir Charles Marlynne leaped up from his chair and fairly rushed past the butler to the library.

As he snatched up the receiver the excitement in his face was very obvious, but it faded away quickly enough.

"Oh, yes, come round by all means, Miss Wrayne! No! Neither my son nor Aristide are here, but I expect them both soon."

He hung up the receiver with a sigh. Half an hour later the butler showed Daphne into the room.

"No news, Miss Wrayne?"

"Not exactly what you'd call news. I've taken the liberty of asking some one to ring up here, and as it's rather important perhaps you won't mind my waiting here till the message comes through."

"Not a bit, Miss Wrayne. Please sit down. Gerry and Aristide will be in soon."

"Oh, it's nothing very important," said the girl carelessly. "Just one little question I wanted to ask Mr. Aristide. It might have a little bearing on the case. What a nice fellow he is."

"Yes, we all like him very much. He's frightfully upset over June, poor fellow. Ever since he's known her he's been a sort of big brother to her—taken her everywhere."

"Yes, one can see he's really fond of her. Where did you meet him?"

"At Cannes last year. He and Gerald pal'd up in a moment and they've been inseparables ever since. Ah! I think I hear them both."

An outsider watching the quartette during the next forty-five minutes would have been a little puzzled. The baronet and his son-in-law both appeared to be a little distraught.

They almost gave the impression that they were rather anxious to get rid of Daphne. Yet the latter seemed sublimely unconscious of the fact. She appeared to be in the very best of spirits, chatting incessantly the whole time—especially to the Greek.

And then suddenly the telephone bell whirred. Daphne jumped up in a moment.

"That must be my call," she said. "No! Please don't go!"

As she picked up the receiver the baronet

frowned a little. It seemed as if he almost resented such very unceremonious treatment.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Daphne. "Is that you—what?"

At the sudden amazing change in her voice, and simultaneously in her expression, all three men started visibly. Daphne went on, but she was obviously frightened now.

"But I—I don't understand! June—June—is it really you? Where are you?"

All three men were on their feet in a flash, but Daphne held up a quick, impatient hand as they crowded round her.

"Speak up! Are you all safe?—thank God for that!—hold on a minute, hold on!"

She swung round to the amazed baronet.

"June speaking! She's been kidnaped, but she's escaped. Speak to her!" she flung out breathlessly.

The baronet almost snatched the receiver from her hand.

"June, June, where are you? Are you all right?"

A pause as he listened, Daphne, Aristide and Montgomery leaning eagerly forward in that stillness that could be almost felt. Then at last the baronet spoke, and his voice had now become curiously hushed.

"She's gone! She says she'll be home to-morrow. She says she daren't say more."

"Daren't say more?" echoed Daphne.

"Those were her words. 'I daren't say more. It isn't safe. I'll be home midday to-morrow. I've had a terrible time, but keep it all to yourselves till you see me, and I'll tell you everything.'"

For some few minutes they stared blankly at each other.

It was the Greek who at last broke the silence.

"She didn't say where she was?"

"Not a word!"

A little smile came over his face.

"Well, thank God she's safe!" he said slowly. "To-morrow we shall hear all about it."

He glanced at his wrist watch.

"Seven o'clock?" he ejaculated. "I'd no idea it was so late. Gerry, I must be off. I've got a dinner appointment."

A few minutes later Montgomery came back into the room alone.

"What do *you* make of it, Miss Wrayne?" he asked abruptly.

"It's so serious, Mr. Montgomery," replied the girl slowly, "that I'm going to ask you two to put yourselves implicitly in my hands—if you want June back to-morrow!"

They stared at her amazed.

"But—" began the baronet.

Daphne turned on him quickly.

"I want you two," she said, "to remain here with me till my phone message comes through. That's all I can say at the moment."

The butler entered the room.

"Do you wish dinner at half past seven, sir?"

But it was Daphne who answered.

"Hold it up indefinitely please, Sir Charles," she said curtly.

For nearly an hour the three sat silently there. Daphne curled up in her big chair, a very grave look on her face, smoked cigarette after cigarette with eyes that gazed straight before her.

The baronet and his future son-in-law watched her anxiously. Then once again the telephone whirred and the girl snatched quickly at the receiver.

"Hullo! Yes? Daphne speaking—yes!" A long pause. Then—

"I see! Send Rayte here with the Hispano. I'll wait here for your next message. I'll send Rayte back to go down with you.

"Whatever station it is, I'll be there on time and you can let him be there to tell me where to meet you. I was perfectly right, and you must stick at nothing. Ring me up as soon as you can."

Then, as she hung up the receiver, she answered the unspoken question that was on the lips of the two men.

"Wait a few minutes longer. In the meantime better be on the safe side and have some food packed. We *may* have a long journey. My car's coming round."

Another half hour dragged round. And then once again the little bell rang, and Daphne picked up the receiver.

"Nine hours and a half, Jim? Yes, we'll do it on our heads. Good luck, old boy!"

She hung up the receiver and turned to the two men.

"We must start at once," she said, "and for heaven's sake don't ask any questions. We're going to fetch June. She's in grave danger!"

V

AS the big car slid smoothly down the hill toward the little railway station a man, two hundred yards away, stepped out into the middle of the road and put up his hand. Daphne, with a quick exclamation of something like relief, applied the brakes.

As the car stopped the man came forward and saluted. He was a short, thick set, well set up man in overalls and goggles.

"Well, Rayte?" exclaimed Daphne sharply.

"Cross the railway, miss, and when you reach the spot keep straight up the hill for a mile, first to the right at the signpost and wait at the first milestone on the left."

"Train been in long?"

"About fifteen minutes, miss."

"Thank you, Rayte. You'd better follow us."

"Very good, miss."

He saluted and turned to his motor bicycle, which stood at the side of the road. Daphne let in her clutch.

They pulled up at the milestone and Daphne pushed back her goggles and produced a cigarette case, which, without a word, she handed to the baronet and Montgomery. Puffing at her cigarette she rested her arm on the wheel and gazed around.

It was a wonderful view, and with the morning sun shining upon it, it became even more wonderful still. To the right lay the blue sea, unbroken in its smoothness. In front and all round the sweep of gold and green hills, interspersed with gray crags.

The only sign of life was a small, low, white house about two miles away, tucked in to the side of the mountain. Daphne studied it intently, an anxious look on her face.

"We're on the coast of Glamorganshire," she said slowly, "for your information. I'm sorry to have been so darned uninteresting on the way down, but I've been pretty worried and am still, for that matter.

"You see, if by any chance I've made a bloomer—listen!"

From away down in the valley came the hum of a motor engine. Daphne, holding up a warning hand, snapped three times on her electric horn.

The tragic eagerness in her face was almost pitiful to see now.

Sir Charles and his son-in-law gazed at her spellbound. It seemed to them that they were on the edge of some tremendous happening.

For a moment—silence. A seagull circling up above broke into shrill cries. Then suddenly from down in the valley rung out four sharp staccato notes of an electric horn.

Daphne leaped to her feet, her eyes ablaze.

"I *was* right!" she cried triumphantly. "They've got her—they've got her! Oh, I *knew* I couldn't be wrong!"

"Got who—June?" shouted the amazed baronet and Montgomery together.

"Yes, June! That's the signal!" Daphne's hands were clasped together and the rapture in her face was beyond all words. "Oh, my wonderful, wonderful men!"

Sir Charles Marlynne always declared that thereafter he never knew exactly what happened. He said that the next fifteen minutes were a mass of amazing, unbelievable happenings out there on those lonely Welsh mountains.

He said that Daphne herself was the most amazing of them all. For nine hours she had sat at the wheel, an anxious, serious-eyed young woman, who smoked perpetual cigarettes and answered only in monosyllables.

Now in a moment she had become a fourteen year old schoolgirl, cheeks flushed, eyes ashine—the incarnation of wild, reckless, uncontrolled delight.

And then round the bend of the road swept a big closed car that slid up the hill and pulled up fifty feet away. And almost before it had stopped, June, hatless, had jumped out and was running toward them to fling herself into the arms of her lover, who had rushed forward to meet her.

All this Sir Marlynne saw as in a dream, for his eyes were gazing at something even more amazing still—four well-dressed, well-set up men in long dust coats, who were advancing toward him. And each one of them was wearing a black mask!

For a moment silence—a breathless, amazed silence. Daphne had slipped out of the car and had run forward with eager outstretched hands to meet those masked men.

Now standing in the middle of them, four silent, motionless, yet somehow strangely protecting figures, she faced the baronet, her golden head thrown proudly back, her eyes ashine with pride—a happy queen with her four knights around her.

"Sir Charles," she said, and the thrill in her fresh young voice was wonderful to hear, "let me introduce to you the men who have never failed me yet! My four —Adjusters!"

VI

IN the big dining room of the Berkeley Square house four people sat round the table—Sir Charles Marlynne, June Marlynne, Gerald Montgomery and Daphne Wrayne. Dinner was over, the butler had withdrawn, and June had related her experiences.

She had told them how Dmitri Aristide had, to her surprise, turned up at the Wargrave Cottage only an hour after she had said good-by to him, how he had calmly announced to her that he had always loved her, that she was never going to marry Gerald and how she was going to marry him.

Then—amid constant mutterings of "scoundrel," "blackguard" and "villain" from her *fiancé*—she had gone on to relate how she had been seized from behind, gagged, bound, and carried off in a car. Went on to relate how she had eventually found herself in a luxuriously furnished, barred and locked room, high up overlooking the sea—finally, how three masked men had suddenly burst down the door and rescued her.

And then Sir Charles Marlynne had turned to Daphne.

"Miss Wrayne," he said, "as the children say—'Won't *you* tell us a story?"

As they all leaned forward eagerly a little flush showed in Daphne's cheeks.

"If you like," she smiled.

White arms resting on the oak table, chin cupped in slim hands, she began:

"When you motored me down to Wargrave, Sir Charles, I had absolutely nothing whatever to go upon except that Aristide had happened *by accident* to be motoring in Henley and had happened, also by accident, to have seen June.

"But I could no more reject it as a pure coincidence than I could fasten on to it as a definite clew. It was one of those things worth pigeonholing—in case. Then when we got to the cottage we were met with two other curious things. One was the unfinished cigarette in the grate."

"That was Dmitri's," murmured June. "I remembered him tossing it away."

"A bit of luck for us all I happened to spot it," smiled Daphne. "Then upstairs I came across your nightdress."

"But surely that didn't help?" queried the baronet.

"Actually, no," replied Daphne, "though it roused my suspicions. It struck me as distinctly curious that June, having plenty of time in which to pack and so few things to have to pack, should go away forgetting it and remembering everything else."

"I suppose Aristide, when he went up and cleared all my things, as I imagine he did," said June, "never thought of looking under my pillow. I noticed my loss the moment I looked into my case, but I didn't let on."

Daphne laughed.

"I believe if you put a man and a girl to tidy up a girl's bedroom," she remarked, "a girl would put her nightie *under* the pillow every time. And a man would put it on top of it. But, there again, there was nothing in that as a definite clew.

"It was only one of those tiny trivial things that *might* fit in later on. However, let's get back to where we were.

"When I left you, Sir Charles, at the cottage, I went down to the farm on the offchance of picking up a clew. And there it was I learned that on the Sunday afternoon a big closed car had stood outside the lane for nearly an hour.

"The man described the car as one of those 'shiny, dark blue, swagger-looking things, closed in.' He wasn't sure of the number, but thought it had two naughts at the end of it. I admit then that I thought, as the children say, I was getting warm."

"Not much to go on all the same," murmured the baronet.

"And yet what a lot really!" replied Daphne. "An Egyptian cigarette end, a nightdress overlooked, a big car and a possible couple of naughts at the end of the number! And one circumstance—Aristide's *accidental* visit to Henley! Well, obviously there was only one thing to do.

"That's why I got you to drive me—as you remember—to the Motor Registration office. And there I found that Mr. Aristide was the owner of a dark blue thirty horse power saloon car, bearing the number GLX 19300.

"My coincidence from that minute became something more than a coincidence!"

"But even then," said the baronet, "you were up against something apparently motiveless. That's the strange thing to me."

"One of my colleagues, a great expert in crime," rejoined Daphne, "has always impressed it on me that one should never allow one's judgment to be biased—while investigating a crime—by the apparent absence of motive. The crime that is apparently motiveless possesses the strongest motive of all—when you find it.

"So as my clews were leading me in one direction only, I followed them—and found yet one more. Aristide offered me a cigarette. And the moment I took it I saw that it was the same brand as the one I had found at Wargrave! And from that moment I knew that Aristide had deliberately kidnaped June.

"Why? Obviously because he was an Oriental, and when Orientals fall in love with white girls who are some one else's property they don't ask, they don't argue. They simply take!"

"She's perfectly right," put in June. "Down in the cottage Aristide said practically the same thing to me. He said that the first moment he met me he intended to possess me. He said everything comes to him who waits. He waited."

"But now," went on Daphne, "I was confronted with a new difficulty. Incidentally I may mention that between Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday evening I was busy on Mr. Aristide's history.

"And I may mention that he's not a Greek at all—he's a Turk passing under a Greek name. The Yard knows nothing definitely *against* him, but they've been watching him for years—and the Yard, let me tell you, never does that without good cause.

"But, as I was saying, I was confronted with a new difficulty. I hadn't one chance in a million of finding June till *after* the day fixed for the wedding! And, what is more, I knew it!"

"Why do you say 'Till after the wedding'?" queried the baronet.

"Because I knew perfectly well I could find her then," rejoined the girl. "Aristide, if we followed him, would lead us to her. He intended to carry her off. But that was no good to me. I'd promised you I'd find her in *time* for the wedding!"

"All the same," frowned the baronet, "you couldn't be sure you could get her. Even if you *knew* she was on his yacht—"

"My dear Sir Charles," interrupted Daphne, "we never stop at trifles when we're working for our clients. How on earth d'you suppose we got June from that lonely white house?"

"I haven't even the vaguest notion."

"Well, I haven't had a chance of seeing my colleagues. I just introduced you, as you know—and, incidentally, not many folks are privileged to be able to say they've *seen* the Adjusters—and then we cleared off. But I know before they tell me what happened.

"They walk up to the door and ring.

The manservant opens it—and doesn't care to argue with two revolvers, so he submits to be bound without a word! It's quite easy. And, mark you, when you've held up a man who's committed a crime you're in a pretty safe position. *He* doesn't appeal to the police for redress!"

"Isn't she perfectly marvelous, dad?" murmured June with shining eyes, but Daphne, smiling, shook her head.

"Do go on, Miss Wrayne," said Montgomery. "You haven't told us yet how you found June."

"Oh, that," smiled Daphne, "was a mixture of luck and ingenuity. When my colleagues and I saw clearly that we'd no chance of finding June by our own efforts, we naturally had to get Aristide to lead us.

"That interview of mine with yourselves and Aristide in your library last evening, Sir Charles, was just a clever little frame-up. The girl who rang you up and said she was June was my secretary at Maidenhead—instructed by me!"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the amazed baronet, "you mean to say—"

"Oh, mark you," interrupted Daphne, "it wasn't a cert! There was always the chance of Aristide not troubling to verify the truth of it and bolting straight to his yacht and clearing the country. And that would have been a little awkward.

"To get him then to disclose where June was we should have had to do a bit of 'third degree'—and frankly, though one has to do it on occasions, we're not keen on it. Fortunately, however, it didn't become necessary.

"The moment Aristide heard—or fancied he heard"—with a smile—"that June had escaped he threw in his hand and bolted—as you know."

"We didn't know," murmured Montgomery. "We merely thought he really had a dinner engagement. As I showed him out he said he'd come and see us in the morning."

"Naturally," answered Daphne. "But he bolted all the same, and I was expecting it and had made all arrangements to meet it. My man was waiting outside, followed him to his flat, saw him come out with luggage, hire a taxi and drive to Paddington.

"He booked through to a little station in Wales on the nine twenty-five—a single ticket. But he didn't go alone. My four colleagues traveled down on the same train and we went by car.

"My colleagues, the moment they left Paddington, had made up their minds to get him—and they had made up their minds also that they weren't going to let him go till he had disclosed June's whereabouts. And that's that!"

"Yours is a marvelous organization, Miss Wrayne," said the baronet after the long pause that followed. "I never quite realized till now how marvelous it really is. But supposing Aristide had slipped off at some previous station?"

"We were expecting him to do so actually," replied the girl, "but it would have made no real difference. My men would have been after him.

"We should just have been hung up a bit where we first stopped, and one of them would have hired a fast car and come along. Everything was allowed for. Aristide wasn't going to get away."

"I wonder why he took her to Wales?" muttered the baronet, "and why he didn't take her to his yacht at Southampton?"

"The Welsh coast is lonelier," rejoined the girl promptly, "and, incidentally, I think we'll find his yacht was there waiting for her. I found out incidentally that she *had* been at Southampton, but had left two days ago."

For some minutes there was silence. The baronet was the first to break it.

"It's wonderful, Miss Wrayne," he said at length, "absolutely wonderful. We simply don't know what to say, or how to thank you. But I do hope you'll take care of your health. When you had that bad heart attack the other day—"

He stopped staring, for Daphne was rippling with subdued, yet very obvious laughter.

"Dear man," she said, "my heart's as sound as a bell! You were just beginning to tell Aristide about that cigarette end at the cottage, which would have put him on his guard like a shot. I *had* to do something. So," very demurely, "I had a nice little heart attack!"

As Jose left, a small statuette on the mantel seemed to explode—

THE LIVING GHOST

By Walter Archer Frost

A BRILLIANT LIGHT SUDDENLY FLASHED AND ON THE BARE WALL A SHADOW STOOD OUT, THE MOST HIDEOUS APPARITION I HAD EVER SEEN

CHAPTER I

THE MAN ACROSS THE STREET

"WILL you lock that door?" the man said hoarsely, as soon as Ruggles had admitted him to our living-room; "and pull those portières across the windows?"

Then, after he had seen us do it, he looked about with terror in his eyes. "I've never thought I was a coward," he went on; "but this thing has all but robbed me of my senses and, unless you come to my aid, will soon drive me to my death!"

"Sit down," Ruggles said quietly, drawing up a comfortable chair for our nerve-shattered client. "Now," as the man sank into it, "tell us what you are afraid of.

"This is Mr. Crane, who works with me on all my cases. You can speak before him as if you and I were alone in this room. But speak, you must, if I am to be able to help you in any way!"

The other pressed his shaking hand to his twitching lips. "You ask me what I fear? The thing that comes to me every night in my bedroom—the human specter, the living ghost, whose terrible shadow I see there before me on my wall!"

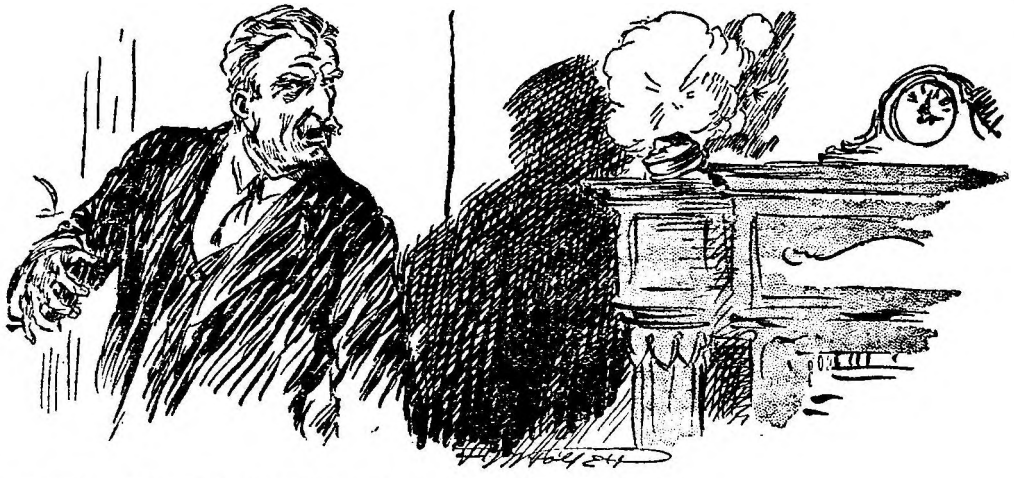
"A shadow is harmless," Ruggles said reassuringly. "But you said that the specter was human and the ghost alive—"

"It is alive," our distrait guest said; "it moves—"

"A trick is being played on you," Ruggles said a little impatiently. "This, you must remember, is the twentieth century, not the age of goblins or demons!"

"A trick, you say?" the other demanded. "You will not say that, once you have seen it for yourself! I tell you, the thing is driving me to where I'd prefer death to living on as I am living now!"

There appeared to be truth at least in the man's last statement, for his deep-set, dark eyes were haggard and wild; only a



—and a few grains of plaster slid down from a hole behind it in the wall

persistent dream, it might be, but to him it had an actuality so terrible that it had worn him down to the point where he now was scarcely stronger than a child.

While he lay back in his chair, his eyes half-closed, his deep chest rising and falling like that of a spent fugitive, I wondered what he was about to tell us.

However startling it was, it could not exceed, I was sure, some of the revelations which had been made to Ruggles and me in this silent room.

For terror drove most of our clients to us—the terror of the man or woman who feels that the last limit of his endurance has been reached, the last desperate hope gone, and that, in the chance of Ruggles's aid, now lay his only possibility of safety.

I will say one thing for them: they all came through clean, realizing that they could keep nothing back in their confessions to him, if he were to be able to aid them as they asked.

A very few, as in the case of the self-styled " Colonel " Hawkins, substituted for the truth a plausible lie; but these invariably learned too late the fatal price they paid for tying our hands as they had. Poor, weak, lying Hawkins!

The Bali kris, which had served so terrible a purpose before, served it again in his hands: with its keen blade, he had let out his own life-blood, preferring suicide rather than to hear the truth from the lips of the man he had wronged!

Grim stories we had listened to, in this comfortable little living-room of ours, grim confessions, forced out by the fate which, for one strange reason or another, had been meted out to those who came to us for refuge and help.

And, watching our new client now, I wondered where he was going to fit into the long list of those who had come to us: would he attempt to deceive us, as Hawkins had, or would he do as most did—come through absolutely clean?

What we knew of him, so far, was almost as vague as what he had been able to tell us of his mysterious predicament.

He appeared to be about fifty-five years old, tall, with a body which, in its ordinary physical condition, could be by no means lacking in activity and strength in spite of his iron-gray hair, well-dressed, and scholarly-looking—not at all the man one would expect to find the prey of a delusion or the victim of foul play.

On the other hand, because I had seen it proved a hundred times, I knew that the most unexpected and shocking secrets often lurked behind the most favorable exterior.

Gadsby, the murderer, to the day of his execution, had preserved his immaculate appearance; so had Hollister, the poisoner; so had a dozen others, the hidden horrors of

whose lives, when revealed at last, had startled the public and provided a theme in a thousand pulpits.

It was Ruggles's invariable custom to hide his connection and mine from the newspapers; but, at times, as in the case of the Carrington family doctor, the Garlic Bulbs, the Glavis affair, the Van Holberg tragedy, and some others, the part we had played leaked out and we had, as a result, an astonishing number of new clients.

But the greater part of these, Ruggles always directed to the local authorities, keeping only those cases which presented unusual difficulties or the need for the utmost delicacy of handling.

Indeed, publicity was what, for every reason, we dreaded most, professionally speaking, for it crippled us to a degree little dreamed of by those who heaped commendation on us. How little they understood the work we did and the need of secrecy and silence in it!

Our latest client, who had been lying back, panting like an exhausted dog, lifted himself to a more erect position in his chair and said in a voice so weak as to be scarcely audible:

"I am Mortimer Hastings, Mr. Ruggles. I live at Readsdale, a suburb you may have visited at some time. You must help me! Do so, in God's name! Drop whatever other business is now occupying you, and devote all your time to assisting me!

"I know that I ask a great deal of you, but I am willing, yes, eager, to pay you what you ask. I have abundant funds, though until a week ago I believed no one dreamed of that fact. Ask of me what payment you will, for your services!"

"What would you say to fifty thousand dollars?" Ruggles asked, his face wearing a smile of cupidity such as I had never seen it disfigured by before. "Fifty thousand dollars?"

"I will write you a check for that amount at once," Mortimer Hastings said, taking out his pen and pocketbook. "What are your initials?"

"I was testing you," Ruggles said, with a return to his natural manner. "I should not think of asking such an amount of you.

"On the other hand, I cannot possibly devote all of my time to your case, for there are others which have an equal, indeed, perhaps a still more pressing need of my help."

"If their position is worse than mine is, Gold help them," Mortimer Hastings said. "Will you come to my house, No. 13 Grove Lane, at ten o'clock to-night and see for yourself?"

"Yes," Ruggles said, "Mr. Crane and I shall be there at ten. In the meantime," he went on, as our new client rose from his chair and reached weakly for his coat and stick, "is there nothing more that you want to tell us, before we come?"

Mortimer Hastings's eyes had cleared a little at Ruggles's promise to come; but they regained their look of desperation at my companion's abrupt question.

I saw, or imagined that I saw, our client's unsteady lips open as if he were about to speak, then he slowly turned as if to avoid Ruggles's steady glance.

After a moment of silence, Ruggles went on, "Anything however unimportant it may seem to you, may prove of the greatest advantage to Crane and me in coming to your assistance," he reminded our irresolute guest.

Then, after another moment, in which Hastings still remained silent, Ruggles kept on, "Tell me, at least, why you changed your name to Mortimer Hastings, Mr. Henry Scott! And why, in addition to changing your name, and deserting California, have you attempted still further to disguise yourself by touching your black hair with gray?

"Is it because you are afraid that you may come face to face with Van Schillingen? I should have gone farther away from New York if I had been in your place. It undoubtedly would have been safer for you to return to California or—"

Ruggles broke off abruptly, and well he might, for our mysterious client, after staring at Ruggles more and more wildly as my companion's extraordinary recital proceeded, groped toward a chair, like a man who felt himself fainting, and then sank down, as if gone suddenly deaf, dumb, and blind.

I saw Ruggles bend swiftly and lift from

the floor by our table something which he thrust with remarkable swiftness into his pocket.

"Some cold water," he said to me.

When I had brought it, he was bending over our client who still seemed like a man robbed of his senses.

"Take some of this water," Ruggles said, holding it to the other's lips.

The man drank, then, raising himself to a sitting posture, asked huskily,

"In God's name, how do you know—"

"Never mind that now," Ruggles interrupted him. Then, looking from the window, "Is the man you believe following you tall, rather bent, dark-skinned, and does he use a cane to lean on?"

"Yes," the other gasped. "Is he—"

"He is standing on the curb across the street. You will recognize him, or be able to tell me that I am wrong, after one glance at him. I will help you to your feet. He is there, across the street, directly opposite those front windows."

But our strange client's only answer was to spring from his chair and retreat still farther back away from those front windows.

"No," he said, a voice to which new desperation gave new strength, "I will not look at him. There is no need for me to, for you have described the shadow, for you say he is tall, bent, and uses a cane to lean on.

"I cannot stay here! Can you not get me out by a back way? You must! And you will come to my house at ten o'clock to-night? Come later than that, and you will find me dead, for I cannot endure this any longer!"

It was clear to me as to Ruggles that nothing further could be hoped from the man now; for sufficient reason or because a disordered brain was conjuring up all manner of dreadful visions before his wild eyes, he was at the point of collapse.

"Yes," Ruggles said evenly, "I will show you how you can leave here by a back way, and I will be at your house, with Crane, by ten o'clock to-night. I suggest, though, that you stay here with us until it is time for us to start; nothing can threaten you here; you can stretch out in our extra bedroom—"

"No," the other said dully, "I must—go." He looked about for the door to the rear of our little first-floor apartment.

"Wait here," Ruggles said to me, "while I show him the way out." To our client, Ruggles said, "Before you go, Mr. Scott, I beg your pardon; from now on I shall call you Mortimer Hastings—I say, before you go, you had better take your pocketbook, which you have left there on our table."

Ruggles took it up, then said, "Let me put it in your pocket." This was while Hastings was fumbling with his hat and stick. "Is it in this inside pocket that you keep it?"

"Yes. Thanks very much," Mortimer Hastings said, as Ruggles thrust the pocketbook in. "I am—I am not myself. You can see that."

"I have good hope that we shall make that all right," Ruggles said. Then he led Hastings through the doorway into the back of our apartment.

CHAPTER II

A MYSTERIOUS SNAPSHOT

IT was a little after six o'clock in the evening of what had been a blazing September day; the air was cooling a little now and a sturdy northwest wind was blowing in from across the Hudson.

Ruggles and I had planned to have an early dinner and then to have a long walk up Riverside Drive.

If Henry Scott, or, as he preferred to call himself, Mortimer Hastings, had not come in, we should have indulged in that tranquil ending to what had been a tranquil day.

But there had been nothing tranquil about Mortimer Hastings or his story, vague and improbable though it was—I felt a disturbing, almost electrical tension in the air even after Hastings had left the room under the guidance of Ruggles.

In order to throw off the ominous feeling of nervousness, which I could not account for and yet was fully conscious of. I went to our front windows and looked out on the quiet street.

The street was quiet enough, but, directly across from where I stood, loomed a fig-

ure I instantly recognized as the man Ruggles had told Hastings of, the man whose presence, across the street from our front door, had sent Hastings in fresh terror and dread to escape through the back of our apartment.

"The Shadow," Hastings had described the man as; and that term seemed to fit him like a glove; a new apartment house was being built directly opposite ours and the first floor of it presented the appearance of a vast, cavernlike room, more gloomy yet because of the horizontal rays of the sun which swept the street, and back into that dreary space the watcher now had retreated a little—not so far, however, that I could not make out his forbidding outline, and he seemed indeed a shadow, as Hastings had said.

Then, as I watched, either the gloom in that dismal cavernlike room suddenly deepened, or the shadow itself faded, for I could no longer see the man whom I had seen.

The only way I could explain it was that the man must have the eyesight of a hawk and in that way had been able to see Hastings leave our living-room; if that were true—and it seemed to me that it must be—the man was hurrying to the back of our apartment to cut off Hastings's escape there.

I knew that by this time Hastings would have left through the cellar door which opened on the court at the back and now must be making his way to the street by means of the alley which afforded an entrance for the tradesmen.

There was no time to lose; I darted to the cellar stairs only to meet Ruggles coming up them.

"That fellow over there, who was following Hastings—"

"You mean the watchman in the building they're putting up across the street?"

"What?"

"The watchman," Ruggles repeated.

"The tall man with the bent figure and the walking-stick he leaned on—"

"He was not tall, nor bent, nor did he carry a walking-stick, the watchman. He was rather stout, more than usually erect, as becomes one who may easily have been a top sergeant in the Spanish war, and has the ruddy complexion of a healthy Irishman whose work keeps him out-of-doors."

"But you described—"

"I described the man Hastings was afraid was following him—the man of whom our new client feels in such deadly terror that he dared not even mention him until I forced him to."

"But," I began again, now staring at Ruggles in a bewilderment scarcely less complete than Hastings's own, "how did you find out—"

"About what he looked like? From a photograph of him," Ruggles said. "Here, look at it for yourself!"

He took from his pocket what I had forgotten but now remembered having seen him thrust into it when Hastings had sunk in that sudden collapse of his into a chair.

It was a photograph, taken many years before by some one who had used a Brownie camera—an old snap-shot which, for some unimaginable reason, had been carefully and cleanly cut in half from the top of it right down through the middle.

The half before us showed half of a gnarled trunk of a great tree, surmounted by thick, bare, up-turning branches.

But the most extraordinary feature of the photograph was the fact that it showed a man leaning against the trunk of the tree, half of his body and all of his face showing.

One glance at that face and what I could see of his body in the photograph, told me at once how Ruggles had been able to describe him so accurately; for the body of the man was tall, and, as he stood, with his back to the tree trunk, he leaned heavily on a heavy walking stick.

"But you said that he had a dark skin," I broke out. "How did you get that information from looking at this photograph?"

"Part of it was a guess," Ruggles said, "but it was a guess based on my knowledge of the country."

"California, you said."

"Yes, Monterey, California."

"But why Monterey?" I asked.

If Ruggles heard me, he did not choose to answer or did not consider this the time to answer; he was looking closely at the photograph, and saying:

"You can see, Dan, that Hastings has preserved this photograph, or, if he has not, the man who recently sent it to him has; you can see that, though this photograph obviously was taken many years ago, it has been kept so carefully that it has faded hardly any and no particle of dust has been allowed to settle on it."

"Yes, the owner, whoever he was, attached a great deal of importance to it. I wonder why?"

"Look at it more closely," Ruggles said, taking it to the window through which was streaming the last brilliant rays of the late afternoon sun.

Holding it now where the light was brightest, Ruggles studied the photograph with that extraordinary concentration of which he alone, of all the people I had ever known, was capable.

"This photograph," he said, "is a link in a chain which binds Hastings and the man whose face is shown here."

"A link, you say?"

"Yes. Just as, in the days of the Gold Rush into the Klondike, two men, who had worked out a claim, cut a nugget in two and each took half for future identification. Wait," he broke off suddenly, "I must get my microscope on this!" He did so, crying in a moment:

"There are two exposures developed here; look at it through the glass and you will see what I mean. Look at it!"

He handed me the microscope and the fragment of a photograph and I saw what he had; part of the body of another man, dimly, but undeniably to be seen like a film covering the body we had first seen.

"But his head is not shown here," I said, "only one of his shoulders and an arm, part of his body and one leg. Where is—"

"The face of the man we have just discovered? That is in the half of the photograph which is missing. Yes, we are making progress now.

"What I thought was only a blur is really the part that tells us the more—this second impression was taken on top of the first one."

"By accident?"

"No, intentionally, for the purpose of future identification. Hastings knows this face very well—it is that of a former pal of his; I am willing to state that flatly. Hastings knows this man well, much too well, it may be; they were closely associated in some work or some venture of some color or other.

"They separated, each taking half of this photograph, Hastings taking that showing his own face and the other man taking the half of the photograph showing his."

"But, if they did it for the purpose of identification, wouldn't Hastings have taken the half showing the other man's face?"

"Not at all," Ruggles said, "for the other man knows what his own face looks like; the reminder of a compact or of a secret past they both shared, many years back, would come through this man receiving the half of the photograph which has Hastings's face on it—and visa versa."

"Then what do you make of this?"

"That the other man has recently sent Hastings this half of the photograph, or, what is much more liable, brought it and left it at Hastings's house, recalling to Hastings an obligation he undoubtedly had tried to believe buried or reminding him of some dubious act which Hastings would give years of his life to have undone."

"You speak with certainty, Ruggles."

"I am in a position to."

"Mind reading?" I asked. I had come to believe him capable of anything.

"No, a letter," he said, "which, when giving Hastings's pocketbook back to him, I had the good fortune to take from that pocket without his realizing it." He handed me a letter written in a very legible longhand, which read:

Hotel Marion, New York City,
Sept. 4, 1927.

HENRY SCOTT, ESQ.,
City.

Dear Scott—One hundred thousand dollars in bills, left here in an envelope addressed to me, will be delivered to me and will be considered by me as payment from you on account.

I am leaving this in your letter box.
If the money does not come, I will.

JAMES TOLLIVER.

"Blackmail," I said.

"I am not so sure of that," said my

companion. "This man, Tolliver, may be claiming only what is his. He shows a noticeable degree of frankness and confidence; you see, he makes no effort to conceal his name, where he is stopping, or what he wants. That means that he is perfectly sure of his hold on Hastings."

"You mean that, otherwise, he would be afraid of Hastings's turning him over to the police?"

"Yes, I mean just that. Tolliver, we are safe to assume, is the man who had this half of the photograph. Hastings, in some way, gained the hardihood to refuse the money demanded in this letter.

"It was then that Tolliver played his second card—sent Hastings this half of the photograph; and that shot told so well that Hastings came to us for help. This promises to be an interesting case, Dan; and one of its most interesting features, so far, is the question: who deserves to be helped, Mortimer Hastings or James Tolliver?"

"But tell me," I said, "how under the sun you knew that Hastings's real name was Henry Scott."

"No mind reading there either," Ruggles said. "That was the name engraved in gold letters on Hastings's pocketbook."

"Why does Hastings stand in such terror of Tolliver, if he wants only money and Hastings has as much as he said he had?"

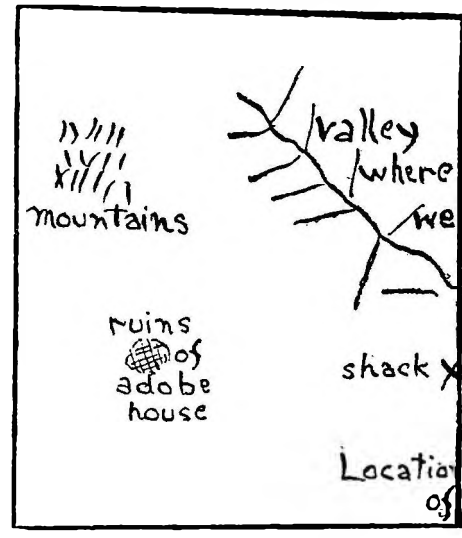
"We can only guess at that," Ruggles said. "Hastings must have a lot of it. You remember, he would have given me his check for fifty thousand dollars for a monopoly of our services. He may realize that, if he gave Tolliver the one hundred thousand dollars he asked for, it would be only the beginning.

"By the way," Ruggles went on, holding the fragment of the photograph to the sun, "here is something interesting—something that looks like a tracing on the back of this photograph."

"What?"

"Yes," Ruggles was still looking at it, "it looks like a prospector's tracing of a rough bit of country: a valley clearly indicated, with jagged hills marked off; here is the shack, and, over here—come here, Dan, and look at this while the light is good!"

I did so and saw, as Ruggles had said, what looked to be a rough chart:



"You see," Ruggles said, "how incomplete some of the inscriptions are: 'valley where we—'; 'location of—'"

"It shows," I said, "that they were made by an illiterate person."

"No," Ruggles corrected, "it means that they were completed on the other half of the photograph: this is a chart of a location difficult to find, yes, impossible to find without the other half of the photograph."

"Then it strikes me these two men were fools to cut the photograph in two."

"Not at all," Ruggles corrected again; "don't you see? Either half of the photograph would identify one of the men; but both halves of the photograph were needed to locate the place; the two men were making absolutely sure that neither of them should return to that spot without the other.

"I'd give something to know what their reason was; it must have seemed to them a most important one, for—"

Ruggles stopped abruptly, shot the half of the photograph into his pocket, then stood tense as a pointer, straining his ears to catch again a sound which had warned him, though it had been inaudible to me.

"What's wrong?" I asked in a whisper.

"Nothing," he whispered back; "but some one has just started up the cellar stairs. If it is Hastings, he has undoubtedly missed his letter and this photograph. If

it *is* he, open the middle one of those front windows in five minutes from now; I'll be where I can see it.

"Keep him here as long as you can, then go out to his home with him. Say I'm out working on another case and may be delayed in getting out there. Keep your gun handy!"

CHAPTER III

SOME LIVELY ENTERTAINMENT

AS Ruggles finished, he glided into our extra bedroom and closed the door and locked it behind him, just as Mortimer Hastings emerged from the narrow dark hallway which connected our little apartment with the cellar stairs.

He was more than ever haggard and wild, and I was sure that he had heard not a word of what Ruggles had said.

"It is better that you came back," I began at once, pulling out a chair into which he sank instantly. "Almost immediately after you left, I saw the man, who had been standing across the street, leave his post, and I was afraid that he had followed you."

Whatever question had been on Hastings's lips when he entered our living-room, I, of course, could not be sure of, but it must have concerned the fragment of the photograph and James Tolliver's letter.

Now, however, Hastings's one thought was how he could find even temporary safety from pursuit, for he asked hoarsely:

"May I stay here—awhile? Where is Mr. Ruggles?"

"Out, working on another case," I replied, remembering Ruggles's instructions. "He will be delayed a little, perhaps, in reaching your house this evening, but it will be only a delay; he will surely come. Feel no anxiety about that."

Then, remembering that it was dinner time and thinking that this opened a way of prolonging Hastings's remaining, I asked him if he had had dinner.

"No," he replied, as I was sure that he would; "and I could not eat a particle of food now even if it were all that stood between me and death. How can I be sure that he will not come in here?"

"You can ease your mind about *that*," I said; "for it is very unlikely that your man will try to force his way into this apartment; and furthermore, I have very effective means of stopping him if he does try it."

"You are armed, you mean," Hastings said. "I never carry a weapon now. I used to, in the old days—every man did, out there then; we had to, or—" He caught himself up quickly.

"In California, you mean?" I asked as casually as I could.

"Mr. Ruggles was wrong there," Hastings said. "He thought I had been in California, but I never was there in my life; and I never knew a man named Van Schillingen."

"How about James Tolliver," I shot at him abruptly, to catch him off his guard.

"Give me that letter," he cried so sharply that I knew at once he had trapped me. "Give me that letter!" Weak to the point of collapse a few moments before, he got strength from his passion now; he was out of his chair and at me with the bound of a maddened animal.

There was such desperate resolve in his eyes that I threw my gun up; but he twisted it from my hand and in a twinkling I was looking into its muzzle.

"Give me that—letter," he panted.

I tried to speak, but my lips and tongue felt made of wood; I could think of only one thing: I had got to get to our front windows and throw open the middle one—that was the signal which Ruggles had asked me to give him in five minutes if Hastings returned.

All the time, Hastings was keeping his gun on me and glaring at me with dilated eyes.

"That letter—give it to me," he commanded fiercely.

"Put down that gun," I said. "You act like a madman. I'll open one of those front windows and let some air in—"

But as my hands touched the sash, he swung up the gun he had lowered.

"Don't touch that window," he cried wildly. "You are trying to signal to the man who is following me!"

"You are out of your mind," I said.

I was nearly out of mine; he still kept

me covered, and his hands shook so that I knew any moment might be my last.

"I've got to get some air in here," I said. As I spoke, I turned to the window; I knew it might mean a bullet, but so might it anyway, with his fingers on the trigger jerking the way they were—and I had got to open that middle one of the front windows and so give Ruggles the signal he was waiting for.

It seemed to me that I could *feel* that bullet in my back; but I got the window open. Then I turned and faced Hastings.

"The man isn't there any longer," I said. "He was there awhile ago, but he has gone." My voice was husky, but I felt more like myself now.

I had given Ruggles the signal; and he knew now that Hastings was in our rooms. Furthermore, I saw that, though Hastings still held the gun in his twitching hand, the muzzle was pointing to the floor.

With the greatest appearance of unconcern I could muster, I sat down in a chair and took out a cigar, not taking my eyes for an instant from Hastings's.

"You were talking about a letter," I said. "What did you mean?"

"You know perfectly well: James Tolliver's letter! You must have seen it or you couldn't have got his name!"

"I don't know anything about any letter. Ruggles told me—"

"Then he has it. He must have it! And he must give it back to me! Where is he?"

"I have told you that he is down town somewhere, working on another case; but he will be at your house around ten o'clock to-night."

"He may lose the letter before that time," Hastings said; "it may be taken from his pocket as he himself took it from mine."

"Get that crazy idea out of your head," I said impatiently. "Why do you keep saying that Ruggles took a letter from you?"

"Because he gave you James Tolliver's name and he could not possibly have heard of Tolliver without seeing that letter. In addition to taking the letter, he took the photograph."

"You're sticking on a photograph, too, now," I said. "This is getting worse and worse! I'm going to have my dinner sent in. Will you join me?"

Hastings made a sharp gesture of denial, glaring at me with the savage suspicion of a wild animal.

"All right," I said, "if you don't want to eat, make yourself at home here while I get some food inside of me.

"Let me tell you one thing, though: Ruggles never heard of your letter or your photograph. What Ruggles knows of you, he has known for some time and has had good reasons to."

"What do you mean?" Hastings demanded. He laid the gun down on our center table and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, watching me now nervously and anxiously.

"I mean," I said, "that Ruggles never forgets the face or the name or the history of any man he has seen once and catalogued."

This was absolutely true in the case of all the criminals on Ruggles's list; that it was not true in Hastings's particular case was simply because he was not sufficiently important, from our professional standpoint, to be on Ruggles's list.

My mentioning James Tolliver's name to Hastings had been a very bad blunder and I had now to convince Hastings that Ruggles had known about James Tolliver without ever seeing or hearing of Tolliver's letter or the photograph. So I went on.

"At some time, Ruggles has seen you, Mr. Hastings, got your name, learned all about you, your best friend and your worst enemy. So to-day, when you came to us, wild with fear of a man who, you said, was following you, Ruggles instantly remembered James Tolliver and your life in California.

"You could account for this only on the theory that Ruggles had seen Tolliver's letter and a photograph you have spoken of; but I tell you that Ruggles knew all this without seeing either—would, in fact, have known all he knows now even if Tolliver had never written that letter and the photograph had never been taken.

"Ask Ruggles about this when you see him to-night at your house, if you care to!"

"No," Hastings said hopelessly; "let my

secret remain locked in his breast as I had hoped it could remain locked in mine! I believe what you have said; and I ask your pardon for accusing you both as I have. It is as you say: I have talked and acted like a madman."

"That has passed," I said. "You simply must realize that Ruggles and I are going to get you straightened out all right, and so you must not be too ready to suspect us of tricking you."

"I do realize it," Hastings said earnestly. "It is just that this cursed thing has got me to where, until now, I have felt unable to trust any one.

"Undoubtedly, I left Tolliver's letter and the photograph at my house, though I could almost have sworn I put them in my pocketbook. Let me lie down, if you will.

"I want to wait here until dark. I may be able to throw Tolliver off then, though he keeps on my trail like the human bloodhound he is."

CHAPTER IV

MORE HARROWING THAN DEATH

I UNLOCKED the door into our extra bedroom—Ruggles, after locking it, had taken his key out, so the keyhole was clear. Opening the door and indicating the bed, I said to Hastings:

"Go in there and stretch out, if you like. Here's the key. You can lock the door." He thanked me earnestly, took the key, and went in, locking the door after him as I had told him he could.

Mrs. Watts brought in my dinner then. After she had gone, I seated myself at the little table she had drawn up and placed the tray on.

A few moments before, I had spoken of dinner as if I felt ravenous; but now I was as little eager for it as Hastings himself.

What I could swallow, I did.

I felt a return of that ominous foreboding which had oppressed me earlier: an unaccountable but poignantly clear sense of dread, as if something had told me that it was written on the Books of Fate that some ghastly ill was to overtake Ruggles and me to-night at Mortimer Hastings's home at Readsdale.

I knew, as both Ruggles and I always knew, on every case we embarked on, that a shot in the dark, or a knife-thrust from behind, or the crushing blow of a blackjack might at any moment hurl us into eternity.

But that was not what I dreaded now. In a sense, Ruggles and I were too well used to that disagreeable possibility to have it stimulate our imaginations or in any way shake our nerves.

Just as a person is said at last to work out an immunity to typhoid from drinking bad water, Ruggles and I might have been said, after years in our dubious profession, to have worked out an immunity to fear—fear of death, that is.

But death, final and terrible as it must always be to any one still in his prime, was not what I felt an intimation of now.

That still more dreadful fate, Disgrace, was what I feared now—disgrace not for myself, but for Ruggles.

I was as sure now as I was of anything in the world that Ruggles would solve the secret of the mysterious thing which threatened Mortimer Hastings—would solve it, that is, unless something came up to tie Ruggles's clever hands and prevent him for the time from exerting his marvelous cleverness and that amazing resourcefulness of his which baffled me more with every display he gave of it.

I knew that we had won out in cases which had promised far worse than this did at the start.

Rising from my chair and walking over to the fireplace, I remembered the infernal machine which only Ruggles's sixth sense had prevented from destroying us.

In the comfortable chair in which I seated myself, a bomb had been placed once.

It was into this same room that Dr. Spaulding, the poisoner, had sent through the keyhole of the door by means of his gas pistol, fumes deadlier even than bullets or knives, and from those deadly fumes it was Ruggles's strange ability to anticipate our enemy's action, which again had saved us.

How Ruggles had been able so surely and swiftly to identify the criminal and understand the workings of the criminal mind, had been at that time an increasing mystery to me and still was, in a way.

More than once he had said to me, "I'm a near-crook, Dan; but I wear better."

What he meant by that, I had never asked him; but I had always asked myself how he had learned to know the world of crime so well.

I had asked myself, indeed, if any man could know it, as Ruggles knew it, without having been, at some time in his life, a part of it.

For Ruggles knew the underworld so well; its most intimate secrets—he could tread so unerringly the darkest jungles of the worst districts of the world's greatest cities!

How had he been able to master so perfectly their secret crime-code? How had he come to be able, as I have said, to anticipate and check-mate, as he invariably did, organized crime's efforts at merciless discipline and quick revenge?

In age, he was still in his early thirties; and he was marvelously well equipped to tread the dark ways along which his strange profession led him.

He was well over six feet in height; he weighed always between two hundred and five and two hundred and ten pounds stripped; he combined the tremendous strength and hitting power of the best heavyweight with the speed and endurance and catlike activity of foot which one expects to find only among the lighter middleweights.

If he had the hatred of the chiefs and lower officers of the best organized and most highly financed syndicates of crime in Manhattan, as well as in London, Paris, Vienna, Petrograd, and Berlin, to say nothing of those in the capitals of South America and in that turbulent little country just south of the Rio Grande, Ruggles had their respect, too—they knew that, in addition to being their most dangerous enemy, he always fought them fair.

He knew them. All of them were on his list. With the precision and steadiness of a perfectly operating machine and the inevitableness of destiny itself, Ruggles was capturing and convicting one after another the most clever and dangerous criminals.

He was working steadily on down the list; and now it had got to the point where those, whom he had not reached, realized that their only means of escaping him lay in their removing him from this world.

It was a little over four years now, since I had begun to work with him as his assistant; and in that time I had learned not to be surprised at anything which he, or all those who hated and feared us, might do.

He had an unmatched knowledge of biology, natural history, surgery, and medicine; unmatched, I mean, when it came to a knowledge of these subjects all combined in one human brain.

And I believe that he had no equal when it came to practical knowledge of poisons, ancient and modern, and their antidotes—and this knowledge he had to have, in order to keep ahead of our sleepless and relentless enemies.

He was an extremely clever mechanic, and this, as I have just indicated, had saved our lives many times.

To the infernal machine Slade had stuck in our fireplace, and the bomb Cottrell's men had smuggled into the seat of Ruggles's favorite chair, could be added the deadly device Stanfield had put behind the picture in Roger Sterling's bedroom in that singular case where we had our final reckoning with Quin Lash, the alligator hunter, in that devil's hut under the leperous sycamores.

As I had told Hastings, Ruggles's restless and eager mind was a veritable storehouse of information on every subject under the sun, always ready at the call of his photographic memory; and his power of quick and accurate deduction formed a strikingly effective ally to this.

He insisted to me that he was not a detective, and certainly he had no connection with any detective agency. He was the unfailing refuge of the innocent who, without his help, could not prove that innocence.

But the predatory animal, whether the head, or the hitherto unsuspected protector of crime, or the savage executor of ordered violence, Ruggles handled without gloves—he showed them no mercy, for well he knew that they would show him none when the final show-down came.

If he broke the law—and most certainly

he often did, as he had just done in taking the letter and the photograph from Hastings's pocket—it was always to assist in righting a wrong and never for his own gain; his sins were always benevolent.

So he was, and I had come to feel that he could not fail and that nothing could cripple him or obstruct his fine endeavors.

Then Markley had come, Markley and the four other members of the gang, and the skeleton, whose existence I knew then I had always dreaded, had been dragged from Ruggles's closet; for the past ten years he had lived straight; but, before that, he had been a member of Markley's gang.

They had operated chiefly in Kansas City, Ruggles had confessed to me; and every one of them: Markley, Mueller, Cottrell, Hilliard, and Branley, knew enough about him to send him to the penitentiary.

Markley had brought them all to our apartment, and I would give years of my life if the memory of that awful meeting could be wiped from my brain. There was nothing that Ruggles could do but agree to their terms—it was that or face immediate arrest and sentence.

Their terms were that he should enable Markley, then being hunted by the detectives and police, to escape from the city. But Markley was shot to death by Stannistreet, a detective and our best friend.

That had brought the whole gang down on us, charging that Ruggles had double crossed them. He had not; but they would not, perhaps could not, believe his denial. They launched Cottrell on him, only to have Cottrell killed by a crook whose hatred he had won.

That left three of the five; and, just when I had hoped that the death of Markley and Cottrell had discouraged the rest, Hilliard came, a determined and deliberate blackmailer, to wreak upon Ruggles the hatred of these unappeased enemies.

But Hilliard's triumph was short-lived; night and the river, and his insane love of the loot he had accumulated, worked his doom.

So now we had to reckon with only Mueller and Branley; and it was they, or either of them, that I dreaded now.

Turn my eyes where I would, I could see them in the deepening shadows; living ghosts they were to me, more terrible than that stark and awful Shadow which peered inexorably down at Hastings from the wall of his bedroom.

CHAPTER V

NIGHT OF AGONY

THE sun had gone down behind the Palisades; the lingering light was fading fast and I pressed the wall switch, to flood the room with light—to dispel the shadows which now were as black as the fate they seemed to foretell for Ruggles.

No sound came from the extra bedroom into which Mortimer Hastings had gone. A dull lethargy had come down on me, such a sense of futility as saps the energy of a man at the end of what he knows to be a hopeless struggle.

That was it: I knew that Ruggles's struggle against Mueller and Branley was hopeless, for they had only to go to the first policeman they met and say:

" The man, Ruggles, who has made such a name for himself here as a detector of crime, is an ex-criminal himself. We will prove it to you." And I knew, for Ruggles had admitted it to me, that they had the proof.

There was this about it, too, which made still more vain any effort on Ruggles's part to defy them: though they themselves were criminals, the police of Manhattan had nothing " on " them; not a particle of evidence of any guilt.

Furthermore, even if, in convicting Ruggles, Mueller and Branley revealed their own guilt, they could buy immunity of the State by bringing to " Justice " a " criminal " of such extraordinary powers as Ruggles was known, nationally and internationally, to possess.

It would be a feather in the cap of any policeman or detective to bring about Ruggles's arrest; it would mean prominence, promotion.

The fact that for the past ten years Ruggles had lived absolutely straight, more than that: for that period had served justice and law and order better than any other

man had, in suppressing organized crime, that is—all that would weigh nothing against the fact that the Statute of Limitations does not run against a felony.

Ruggles, a criminal ten years ago, was a criminal to-day and the prison gates would swing and shut him in just as surely as if he had never lived straight for an hour.

This I knew from my knowledge of criminal law, and this Ruggles himself told me, out of a knowledge far greater than mine.

I knew, too, that Branley and Mueller in every probability were now in New York, waiting the time when they could use to their own pecuniary advantage the hold they knew they had on Ruggles.

They would make money out of him first, money enough to buy them ease and luxury for the rest of their lives; then they would wreak on Ruggles the hatred which had grown in them since the moment when the detective, Stannistreet, Ruggles's friend, had shot Markley down.

Unable longer to sustain these thoughts, which alarmed me every moment more, I went to the door of the bedroom and knocked on it loudly. Hastings replied after a moment in the voice of a man roused from the sleep of complete physical exhaustion.

"Turn the light on, there by the head of the bed," I said, "so you won't fall over anything when you get up; then come in here."

I heard him fumbling in the dark for the light, then my hair felt stiff and coarse on my head, for from that bedroom had come such a scream of horror as a man gives only in mortal terror.

Twice that terrible scream cut the air, while I fought that locked door.

"Mercy! In God's name, have mercy!" I heard Hastings cry out, then his voice went in a dreadful rattle.

I burst in the door and I was in the room. As I sprang in, I saw close the secret exit of that room, a small door which Ruggles had had made there for his use and mine in emergencies; that small door was slammed to, before I could see who had closed it.

"Who was here?" I cried, bending over Hastings.

He turned blind eyes to me; his lips moved, but no sound came.

"Who was here?" I demanded again.

Again his lips moved, and this time I made out the word, one word only:

"Tolliver."

Then Mortimer Hastings fell back in a faint which it seemed to me only the Judgment Day's summons could rouse him from.

At last, though, he roused. "Take me to my home," he said in a dead voice. "I do not care what I find there; nothing could be worse than what I have just been through—he was sitting there beside the bed, when I turned the light on."

"Tolliver?"

"Yes."

That told me everything. If it was Tolliver, I knew in whose clutches Tolliver had fallen; I knew who had revealed to Tolliver the existence of that secret door—only two men living knew of that door besides Ruggles and myself.

More than ever now, I wished that Ruggles would return. But he had told me that he might be delayed in reaching Hastings's home in Readsdale even by ten o'clock.

There was no good in waiting, and I set myself to reviving Hastings sufficiently to make the journey to his home.

This proved much more difficult than I had thought. It was a long hour later before I helped him down the steps to the street and supported him with my arm as he walked weakly to where he had parked his car.

As I got into the car I looked at the squatty, bent figure of the chauffeur and asked myself whether or not he was concerned in what was taking place at Mortimer Hastings's home in Readsdale.

The chauffeur was a foreigner, a Mexican, or a Spaniard, I judged from what I could see of him as we passed one street light after another.

On the parkway, between Mount Vernon and Bronxville, we had a blow-out and had to change a tire. We ran out of gas betwen Hartsdale and Readsdale.

Some one, either with the aid of the chauffeur or while he was dozing in his seat, had taken simple but effective measures to delay our arrival at Hastings's home.

It was nearly half past ten when we reached there.

If I had hoped to find Ruggles awaiting us, I was mistaken; there was no sign of him.

But, stiff and stark on the rug before the fireplace, a rug so red that the blood scarcely showed on it though it had stained his white sides, lay the body of a magnificent bull terrier.

Hastings looked down at the dead animal without the least sign of surprise.

"I knew this would come," he said, "for they knew that he was absolutely faithful and would give his life to protect me! Well, Tolliver has killed my dog. Let us see what else he has done in my absence."

Hastings turned on a wall switch and led the way into what I took to be his favorite room: a small study which opened off the living-room.

"It is a disagreeable sensation," he said in a husky, lifeless voice, "to know that you may be shot dead at any time from any of these windows. I have realized that ever since Tolliver came.

"Only one thing has made him hold his hand: he knows that I still have a good deal of money left."

"You mean he has been blackmailing you?"

"It amounts to that. For years he has been forcing money out of me; but, for the past month, he has suddenly raised his demands to very large sums; when I did not comply, he wrote me that letter, showing me that he had come to New York. A few days later, he left the half of the photograph here.

"I have taken every precaution, but he slips into this house like a shadow, like a devilishly, deadly shadow, as he slipped into your apartment, not two hours ago.

"He will keep on bleeding me until he has bled me dry."

"Why do you yield to him?" I asked. "Does he know of anything discreditable that you have done?"

"At the time, it was only a most far reaching error of judgment. Later, it became discreditable. I had provided amply in money and believed I should not hear of it again, but now Tolliver has brought it back to me."

"Are you sure he is not tricking you?"

"No, he has brought me a message written in a hand I wish to God I had never seen, but cannot possibly mistake. I will show you."

He went to a desk, unlocked it, and opened it; then stood staring. "Tolliver's letter," he cried, "and the photograph. Instead of taking them with me when I went to your apartment, I had locked them securely in this desk here!"

"Just what I told you," I said.

"Yes. And yet, when you spoke of James Tolliver, I thought you must have seen his letter—I could not account for your knowledge in any other way! But you were right and I was wrong.

"Your friend, Ruggles, has powers which I should pronounce incredible, if I had not myself seen this demonstration of them and had not heard of equally miraculous services he has performed for others!"

Hastings was obviously much relieved at finding the letter and the photograph. He did not show them to me; instead, he handed me a scrawl, written on the cheapest of paper, so wretched a scrawl that I could make out only the fact that it was written in Spanish.

"I cannot read it," I said.

"But *I* can," he said hopelessly, "and I know too well whose writing it is. I wish to God I could be mistaken but I cannot; the man who wrote that is dead—" Hastings clutched his face with his hands, "but Tolliver has found his ghost and brought it here—this is his hold on me, and he holds me, crushes me like a vise!

"Where is Ruggles?" he cried abruptly. "Why doesn't he come?"

I knew that Ruggles *had* come and undoubtedly was in the house now, for nothing else could have accounted for the presence of the fragment of a photograph and Tolliver's letter in that desk.

Ruggles had come here ahead of us and put them there—that, or the possibility, which I would not admit to myself might be even a possibility: that some one had waylaid Ruggles and taken the photograph and letter from him.

To Hastings I said "Ruggles will get here as soon as he can—you remember, he said he would be delayed. We shall have to wait here only a short time for him."

"Sit down then, if you will," Hastings said, "while I call the butler to take the body of the dog out and have José bury it."

Hastings left the room, and I heard him calling repeatedly without receiving any answer. Presently Hastings returned, accompanied by the chauffeur.

"My butler has deserted the house, and no wonder, considering what has been going on here. José"—Hastings spoke to the chauffeur in Spanish, so swiftly pronounced that I could not follow it.

But José could; he bowed until his parchmentlike face was hidden, then, bending still lower, raised the body of the dog in his arms and left us.

As he did so, a small statuette on the mantel, on a line with his head, seemed to explode, and a few grains of plaster slid down from a tiny hole, just behind the statuette, in the wall.

"What was that?" Hastings cried, staring at the fragments of the statuette and the freshly made hole in the wall. "Something went into the wall, there!"

"Some one, who uses a Maxim silencer on his gun," I said, "has just tried to kill your chauffeur." As I spoke, I switched off the lights.

"I thought you were mistaken, when you spoke of the chance of your being shot at through these first floor windows; but you were not wrong; you were right.

"Since we've got to stay in this cursed house awhile, let us go up to the next floor—it will be safer!"

I had not got the words fully out before I heard Hastings bounding up the stairs, and, groping along as best I could, I followed him.

CHAPTER VI

"THE LIVING GHOST"

THERE was no light on the second floor. As Hastings had said, his butler had deserted him rather than remain in such a house; the chauffeur had been out with Hastings, and there had been no one left in the house to turn the lights on.

But darkness, I knew, was our best safety. Hastings had said that the house was haunted by a living ghost; but, if ghost it was, it was one who realized the advantage of using a gun with a Maxim silencer.

Our arrival had been watched for; so had the chauffeur's entry into the brilliantly lighted room, where he had offered a good mark for the gun with the silencer. That was clear enough.

But what puzzled me not a little was why the shot had been sent at the chauffeur instead of at me. That shot had proved the faithfulness of the chauffeur to his master; but I felt that there was more than that in it.

I wondered if he were known to be a master in the use of a gun or a knife, and I was just about to ask Hastings that, when I felt myself clutched by hands of iron; something which served as a gag was thrust into my mouth; my arms and legs were tied before I could so much as cry out or try to break loose, and I was lifted from the floor a helpless prisoner.

Not a sound had accompanied the calamity which had overtaken me. It had all been done in the heavy silence of the dead.

Hastings's wild words came back to me: he had said that in this house he was assailed by a living ghost.

But, though he moved with a ghostly silence, the man who carried me seemed to have the solidity of masonry and thews of steel.

Moreover, he seemed to know the house as he knew his own hand, for, though it was still pitchy dark, there on the second floor, I was carried along swiftly and touched or brushed nothing on the way.

I could hear Hastings walking ahead of me. He called back over his shoulder:

"I am not going to turn any light on, Mr. Crane. Don't you think it is better not?"

Gagged as I was, I could not utter a word.

Then Hastings, after waiting a moment, called again, still guardedly, but in a voice perfectly audible to me:

"Are you there, Mr. Crane?"

The man who carried me stood motionless now, as if he realized, just as I did, that Hastings was standing still, listening.

"Crane!" Hastings called again. There was a long silence, during which I heard Hastings's anxious, quick-drawn breaths.

Then there was the sound of a bed yielding, and I knew that Hastings had thrown himself in desperation on his bed.

I was sure I was not in Hastings's bedroom—the creak of the bed springs, as he threw himself down, had come too faintly to my ears for that.

Just as I reached this conclusion, the man who had carried me with such ease and such extraordinary noiselessness, laid me on what felt like a couch, and then left me.

Whether or not he had indeed gone or was waiting, a few feet away, to see if I could succeed in struggling free of the gag or from the cords which held my arms and legs, I could not be sure; but all my earlier efforts had proved the hopelessness of further struggles, and I remained perfectly motionless.

My captor had shown himself to be a man of caution, and I followed his example. But to his caution he added the quality of daring which shows not recklessness, but absolute self-confidence.

Coming to me in the darkness as he had, he could have killed me with one blow if he had wanted to, but instead he had captured me, gagged me before I could make a sound, trussed me up like a chicken, and simply brought me along and now had laid me down like a piece of baggage he was through with for the time being.

I had been in his way because I had come here to help Hastings; my captor had now effectively put me out of his way, and at the same time had me in a position where he could use me as a demonstration of his own power for the further terrifying of Hastings.

That, of course, was why I had been carried along through the corridor behind Hastings; I was being kept near him—I was sure now that I was in an adjoining room, probably a small alcove, of the bedroom where Hastings was.

I could be brought out and showed to Hastings if, through hope of assistance from me, he became obstinate and refused his enemy's demands.

But, first, Hastings would be put through an ordeal, I was sure, and I knew that the only thing that could save either Mortimer Hastings or myself now was the arrival of Ruggles.

Then I forgot even Ruggles, for there began a thing I was powerless to account for: on a bare wall slightly at my left a brilliant light suddenly flashed, and on it stood out a shadow black as the pit, and the most hideous apparition I had ever seen.

Apparition, I say, the most hideous, and it was that. For though it was a shadow, it had eyes that opened and glared out, fierce, savage, human eyes that could see.

It was not a shadow, by heaven, it was what Hastings had called it: a Living Ghost; a dread, terrible thing which would haunt one's brain until his dying day.

Then, while the thing stared at us there, the light flared higher still and the features of that face stood out clearly; and it was the face in the photograph, the face leaning against the trunk of the half-shown tree.

I recognized it. Much more did Mortimer Hastings; again came that blood-curdling scream, and this time the words, torn from Hastings's breast were:

"Almighty God, enough! Enough! Tolliver, have mercy. I will give you what you ask!"

Instantly the shadow, that awful presence, passed. For a long moment, there was not a sound to be heard, not a thing to be seen in that dreadful room.

Then the lights flared up and there was only the blank wall, where that Living Ghost had stood. I looked at the ceiling above the place where it had been: it seemed to me that in this brilliant illumination some telltale means of support must be visible—some object from which that abominable thing could have been suspended. But the ceiling was as bare as the wall.

Everything, even my own fate, seemed secondary then to the solution of this secret

and mysterious mechanism which had produced the terrible thing which I had witnessed.

CHAPTER VII

UNMASKING A SPECTER

THEN a man entered the room noiselessly—so noiselessly that he might have come from any direction without my having become aware of him until I saw him.

He was there now, standing where I could see him clearly; he was not in the room where I was, but in that other room into which I could look from where I lay on the couch where my captor, probably this man himself, had placed me.

It unquestionably was Hastings's bedroom where the man was now standing. But I looked not at what I could see of the room; I looked at him: he was tall, heavily built, somewhat past middle age, and his strikingly pale face was free of beard or mustache.

Who he might be I could not tell; but one thing I knew: he was not the man in that horrible sight I had just seen.

Then I knew who it must be, could only be: Tolliver.

What happened next confirmed this opinion, for Hastings's voice came weakly from the bed:

"Tolliver? Tolliver!"

"Yes, Scott," a voice said, "it is I."

Tolliver stepped outside my line of vision then. I heard again the creak of the bedsprings, and in another moment both Hastings and Tolliver appeared, the latter leading the former to a chair.

When Hastings had seated himself, Tolliver placed before him a small table; then, seating himself, looked steadily as Hastings.

"You have seen," Tolliver said evenly, "what you yourself compelled me to show you, Ross McAndrew, as he was when you killed him fifteen years ago—"

"He did not die," Hastings cried out. "I struck him. I admit that, but I did not kill him, for I tell you he did not die!"

"Do you want to see him as he was just after you had killed him?" Tolliver demanded.

Without waiting for Hastings's reply, Tolliver darted from the room. In a moment the lights went off, then that single, strong illumination flared again on the wall where it had been before, lapping the plaster with what seemed to be tongues of silver fire, then covering it with that even and ghastly brilliancy.

Now for a second time appeared the hideous apparition of the man whom Tolliver had called Ross McAndrew—as hideous and as awful to me as if I saw it now for the first time. Again its awful eyes looked at us—a living ghost, this, as Hastings had said it was.

Then, from behind it, descended a heavy, blunt instrument, which struck the figure on the head; McAndrew fell forward on his face, and against the heavy, blunt weapon fell.

A man's head and shoulders bent over the body; the assailant's face was in profile, but there was no mistaking it for one instant; the features were those of Henry Scott, alias Mortimer Hastings.

There was one wild cry from Hastings, whether of denial or confession, I could not tell. The lights died; darkness settled on the room.

Then a heavy bulk crashed down on the floor with a shock which rocked the room.

I heard the whistle of some object being hurled, then it struck something; there was the grate of two resisting solids, then the wall switch was turned on and as swiftly off.

But, in that briefest of seconds, I had seen a huge figure battling with two men in the center of the room. I struggled so wildly at the cords which held my wrists that they cut my flesh like wires, then parted.

I whipped out my knife and slashed the cords at my feet, stood up, almost instantly was hurled back on the couch by those fiercely revolving combatants, sprang again to my feet, and felt desperately for the wall switch.

I could not find it. I was like a man blinded by that instant-long illumination which had left the darkness blacker even than before; I was like a man without eyes,

hunting, through black rooms he did not know, for something that was not there.

But, though I could see nothing in the world, I could hear the titanic struggle which persisted with the violence and obstinacy of three gigantic machines in desperate, merciless conflict, wild, human machines which cursed with rage and pain.

So far, there had been no shot fired. I do not mean that there had been no sound of a shot—a silencer would have taken care of that and I had good reason to believe that at least one of these men had a silencer on his gun; but there had been no flash of any explosion.

It was two against one, and it may have been that one dared not fire for fear of wounding his ally, dared not fire or try to use a knife.

The fight went on—over furniture, on it, and through it, all in that utterly black darkness which hung like a perpetual pall over that resounding room.

Then my fingers touched what I knew was a wall switch and I turned it, in time to see Ruggles, the center of that interlocked mass, wrench himself loose from the other two, then spring in and get home a straight right which sent one of the men almost horizontal against the wall then down, any way all at once as if he had been struck by lightning.

The other man drew back, dropped to his knees and whipped a knife from his coat and hurled it at Ruggles. I saw it fly point first and saw that point sink to the haft of the blade in Ruggles's side.

I thought that was the end, but it was not, for the knife had passed between Ruggles's side and his arm, cutting a long bloody gash, but one which did not slow him up a particle, for he was on the other man with one bound and pinned him on his back on the floor, and thus it was that, springing to Ruggles's side, I looked down at the upturned face of Mueller.

All this had taken place quicker than the quickest tongue could tell it.

Mueller said with that cold composure which had characterized him at our earlier meetings:

"I meant to kill you, Garrison. I will do it, next time." Garrison was the name he had known Ruggles by when the two had worked in the same gang in Kansas City, ten years earlier.

"You almost did it this time," Ruggles said. "I shall take pains to delay your next attempt." He searched and disarmed Mueller, then helped him to his feet.

Then he bound the ankles and wrists of Tolliver, and returned to where Mueller and I were standing.

"Where do you fit in this?" Mueller asked Ruggles. "You've spoiled the best thing I ever got my hands into. What cursed luck brought you?"

"Your victim came to me as a client. When he told me of a living ghost haunting the wall of his bedroom, I remembered your skill as a mechanic and your originality as an electrician.

"Moreover, I had reason to believe that you were in the neighborhood of New York City and for you to run out here and set up your apparatus would be easy."

"You—" Mueller cried furiously.

"Don't start anything," I warned him. "I've got you covered, Mueller!"

Mueller looked at me with the eyes of a cornered animal. Then he masked his eyes with a slow, confidential smile.

"Let's step into the next room where we can talk," he said, then led the way, and Ruggles and I followed him.

CHAPTER VIII

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

WHEN we were out of earshot of the others, Mueller said slowly to Ruggles:

"Lay off this, Garrison, or Ruggles, if you like that name better. Lay off this! I've told you this is a big haul for me, and it is; that bird on the bed had got money in bales and he'll give us all we ask him for.

"You can come in for your third, you and Tolliver and me, and your man here, Crane, too.

"It's a big thing. We've got Scott so scared he don't know black from white!"

"Nothing doing there, Mueller," Ruggles replied. "I'm going straight and I'm standing by Hastings."

"Oh, you are, are you?" Mueller said scornfully. "You've forgotten, I guess that I know enough about you, from the days when you worked with our gang, to send you where you've sent a good many good boys? One word from me, with the proof I've got, will send you to the pen!"

"That is as it may be," Ruggles said evenly.

"You think you've got me, do you?" Mueller said desperately. "Well, if I go to a pen for this job, you come with me!"

"I say again," Ruggles answered, "that you can do as you like; I'm living straight. Now, if you have nothing else for us to talk over, I suggest we go back into the other room."

"And remember, Mueller," I said as we went, "I've got you covered!"

"I came out here," Ruggles went on, "expecting to find you, and perfectly sure that I should meet Mr. James Tolliver, recently arrived from California."

"I never was in California in my life," Tolliver shouted. He had recovered consciousness in time to hear Ruggles's words.

"You were there," Ruggles repeated. "It was there that you murdered Ross McAndrew, fifteen years ago; and it was for that murder that you were sentenced to life imprisonment at the penitentiary of San Quentin, from which you recently escaped and to which now you shall be returned, Tolliver."

"You can't prove that," Tolliver flung back.

"I can. Do you care to see a photograph of yourself?" Ruggles took from his pocket a half of a photograph, and held it before Tolliver's eyes.

"That's me all right," Tolliver said, "but that don't prove anything."

"It proves everything," Ruggles said evenly, "as you will understand as soon as I compare your finger-prints at San Quentin with those I have taken from the letter you wrote to Henry Scott, alias Mortimer Hastings."

A convulsion seemed to wring Tolliver's body. He cried wildly to Mueller:

"You told him, you—! You've double crossed me, you—!" In some manner he got his bound hands on the knife which had fallen to the floor, and before any of us could move, Tolliver had swung his two arms up together, then shot them forward—the knife flew like a dart into and almost through Mueller's neck, killing him instantly.

"That lets him out, the swine," Tolliver cried, "and I can't be fixed any worse than I am!" He glared at Ruggles. "The only thing I don't like is that the knife couldn't have got the two of you!"

Ruggles said nothing. He went to Tolliver and reënforced, with the cords which had bound me, those which already held Tolliver's ankles and wrists.

Then he went to the bed and looked down at Hastings, who had sunk there and lay motionless.

"It is hard to understand," he said, "why life clings so obstinately to so many of those who break every commandment and, on the other hand, seems always about to flicker out in so many who endeavor to live up to every worthy rule.

"Here is Henry Scott, for example, who, except for a blunder made fifteen years ago, has lived, as I happen to know, always carefully and uprightly; and there, for another example, is Mueller, who patronized every vice nearly his whole life long, yet it took a long, keen knife, thrust through his jugular vein, to kill him.

"Well, there are many things we cannot understand in this world, Dan, and fortunately we are not required to."

He raised Mueller's body from the floor and laid it on the couch in the adjoining room. Then he went back to Hastings who now had raised himself on his elbow on the bed.

"Mr. Hastings," Ruggles said quietly, "I believe you will have no more trouble now. I advise you to spend a few months in Europe, where, probably as quickly as anywhere, you can get the memory of this thing out of your head.

"But at the start understand one thing: your living ghost was only a clever mechanical contrivance, executed by a man who had, with his rare mechanical ability, an equal knowledge of electricity."

"What do you mean?" Hastings demanded.

"Look," Ruggles said, "and I will show you!" He left the room, and, a moment later, called to us: "Watch the wall where you saw your ghost appear."

We did so, and saw that section of the wall swing out to the left side, and, in its place stand a small platform, perhaps a foot deep and five feet wide.

"Now turn off the lights, Dan," Ruggles called to me, "then both of you watch again."

I turned off the lights, and again that brilliant, shimmering illumination appeared on the section of the wall where both Hastings and I had seen the ghostly apparition stand.

It appeared now, looked at us as before with its strangely living eyes, then went through, as before, its hideous pantomime.

"Turn it out, in God's name," Hastings shouted.

"No," Ruggles called back, "instead, turn on the lights!"

I did so, and Ruggles came back to us.

"It is, as I told you," he said to Hastings, "only a clever contrivance. That dummy there was made by Mueller to resemble Ross McAndrew—"

"But how was that done? How did Mueller know what McAndrew looked like?" Hastings asked again.

"Tolliver knew well enough the appearance of the man he had murdered; and, to reënforce his memory of his victim, Tolliver had this photograph of McAndrew to go by. I found it this afternoon, when I searched Tolliver's rooms at the Hotel Marion."

"It was you who went through there, was it?" Tolliver cried savagely. "It was—luck that made you blunder on the photograph!"

"I did not blunder on it," Ruggles said: "I was looking for your half of the photograph; you see, I had the other half."

"I see now," Hastings said. "You took it when I came to your rooms—you took it and the letter which I dared not show you. Well, I bear you no ill will, considering what use you have made of them.

"But tell me how Mueller could build that platform and make the wall swing back as he did!"

"An examination of it is the only thing that can tell us," Ruggles replied; "but you may believe that, every time you left this house, he knew of it and worked painstakingly and shrewdly during every hour of your absence. How he happened to learn that you had abundant money, is more easily figured out.

"Tolliver told him, and together they marked you down as their victim! But you are free from them now forever."

"And that," I said, when we were back in our apartment on West Eighty-Sixth Street, New York, "is the end of the Hastings Mystery, or rather, the end of The Living Ghost. And the end of Mueller, too.

"That leaves only one man, Hilliard—no, Branley, for us to reckon with. Of the five who knew the story of your past, four are dead—Markley, Cottrell, Hilliard, and now Mueller. Isn't there anything you can 'get' on Branley?"

Then, as Ruggles said nothing, I went on: "Look at it this way, Ruggles: Branley is a crook, and if we locate him, as we can very easily do, and watch him, we'll find him doing something before long that we can send him to the pen for."

"That is true enough," Ruggles admitted, "but you have forgotten one thing: if I get enough on Branley to send him to the pen, he will still have enough on me, from the old days, to take me to the pen with him."

"Then you mean that we can't do a thing against Branley? We must wait and see what happens when he comes to us?"

"That's just what I mean, Dan. He will hunt me down; and, as he is the last of the gang, he will stake everything on one final attempt to get me."

"And when he comes, we'll see what we can do," I said. "Let's forget him in the meantime."

Then, as I lighted one of my pet cigars: "Tell me one thing, Ruggles: in this Hastings business we've just been through—who was the Van Schillingen you asked Hastings if he was afraid of coming face to face with?"

"There was no such person," Ruggles

said; "that was just a bluff to throw Hastings off his guard.

"When I asked him why he didn't go back to California, I saw I had said too much, for Hastings closed up then like a clam; I put in the Van Schillingen business to make him think what I'd said about California was only a chance shot and that I didn't know anything about his past after all."

"But what did you know about his past then?"

"Not a thing, except that, from his having that photograph in his pocket, he had undoubtedly been in California."

"How did you know that?"

"Because that tree, shown in the photograph, was a Monterey cyprus, which grows in only one place in the world, Dan, and that is Monterey, California.

"What I found out about Hastings having led an upright life lately and all that, I dug up here in town this evening; just as, by long distance, California gave me Tollier's criminal record and the details of the quarrel Hastings, that is to say Scott, had had with Ross McAndrew just before Tolliver killed him.

"And the clew?" I asked.

"Why, you need hardly ask that. It was the Monterey cyprus."

"But why was Hastings so afraid of Tolliver?"

"Because he had carried for many years in his breast the secret dread that, when he struck Ross McAndrew down, he had killed him.

"Immediately after that quarrel, the real cause of which Hastings alone knows, he left California. He must have known of Tolliver having been convicted of murdering McAndrew; but Hastings evidently felt, for all that, that he himself had killed McAndrew."

"I see what you mean."

"And so there was a double burden on Hastings," Ruggles went on. "He feared in his heart that he had killed a man for the murder of whom an innocent man had been convicted and was serving a life sentence. There was this odd twist to the situation: for years, the California authorities have been trying to find Hastings."

"What?"

"Yes; trying to find him in order to tell him that they had absolute proof of his innocence. But he had changed his name from Scott to Hastings, and they could not locate him.

"Those marks and lines on the back of the photograph, by the way, were not, as I thought, the location of a claim. They were made by Tolliver himself, just before he was captured, and they showed the place where he had buried the body of Ross McAndrew after killing him."

"The cold-blooded fiend!"

"Cold-blooded and fiend are the right words to use, when describing a man like James Tolliver.

"He escaped from the San Quentin pen, made his way here, found Hastings, knew he had an abundance of money, and, with Mueller as an assistant, settled calmly down to blackmailing Hastings harder than ever, and would have drained him dry and driven him insane, if luck had not thrown Hastings our way and enabled us to help."

"Call it luck if you like," I objected.

"Luck played a strong part," Ruggles said. "I pray that our luck holds when Branley comes and finds me."

THE END

EDITOR'S NOTE.—February 11 we offered you a special article, "The Swope Millions," by Louise Rice. By a freakish accident the tail end of the story was lost between the editorial offices and the printer's.

As printed, the story ended with the statement that the defendant "got life imprisonment."

The manuscript, however, had proceeded to tell how later the Supreme Court had reversed the lower court's decision and granted a new trial; how a juror had fled during the second trial, invalidating that; and how the jury had disagreed at the third trial, and the State of Missouri had dismissed its case.

Readers who remembered the details of this *cause celebre* will be glad to see here the lost ending of the story.

His voice rose hoarsely and he beat his fist weakly on the table

A FOLLOW-UP STORY

By John Ames

THE GLOBE HAD A SPECIAL REASON FOR WANTING A STORY OF THE HARRISON SHOOTING, BUT EVEN IT WAS IN FOR SOME STARTLING REVELATIONS

NOT ordinarily would a New York paper send a reporter of Martin White's seasoned talents to a Western Pennsylvania industrial town, to cover an apparently unmysterious and commonplace murder.

But *The Globe* had a special reason for wanting "a good follow-up story" of the killing of Mrs. George Harrison, wife of a mill superintendent, for whose murder her husband was under arrest. It had been quickly enough proved that a bullet from his revolver had ended her life.

The Globe was particularly interested because Mrs. Harrison, before her marriage, had been Jane Dorsey, winner of a beauty contest which that enterprising newspaper had sponsored.

She had been adjudged the most beautiful telephone operator in the metropolitan area of New York—an area which embraces many communities that are not strictly metropolitan.

But—as has been the case with so many winners of newspaper beauty contests—Miss Dorsey's looks had not greatly impressed impresarios of the stage and screen, and after a week's engagement at a vaudeville theater which had coöperated with *The Globe* in the contest, as an easy means of publicity, she was quickly forgotten by every one concerned.

Not content to return to the switchboard, she decided to return to her home town for a visit, to bask for a little while, at least, in local appreciation of her brief fame.

She had remained in her home town of Freeman to marry George Harrison, then a rising young foreman on his way to become superintendent of the wire plant of the Freeman Steel Company.

Some of these general facts had been brought out in the first-day story telegraphed to *The Globe* by its Pittsburgh correspondent.

The town in which the murder was com-

mitted was in the Pittsburgh industrial district.

On the train, en route from New York, White studied the clipping of the first story. Other essential facts, as the correspondent had reported them, were these:

The young wife—she was twenty-six—had been shot twice through the heart and instantly killed, in her home, an hour before midnight.

The Harrison home, a two-story, six-room frame dwelling, was near the wire plant. Hearing the shots, he said, Joseph Gaston, a detective attached to the plant, rushed into the house, and in the dining room found Harrison, revolver in hand, bending over the body of his wife.

He had arrested him and turned him over to the local police, who conveyed him to the jail in Pittsburgh, where he awaited indictment and trial for murder.

The circumstantial evidence had been convincing enough. Harrison, however, had told a crazy story of having himself rushed into the house a moment before the arrival of the detective, and found his wife's dead body on the floor, his revolver beside it. He said he had just picked it up when Gaston entered.

Harrison further declared that he himself had heard the shots as he neared his home after a walk from the mill near by, but had found no one but his dead wife there when he entered.

This, in view of the detective's account, was preposterous—as much so as his explanation of his possession of the revolver.

Gaston had investigated further, he said, and learned from friends of the young couple—Harrison was less than four years older than his wife—that they had frequently quarreled.

Jane Harrison, the small-town belle, whose attractions had been certified in a New York beauty contest, was a married flirt, it was said.

There had been found no evidence that Harrison suspected any one admirer, or, indeed, that he suspected his wife of any infidelity.

Her flirtations seemed to have been casual and general, and, so far as was known, restricted to openly indiscreet conduct at drinking parties attended mostly by mill executives and their wives.

In fact, Harrison himself, in prison, vehemently insisted that he had never suspected his wife of having a clandestine lover; didn't now believe she had gone so far.

But he had several times been very angry with her, and had remonstrated with her against her conduct; told her she was injuring her reputation and his standing in the community.

The accused husband had gone so far as to admit that he had quarreled with her on the evening of the murder. He owned to a violent temper, and admitted that at times he might have been unreasonably angry with his wife.

When Harrison was questioned in prison by Gaston and detectives of the police department he explained his declared absence from the house, when the murder was committed, by saying that some one had telephoned from the mill, reporting a break in some wire-drawing machinery, the repair of which would require his supervision.

At the plant, to which he had hurried, he found that there had been no breakdown, and he could find no one who admitted having telephoned the Harrison home.

He was still puzzled over this, he said, and thinking, too, of how he could make up his quarrel with Jane, when, approaching the house, he heard the shots.

No one placed the slightest credence in his story. He seemed to realize himself that it would not be believed, for he had sunk into a daze, from which he had emerged only to declare that he was indifferent to what happened to him. The news story quoted him:

"I want to die anyway, now that Jane is dead. I loved her and still love her, and can't live without her. As I have no family, or other relatives, it doesn't matter to me now whether I hang or not."

Harrison had been held in high regard by his employers, who, despite the seemingly perfect case against him, retained counsel to help him. He seemed able to do little to help them defend him, and convinced them that he was indifferent to his fate.

No attempt had been made by Harrison to refute or deny any part of the mill detective's report.

He said he had not seen Gaston when he rushed into his home after hearing the shots, and agreed that the detective must have been approaching, in the darkness of the mill neighborhood, from another direction, and somewhat farther away.

A neighbor had heard the two reports, but had dismissed them as noise coming from the mill, until he learned of the murder.

That it was murder, and not possibly suicide, there seemed to be no doubt. The revolver had been fired too far from the woman's body to permit of powder-flash burns; and an expert who examined the wounds declared they were so placed that they could not have been self-inflicted.

II

ARRIVING at Union Station in Pittsburgh, White went to a hotel and registered. From his room he telephoned to Harry Bennet, the local correspondent of *The Globe,* who had been notified to expect him and lend his cooperation.

Bennet operated a free-lance bureau and served as Pittsburgh correspondent for a string of papers in other cities.

"Want me to come over to the hotel, or will you come over to the office?" he asked White.

"I'll go to your office," replied the Park Row veteran. "How much time can you give me on this job to-day, Harry?"

"As much as you want. Knew you were coming—your office telegraphed—and I'm turning the works over to my assistant for the day."

"Fine. I'll taxi over there in a few minutes. Anything new?"

"Hardly a thing, beyond what I've already sent over the wire."

"I've read that. Talk it over with you when I see you."

A taxicab conveyed White to Bennet's office in five minutes. He had worked several times before with the Pittsburgh newspaper man, having used his bureau as a base from which to cover steel strike riots and mine disasters some years before. Both were veteran reporters; they understood and liked each other.

Ordinarily Bennet was not delighted when star reporters came from New York to take over stories for which his news bureau was paid space rates, for it usually meant reduction of his revenue. And sometimes these stars, carrying canes and wearing spats, high-hatted the provincial.

More than one he had found to be a news-gatherer inferior to himself: lads who depended on him to provide carbon-copies of his own hard-earned stories over which they wrote flashy leads under their own signatures.

Bennet, himself a free-lance, was one of that hard-working army of anonymous newspaper men who never see their bylines over a story, but without whose ability to gather news and feed it to the copy desk the publication of no newspaper would be possible.

His bureau was fairly profitable; in fact, this provincial outlaw from the city rooms paid a larger income tax than did most of the Park Row feature-assignment stars.

Once he had refused an offer to come to *The Globe.* The salary was fair, but not enough to tempt him away from the independence of his own "works," as he usually termed his bureau.

With gentle malice he loved to quote that ancient and not always fair definition of a journalist, invented no doubt by some envious provincial: "A journalist is a fellow who carries a cane and borrows money from newspaper men."

But Bennet liked and respected Martin White, who brought no breezy airs from the metropolis, and who always saw to it that the local correspondent received credit, both financial and professional, for his work on stories which *The Globe* star took over from him.

The Park Row veteran, in fact, disliked to be called a star reporter, and derided most of the fiction he had read in which star reporters were glorified.

There had never been anything dashing, or flashingly brilliant, about Martin or his work; yet he was known in newspaper offices from New York to San Francisco as

the most consistently successful reporter of first page news in the United States.

Often he had created news, rather than reporting it, by his insight and his refusal to accept seeming fact at its face value.

Middle-aged, of medium height and weight, with gray hair and cool gray eyes, always rather neatly dressed, he looked more like a moderately successful business man than a member of the fourth estate.

He moved about quietly and seemingly without hurry, but if he ever was beaten to the edition on an important story no one on Park Row was old enough to recall it. He had a slightly cynical fondness for newspaper reporting, and had never tried to leave it.

"What do you think of this story?" he asked Bennet.

"So far as I've been able to find out, it seems like an open-and-shut case. I don't think the police are doing much further investigating.

"I understand that Harrison is breaking physically under the strain, and is expected to confess pretty soon in order to get a life term instead of the rope, with a plea of temporary insanity.

"I suppose," he observed, "that *The Globe* is more interested in the feature angle about Mrs. Harrison—from the viewpoint of her New York experience."

"Yes," said White, "that seemed to be the notion of the managing editor, inspired, I think, by the circulation boss, whose idea it was to hold the beauty contest that Jane Dorsey won."

"I see."

"But I can't see it that way myself," continued White. "I have an idea that it will rake up the unpleasant side of the beauty contest game in a way that won't reflect credit on any paper that plays it up.

"It would be a depressing assignment to follow up the careers of most of the winners after they've been let down from their dizzy little pinnacles. I wasn't so keen to come over here on this job."

The veteran reporter, reflecting on the jazzing-up methods by which the go-getting circulation manager nowadays exerted his influence upon the editorial department, lit a cigarette and puffed at it moodily.

"Where do you want to begin your work here?" asked Bennet.

"Had Mrs. Harrison any relatives in this part of the country?" inquired White.

"None. Her parents died several years ago. She has a brother out in Dallas, Texas, but he is not coming on. He had been estranged from his sister for some years. Wired he would pay funeral expenses if necessary, but there has been no other word from him."

"Harrison willing to talk to newspaper men?"

"He won't talk to anybody now—not even to his lawyers nor his employers. He seems to have given up hope."

"What about Gaston? I suppose he'll talk readily enough; I never knew a detective who thought he had a case in the clear that wouldn't."

"Right," nodded Bennet. "And he's especially fond of pointing out that the coincidence of his having been on hand to catch Harrison with his own gun in his hand, and over his wife's dead body, was due to his being on the job in the neighborhood of the plant."

"Where does he hang out—at the mill?"

"Most of the time, I suppose, now that the case seems to be pretty well cleared up."

"I'd like to take a look around Freeman. When can we start?"

"Right away. Local trains for that district leave every half hour or so."

"Let's start."

III

FREEMAN was a drab and dingy steel town in the dark green hills of Western Pennsylvania, fifteen miles from Pittsburgh, the great industrial center that had spawned it and scores of towns almost exactly like it.

A pall of bituminous coal smoke and iron ore dust hung low over it, and the acrid odor of coke gas was constant.

The banging of hammers, the clatter of machinery, and the hissing of steam, mingled with the clang of iron and steel in a discordant symphony whose tortured theme had ten thousand variations.

The members of the orchestra were some twelve thousand "hunkies" of more than

a dozen nationalities; the divisions led by a few score American foremen, master mechanics, superintendents, and managers.

Its owners were comfortably remote in high, clean skyscraper offices in Pittsburgh and New York, when they were not to be found on the bright green golf courses of Sewickley, Long Island, or Florida.

Which, no doubt, was as it should be. "For some must toil—*et cetera.*"

White and Bennet found the Harrison dwelling deserted and locked, with its dark window shades drawn down to the sills.

Despite the racket of the wire mill near by, the house of death had about its gray wooden walls a heavy air of silence.

"Do you want to go around to the mill office and see if we can locate Gaston?" asked Bennet.

"Not yet. Let's go to the nearest neighborhood joint."

Since his early days as a police reporter it had been White's habit to spend more time in the neighborhood saloon in search of stray leads than at police headquarters.

Following a crime, particularly a domestic tragedy, there was sure to be plenty of gossip about its principal characters in the nearest gin mill.

More than once he had winnowed from it information which had contributed to surprisingly simple solutions overlooked by the police.

It was a theory which he, at any rate, had found practicable; that deduction played a relatively small part in the solution of crime in the workaday world; that more of the obscure detail of a puzzling crime was to be learned by following every possible lead to a central conclusion. He usually found that conclusion.

This case, on the face of it, seemed to have few or no elements of mystery, but it might not be waste of time to look around a bit.

For one thing, as a matter of general principle, he disliked to accept without corroboration the unsupported testimony of a detective of Gaston's type—the steel mill bull, ordinarily despised by the better grade of crime investigator as an irregular hireling, hired to spy upon workmen.

Usually they were the offscourings of the lower grade of private detective agencies, and were most useful to their employers—who also despised them but found them useful in times of strikes or other labor troubles.

Knowing the congenial laziness of the average city and county detective, he could understand their willingness, however reluctant, to accept Gaston's unsupported word under the circumstances of the Harrison murder.

No other solution seemed either apparent or possible; there appeared to be no other lead; no ground for accusation of any one other than the husband of the slain woman.

White and Bennet entered the saloon through a pair of old-fashioned swinging doors. The stale odor of bad beer, bad whisky and worse gin, commingled with the native filth of the place, assailed their nostrils.

The bartender, swabbing the veneered pine bar with a marvelously dirty towel, recognized the Pittsburgher and greeted his visitors with the universal "What'll it be, gents?"

As the lesser of the liquid evils of the place, they ordered beer. They were sipping it slowly and without relish when the noon whistles began to blow.

Presently workmen shuffled in for their midday "heater-and-cooler"—whisky with a beer chaser—and a generous but smelly free lunch.

The murder, still fresh news in the community, was the uppermost topic of conversation, which soon swelled into a loud confusion of voices as the second and third heaters-and-coolers began to take hold. The penetrating odor of laborers' sweat permeated the place.

White and Bennet edged toward the end of the bar nearest a small back room. In the room, just behind them, was a corner table where three men sat. Two were in greasy overalls and were drinking beer.

The third was ingurgitating whisky, and it was evident that he had been devoting some time to it. He was not dressed in working clothes, but had the unkempt appearance of an inebriated laborer out of work.

His voice rose hoarsely above those of

the others, and he beat his fist weakly on the damply stained table, as he declared:

"I tell you I saw this—Gaston comin' out of Harrison's office half an hour before the murder. What—what business 'd he have in there—Harrison always keepin' it locked when he's not at the mill. Tell me—what'd he want there?"

"Oh, shut up, Tom; you're drunk, and you're sore at Gaston because he got you fired for bein' drunk around the plant. You'll get into worse trouble, first thing you know.

"We all know the dirty bull for a damn company spy, but no one knows of any reason he'd have to frame Harrison.

"And who else would have any reason to kill Mrs. Harrison than him—crazy mad at her like he was? Would Gaston? He never met her in his life, I'll bet. He wasn't allowed to mix with the Harrisons and their friends."

Tom lurched boozily across the table and wagged a wavering finger at his friend.

"But ain't it queer he'd be comin' out of Harrison's office jush 't that p'tic'lar time? Tell me that!"

"Well, I suppose that his job gives him the right to spy into the offices of a superintendent as well as into the affairs of any one else that works for the company.

"It might have been him, Tom, but you might have mistaken the time, and it probably was Harrison himself you saw in the dark. He'd been there, you know, just before he came home and killed his wife. And that fake phone call makes it look like he was tryin' to prepare an alibi in advance."

"Somethin' wrong—somethin' wrong. I tell you I'm certain it was Gaston I saw."

"But what about the revolver? Harrison told the police officers that he nearly always kept it in his desk—exceptin' only when there was trouble around the plant. That was known around the mill.

"He claimed he hadn't taken it from his desk—and he admits Gaston found it in his hand, with two bullets fired out of it, and him standin' over his wife's dead body."

White and Bennet had been listening intently to the argument. The bartender had heard part of it.

"Oh, Tom is soused and just shootin' off his mouth. Nobody ought to pay any attention to him when he's like that. Besides, why didn't he tell a thing like that at the time of the arrest?"

"He's been lyin' home drunk ever since," volunteered a workman at the bar.

IV

WHITE and Bennet had left the bar and were on their way to the mill office when the latter tugged at the New York reporter's sleeve.

"There's Gaston now, coming out of the mill, on the other side of the street."

The company detective was less than a hundred feet away when White said:

"Don't let it appear that you've seen him. I don't think he has taken any notice of us. Let's turn this corner and let him pass."

The maneuver was effected, apparently without Gaston having noted it.

A few moments later the reporters retraced their steps and saw Gaston proceed up the street, evidently unconscious that he was being watched.

"Harry, you're sure that's Gaston?" asked White.

"Dead sure. I talked with him after the murder."

"Well, it isn't. It's Mug Casey, who was a house detective at the Hotel Granton in New York about five years ago—when Jane Dorsey worked the switchboard there."

Bennet whistled softly. White continued:

"I used to drop in there occasionally, and I was afraid he might recognize me. Perry Bronson, who handled the reporting end of the beauty contest that Jane won, told me once that the house dick had been crazy about the girl, and had followed her around a good deal. He left New York not long after she did.

"But he had a reason other than the possible one of following Jane Dorsey here. Less than a week after he disappeared he was connected with a gang of hotel thieves who were caught, and who squealed on him when they were indicted for murdering and robbing a guest. He's wanted now by the New York police."

"Hell! No wonder he wouldn't stand for having his picture taken by the newspaper photographers. I thought it queer modesty at the time."

"Evidently he now feels safe from recognition. You get busy with the chief of police here and tell him that I'm getting New York police headquarters to send detectives here with a warrant and a demand for extradition.

"After that Casey can have his choice of burning in New York or swinging here. It won't matter whether we can get a confession from him, for, under the circumstances, I don't think it'll be hard to clear Harrison."

When Mug Casey was arrested at his boarding house he collapsed and admitted his identity, but refused to answer questions as to the murder of Mrs. Harrison.

In the meantime Martin White had been active in other directions.

He got permission to examine the desk drawer in which Harrison had claimed he kept his revolver, and from which it had been taken by the detective.

He found several blue prints and other papers, which he turned over to a finger-print expert. They were found to be marked with finger-prints which Casey, with the stupidity of a tenth-rate detective, had left on them when he rummaged through the drawer.

It was established that he had been seen emerging from a telephone booth in one of Freeman's drug stores at the time when Harrison said he had received the fake message.

An operator on duty said there had been no other calls in the town within ten minutes of that time.

These fragments of evidence, pieced together with the statement of the workman who had seen him emerge from Harrison's office, enabled White to reconstruct the crime, or at least to construct the hypothesis which later freed the accused husband.

Because the most important witness was dead, it would be impossible to prove the hypothesis completely; this was found later to be unnecessary.

White's follow-up story traced the infatuated Casey from New York to Freeman, where, probably, he had tried to renew his attentions to the girl, now Mrs. Harrison.

Whether he succeeded in any measure could not be determined. No one had ever seen them together.

But it seemed likely that his attentions were unwelcome to Mrs. Harrison at the time of the murder. Casey apparently had decided upon a double revenge, to kill the woman who had rejected him and fasten the murder on his successful, though unwitting, rival.

Bringing about the superintendent's absence, he had called, forced himself into the house, killed Mrs. Harrison with her husband's stolen revolver, placed it beside the body, and remained hidden until Harrison returned.

It was easy, then, to catch the innocent man with the revolver in his hand. Naturally he would pick it up, and with amazement recognize it as his own.

Mug Casey, knowing that he would first be tried for the New York murder, cannily refused to admit killing Mrs. Harrison.

He was convicted and electrocuted for the first crime, but to the end he sullenly and stubbornly declined to confess the second.

To the last he had hoped for commutation of sentence.

For Martin White, however, Casey, having gone to the bat once too often, had provided some exciting follow-up copy for *The Globe*.

"En guard," said the figure, drawing a rapier from beneath the cloak, but—

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE PRINCE

By Victor Maxwell

WHAT WAS THE SECRET OF THIS STRANGE PRINCE WHOSE PATH SEEMED TO BE HAUNTED BY TRAGEDY?

CHAPTER XXIV

PLAIN TALK

RIORDAN walked over toward the cottage that Czeresnotski's men had occupied, and before which the police squad that had come with Niles was congregated. He entered, and the captain and Welland followed him. The place was untidy, the floor was covered with discarded clothing, none of it good and most of it dirty.

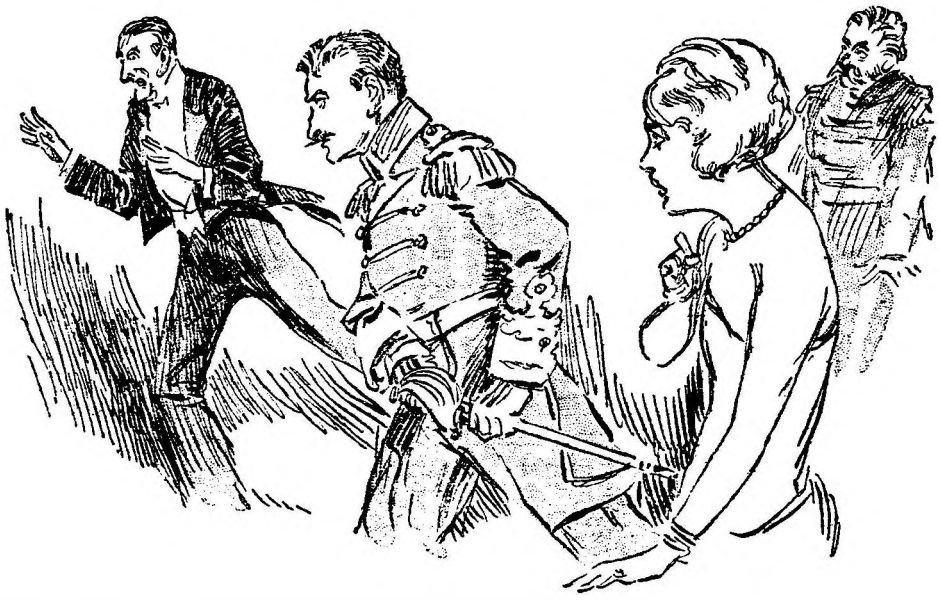
Seven cots, three of them folded and the other four open, were ranged about the walls. In one corner was a cheap deck of cards, lying in a jumbled heap. In another corner were two pamphlets, printed in some foreign script, the letters of which looked like various designs for swords, spears and boathooks. Besides that there were several pictorial weeklies of recent date.

Riordan kicked a pile of the discarded clothes over against the wall and then began to pick the garments up one at a time and examine them.

The first was a sport shirt, of the vintage of about 1920, brilliant in striping and bearing many laundry marks upon the collar band. It was size sixteen. The next garment was a union suit, badly torn. The pile next gave up a pair of "ice cream pants," stained with red and blue paint. Then another shirt, this one of cheap grade, and size fourteen. It bore no laundry marks.

Two pair of socks, of different sizes, one pair much darned, came next. Then an undershirt with one sleeve torn off. Three

This story began in FLYNN'S WEEKLY DETECTIVE FICTION for February 25



—the prince seemed not a bit surprised as he whipped out his own weapon

handkerchiefs, tied together with string, came up in the next handful. Two bore the initial "E," and the third carried a metal-bound laundry tag bearing the name "Brown."

A bath towel, some time burned with a hot iron, was the next prize; followed by a torn shirt, partly silk, and of size seventeen. Its collar band was well covered with laundry marks.

Captain Niles had been watching Riordan, and, after a moment, he, too, began examining the clothes on the floor. Welland stood in the doorway watching them. Outside the uniformed men milled round and talked among themselves.

The door of the elevator tower slammed, and Captain of Detectives Brady came stamping across the roof, followed close behind by Chief of Police Roberts. Welland turned to meet them, and detained them at the door of the cottage a moment, while he briefly related what had happened and complimented Captain Niles on his speedy response to his call.

Riordan and Niles, desisting from their examinations, looked at each other.

"Well?" queried Riordan, smiling.

"I'm a son of a gun," exclaimed Niles. "You buy this junk by the bale down at Guldenheimer's when you want old rags. The printshops use a lot of it, and now the garages are using it, too."

Riordan nodded his head.

"What'll we do about it?" Niles demanded.

Riordan pointed outside.

"Niles," he answered, "I don't know what you're going to do, but my advice is to keep your mouth shut. Me, I'm wooden in the head."

The uniformed captain smiled thinly, and then turned to salute as Chief Roberts and Captain Brady pushed in.

"Well," roared the chief, "what's all these men doing loafing up here? Anybody chasin' these guys? Take your squad out of here, Captain Niles, and see if you can get anything on the street. I guess three of us in plainclothes is enough for this job."

Niles saluted again and hurried out, relieved to be rid of the situation so easily. Captain Brady's eyes were taking in every detail of the cottage, as the chief turned to Riordan.

"Well, what you got?"

"Not much, sir," answered Riordan. "I was at the theater with the prince. It was all over when I got back."

"You talked to the help? Anybody see this thing?"

"I've got reports on what the help think they saw, sir."

"Where's your special detail?"

"Down in the prince's suite, sir."

The chief looked over the cottage hurriedly.

"Dirty mess," he said. "Let's go downstairs and see what the prince has got to say. I'm gettin' fed up on this myself."

They took the elevator down to the second floor. Welland led the way to the prince's suite and showed Captain Brady and the chief into the reception room. The house detective was sitting there in an armchair and rose as the group entered.

Riordan, dropping back at the door, hurried down the hall to the stairs and raced up to his own room, where he found Stacy, Willis and Halloran busy playing pitch and toss for ten cents a game.

"Snap out of it," he barked. "You, Stacy, get down to the hallway outside the prince's rooms and walk post there. If anybody asks you, say I told you to and you don't know why. Say you've been there since we come back from the show.

"You, Willis, go downstairs in the basement and round up a porter named Stiver and let him fill you up on the kidnaping yarn. Quick, now."

The two younger sleuths dashed from the room. Halloran drew a broken cigar from his pocket and began to chew on it.

"Something broke, Matt?" he rumbled.

"Yeah. You go and find out where Davie Guldenheimer lives. Get a taxi, go wake him up and bring him up here and sit on him till I come. Waddle along now."

Three of his aids disposed of, and secure in the knowledge that the fourth was probably asleep at Mrs. Davis's lodging house, Riordan returned to the prince's suite, to find Saunderson explaining to the chief and Captain Brady that his highness was in a state of collapse and could not possibly see them.

"He's had what you might call a bad night," said Saunderson. "What with getting bounced out of a show and then coming home to find all his flunkies kidnaped. He is not used to that, you know."

"You got any idea, young man, how many enemies the prince has got?" demanded Chief Roberts.

Saunderson shook his head.

"Or how many are in this gang that's been raising Ned here?"

"It hasn't been my fortune to meet any of them, chief."

"Who's guarding the prince to-night? Isn't he afraid they'll try to get him next?"

"His three lords-in-waiting are with him, with drawn swords. I don't think it would be healthy for anybody to try and get into his room without knocking."

"You know the names of these servants, or got any description of them we can work on?"

"They're all dark men, and all of fair size, chief. As to their names, I don't know.

"I heard the prince call one of them something once, and I asked him what it meant in English, and he said it was quite similar to 'you no good son of a jackal.' I didn't ask any more questions."

Captain Brady spoke up.

"Do you suppose, after this, that the prince will go to that damned reception to-morrow?"

"To meet his old friend, Mr. Pring. Surely yes, captain. You don't know the prince if you think he won't."

"Well, tell him it'll be all right," said the chief. "I'll have fifty men scattered about that place. And Brady will have half his dicks on the inside."

"It'll be a great reception, then," laughed Saunderson.

"It'll be airtight, son," said the chief, emphatically. Then he turned to the door. "Riordan, you got a room here where we can talk?"

"Yes, sir, on the floor above."

"Well, let's go there. Good night, Mr. Saunderson, and tell his highness for me that we will do all we can to get his servants restored to him safe and sound."

In the hallway they passed Stacy, marching seriously along the corridor, industriously looking into every shadow. The chief seemed to approve, but Captain

Brady cast a quick eye at Riordan. That worthy, however, gave no sign he had seen the look.

Once in his room Chief Roberts bluntly came to the point.

"Sergeant Riordan," he said, "I'm not altogether satisfied with the way you're handling this case. I haven't seen any results.

"Of course, you and your men weren't here to-night when this thing was pulled, but I can't see that you've turned up anything on these other jobs yet. Have you?"

"I've got a pretty good line, I think, sir."

"Well, what you got?"

"To-morrow night, sir, or Saturday night at the latest, I expect to bring in six people, possibly seven. I'm waiting till I can line up the seventh one, sir, before I grab the others. Grabbing any one of them now would simply tip the others off and give them a chance to beat it."

"Who are these men?"

"I'd rather not say, right now."

"Uh-huh, just as I thought. You're stalling. You haven't got anything. You're just running a bluff and hoping something will turn up."

"I wouldn't say that, chief," broke in Captain Brady. "Riordan's made good on a lot of cases before this. I've never known him to stall. I think, sir—"

"I know he's made good," snapped Roberts. "That's why he's stalling now. If he had anything on this case he wouldn't be loafing round the way he has been doing.

"I know Riordan as well as you do, Brady. He's a good dick, a blamed good dick. But he's fell down on this, and he knows it. He's hoping he'll get a lucky break, like we all do.

"If he had a line on any six men, why wouldn't he tell me who they are? Don't he think I can keep my mouth shut?"

Captain Brady looked at his chief aid, but Riordan gave him no signals, nor did he say anything.

"Name one of these six men," demanded Roberts.

"Suppose, sir, I said his name was Gory-vitski," answered Riordan. "Would that satisfy you?"

"Is his name Gory-whatever you said?"

"No, sir, it isn't."

Roberts pondered a moment.

"I got a good mind to bounce you off this case," he said.

Riordan suddenly flared into action.

"You have, have you?" he demanded. "All right, do it. Go ahead, I'm through right now. Put somebody else on, and see what you get. What's more, I'll tell you where you'll get—you'll get yourself the laughing stock of the whole city, and the entire mob will slip out on you, and you'll have no alibi or comeback.

"If you're so damned wise, why haven't you tumbled to this thing yourself? It's been plain enough."

Chief Roberts grew purple with anger, and fairly sputtered.

"Talk to me like that, will you?" he roared. "I'll show you! I'll not only bounce you off this case, but I'll have you up on charges. I'll break—"

CHAPTER XXV

RUNNING A WHIZZER

A HEAVY knock on the door stilled the tirade.

"Come in," called Riordan, and Halloran entered, leading a small, unkempt and bewhiskered man beside him.

"Oi, chief, I ain'd done nuttin'," the little man began, on recognizing Roberts. "You know I ain'd done nuttin'. What for this man come to my house and drag me oud? You know, chief, Davie Guldenheimer don'd do nuttin' vich ain'd by the law alrighd."

"What's this all about?" demanded Roberts.

"Guldenheimer," spoke up Riordan, "think sharp now and no tricks. You sell some bundles of old rags to-day to some dark men, like wops?"

Davie blinked his eyes and looked from one to the other of the police officers.

"Yes," he said slowly. "I sell some rags. But that's alrighd. I got a license."

"How many men? What'd they look like?"

"Two men. Vun dark and big, like you say. The other smart feller, very funny. Speak like he was oud from New York, speak just like New York."

"What time was this?"

"Four, five o'clock. They come to my place in taxi."

"Didja notice the number of the taxi?"

"No. For vy should I? It ain'd no wrong to buy rags, is it?"

"You know the rags if you saw 'em?"

"I mighd."

"Halloran, go up on the roof. Get the elevator boy or somebody to show you the hut up there where Czeresnotski's servants lived. You'll find a lot of old clothes on the floor. Grab an armful and bring them down."

There was silence in the room till Halloran returned, his huge arms wrapped about a great mass of dirty, old clothes and cloth. He dumped the pile on the floor.

"Take a look at it, Davie, and see if you recognize it," said Riordan.

The little man fingered the stuff a moment, and lifted several of the garments to his nose. Nodding his head he smiled and said:

"Yes, that's some of the stuff."

"How'd you know?" demanded Roberts, interested in the proceeding.

Davie grinned.

"I smells it, chief. My varehouse, you know, it's got a leak from the sewer in id, and the rags, they take id up."

"Take him upstairs," said Riordan to Halloran, "and let him get the rest of it. It's yours, Davie, to pay you for coming down so nice. You can sell it again. But, listen, if I want you to identify those men, you'll come? Or will I have to send the bulls after you?"

"I'll come, Mr. Riordan. You just send vord."

The two of them went out. Chief Roberts looked steadily at the detective sergeant. Captain Brady kept his eyes on the ceiling.

"Mebbe I was hasty, Riordan," said the chief. "I dunno. Mebbe I was. I guess you know what you're doin'. You stay on this case.

"But mind you this, don't ever talk to me again like you did just now, or I'll—I'll clout you one in the jaw. And you mind this, too: you bring in these six men you're talking about, or I'll—well, you bring 'em in, that's all.

"Come on, Brady, let's get out of here."

Riordan, sitting in the Belmont-Grand grill Friday morning, leisurely eating breakfast and reading *The Chronicle's* account of the previous night's adventures, noted a shadow falling across the page and looked up to see the burly form of Halloran standing beside him. The detective sergeant kicked out a chair.

"Sit down," he said. "When you stand up you're too big for the place. Sit down and have some grapefruit or steak or something."

Halloran lurched into the chair.

"I don't eat them sour oranges," he answered. "An', besides, I've had me grub. I come in to tell you somethin'."

Riordan folded his paper and looked receptive.

"I was down to headquarters to sign the pay roll," the big sleuth went on, "an' I hear the news. The old man himself is goin' to take charge of things out to Pring's reception to-night. He's listin' up the men now for special duty.

"Goin' to have a guard around that place, he is, like it was a bank. An' everybody's to be heeled, an' if anythin' starts the word is to shoot first an' ask questions after."

"Brady seem to know about it?" snapped Riordan.

"That's more news. Cap'n Brady lit out early this mornin' on a hot tip that these here kidnaped servants was locked up in a hop-joint down at the river end of Chinatown."

"You pick up any more gossip while you signed the pay roll?"

"Whatcher mean gossip? Do you think I'm kiddin' you, Matt?"

"No, no, not at all, big fellow. I just wondered if you'd heard anything else, that's all. You brought me about all the killjoy news I can stand with my breakfast, that's all."

"What's the matter with what I told you?" asked Halloran seriously.

"Matter enough. In the first place, I got to locate all the guards round the Pring swamp and swap 'em blanks for the cartridges they'll have in their guns.

"It'd look fine, wouldn't it, to have some bull start shooting, and set 'em all off, and have forty-seven bullets go through the windows of Thistlelawn Villa and nick about ten of the city's swells who'll be there. An' I got something else to do to-night, too, beside hunting up harnessed bulls in the dark."

"I'll help you, Matt. I c'n see where you got the right idea."

"You bet you'll help me. And so would Captain Brady, only he'll be so sore he can't be talked to."

"What'll make him sore?"

"Chasin' down to Chinatown for nothin'."

"How do you know them servants ain't—"

"Never mind, I know it. They're probably ten hours on the way to Frisco right now. Well, I'm glad you dropped in. I see where I've got a lot of work.

"Tell you what you do, big fellow: you slide down to headquarters again and ease yourself in so the chief won't spot you, and get me a list of the men detailed to guard the Pring place to-night. Give the civil clerk a drink, or promise him one, and maybe he'll run you off a duplicate copy of orders. Anyway, you get me a list of all the men, and where they'll be posted, if you can.

"I'll be in my room somewhere about noon. You bring me that list there then."

Riordan finished his coffee at a gulp, and left the grill in Halloran's wake. Going from the hotel he walked down to the Federal Building, and, after a short wait, managed to gain admission to the inner office of the local Immigration Bureau. The inspector in charge, Dr. Lombardi, greeted him cordially.

"Well, well, Riordan, long time I not see you," he laughed. "What's on your mind?"

"You very busy, doc?"

"No, go ahead."

"I don't mean you personally; I mean your men got a lot of work right now?"

"We've got plenty, sergeant. They've cut me down two inspectors, you know. What's on your mind?"

"I got to have some help to-night, and some Federal bugs would help me a whole lot."

Dr. Lombardi swung to his desk, opened a drawer, and drew out a golden shield, which he tossed into Riordan's lap.

"Easy," he said. "Pin it on. I hereby appoint you a special agent of the Immigration Bureau, to serve at my instruction and pleasure. That all you want?"

Riordan grinned.

"I'll just keep this thing, doc. It might come in handy at that. But what I meant was that I could use two or three of your boys to-night, maybe. I've got to run a whizzer."

Lombardi's face was darkened for an instant by a frown, but it passed almost as soon as it formed.

"I'll do it for you, Riordan," he said. "But I don't like whizzers; they're too liable to blow back. What do you want to do?"

"Take shootin' irons away from forty-seven cops."

Dr. Lombardi leaned back in his chair and laughed loud and long.

"Oh!" he exclaimed at length. "That's a good one. What's the matter; aren't you a sergeant any more?"

"Sure I'm a sergeant, doc. But I'm attached to the inspectors' department, and it's a question how many of these harnessed bulls would give up their rods to me. To Uncle Sam's men, now, they'd be more apt to listen to reason, especially under the circumstances."

"All right, sergeant, I'll go. But suppose you tell me the circumstances."

"I'll do that, doc, and right now too. Later on I'll bring you a list of the cops I want made harmless, and where they're posted. It's all about this Czeresnotski reception out at Pring's to-night."

Dr. Lombardi looked interested. He leaned forward in his chair.

"Yes," he said, with a rising inflection. "You know I was thinking of going out there myself to-night. That bird interests me."

"You needn't worry about him, doc. He's going away the end of the week. But this is what I'm up against.

"You see, I'm supposed to be his guardian, to see that he doesn't get hurt. Been a lot of hokus-pokus about him already. But that's neither here nor there.

"To-night, though, he's going to this soirée out there where the swamp used to be, and the old man—I mean Chief Roberts—has got a hunch there'll be somethin' doing and he going to have a squad of harnessed bulls out there on post. He's told 'em to be heeled and that there may be a ruckus.

"And those are the birds I want to get at, see?"

"Why?"

"Because, doc, there may be a lot of the city's real people there. Women folk, especially. You know a prince is a sort of drawing card, and Mrs. Pring's sure sent out all the invitations she could get printed at short notice.

"Well, with a jam like that, it isn't unlikely that there'll be some dip on hand, and he may make a fuddle of his job and scare somebody. Supposin' some woman feels a moll-buzzer tryin' to lift her jewels, or even a purse, and she let's out a yell. Can't you see what's liable to happen?

"There'll be a mess of harnessed bulls planted round in the dark, all told beforehand that there's liable to be a ruckus, and nervous because they've got to do overtime duty.

"Supposing a woman screams. What'll be likely to happen?

"Some flatfoot will rush up yellin', and maybe shoot a coupla holes in the air to show he's a cop; and then what? All these bulls scattered round are liable to start popping off; and from what I know of target range records it 'll be a wonder if eight or ten people up on the second floor of the house aren't drilled with stray lead.

"Now, I'm not in a position to go round and try to disarm those bulls. But if you can send two or three of your men up there, and have 'em show that they're honest-to-Gawd Federals, and say something about this being a diplomatic matter and no guns is allowed, why we can get away from all that danger. See?

"I'll have a couple of my boys go round with your men and say it's all right and regular, and collect the artillery. All your boys 'll have to do is to run the whizzer. See what I'm after?"

CHAPTER XXVI

"THEN SCATTER"

LOMBARDI nodded his head.

"A very good idea," he said. "What in time did Roberts want to tell the men beforehand that there was liable to be trouble for?"

"I don't know why he told 'em, doc. But at that he's right. If it was just taking the chance on some rough stuff in the crowd I'd be willing to risk it. But there is going to be a shindy of some sort."

"What do you mean?"

"Just that, doc. I'll bet my right hand there's going to be some kind of a play made to get the prince. Of course it will flivver out, like all the rest of these things, but they'll try it, just the same."

Lombardi's eyes narrowed.

"Who'll try it?"

"The same bunch that's engineered the whole thing."

"You believe that?"

"Sure. I know it."

"Well, why don't you go get 'em then, and stop it?"

"I will. Maybe to-night. But it isn't ripe yet, and I don't want to spoil it. On the other hand, I don't want to take any chances of having some harnessed bull let daylight through any of Pring's guests."

"You going to be there?"

"I hope to tell the world I am. And some of my boys. They'll do as I tell 'em. If I tell 'em not to pull their rods, no matter what happens, their hands will get paralysis every time they get near their smoke wagons. I don't have to worry about my gang. But this idea of the chief's is liable to bust me all up in business."

"All right, Riordan, I'll go. I said I'd throw in with you, and I will.

"You bring me a list of the officers you

want disarmed, and send me one or two of your men to go and collect the hardware, and I'll promise to invoke enough phony international law to make it stick.

"And you needn't be afraid of any comeback, either. I may take a hand in this Czeresnotski case myself, when you get through with it."

"You got something on him, doc?"

"I may look into him a bit closely."

Riordan squinted one eye. "May I ask why, doc?"

"Yes, and I'll tell you. His name doesn't fit."

"Huh?"

"There isn't any such name as 'Czeresnotski,' sergeant."

Riordan smiled.

"The hell there isn't. It may not be his name, but he can take it if he wants to, can't he? I could say my name was Smirkovitch, couldn't I, and get by with it?"

Dr. Lombardi nodded.

"Certainly, for 'Smirkovitch' could be a name, Riordan. But not 'Czeresnotski'. Names, you know, sergeant, are peculiar. I've made a study of them; in fact that's part of my work."

Riordan showed his interest.

"That so, doc? I always supposed you could say anything was your name, and nobody could prove it wasn't."

"Well, you're mistaken. Names are made from certain roots, that go away, way back in the world's history. And there isn't any combination of name-roots that would make 'Czeresnotski.'"

"I've heard something like that, doc. How 'Johnson,' for instance, originally meant 'the son of John,' and how the original 'Baker' was named that way because he made bread."

Lombardi laughed.

"Oh, that's very modern, Riordan. Names like that don't go back for more than two or three thousand years; the oldest of them, I mean. That's only part of the idea. But when you get into these old-world names you go further back than that.

"Some of the names go back to tribal days, when the language only had a hundred or so actual words. You study these old-world names and you can tell all about the owner's history; if it is really his name and not an assumed one. And then, when you get a name like this 'Czeresnotski,' you can tell it isn't a name at all.

"The name 'Czerny' is all right. 'Czerenkof' is a name, too. But 'Czeresnotski' isn't a name at all.

"Why, it's just as if you tried to tell me that 'black-white' was a color. You can have 'bluish-white' or 'yellow-green' or 'rose-pink,' but you can't have 'black-white.' See? Well, it's the same way with names. There isn't any name 'Czeresnotski.'"

"By gosh, doc, you've told me something," said Riordan, thoughtfully. "And I know you're right, too. You know your stuff, doc. Say, if I want you some time, will you come and tell that same line of dope to Captain Brady?"

"I'll tell it to anybody, sergeant. And prove it, too, if you wish. I've got a fair-sized library devoted to nothing else but names."

"Well, I'm sure obliged, doc. For everything. I'll be round later, or send two of my boys around, with the list of those cops. And you know, doc, if I can ever do you a favor, all you've got to do is to call up."

Leaving the Federal Building, Riordan went to the main office of the telephone company, and, getting a booth all to himself, called up Inspector Mulhern, of the Vancouver, British Columbia, police department and had a long chat with him; so long, in fact, that the tolls came to nine dollars and forty cents.

Apparently well content, he pocketed the meager change from a ten-dollar bill, and returned to his room at the hotel. There, later, he was joined by Halloran, who had obtained a copy of the special assignments for the evening.

"You got up pretty early this morning, didn't you, big fellow?" he said, laughing. "Spoil your beauty if you do that."

"I always get up early to sign the pay roll. Why wouldn't I? I gotta eat, ain't I, Matt?"

"Sure, you've got to eat. Well, I tell

you what you do now. You can take the rest of the day off. There won't be anything doing.

"But at four o'clock you go out to Mrs. Davis's place and get hold of Enright. You needn't cover up about it any. Enright won't be there any more after to-day. And you and him go down to the Federal Building and up to the offices of the Immigration Bureau, and give Dr. Lombardi this list.

"You tell Enright to dump whatever he's got in his suitcase out, and you take the empty suitcase along. Be sure and don't forget that, for if you don't have a suitcase or a big grip of some kind, you're going to have a heap of trouble later on. Got that?"

"Sure. I got a good mind yet," said Halloran.

"Well, you want to keep it good. Because you're going to see something to-night that'll make you think you're crazy or dreaming. You give that list to Dr. Lombardi, Halloran, and then you do as he tells you.

"He'll send you two birds out with some of his boys, and you're goin' to fill that suitcase up. It'll be heavy, too.

"If anybody asks you is it all right—anybody, mind you, bulls or dicks or what-not—you tell 'em it's orders. And when you get that suitcase or grip filled up, you take it down to Captain Brady's office and leave it there.

"Then you and Enright scatter. And it'll be just as healthy for you as not if Captain Brady don't see you packing that stuff in. If you can't dodge him, if he's watching both the front door and the back door from the drill hall, and you can't get him out of the office, why tell him I sent it in. And then beat it, see?"

"I get you, Matt. What's goin' to be in the grip?"

"Dynamite, big fellow. But don't you worry about that. You leave me do the worrying."

"All right, Matt. And report to you to-morrow?"

"You can use your own judgment about that when to-morrow comes. I may be tied outside somewhere."

Halloran rumbled out a laugh.

"Fat chance," he said, and, turning, walked from the room.

CHAPTER XXVII

"I'LL TAKE CARE OF MYSELF"

PERHAPS it was a coincidence, but Sergeant Riordan was sitting in the lobby of the Belmont-Grand late in the afternoon, close to the door of the ladies' parlor, when Marion Slade walked in. She came up to him smiling.

"I suppose you'll be at the reception at Pring's to-night, Sergeant Matt?"

"Most likely. Will you?"

"You bet I will. I didn't go out there and help address over two hundred invitations while I was interviewing her, just for nothing. I sent one to myself."

"Well, I'd just as soon you didn't go." Riordan's tone was positively sullen.

The girl laughed.

"It's a lucky thing you aren't—" She stopped, flushed and looked away.

"Go on, finish it," said Riordan. "Don't ever be a quitter."

Marion Slade gave a nod of her head.

"I was going to say it was a good thing you weren't my husband," she answered. "Because if you were you'd be disappointed any time you tried to tell me what to do and what not to do."

"So?" Riordan's tone was suddenly mild. "I'm thinking not, Marion. If I was your husband you'd do as I wanted you to, because you'd want to please me. And I'd want you to do the things that would please you."

The girl looked at him through half closed eyes, and then suddenly gave a hard laugh.

"That would be ideal, wouldn't it, Matt," she said. "It would be so ideal there wouldn't be any fun. Nope, a husband with whom one never disagreed wouldn't be any fun at all. Why don't you want me to go to the Pring's reception to-night?"

"Because it's a fool show off, for one reason. If you wrote the truth about it, your paper wouldn't publish it: and if you write it up like it was something grand, you'll be lyin' to your readers."

"My gracious, Matt, how righteous you are to-day. Well, I'm going. I'm going to write it up, as I see it, and I'm going because I think it will be fun. There's no telling what will happen."

Riordan nodded his head.

"That's the very reason I just as soon you didn't go. Somebody may start something and somebody else may lose their head, and before it's over there may be a nasty mess. Get a lot of people like that milling round, and you can't tell what will happen. I wish I'd never started—"

He closed his mouth abruptly. Marion Slade laughed.

"Go on, Matt, finish it. Don't be a quitter. You were going to say what?"

"Never mind what I was going to say."

"But I want to know."

"Well, you'll have to keep on wanting, then."

"Why, Matt! That's no nice way to act. I told you what I was going to say, when you asked me."

"I know you did."

"Go on, then, tell me."

"Not a word about it. Listen, if you go to this soirée, what are you going to wear? I want to know so I can keep an eye on you."

She raised her head haughtily.

"I'm going to wear clothes, of course. Tell me what you started to say."

"No."

"Don't you trust me?"

"No."

She looked at him puzzled, and then laughed.

"Matt," she exclaimed, "do you mean that you don't trust me, or that you won't tell me what you were going to say?"

"Both of 'em, right now."

Marion Slade pouted.

"I think you're horrid," she said.

"That's tough luck for me, girly. But remember this: if anything starts at that shindig to-night, you get behind me."

"You think something will start?"

"I'm afraid it may."

"What?"

"I don't know. If I did I'd stop it before it started."

"You think this kidnaping of the prince's servants has something to do with it?"

"Who said they were kidnaped?"

"Oh, Matt! Are you going to give me a story? Don't you think they were kidnaped?"

"I wasn't round when it happened. As a matter of fact, you'd better ask Captain Brady. He's working on that end of it. The chief has a sort of an idea that I'm falling down on this thing, and I think he's got Brady working special on the kidnaping."

Marion Slade reached out and put a hand on his shoulder. Her eyes grew large and her voice soft.

"Is that so, Matt? I'm so sorry—sorrier than you'll ever know. Maybe I—maybe I can help—"

"You can help me," Riordan interrupted, "by staying away from Thistlelawn Villa to-night. I'll have enough to worry about there without worrying about you."

She dropped her hand and shook her head.

"Don't worry about me, Matt. I'll be all right. And maybe I can help you, too. Really— don't worry about me. I can take care of myself."

"So can I," he said. "And I've got to go do it right now."

He left her abruptly, and did not turn to note the worried look that flashed into her eyes, or to see her start a few steps after him, then pause, and resolutely walk away in the other direction.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BOUNCED

ONCE seated in the right-hand stage box at the Empire Theater for Friday night's performance of "The Golden Girl," Prince Czeresnotski, who had broken custom by wearing a gorgeous cream and scarlet uniform, belted and with a golden sword, turned to Detective Sergeant Riordan and spoke softly in his ear.

"My frien', you will help me? I haf a letterrr here"—he showed Riordan a note he held in his gloved hand. "You can go back zere, on zee stage, yes? You will take zis letterrr for me and gif it to her?"

"No, your highness. I don't think I ought to leave your side."

"One of your mens, perhaps? I haf known her name now."

Riordan hesitated a moment, then nodded. Turning he motioned to Willis, standing on the opposite side of the house in the rear; and in a moment the young inspector was in the box.

Just then the lights were lowered, the orchestra struck up the overture, and the curtain rose on the opening of the show, with the stage filled with dancing and singing girls.

"His highness got a job for you, Willis," explained Riordan. "Wants you to deliver a message back stage. Better work past Jerry Ryan on the stage door."

Czeresnotski smiled, passed the note to Willis, and patted him on the back. The young inspector moved from the box and made his way up the side aisle, but not alone.

Some lynx-eyed reporter had seen the parley in the royal box and caught a flash of white as the note changed hands, and he rose from his seat and followed Willis.

Halfway back in the house another reporter, no less crafty, but merely less lucky, also rose and made his way to the aisle.

And then, as if the news was spreading by some system of telepathy, there rose here and there in the audience clever or curious individuals who sensed a development in the prince's romance; and a constantly growing throng, like the widening tail of a comet, followed Willis up the aisle, across the foyer and into the lobby, not even pausing for door checks.

The young inspector increased his speed, the two reporters raced to his side, and the mob behind broke into a run; all pouring into the dim alley that led back to the stage door. By dint of strategy, Willis reached it first, slipped inside, and bolted it.

Jerry Ryan, veteran watchman, leaped from his chair and dashed forward with upraised cane, and then, recognizing the plain-clothes man, stood, gaping, open-mouthed.

"'S all right, Jerry," said Willis. "Couple of damn reporters just chased me up the alley, that's all."

Jerry's cane came down slowly to the floor, but his form still blocked the narrow passageway.

"An' what would reporters be chasin' you for, Mr. Willis?" he asked.

"'Cause I'm going in here."

"You're not goin' in there. Nobody but performers goes in there after the curtain is up, Mr. Willis."

"Oh, come, Jerry; I'm an officer."

"An' well do I know it."

"Well, then, I'm going in, I tell you. I've got business."

"An' I tell you, Mr. Willis, you are not goin' in. This theayter is private property, an' no officer goes in here unless there be cause for alarm or he has a warrant. Ye know the law as well as I do."

"I got to see one of the firemen, Jerry. Honest I have. They phoned down to headquarters about the pressure in the mains, an' I got to tell one of the firemen."

"I'll call him for ye. The fireman is stationed there by law, but he has no visitors. Wait, I'll phone to the gridiron, an' they'll send him down."

Jerry paused a minute, watchfully, then stepped to the telephone in his little office. As his back turned, Willis dashed by and caromed into the brawny arms of Myron Halstead, manager of the show.

"Well," he queried, holding his captive tight.

"Leggo o' me, you big stiff, or I'll—"

Halstead squeezed the words off, and carried Willis back to the narrow corridor, where Jerry had stepped from his office, reproach showing on his face.

"I think it's all right, Mr. Halstead, sir," he said, to protect Willis, for he knew the wisdom of having friends on the force. "He has a message to the fireman on the grid."

Halstead released his victim, and Willis gasped to get his breath after the grizzly grip.

"You lay your mitts on me again, you big stiff," the inspector said, when he had recovered use of his vocal cords, "and I'll fill you full of lead slugs. Get to one side. I'm going in there now. I'm an officer, and—"

"I know," said Halstead. "I was watching from the wings. I saw you called

to that royal idiot's box, and saw you take a note. That's why I came back to meet you. I'll take the note, young man."

"Like hell you will. I'll deliver it myself."

Halstead smiled.

"To whom is it addressed? Just to save any fuss, I'll call the party out."

Willis withdrew the note from his pocket, to read the name thereon, and Halstead snatched it, quick as lightning from his hand.

"Now, you young whippersnapper," he said, "get out of here while you're in good order. You've got no right here, and you know it, and if you open your yap I'll complain to the chief of police and have you broke."

Willis sprang at Halstead open-handed.

"Gimme that note," he hissed, as he launched his attack. But Jerry Ryan, wise in his day and of long and infinite experience, projected his cane between the young inspector's legs; and in less than the fraction of a second Willis felt himself hurtling through cool, dark air and heard a door slam somewhere above him.

He struck something that impeded his progress, and then came to rest on a soft and violently squirming body. It was one of the reporters, waiting outside. The other reporter pulled them apart.

"Huh, threw you out, did he? Listen, what was the name on the note?"

"Howin'ell do I know," growled Willis. "He snatched it out o' my hand. But wait."

He launched himself at the stage door, but it had been thoughtfully built, and it resisted his attacks. He pounded on it with his fists, and then with the butt of his revolver, while the crowd, highly appreciative of his efforts, applauded wildly.

Then the big form of Halloran, pushing ruthlessly through the spectators of this performance, created a diversion.

"G'wan, all of youse," rumbled the burly inspector. "Beat it out of here. G'wan now."

He shoved over three or four men to emphasize his words, and, advancing to the stage door, grasped Willis by the neck, much as a big mastiff would pick up a puppy.

"Come out of it, ye young ijiot," he growled. "Fergit it, you can get him later. Makin' a show of yourself here."

He fairly dragged Willis through the alley and away from the theater. The reporters knew better than to follow a futile chase, and the spectators, after milling around a bit, went back to the theater entrance and found they had an argument on hand to get in without door checks.

The curtain fell on the first act, and Manager Halstead, seemingly unruffled, appeared on the stage apron.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, when the hub-bub his appearance had caused died down, "it is with great regret and mortification that I come before you, but events have transpired that make it necessary.

"A member of this audience, in violation of the warning which I have broadcast both by word of mouth and in the press, has tried to communicate with a member of 'The Golden Girl' company.

"I have said that if such an attempt were made the offender would be forced to leave the house, and I am a man of my word. I will give the man who tried to smuggle a note to one of the young ladies of my compny during this first act two minutes to leave the theater."

He drew out his watch and stood looking at it.

"Thirty minutes have elapsed," he said.

Every eye in the house was focused upon the right-hand stage box, and the auditorium was so still you could have heard a pin drop.

Czeresnotski, feeling the pressure of twenty-two hundred pairs of eyes, turned to one of his lords-in-waiting and began to speak excitedly. Sergeant Riordan, sitting beside his highness, put his hand over his mouth to hide a grin.

"One minute has elapsed," intoned the voice of Halstead.

Czeresnotski leaped to his feet and half drew his gleaming sword from its scabbard. Lords Nyra and Savoff moved to his side and spoke vehemently in either ear, waving their hands the while. Slowly the prince returned his sword and resumed his seat.

"One minute and thirty seconds," said Halstead, his eyes still on his watch.

Czeresnotski rose again, leaned over the box railing, and spoke.

"'Iz highnez, Prrrince Czeresnotski, apologize," he said.

Halstead looked up for the first time. "One minute and forty-five seconds have gone. I hope I shall not have to call for assistance," he said, levelly.

A wave of murmurs swept over the house, and there was evidence of growing tension and uneasiness. Halstead snapped his watch shut and moved directly to the railing of the prince's box.

"The two minutes are up, your highness."

Czeresnotski tossed up his hands in a gesture of bafflement. Rising he threw his cloak about him and turned to the rear of the box, his lords-in-waiting forming in a protective group about him and Riordan bringing up the rear.

Part way through the box curtains the prince turned, shoved Riordan aside, and looked out over the hushed house.

"Peoples," he said, his voice breaking. "Czeresnotski is sorry. But he iz in lof."

Turning again, hurriedly, he joined his party, and they passed out the nearest fire exit to the alley, where the prince's car was strangely awaiting. Every eye in the house—some of them moist with tears—had followed his departure. When the audience turned their gaze back to the stage Halstead had stepped from sight, and only the waving curtain swung slowly back and forth. And, as if to still the babble that instantly broke out, the orchestra crashed into a rollicking air.

CHAPTER XXIX

EN GUARD

THISTLELAWN VILLA was ablaze with light. A canvas canopy stretched from its wide front porch down to the curb, with a crimson carpet covering the concrete walk beneath. Two motor cycle policemen, unmounted, stood at either side of the carriage block which Mrs. Pring had insisted should be a part of her home's equipment; a huge, liveried negro, borrowed for the occasion, stood by its side to open automobile doors.

Motor cycle men, mounted, and with revolvers thrusting boldly from the holsters hung on their Sam Browne belts, rode back and forth the length of the block, keeping arriving automobiles in a single line.

Across the street ten uniformed policemen lined the curb to keep the curious back, while scattered about the neighborhood, most of which was "improved" but not yet boasting of other houses, were patrolmen on fixed post, serious-looking and grim under the street lights.

Private automobiles of high and low degree were arriving and then passing on or else being parked on the road beyond the villa. Now and then a taxicab churned its way up to the canopy and disgorged gayly gowned women or formally dressed men.

Through the windows of the villa a great throng of guests could be seen milling about in the ground floor rooms, while open windows on the second floor revealed women being assisted in taking off their wraps by neatly aproned negro maids. It was a great night for Thistlelawn Addition.

Presently came the distant whine of sirens, and there drove up rapidly a cavalcade of motor cycle men surrounding a limousine. They wheeled aside as they neared the house and formed a line in the street, while the big car pulled up to the carriage block. The negro opened the door and bowed low.

Czeresnotski, in dazzling 'royal purple and gold uniform, his sword clanking and jingling, stepped out, followed by his lords-in-waiting in hardly less splendid attire. Within the house an orchestra struck up "Hail to the Chief," and there were faint cheers from the crowd on the opposite sidewalk. Then the limousine and the motor cycle squad moved on down the block.

A few more guests arrived after the prince, and then things on the outside quieted down. The crowd of curious folk began to dwindle, for it was nearing midnight, and the car service from Thistlelawn Addition was none of the best after that time.

Some few idlers remained, however, and were rewarded by seeing a novel sight.

There came down the street five men.

Three of them wore the neat and unostentatious uniforms of Immigration Inspectors, and two of them were inconspicuously clad in everyday attire. Of these two, one was a veritable giant and carried a bulging suitcase, while the other carried some sort of a printed list in his hand.

Coming up to a policeman, this group would halt, there would be some parleying, more or less prolonged or emphatic, but in the end the policeman would take out his revolver and hand it to the big man, who would thrust it in the suitcase, close the grip, and then the five would move on to the next patrolman. It was a curious sight, truly, and many of those who saw it marveled at it greatly.

Within the Pring residence there was nothing short of a terrific jam. The center of this was Prince Czeresnotski, Mrs. Adolph Pring and her husband.

Off in the outskirts were the three lords-in-waiting, each silent, smiling, enigmatic, the center of lesser jams. Still further in the distance was a buffet, attended by liveried servants, who did their best to dispense refreshment to all who could fight their way up within reach.

Somewhere an orchestra was grinding out jazz tunes, and on the veranda, too, many people were trying to dance in the limited space at hand. Here and there about the walls, mostly in corners, were strangely uniformed servants, standing ill at ease and watchful.

People nudged each other and pointed to them, and whispered that they were detectives.

Slowly worming her way through this crush of assorted humanity, and scanning each face as she passed, moved Marion Slade of *The Chronicle*. She was looking for " our best people," persons whose names would add eclat to the story of the reception; and she was vaguely puzzled because she did not see many of the city's real society."

Also she had an eye out for Riordan, for there was something she wanted to ask him, but not the slightest trace of the detective sergeant could she find.

Gently but firmly thrusting her body now into this opening and then into that, Marion finally found herself almost directly beside Adolph Pring, before whom there were still slowly passing a seemingly endless line of folk who craved the brief presentation to the guest of the evening. Next Pring stood Czeresnotski, and beyond him the hostess.

Marion noted that the prince seemed cynically bored at the constant line of bobbing heads before him, and that his hand seemed merely to float out and then back when a palm was extended in his direction. Mrs. Pring was highly flushed and much elated, it was evident; but there was an expression of bewilderment on Adolph Pring's features, as if he was wondering whether he was really awake or was dreaming about the whole thing.

There was a subdued buzz of conversation filling the air, a sort of rising and falling hum. The whole thing struck Marion as being in some way theatrical, and she was smiling to herself at this impression when suddenly her reportorial instinct told her that something was occurring, some note being struck not in harmony with the general tone.

Instantly her alert mind groped about to find what it was, and she realized that a peculiar silence was spreading over the crowded room—a silence that seemed to be progressing inward from the front door.

Then suddenly the wall of people in front of her broke, with a chorus of half suppressed gasps, and a nightmare figure, tall and sinister, advanced seemingly toward her.

A woman near by gave a smothered scream, but Marion did not turn her head to see who it was.

Her eyes were riveted on the approaching man; taller than the average, thin, cloaked entirely in a loose-fitting black, flowing garment, black half mask across his face, black plumed hat on his head, from underneath which flowed black and curling locks.

" *En guard*," said the figure, halting before the prince, and at the same time drawing a thin rapier from beneath the flowing cloak.

Adolph Pring took a step forward.

" Really, you know," Marion heard him say, " this won't do."

The rapier flashed in his direction with a lightning-like, vicious lunge, and Pring sprang back.

Czeresnotski, standing as he had been all evening, seemed not a whit surprised.

Eye to eye he glanced at the strange visitor, and then, with a furious suddenness, whipped out his own sword and lashed at the intruder. There was a ring of steel on steel; sparks seemed to fly from the flashing blades that whipped through the air in darting arcs.

Out of the corner of her eye, as she gazed upon the combat fascinated, Marion Slade saw Mrs. Pring lying, a slumped-down heap, upon the floor beside Czeresnotski's feet. She sensed that the close-pressed throng behind her had drawn back, and that there was beginning a wild stampede to get out of the room; but the lunging, battling figures still held her gaze.

A sharp exclamation came from the intruder, as if Czeresnotski's blade had found him off guard, and he began to lash out still more furiously. The two swords flashed incessant fire as they reflected the lights as they darted back and forth, up and down.

Czeresnotski stood exactly as he had been before, as if disdaining to yield, though his assailant began slowly to weave back and forth and to circle first toward one side and then the other.

Here was real combat, Marion sensed; a desperate struggle between two master swordsmen, and in her heart she began to " pull " for the prince.

Then, with a suddenness that seemed to upset for a moment the deadly earnestness of the two battling at her side, came two sharp reports of a revolver, followed by shouts and cries on the floor above. The attacking swordsman wavered.

She heard Czeresnotski snap something unintelligible at him which she believed to be a curse—and then she was swept from her feet in a powerful grasp, and the whole roomful of people became a confused blur before her.

There was a great stamping; indistinct, shouting figures dashed past her, she heard a veritable volley of shots, only outside the house, and then everything became dark.

CHAPTER XXX

ANOTHER KIDNAPING

WHEN she opened her eyes it still seemed to be dark, and she had the impression of hurtling through space at great speed. Dazzling lights like shooting stars flashed across her vision.

She put her hand to her eyes, rubbed them, and pulled herself together. And then she realized that she was in an automobile, flying along a dark road somewhere.

Alarm choked her for an instant, and then she laughed wildly as she saw that it was Riordan's familiar roadster, and that he was crouched silent and intent over the wheel.

" Oh, Matt," she said, " what happened? It was a wonderful fight. Who won?"

" Yeah," he answered calmly. " Well, it'd been more wonderful if I'd got there sooner. I know who'd have won in that case."

She looked closely at him, but it was too dark to see his face, and the light that illumined the instrument board cast a shadow that only intensified the shadow over his feature.

" Where are you taking me?" she asked.

" To my mother's. And you're to stay there, too. Get that?"

" Nothing of the kind," she snapped in reply. " You let me out at the first car line. I've got half of the finest story in the world, and I'm going to get it into the office."

" You're out of luck on the story. There were enough reporters out there to write a whole paper full of stories. You're going to my mother's house, and you're going to stay there, see."

" Matt, are you crazy? What's the matter with you? It's after midnight and your mother's in bed anyway, and if I don't get to the office before half past one I can't make my edition."

She grasped his shoulder frantically as he twisted the wheel sharply and the car jerked around a corner while the tires shrieked complaint.

"If you want to get out you'd better jump, then," he said, stepping on the accelerator at the same time so that the powerful machine leaped ahead. "I aim to keep you out of *The Chronicle* office to-night, if I have to keep driving this way till sun-up."

There was no lack of pluck in Marion Slade's make-up. She turned and looked over the side of the car at the road, which spun away in a gray streak beneath. No, it was no place nor time to jump. She looked over the front of the car, wondering if there was a switch she could pull that would kill the engine.

Suddenly her hand shot toward the ignition key, and fell in her lap numbed by the sharp blow Riordan had given it.

"You try any tricks," he warned, "and I'll have to get rough."

The car whirled along, its lights boring into the darkness ahead. Taking bearings by such signposts and landmarks as she caught glimpses of a they flashed by, she knew they were on the Ocean Highway. There was, she knew, a hundred miles of it stretching before them; and then a turn onto the Coast Road would offer other hundreds of miles, if Riordan was so inclined.

"Matt," she asked, "have you gone crazy?"

"Pretty near."

"Well, suppose you slow down and tell me about it."

"You give me your word not to try and jump out?"

"Don't you trust me, Matt?"

"I'm gambling on you, girly. But I'm not taking any chances. I'm going to keep driving just like this till you give me your word you'll do as I tell you. And every minute you delay is making it just so much harder for me."

There was something new in Riordan's tone that made her heart beat just a trifle faster. Yet the whole thing was ridiculous. She gave a harsh laugh.

"I'll promise nothing," she said. "Drive all night if you want to."

He made no reply, and the car continued to race through the night. Once they passed another machine, and she was tempted to cry out for help, but before she could make up her mind to do it the other car was far behind. And still they swept on into the night, the motor roaring steadily.

"Matt," she said at length, "I'll be good."

"Promise you'll do as I tell you?"

"If you ask anything reasonable."

"That won't do. Promise you'll do as I tell you from now until Sunday morning."

"Matt, you're mad. I'll do nothing of the kind. Tell me your reasons, anyway."

He made no reply, and the car still rushed on. She watched the speedometer, and was amazed at how rapidly the miles were clicked off. The speed indicator showed sixty-five miles an hour, and the totals dial kept changing with terrifying rapidity. The figures had leaped up nine miles without a word spoken.

"I promise, Matt," she said.

He jammed on the brakes, and the car grated and skidded to a stop. Frantically he backed up, jerked the wheel around, shifted gears, shot the car ahead, and they had turned. He tooled the machine up to top speed again and began as mad a rush back toward the city as he had taken in getting away from it.

"Remember, girly," he said at last, "you've given me your word. Now I'll tell you what you're going to do. I'm going to take you to my mother's, and you're going to stay there till I come for you.

"And play dead; no telephones to the office or to anywhere. Mother'll take care of you. I'll probably be around for you Saturday night, or send for you, but it may be Sunday morning. Mother'll take care of you, so you needn't worry. I'll tell her it's all right."

She shivered slightly.

"But why, Matt? I'll do it; I've promised. But why? What's happened?"

"You're in a helluva jam, that's what's happened. You think you've been having a good time writing all this stuff about the prince and standing beside him in that ruckus to-night; but, as a matter of fact, you've been getting in deeper and deeper. And if anybody was hurt in that stampede

at Pring's, you're in good and bad. That's why.

"I don't know who started the gunplay—I thought I had all the guns out of it. I was so darned sure I had all the guns located that I took my time about gettin' there; and I was pretty near too late.

"But, thank God, I got there in time to get you out during the excitement, and if it comes to a show-down I can go to the front and alibi for you, by swearing you and me were out joyriding. That's why."

Marion Slade bowed her head, and tears welled to her eyes, so that she was thankful for the darkness that hid her face. She reached out a hand and patted his arm. But Riordan kept both hands on the wheel, and did not slacken the speed of his roaring roadster till he turned into the street before his mother's house.

There was a light burning in the window, and as the big car grated to a stop before the cottage, Mrs. Riordan opened the front door and came down the graveled walk through the garden to meet the girl reporter.

CHAPTER XXXI

FACING IT OUT

DETECTIVE SERGEANT RIORDAN drove into the police garage at headquarters at half past two in the morning, parked his roadster in the space usually reserved for it, nodded to the driver of the patrol wagon who was lolling sleepily on its seat, and pushed through the swinging doors into the main lobby. This chamber, usually deserted at such a before-dawn hour, was brilliantly illuminated, and uniformed and plainclothes men were standing around in groups, talking.

At Riordan's entrance conversation stopped so suddenly that he realized his position was going to be more unpleasant than he had anticipated.

The door to the chief's office was closed, but there was light to be seen in the crack beneath it, so he knew somebody was inside. Squaring his shoulders and assuming a "poker" face, the detective sergeant strode across the lobby, and, without knocking, opened the chief's door and walked in.

His glance, sweeping the room, took in the figures of Captain Brady, Chief Roberts, his honor the mayor, and Adolph Pring. They all looked up at his entry.

"Where hae ye been, mon?" demanded the chief, lapsing into his Scotch accent, as he always did when he was laboring under great strain.

"I've been busy, sir."

The mayor slapped his palm on the table.

"Well," he snorted, "you must be tired. I'll see that you have a chance to rest. You're removed from duty pending an investigation into charges which I shall file against you. Give me your star; we want no cowards on the force."

Riordan's face never changed. He turned back his coat, unpinned his shield, and threw it in front of the city's executive.

The chief worked his lips as if he was minded to say something, but kept them pressed together.

"The boy's no coward, your honor," said Captain Brady.

"No," sneered the mayor. "He ran away, didn't he? He and that girl reporter?"

Brady answered nothing.

"Yes," continued the mayor, "he ran away. While a gang of desperate ruffians was attempting to raid Mr. Pring's residence, while Prince Czeresnotski was fighting for his very life with an armed antagonist, what did this big lout do?

"He came into the room, saw what was going on, grabbed this girl reporter and ran away. Fine policemen you make, Captain Brady."

Riordan fixed a gleaming eye on Pring, and the promoter looked down at the floor.

"Weel, weel, mon, hae ye nothin' to say?" demanded Chief Roberts.

"Not now, sir," answered Riordan stolidly.

The mayor smiled evilly.

"Riordan," he said, with mock seriousness. "Captain Brady tells me you are a great de-teck-a-tiff. You have been working on this case concerning the prince for a week. Would you mind telling me what you've found out?"

"I am not yet ready to report on it, sir," replied Riordan, levelly.

His honor waved his hands.

"See," he said, "it's as I told you, Roberts. The man is stalling. He doesn't know anything. And he can't even cover up. Or else he knows better than to try."

Adolph Pring looked up from the floor, and startled the group by saying:

"Your honor, I think perhaps I was mistaken. In the confusion it is quite possible I was mistaken. Now that I see the officer here in a good light, and closely, I do not think he was the man at all who took that girl reporter from the room. I am quite sure he wasn't, in fact.

"The man I saw was about this man's build, but he was ugly looking, rough. The officer here is a very fine-appearing man."

The mayor, watching Riordan's face as Pring spoke, was able to detect no change in the detective sergeant's features. He turned to Pring.

"Are you getting cold feet?" he demanded. "Has this bully terrorized you? Are you trying—"

"Your honor, I am trying to do justice. I was mistaken, and I regret it. This is positively not the man I saw. I am very sorry I made the mistake; sorrier still that I have caused the officer such humiliation."

The mayor shifted back and forth in his chair, and threw his hands in the air.

"Well, I'll be double-damned," he exclaimed. "Either I'm crazy or else you all are. Riordan, what do *you* think happened to-night?"

"I don't know, sir. What did?"

His honor, nonplused by the reply, was silent a moment; then he laughed shortly.

"You're either too clever, or you're a fool," he snapped, "turning my meaning like that. Well, I'll tell you what happened: first of all, some Federal men came along and took all the guns away from the policemen assigned to this confounded reception; then some crazy man rushed into the place and attacked the prince with a sword.

"There were some more of the gang upstairs, but Partridge, of the Protective Bureau, was up there, and he saw them and called on them to halt. They started to run, and Partridge took a shot at them but missed.

"Two of the men were captured outside the house, however, by Captain Brady, who had come out to look things over. The captain had to fire several times at them before they halted, but he got them. In the excitement the man who attacked the prince got away.

"You were supposed to be there, guarding the prince, but you weren't. Stacy and Willis were there, but they were so far back in the jam they couldn't get to the prince till he'd succeeded in beating off his assailant.

"Of course the party broke up with all that excitement. And while everybody here was on the way out to Pring's, answering a riot call• that had been turned in, the Federals brought all those guns in and left 'em upstairs.

"Now, if you're such a whale of a sleuth, maybe you can explain all that."

Riordan's only difficulty was in not taking a deep breath. Of any change in his features he had no fear, for he had sat in too many a poker session in earlier days to be afraid his face would betray him. But it was a great relief to learn the cause of the shooting.

He turned to Captain Brady.

"You make the two guys you got, chief?" he asked.

"One of 'em, boy, was Charley Leighton, the prowl. The other one's one of Leighton's pals. He give the name of Hawkins. I haven't had a chance to look him up yet, but I suspect Leighton met him during his last stretch up the river."

Riordan turned slowly to the mayor.

"Your honor, I'd say it was like this. I'd say that these two prowls, figurin' the chance for a haul was good, had got into the house and were flushed by Partridge.

"I suppose Mr. Pring hired Pat to watch the guests' coats and hats. And Pat, not having any sense, never thought of scaring the women downstairs, but unlimbers at Leighton, and then later on invents all this blah about there being a gang.

"And Leighton and his pal, getting to the street and finding the place all cluttered up with bulls, legged it till Captain Brady here got to shooting too close. I didn't suppose there'd be any prowl fool

enough to try the Pring joint with the streets all full of bulls like that, or I'd have been prepared for it."

The mayor's lip curled and he laughed derisively.

"Oh, yes, sergeant, you'd have been prepared for it. I suppose you were prepared for the vicious attack on the prince, too, were you?"

"Yes, sir, I expected that. In fact it was at my suggestion, sir, that Dr. Lombardi sent three of his boys out to disarm the army of cops out there."

His honor leaped to his feet.

"You! You had half the police force disarmed," he shouted. "For God's sake, what for? Do you want the prince killed?"

"The prince will take care of himself, sir. He proved that he could, didn't he?

"What I was afraid of was that when the ruckus started somebody'd lose his head, just like Partridge did, and start shooting. There were all of seven hundred people at that reception, sir; and stray bullets plowing into a crowd like that would have been fine, wouldn't they?"

Captain Brady nodded his head vehemently.

"The boy's right, your honor," he said. "I realized that when I saw these two birds running. I waited till they got beyond the house before I started shooting, even shooting in the air. I didn't fire at their legs, sir, till they were two blocks clear of Pring's place."

"Did you bring those guns back here?" asked the mayor.

"No, sir, I sent 'em in by Halloran and Enright."

The city executive strummed on the table with his fingers.

"Where were you when all this was going on?"

"Looking for somebody, sir."

"You find him?"

"I got the party I was looking for, sir."

"Somebody mixed up in this plot against the prince?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where's your prisoner?"

"Locked up."

The mayor reached for the telephone.

"Connect me with the jail," he said.

While he was waiting for the operator to ring, Riordan reached over, took the instrument from his hands, moved the receiver up and down, and said:

"Never mind," then hung up.

"Your honor'll pardon me," he continued, turning to the amazed executive, "but Dr. Lombardi and the Federals are very much interested in this case, sir. And you can't talk to or see Federal prisoners. As a matter of fact, your honor, I'm working with Lombardi on this thing."

He reached in his pocket, drew forth the Immigration Bureau shield he had, and placed it on the table.

"It's a little irregular, your honor, but you might say I was temporarily one of Lombardi's deputies. Of course I'm not getting any pay, that's against regulations; but this happens to be a case where we can work together very nicely."

Captain Brady suddenly grew jaunty. He felt he was on firm ground now. He turned to Chief Roberts, but spoke for the mayor's benefit:

"You see, chief," he said. "I told you the boy was all right. He can't be expected to spill Federal dope round here, and it's perfectly all right for him to work with the Federals if they'll let him. I'm proud Dr. Lombardi has asked him to.

"I told you when them cops reported that Federal men had taken their guns, that this was deep international stuff and you'd get your fingers burned if you went pokin' into it."

"Perhaps I can throw some light on this," began Mr. Pring. "I have not told you all I know. As a matter of fact it was this officer here who—"

"You shut your damned head," ordered Riordan, "or I'll put you some place you won't like."

Adolph Pring closed up like a clam.

The mayor was impressed, but not convinced. Yet he realized that he could very easily get into deep water, and he had the usual cheap politician's respect for the power of the Federal officials.

"When do you think Lombardi will take action in this case?" he asked.

"I expect it will be all wound up by tomorrow night, sir," answered Riordan.

The city's executive pushed the Immigration Bureau badge back across the desk to Riordan's side, and flicked the detective sergeant's star after it.

"Well, sergeant, it may be all right," he said. "It looks fishy, but it may be all right. I don't suppose you'd be fool enough to flash one of those Federal badges unless you had a right to. I'll suspend judgment.

"In the meantime, you're relieved from further duty, and Captain Niles will guard the prince until this thing is over. You can devote all your energies, then, to helping the Federal men.

"But I want you to make me a full report on this thing when it's all wound up. And God help you if you've been stalling me."

"Thank you, sir." Riordan picked up the two badges and thrust them in his pocket. "May I ask, your honor, if you were at the reception to-night, or last night, to be exact?"

"Why, no, sergeant, I wasn't. I was unable to go."

"May I ask why, sir?"

The mayor looked at Pring, and then looked away. He did not answer. Riordan reached for a piece of paper, and wrote on it:

> Mrs. Matthew Matthew was advised to suggest to her friends that it might be safer not to attend.

Folding the paper, he passed it to the mayor, who opened it, read it twice, and then looked at Riordan wide-eyed.

"By gad," he exclaimed, "damn if I don't believe what you told me, now. That's the same thing my wife told me."

Adolph Pring held out his hand.

"Mr. Mayor, may I see that paper?" he asked.

His honor laughed.

"I should say not. Not in a thousand years."

The promoter and owner of Thistlelawn Addition bridled.

"All right then," he snapped. "Now I'm going to belch.

"It *was* this officer here who ran away from the fight last night with that girl reporter, and, what's more, it was this officer here who put me up to—who suggested that I—oh, hell, you wouldn't believe me if I told you."

The mayor laughed loudly.

"You're right Pring, I wouldn't believe you. I know you too well to believe you. Remember, I bought some stock in your match factory once.

"And I'll tell you frankly, the greatest mystery in the whole thing to me is why the prince ever went to your house in the first place, after refusing to attend a reception from the chamber of commerce.

"Maybe you think you put over something, Pring, by getting his highness out there; but you didn't. Every woman who didn't go will be off you for the rest of her life, and she'll knock you and knock you and knock you. I know: I've been listening to my wife for two days now."

"Your wife was invited, and so were you," exclaimed Pring.

"I know it. But we—we couldn't come. Well, it's late, gentlemen, or else it's early. We'll adjourn this thing till to-morrow.

"I'm sorry, sergeant, for what I said to you, but you've got to admit it looked bad till you explained."

"I'm glad you think it was explained, sir," answered Riordan, as they all left the chief's office together.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE PRINCE FINDS HIS LOVE

SATURDAY morning's papers were fairly good reading. It was a chance not to be missed. News editors, head writers and make-up men threw themselves wholeheartedly into the task before them, and it may be frankly said they cleaned up big.

In fact when they got through describing the Pring reception, the assault upon the house by "the murderous gang of armed thugs, who were defeated in their purpose solely by the skilled swordsmanship of Prince Czeresnotski, who held their leader at bay in a play of rapiers until police arrived," there wasn't, apparently, much left for the afternoon papers to do but stew it all over again in different words.

However, the afternoon papers had their own special morsel. Prince Czeresnotski, they recounted, had early in the morning sent word that he had a public statement to make. Reporters had flocked to the Belmont-Grand, and the prince himself had received them in audience and very decidedly given them some news.

According to the newspapers, his highness spoke in the third person, and apparently he spoke better English than usual, for *The Star*, for instance, quoted him as follows:

"Gentlemen of the press," he stated, his voice grave in tone and his words measured, as if he was carefully reviewing the intent he wished to convey, "the Prince Czeresnotski desires to say to the people of your city that he feels a grave injustice has been done him. He came to the United States to ask the woman of his choice to become his wife. He came to your city to ask this fairest of women to share his throne and join him in ruling his nation.

"Since his arrival here he has been visited with misfortune after misfortune. While some of the things that have occurred have been of a nature he does not care to discuss; he also has been blocked in carrying out his plans by the manager of the theatrical company with which, at present, his beloved is playing. He has been insulted by this man and indignity heaped upon him in public. However, he will overlook this.

"Upon sober reflection, however, His Highness Prince Czeresnotski has been led to believe that perhaps he took a mistaken course in trying to reach in the most direct fashion the lady at whose feet he desires to lay his heart. Perhaps his efforts really embarrassed the manager of 'The Golden Girl' company.

"If so, the prince is sorry.

"Making this concession, then, it is the desire of the prince to say that in the future he will abide by what is perhaps a more common American custom. Instead of trying to communicate with the lady in question while she is adding her beauty to a wonderful performance, and so antagonizing her extremely solicitous manager, he will, for the time being, act as the humblest freeman in the United States, and will dispatch to this lady a letter in the public mails, bearing a two-cent stamp. In fact, his highness has already dispatched this letter.

"And now he desires to state, formally, that he has abided by the laws of the land and adopted the common custom of the citizens of the United States. For the time being he is under the protection of the government, and so is his letter. He will, therefore, insist on the strict obedience of all parties concerned to the statutes of the United States. And he further desires to say that if any attempt, by any person, is made to prevent delivery of this letter, or to deprive him of an answer to it, he will see that the infringement upon his rights and personal liberty is laid before the proper authorities at Washington, District of Columbia, and sufficient punishment meted out to those who so interfere, deprive him of his rights, and violate the government regulations.

"Furthermore, his letter to the estimable lady in question is so worded that he will know, when he attends the theater this evening, whether or not it has been interfered with."

In other words, as the head writers said it

PRINCE DEMANDS U. S. PROTECTION

Show Manager May Be Cited for Blocking Federal Mail

And so on, which gave the afternoon papers a brand new lead upon which to hang their stories of the events of the evening before and subsequent developments as they were able to ascertain or imagine.

Among these were accounts of Captain Niles's assignment to guard the prince, veiled hints that Detective Sergeant Riordan was on the immediate trail of the "black robed thug" who attempted assassination of the prince, and intimations that police artillery had been tampered with the night before. There was also a carefully worded declaration that "evidence has been developed to show that many prominent people were secretly warned to remain away from the reception," showing that a "large and well-organized gang" had been concerned in the onslaught that ended the Pring reception in "something very close to a panic."

Yes, the papers did very well with it; and the most noticeable result was that Manager Stark of the Empire Theater had to call police reserves to handle the mob that was attempting to rush the doors at the matinee performance of "The Golden Girl" to see whether or not the prince's inamorata had received the prince's letter.

Maybe some people in the audience paid attention to the performance, but if they did they were in a very small minority.

The rest divided their efforts between the right-hand stage box and the members of the chorus.

In the prince's box all seemed serenity. His highness wore a smile of triumphant contentment, as well as a gaudy military uniform. His lords-in-waiting seemed pleasurably expectant, and Captain Niles, replacing Detective Sergeant Riordan, sat erect and alert for any contingency.

As far as the chorus went, it must be admitted that they seemed "jumpy" and excited. Doubtless, the audience concluded, there had been a violent scene when the letter arrived.

The great question was: had it been delivered, or had Manager Halstead laid himself open to governmental prosecution for interfering with the United States mails? And if the letter had been permitted to take its course, which of the beautiful maidens had received it, and how would she signal the prince?

Not only was the chorus distinctly "jumpy," but the girls did not look at the audience with ravishing smiles, as usual, nor did they cast roguish eyes at the right-hand stage box.

Their attention seemed fixed on something that was going on behind the scenes, and several times the conductor of the orchestra had to rap sharply on the footlights guard to bring the beautiful singers back to something approaching the musical tempo required.

The opening ensemble concluded, there developed a delay in the usual smooth-running show, and faint sounds of scuffling drifted out to the audience from behind the wings. To cover this the orchestra conductor emphatically waved his baton, the final strains of the opening number were repeated, and the chorus was forced to sing again the words of the refrain.

In spite of this, however, the disturbance off stage continued. Just as the music again came to its close there was the distinct sound of quick blows and of a heavy body falling, and a second later one of the property men, clad in dirty jumper and with his face all grimy, dashed out into the full glare of the footlights.

In the brilliant center stage he hesitated a moment, apparently confused. The chorus fluttered down about him, waved there by an imperious signal from the orchestra director; but the move was futile.

Looking around an instant, as if to get his bearings, the property man spotted the uniform of the prince, gleaming in the darkened house, and with a roar of rage he pushed his way through the encircling chorus girls' blockade and strode out on the apron.

In an instant only the grilled box railing separated him from Czeresnotski, who had risen in his seat and reached for his sword. Fortunately, perhaps, the tassel on its handle was tangled in the prince's belt, and he did not seem able to draw the blade.

Shaking his fist in Czeresnotski's face, the property man shouted:

"Whatcher mean, you dirty furriner; sendin' mash notes to my wife? Fer two cents I'd give you a pair of dark lamps!"

For just an instant the two stood there in tableau, while the audience held its breath—and then the very roof of the theater seemed that it must lift as a great howl of laughter split the air.

True, here was stark tragedy being enacted in the great auditorium, the blighting of the prince's hopes and dreams and the threatened vengeance of an outraged husband; but such is the American temperament that the humor of the situation was seen first; and the walls of the Empire Theater trembled as the waves of glee and mirth crashed against them, echoed and re-echoed.

Stricken, the prince crumpled and sank slowly into his chair, burying his face in his hands.

The property man, perhaps appalled at what he had done, glared at the shrinking figure a moment, and then stamped back upstage and disappeared. And as the orchestra director beat frantically with his baton, to start the chorus once again on the overture, those in the audience who were not blinded by tears of laughter saw Detective Sergeant Riordan enter the royal box and place his hand on Czeresnotski's shoulder.

A moment later he helped the prince to rise, and led him from the view of the

audience; while Inspectors Willis, Enright and Stacy performed a similar duty for the three lords-in-waiting, who also appeared overcome by the blighting of their master's romance. Captain Niles brought up the rear of the procession, which passed out the nearest fire exit.

CHAPTER XXXIII

MISSING MEN

AFTER that "The Golden Girl" had to stand on its own legs, so to speak; for there was no further attraction for the public in the right-hand stage box. It was the first time, perhaps, during the engagement, that the show got its full measure of attention from the public; and, apparently, the public approved it, for the applause was all that could be desired when the final curtain fell upon the matinée.

The house was jammed for Saturday night's performance, too. Advance sales earlier in the week, before the tragic end of the prince's quest, had assured that, even if Saturday had not normally been the best show night at the Empire.

The only vacant seats, in fact, were in the right-hand stage box, which, having been sold in advance to his highness's party, Stark did not feel like reselling. And it was always possible that the prince might reappear.

But he did not. Nor did he return to his suite at the Belmont-Grand. Enterprising reporters had discovered that in time for Saturday's late sporting editions. Reporters for the morning papers, going to work later, discovered other things.

Not only had Prince Czeresnotski and his lords-in-waiting failed to return to the hotel, but Captain Niles had disappeared with them. So, for that matter, had Sergeant Riordan.

Another reporter, attempting to interview Manager Myron Halstead and discover the name of the chorus girl who, it had developed, was the wife of a property man, found that Halstead also had not returned to his hotel after the matinée.

This reporter had imagination, and he began to vision things. The prince and Halstead certainly were not on friendly terms. Perhaps the prince, enraged at finding his suit blocked and his hopes dashed, had vented his anger by doing bodily harm to Halstead. Perhaps Captain Niles had interfered, and also had suffered.

Hopefully he sought police headquarters and began inquiries. Nobody seemed to know anything about Niles there; he was on duty at the Belmont-Grand, it was supposed.

The news hound sped to the hostelry. Diligent inquiry there merely revealed that Prince Czeresnotski had not returned to his rooms since he had left them to go to the matinée. Further inquiry brought out the added information that Mr. Saunderson, the prince's courier and aid, also was out, and had been out for some time.

Telephoning to Sergeant Riordan's room on the third floor produced nothing; a visit to the room showed it not only empty, but devoid of Riordan's effects as well.

The reporter was very sure he had something important, and rushed to his office to tell his city editor.

By that time "The Golden Girl" was giving its last presentation at the Empire Theater, its engagement closing Saturday night. A telephone to the theater brought word that Manager Halstead was not there.

"Of course he'll be in later," assured Stark. "He'll have to be here to count up and close the week's business, which sure has been good."

"Of course," responded the city editor, and he hung up.

He told the reporter not to use his imagination so much.

"Chances are, kid, that they've all gone out to one of the road houses to help the prince drown his sorrow," he said. "However, you might drop round to the theater about ten o'clock and see.

"If Halstead isn't there by that time, there may be something in the wind. But I think you're just having a pipe-dream."

In the meantime, while "The Golden Girl" was triumphantly concluding its engagement, Captain of Detectives Brady, Manager Partridge of the local branch of the Protective Association, and Chief of

Police Roberts were holding earnest conversation with one Charles Leighton, alleged prowl, in the office of the Detective Bureau executive.

"If I had my way," suggested Partridge, "I'd make him come through, an' you know how."

"No," said Brady, shaking his head. "I don't like to get rough with 'em, Pat."

Turning to the prisoner, he tried again.

"Now listen here, Charlie; you don't know what you're up against. This here thing you've stepped into, Charlie, is a Federal case, and you might need all the friends you can get. If I was in your place I'd play safe, and make a plea for the prowl in the courts here, instead of taking a chance of getting jammed up with the government."

Leighton shook his head.

"Yuh ain't got nothin' on me, cap," he insisted for the 'steenth time. "An' I tell yuh I don't know nothin' about this here other stuff you're talkin' about. Nobody seen me get nothin' an' there was nothin' on me when I was frisked, an' I didn't have no rod nor nothin'.

All yuh got on me is that this stool Partridge here says he took a shot at me an' I run. Who wouldn't?"

"You were in the residence, weren't you?" interposed Roberts. "Entering a dwelling illegally in the night time."

"Sure I was in the place. I never denied it, did I? An' I tol' yuh why. I seen this other guy crawlin' in, an' I went after him to give the alarm. Yuh don't think I'm such a fool, do yuh, as to try an' prowl a joint when there's forty-seven cops standin' round in plain sight?"

"That's a rotten stall," commented Partridge. "Tryin' to pass the buck to your partner, and get off scot free yourself."

"Of course he is," agreed Roberts. "The other fellow is in the first time, and will get off light. Charlie, here, is a three-time loser, and he knows if he's convicted they may hang the habitual criminal law on him. It won't go, Charlie."

"Me mouthpiece will make it go, for it's Gawd's truth," responded the second story man. "I seen this guy go into the place, an' I says to myself I'm just out o' stir, an' if I get this bloke an' turn him in, maybe it will put me in right with the bulls, an' I can stay here for the winter. Bummin' round in the winter rain an' snow ain't any too good for an old fellow like me."

Captain Brady pointed a finger at the prowler.

"Tell you what I'll do, Charlie," he said. "Much as I hate to bargain with a crook, I'll make you an offer. You come clean on this other stuff, and I'll tell the prosecuting attorney I believe this cock-and-bull stall of yours."

"What other stuff?" demanded Leighton.

"The attack on the prince. You tell me who that guy was and I'll make it as easy for you as I can."

"I don't know nothin' about it," persisted Leighton.

The door to the inner office opened and Sergeant Riordan, accompanied by Dr. Lombardi, walked in. The Immigration Bureau man nodded to the two police officers, ignored Partridge, and found himself a seat. Riordan went to his own desk and sat down.

"Boy," said Brady, "I'm trying to get Leighton here to come through."

"About what, chief?"

"About the guy who attacked the prince."

"Huh, he don't know any more about that than you do," replied Riordan.

"He was there, wasn't he?" demanded Brady sharply, far from pleased at Riordan's words and tone.

"He ran past it," answered Riordan. "On the way out of the house. That was all."

"How do you know so much about it?" demanded Chief Roberts.

Riordan turned to the head of the department.

"I was lyin' out in the grass back of Pring's place," he said, "waiting for a party I expected to show up. Pretty soon up come Leighton and this Hawkins guy and hid out not five feet from me.

"Hawkins was bellyaching that it was a fool plant, that there were too many bulls around. Leighton, here, comes back by accusing him of having cold feet, and pointed out that there weren't any bulls in the back

of the house at all. There had been two men stationed there, but they beat it into the kitchen to get some eats. Finally—"

"You mean two uniformed men left their posts?" demanded the chief, fire kindling in his eye.

"I'm telling you about Leighton, not snitching on the harnessed men," said Riordan. "Well, finally Leighton gets Hawkins convinced that the plant was safe, and that after they got in they could slip out easy enough in the crowd, wearing coats they'd borrowed off some of the men at the reception.

"So they went up over the back porch and into the window of one of the rooms the women's wraps was laid out in."

"And you let them enter the house?" queried the chief.

"Sure, I let 'em in. If they could get away with it, and twenty bulls around the place, and two reliefs of dicks inside, they deserved all they could get.

"They had as much chance to prowl that house, chief, unless there was something queer going on, as the celluloid rabbit had in you know where.

"I had something else to worry about aside from a couple of cheap prowls walking into half the police force. But they hadn't been in there much more'n a minute before I heard a woman scream and a lot of scuffling in the place, so I went right in after 'em."

"How did you get in?" asked Roberts.

"Same way they did, up the back porch pillars, through the window and then downstairs to where the ruckus was."

Roberts nodded his head.

"And then," he said, an unpleasant tone in his voice, "I suppose it looked pretty tough to you, and so you got out again."

"I got what I went in after, and got out," corrected Riordan.

Leighton, listening to all this, lost his pose and began to fidget.

"Sort of knocks your story into a cocked hat, doesn't it, Charlie?" sneered Partridge.

Chief Roberts either didn't hear this pleasantry or decided to ignore it.

"Well," he rasped, "what are you here now for?"

Riordan motioned to the Federal man.

"The doc and me, chief, wanted to talk to some prisoners we got, and we didn't know we were going to walk into a session here. If you're busy with Charlie, we can go up to the traffic department rooms."

"About this prince thing?"

Lombardi answered:

"Yes, chief. I'm quite interested in the man Czeresnotski. I heard you were somewhat interested, too."

"I'll say I'm interested. Brady, have this cheap prowl sent upstairs again. We'll finish with him later."

The captain pushed a button on his desk and motioned to the responding doorman to return the prisoner to jail. As the two passed out they stepped aside to permit two other folk to enter—his honor the mayor and a man all the officers instantly recognized as Ichabod Nichols, reputed to be the best "fixer," political and otherwise, in the city.

"Good evening, gentlemen," smiled the mayor. "You all know Ike Nichols, I guess. We came down to hear Sergeant Riordan's report, he telephoned me he had something."

While the chief was shaking hands with Nichols, whom he knew as one of the powers behind the throne, Captain Brady flashed an inquiring glance at his sergeant, but got no signal in response.

"Show's just about to start, your honor," said Riordan, levelly. "I promised you six or seven arrests last time I was talking to you, and now I'm ready to make good that promise.

"If Dr. Lombardi doesn't want these birds, I can lay charges against them myself."

He reached for the telephone on his desk and spoke quietly into it for a few minutes. Then he settled back in his chair and lighted a cigar. Very presently the door was opened again and the big form of Inspector Halloran squeezed through the aperture, followed by four men.

As they entered the room, his honor gave a gasp as he recognized Prince Czeresnotski, Lord Nyra, Lord Savoff and Lord Kurt. The four glanced about the room, and then stood somewhat uneasily in a row as Hal-

loran closed the door behind them and placed his back against it.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE MAYOR MAKES A DISCOVERY

THE mayor half rose from his chair, as if he was going to greet his highness, but Dr. Lombardi forestalled him. Stepping forward, he reached in his pocket and drew out some papers, tapping the prince upon the chest with them.

"I'm chief immigration inspector here," he said. "Have you any papers with you: passport, or anything like that?"

Czeresnotski glared, but made no answer.

"No foolin' now," snapped Lombardi. "You're up against Uncle Sam, man, and you want to think fast and talk pretty. All I've got to do is to pin 'illegal entry' on you, and you'll be sent back where you came from."

"You got a fat chance," said the prince.

The mayor gasped and Captain Brady looked stunned. Partridge emitted a slight snicker, and Sergeant Riordan whirled in his direction.

"That'll do for you, Pat," he snarled.

"And why, Prince What's-your-name, have I got a fat chance?" asked Lombardi's soft voice.

"Aw, can the comedy," responded Czeresnotski. "What's this all about, anyway?"

Dr. Lombardi tapped the prince again with the sheaf of papers.

"I've got here," he said, "Federal warrants for John Doe, alias Prince Czeresnotski; Richard Roe, alias Lord Kurt; James Roe, alias Lord Nyra, and Mike Roe, alias Lord Savoff, charging them with being aliens improperly within the United States. Mike Roe is a bit unusual, perhaps, but it's the only name I could think of at the time.

"You have been detained as Federal prisoners; shall I take you before a United States Commissioner and have you committed for deportation?"

"Say, listen," protested the prince, in vexed tones, "can that stuff, I tell you. We wasn't hired to stand for anything more than we got already. Where's Halstead? You send for him."

Dr. Lombardi feigned surprise.

"*Hired?*" he inquired.

"Sure, hired. In San Francisco, for one week here and transportation both ways. You're full of prunes if you think you can pull anything more on us."

"I shall have to look into this," declared Lombardi, with mock seriousness. "What is your real name, John Doe, alias Prince Czeresnotski?"

The prince sniggered.

"John Abercrombie," he answered.

"And your residence?"

"I left me trunk in a hotel on Market Street."

"And your occupation?"

"Character man, at liberty right now."

"You claim to be an American citizen?"

"You bet your boots. I can get Mayor Rolph to prove it, too."

"And your friends here, do you know whether they are citizens or not?"

"I'll tell the world they are. Haven't you ever heard of the Wilson Brothers, kings of the slack wire? We were all of us at liberty when this thing broke, and we snapped it up."

"Well, well, how curious," said Dr. Lombardo. "I guess I've been mistaken. As far as I am concerned, you gentlemen can go."

Grinning, they turned toward the door, still blocked by Halloran.

"Take 'em upstairs, big boy," said Riordan, from his desk. "Book the whole four of 'em to you and me, registering at a public lodging house under assumed names."

The prince turned sharply.

"Hey," he protested, "you can't do that. We didn't register."

"You occupied accommodations, the residence is assumed, since you made no protest," said Riordan. "Take 'em upstairs, Halloran, and send Willis and Stacy down with what they've got."

"You mean to tell me it was a fraud," gasped the mayor, as the group left the office. "Why, what's was the idea?"

"Did your honor think it was real?" countered Riordan.

"But the attacks, sergeant, all the—"

"We'll come to that, sir. Just wait."

Willis and Stacy had some trouble bringing "what they got" in. Manager Myron Halstead, of "The Golden Girl" company, wanted to fight, and very nearly got what he wanted from the little young Willis. Jack Saunderson, courier and aid extraordinary to the prince, wanted to persuade Stacy that he really hadn't done a thing; but Stacy brought him in just the same.

Once in the captain's office, Halstead burst into oratory.

"Now see here, captain, or whoever's in charge, this thing has gone far enough. I've got to catch a train. I'm willing to do what's reasonable, but I'll be d—"

"Halstead, it's your turn to be good," interrupted Riordan. "You got heavy with me back stage once, and it was your province. This is my office, and I'm boss here right now. You're under arrest for obtaining money under false pretenses. And you can't talk yourself out of it, so don't try. You can go to the telephone and call a lawyer, if you want to."

Halstead's mouth hung open in amazement. Young Saunderson shoved forward.

"Now listen, boss," he said, laying a hand on Halstead's arm, "you lemme fix this. You shut up. I told you if you got to jawing you'd get in a jam. You leave it to me."

He moved forward to Riordan.

"Sarge," he said, "I'll hand it to you. You did a good job. Wiped it all up nice and clean. Had me fooled, too, you did; the way you let me go the limit. Once or twice I thought you were wise, but then again I decided you weren't. But I gotta hand it to you, you're good. By the way, what have you got me charged with?"

"Malicious mischief, assault and battery, being armed, and attempting to manufacture evidence to hinder the operation of justice. Think that'll hold you for awhile?"

Saunderson laughed.

"Fine, fine, sarge. You're good. I'll tell the world you are. Now listen, how can we fix this, eh? The boss and I have got to get a train, and—"

"By the way, Halstead, you paid the bill at the Belmont-Grand for the royal suite yet?" asked Riordan, ignoring Saunderson's plea for the time being.

The manager of "The Golden Girl" winced.

"I'll pay it," he said. "How could I pay it, when you've had me locked up in jail ever since the show closed? I was going to pay it."

"You might write an order for it now, then. They've still got your money down at the theater; I told Stark you'd been detained and wanted him to hold it. I suppose they want about a hundred dollars a day for that suite and the grub."

"A hundred dollars!"

The enormity of it struck the showman so hard that he forgot his other troubles.

"A hundred dollars? They ought to pay us for giving 'em a prince at their old house. I'll not pay a hundred dollars. They had seven rooms, and at four dollars a day, that would be twenty-eight dollars. They ought to knock off three dollars for the advertising it gave 'em. I'll pay twenty-five dollars a day, but no more."

"There was the window you drilled the hole in," reminded Riordan, "and the hole you drilled in the walnut bedstead and the hole in the wall. Rotten job that was, holes all the same size. Bullet, you know, would have flattened out, and by the time it got to the wall it would have stopped."

"I didn't drill any holes," protested Halstead.

"You did, too. You and Saunderson and the Abercrombie guy all worked at the drill. You had a helluva time with the window, so hard that an old dentist, across the street, who was working late making some plates, saw you.

"He couldn't imagine what you were doing. Next day I had a helluva time shutting him up."

Saunderson flashed a glance at Riordan.

"Oh? So that was it, was it; I wondered about that," he said.

"Never mind you doing any wondering," put in Riordan. "You had your party, now it's my turn."

"Better make it fifty dollars a day, Mr. Halstead," said Ike Nichols. "I can fix it."

Halstead looked at the man, recognized certain well-known signs, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, well," he said after a moment. "I suppose it's cheap at that. Gimme a piece of paper."

Nichols passed him a pad, and he wrote an order for three hundred and fifty dollars on the Empire Theater, and passed it back. Nichols put the order in his pocket.

The mayor began to regain his composure and to get a glimmer of what was going on.

"You mean," he said, hesitatingly, "you mean this whole thing was faked? What in heaven's name for?"

"Yes, tell the mayor all about it," suggested Riordan.

CHAPTER XXXV

FIXED

SAUNDERSON took it upon himself again to be spokesman.

"It's like this, see? You all know, or you ought to, that this is the punkest show town on the coast. In the first place, you're a 'nine o'clock' town, and people don't go out much, and in the second place your big theater here is owned by a local stock company, and every stockholder's got an annual pass for two.

"With a layout like that 'The Golden Girl' couldn't afford to play to ordinary business here, the company's too big. So the boss here put it up to me to do something, and I rang in this prince on you.

"Of course it made a hit with the people; the public just eats up romance in the high places, and when your papers swallowed it so good and spread it all over, we played to S. R. O. all week. That's all. Pretty good, wasn't it?"

Partridge burst out into a loud laugh, but stopped abruptly as the mayor glared at him.

"You may think it pretty good, sir," he said, turning to Saunderson, and shaking a finger at him. "But what about our city? You make us the laughing stock of the whole coast."

"Not unless you tell it, Mr. Mayor," spoke up Halstead. "All you've got to do is to keep still. It's air tight now. The prince found out his lady love was married and has gone away to hide his sorrow.

"You can be sure I won't belch about it, because your man here got the goods on me, and the show folks would kid me to death if they ever found out I didn't put it over.

"And you want to remember, your honor, I wouldn't let the prince accept that banquet your chamber of commerce wanted to give him. I didn't want there to be any chance of your best people getting sore.

"To tell you the truth, I didn't like the idea of this Pring thing, but they told me he didn't amount to anything, that he was just a high-class grafter. So I stood for that, it looked so good."

"It's an insult to the city just the same," proclaimed the mayor, though secretly somewhat mollified. "Besides that, you had the police department working overtime, and caused us a lot of trouble. I'm not disposed to look at it in your light at all."

Ike Nichols leaned forward, tapping the mayor's knee with his finger.

"You leave it to me, and I can fix it," he said. "Mr. Mayor, you let me and Mr. Halstead have a little talk somewhere."

"Take 'em both down to my office," said the chief to Stacy. "And you stay outside till they're through, too."

Halstead and Nichols followed Stacy through the door.

"I guess I'll be going, too," offered Partridge, rising.

Riordan squinted up one eye and looked at the local manager for the Protective Association.

"Goin' home, were you, Pat?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, Pat, be sure and go straight home. Don't get it into your head for a minute that you might make a hit with anybody by going to the papers and telling 'em something funny.

"Because you know, Pat, when you did that shooting up at Pring's it wasn't Charlie Leighton you were shooting at, as you told the boys here. You shot at me as I came through the window. Lucky for you you're a rotten marksman.

"I've heard of private dicks working with prowls, and protecting 'em, before now. You make any funny cracks to the papers

and I'll give 'em something good to print. Be careful, Pat."

Chief Roberts looked up with a frown.

"So," he exclaimed, "that's the game, is it? Well, Partridge, you can lay your gun and your permit to carry one on the desk right now, before you go out."

Partridge, his face purple, complied, and then walked from the office. Saunderson broke the silence:

"How'd you get next, sarge?"

"It was too good, son. It broke too rapidly and too smooth. After you and I had our first talk I got to thinking it over, and I wired to a friend I got in New York. Likely to know him, everybody calls him Barney.

"He wired back that you were all right, and that the last he'd heard of you, you were out with a girl show, doing publicity. Later on, just to be sure, I talked to Mulhern, up in Vancouver. He said the last potentate from Europe they had up there was a rajah or something, and you can bet they know up there when any kind of royalty blows through, for they believe in that stuff.

"Then Dr. Lombardi told me something neither you nor I knew—what was the matter with the prince's name. That finished it. You want to study up on names, son, before you pull the next one."

Saunderson laughed.

"You're good, sarge. I'll say you are. Say, maybe you can tell me this: what gave the Pring party the idea—"

"I did," answered Riordan. "And that was the only place I let my foot slip."

Saunderson shook his head.

"I was leary of Pring all the time," he said. "But he was such a go-getter I couldn't turn him down."

"I never heard of such a scandalous thing in all my born days," exclaimed the mayor. "I'm outraged."

"Sorry, your honor," answered Saunderson. "But I'm afraid you'll have to take it out in silent mourning. If you squawk you're liable to start something you can't stop."

"Who pulled that fight with the prince?" demanded Brady. "Some of the boys saw it, and they said it was the real thing."

"Just looked like it, cap. I did it myself. I'm pretty good with the foils, learned it from Kyrle Bellow. Abercrombie's no slouch, either; he used to be with O'Neill in costume shows. We figured we'd better do that ourselves."

Nichols and Halstead returned to the room, accompanied by Stacy. The "fixer" signaled his honor with his eyes.

"Well," said the mayor, "I think the whole thing is disgraceful. I think all you men concerned in it ought to be punished. A man like you, Halstead, a businessman, in charge of a large company, ought not to stoop to such tricks.

"If it wouldn't put the city in such a bad light I'd instruct the police to press these charges against you. As it is I—"

Halstead broke in.

"I'm really in a hurry, Mr. Mayor. My show must be closing now. And I don't like to hold my train: it costs money."

The mayor, deprived of his little oration, shrugged his shoulders.

"You satisfied, Lombardi?" he asked.

"Never had a more enjoyable evening in my life, your honor."

The mayor winced.

"Go on, get out of here," he said. "Stacy, you go upstairs and tell Halloran it's all right, to let those men go."

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE SEVENTH PRISONER

CHIEF ROBERTS, Captain Brady, and the mayor at last were alone with Riordan. The city executive looked at the sergeant.

"You said you might have seven men?"

"I'm sorry, your honor. Six is all I could get."

"Well, it doesn't make much difference. If you'd got another we'd have had to turn him loose, too. I hope Nichols can fix the papers."

"Don't worry about the papers, your honor," advised Riordan. "They aren't any more keen than you are to admit somebody made fools of 'em."

The mayor bridled, but saw laughter in the chief's and Brady's eyes, and thought better of it.

"Sergeant," he said, "I guess you've got something coming from me. The other night I was pretty raw on you. I'm sorry. I'd like to make amends. Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes, your honor, thank you, there is. I'd like two weeks' leave, starting right now."

"I guess that can be arranged, sergeant. Roberts, can you assign somebody to Riordan's place?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you, sir," said Riordan. "I'll be on my way then."

The mayor nodded, and looked at the ceiling. Riordan winked at Captain Brady and hurried from the office. As the door closed his honor looked down again.

"Fine man, but hard to cross," he said. "Little too cocky. But I'll say this for him, he sure handled this right. Used his head.

"Didn't flush this thing in the middle of the week, but let the theater people get their money's worth. Yet in the end he tied 'em up.

"And I'll says this to you, men: I'm glad he did, for I've got some of that theater stock, and we sure would have been out of luck if we'd had the house dark half the week."

The doorman poked in his head, and passed a copy of *The Chronicle's* first edition to Captain Brady, and then withdrew. The head of the detective bureau glanced over it.

"Sufferin' cats!" he exclaimed, "look what it says here!"

Both the mayor and Chief Roberts Roberts leaped to their feet and leaned over Brady's shoulders, reading where his finger pointed:

CUPID FLOUTS PRINCE; AID IS LUCKY MAN

Czeresnotski Finds Idol of Heart Already Wed —Guard from Local Detective Bureau Marries Pretty Girl

As Prince Czeresnotski of Barangaria left the city a broken-hearted man last night, desolate because the girl he had pursued halfway round the world was in reality the bride of another, Sergeant Matthew Riordan, of the city detectives, who had been special bodyguard while his highness was here, was united in marriage to Miss Marion Slade, feature writer on the staff of *The Chronicle*.

The wedding was solemnized early in the evening at the home of Sergeant Riordan's mother, and was a surprise to friends of both the valiant officer and his bride. The young couple left later in the evening for an automobile honeymoon trip.

"Ha," exclaimed Captain Brady, when he had read that far. "I see it now. You know what I think? I'll betcha my shirt this Slade girl was mixed up in this prince thing, too, and that Riordan knew it, and that was why he yanked her out of Pring's when he saw the stunt was going to blow up.

"My gad, I know it's so, for he told me he sent her up to Dr. Somer's office to find out if he saw anything going on at the hotel the night the shot was supposed to have gone through the window, an' she come back and said the doc was a nice old man an' never saw a thing.

"That means she didn't interview him at all, but was trying to cover up—you all heard what Riordan said to-night about having a hard time to keep the doc quiet."

"Yes, and it was the Slade girl who broke the first story," put in the chief. "You remember it was she who wrote for *The Chronicle* all about this fellow Ok, who was supposed to have been killed. Scooped 'em all she did."

The mayor laughed.

"I guess you're right. And I'll bet that was the seventh party in the case, the one he said got away. Well, he sure put it over good, and I hope he'll be happy. But bein' married will tone him down some and take some of the brass out of him."

"Bein' married is good for a young man," sagely offered the chief.

"Uh-huh," said Brady. "Well, let's call it a day."

The mayor got up, walked toward the door, and then suddenly came back.

"I suppose you boys will be taking up a collection for a percolator for the happy pair, or something like that. Let me start it; here's ten dollars. Buy him a good one, boys. And good night to you."

THE END

He stood poised with notebook and pencil as if he had come to take an inventory

SLEUTHING IN SIBERIA

By John Goldstrom

HE CROSSED THE VAST EXPANSE OF THAT ADVENTUROUS LAND SHADOWED BY THE FAMOUS CHEKA, OR SOVIET SECRET SERVICE

A Story of Fact

MY knowledge of the Russian secret police of the days of the Czars was gleaned largely from "Michael Strogoff," from "Siberia," a satisfyingly lurid melodrama of three decades ago, and from various harrowing accounts by nihilists escaped from the mines of the real Siberia.

But I know something of the operations of the Soviet secret police, from personal contact with them over a stretch of Europe and Asia ranging from the western border of Russia to the eastern frontier of Siberia.

For they once were affectionately solicitous concerning my own movements, by airplane and train, over that five-thousand-mile expanse.

I am glad to be able to report that I have never beheld the interior of a Siberian hoosegow, but I came fairly close to that experience, and from what I have heard of them I am satisfied to have missed it.

The Siberian prison system does not embrace welfare work, radio and amateur theatricals, I understand; in fact, it is said to fail utterly to provide that charm of existence for the prisoner which is being so earnestly striven for by American prison reformers.

The Cheka, or secret service of the Soviet dictatorship, has recently been reorganized. Only a few officials know the exact nature and ramifications of the new organization.

The traveler in Russia and Siberia encounters one branch of it, connected with the customs service, as he crosses the frontier.

If he is suspected of undue interest in the politics of the country, he comes under the surveillance of the political police. A lower

branch of the secret police takes care of the more ordinary spy work.

If the old Russian secret police kept closer watch upon the activities of citizens and aliens than does the present organization, half of the population must have acted as agents spying upon the other half.

The espionage system of the Communistic dictatorship of the proletariat all but tucks you into bed at night.

My first personal contact with the Soviet government occurred when I made by first visit to Moscow in the summer of 1925, when, accompanied by my wife, I was making a flying tour of the European airways for the New York *Evening World*.

American writers were more than ordinarily unpopular in Russia then, but I wanted to see in operation the Deruluft airway between Königsberg, the old Prussian capital, and Moscow, a distance slightly longer than that between New York and Chicago.

I applied for a passport visa at the Soviet Embassy on Unter den Linden, in Berlin.

A. H. G. Fokker, the Dutch airplane builder, whose planes were on the German side in the World War, and who is now operating in the United States, had sent a plane to meet us at Rotterdam—the same type of cabin monoplane used by Commander Byrd in his flight to the North Pole and in recent transoceanic flights.

At Amsterdam, where I visited his factory, he told me that my chances of flying to Moscow were extremely slim. He had been having difficulties of his own with the Soviet government, over airplane contracts.

His then representative at Berlin, C. A. Fischer—a famous German aviator, who bombed London and later was shot down by an English pilot near Verdun—had been the technical organizer of the Deruluft line.

He met us at the Tempelhofer Feld in Berlin when we flew there from Amsterdam. With P. Fette, director of Deruluft, he recommended that I be permitted to fly to Moscow.

At their suggestion, in my application for admittance to Russia, I declared myself to be an aëronautical writer having no interest in Russian politics.

I was told that, in the doubtful event that I was permitted to fly over Russia, I might be asked to agree not to attempt to leave the confines of the Trotzky airdrome at Hodinka, a suburb of Moscow.

It is a military as well as a commercial airdrome, and is historically famous as the field where more than a hundred subjects of the late Czar were trampled to death when his coronation ceremonies got out of hand. It is still used by the Communists for mass festivals on holidays.

After three weeks of waiting in Berlin I had almost given up hope when I was notified that, under special dispensation, I would be allowed to fly to Moscow.

I was informed later that, in the interim, inquiry had been made in the United States to determine whether I had ever written anything against the Soviet government of Russia, particularly when I was a Washington correspondent.

Fischer warned me to be extremely careful in speech and manner while in Russia; to express no political opinions, and to confine my questions strictly to commercial aviation, leaving military aviation severely alone.

As I would fly over the intervening small nations of Lithuania and Latvia, and along the Polish border, after leaving Germany, it was necessary to get visas from the embassies of those countries in Berlin.

In the event of a landing, forced or otherwise, in either country I would be arrested and imprisoned if I lacked the necessary papers.

I had to get a visa also for Danzig, the free State which, under the Versailles treaty, gives Poland a corridor through Prussian Germany to the Baltic Sea. Airplanes flying from Berlin to Königsberg stop at Danzig.

I was not to be allowed to take a camera with me, and was advised to travel as lightly as possible. As the traveler leaving Russia, whether as citizen or alien, is allowed to take out with him only a limited amount of money, I was advised to calculate my expenses accordingly.

It is a two-day journed by train from Königsberg to Moscow, and at that time it was an uncertain business. As a matter

of fact, it was actually safer, as well as swifter, to travel by air.

I had breakfast in Königsberg and dinner the same day in Moscow. There was only one stop—at Smolensk—and I was in the air only six and one-half hours. We were aided by a tail wind most of the way, and traveled at the rate of more than a hundred miles an hour.

Stops are made sometimes at Kovno, the Lithuanian capital—where recently there was a revolutionary coup d'état—but on this day we sailed over Lithuania and Latvia without stopping. We detoured around the Polish border, because German and Russian planes were not permitted to fly over Poland.

At Smolensk, where the western air force of the Soviet government is concentrated, I had my first contact with methods of the secret service. I was the only passenger.

In the cabin of the plane with me was the mechanic, an intensely bored young Russian, whose snores rose triumphantly above the roar of the motor which occasionally he tended.

As we neared the Smolensk airdrome he drew the window curtains. I wondered why, and was a bit uncomfortable over the blind landing.

Coming down out of the sky, and approaching the ground at a speed of a mile and a half a minute, I would have preferred a peek at the proceedings.

Neither my pilot, Woedillo, a former Russian ace, or the mechanic spoke any English, and as my Russian was limited to a very few words, I had to inquire elsewhere.

It happened that the Deruluft field superintendent at Smolensk spoke a little English, and he told me, in a hushed voice, why the windows had been blinded.

It was so that I would be given no opportunity to size up the strength of the military air force which occupied the other end of the immense airdrome.

We remained there only long enough to refuel the plane and partake of the inevitable Russian glass of tea.

Smolensk is about two-thirds of the way from Königsberg to Moscow. Nearly all the way we had been flying over the still badly scarred battlefields on which Russia fought Germany and Poland, and the Reds fought the White Russians. Between Smolensk and Moscow we flew over Borodino, where Napoleon won his Pyrrhic victory over Holy Russia.

Near Borodino we flew through a terrific thunder, lightning, rain and wind storm, and then under a rainbow.

The plane pitched and tossed through heavy dark clouds and another storm after the false promise of the rainbow. We landed just outside Moscow in wind and driving rain.

The historic walls of the Kremlin and Moscow's famous towers and minarets were only faintly visible as we plunged earthward. Woedillo made a skillful landing down through the bumpy air.

Before I could deliver a letter of introduction to the field manager I found myself in the hands of the customs and immigration officials.

My passport was examined, and an immediate search made of my baggage and effects. It was not the casual inspection that customs officials make at German, English and Dutch airports, and it was much more thorough than that made by the French.

Soldiers of the Red army, in long drab overcoats, paced up and down outside the operations office and hangars.

I was not compelled to remain under surveillance at the airdrome during my week's stay at the Soviet capital.

I was, however, parked where my movements could be under constant observation. Russian officials of Deruluft—this synthetic name, by the way, is a heaven-sent contraction of Deutsch-Russische Luftverkehrs-Gesellschaft—told me that there were no available hotel accommodations in Moscow, and invited me to be their guest at a house about half-way between Hodinka and the business centre of Moscow, where officials and flying personnel reside.

It was necessary for one of the officials to vouch for my identity to a sentry before I was permitted to leave Trotzky Field, it was guarded so strictly.

It is probably not necessary to add that I was not invited to inspect the military

section of the field during my visit. I saw the airdrome again only a few minutes before taking off in the plane in which I returned to Germany.

At the Deruluft House I was given the room usually occupied by Herr Fette, Deruluft director at Berlin, on his visits to Moscow, and treated with the utmost hospitality.

This included the providing of an interpreter, a man who before the Bolshevist regime had been the owner of an electrical factory and now was cashier for the Moscow office of Deruluft.

If good food was scarce in the Russian capital at the time, that was not true of Deruluft House. And there were better drinks to be had than government vodka, which tastes like an inferior quality of gasoline.

In the house at that time lived Comrade Eugen Guaita, chief of foreign relations of the Soviet Air Service, who exercised governmental supervision over the Russian terminal of Deruluft.

Rank is not designated in the Soviet army, or Guaita would have been a general, despite that he was hardly more than thirty.

He was one of the leaders of Russian aviation, both military and commercial. He had been a war pilot, and later flew from London to Moscow in a small plane powered with only a thirty-five horse power motor. On a later visit I learned that he had got into political difficulties and been deposed.

Guaita was a handsome blond and a highly intelligent officer, who had lived a few years in London and spoke Oxonian English.

He ate in the common dining room, where officials, pilots, mechanics and their wives dined in communistic communality.

Guaita sat at the head of the table, and I at his right. As most of those at the table spoke only Russian or German, and I conversed in neither language, this was, for me, a pleasant arrangement.

Equality at the table was more apparent than real. Pilots and mechanics talked on the easy terms of airdrome camaraderie, but I noted that none of the mechanics spoke out of turn when Guaita was present, or Dr. Dawidoff, Russian director of Deruluft, a dark and often silent man.

Guaita seemed to be spending much of his time writing aviation propaganda, which he told me was disseminated among the Russian masses in cheap editions of books and pamphlets.

He also spent much time in my room, but never invited me to his. He urged me to ask him questions with all freedom, and laughed when I told him I had been warned to ask questions concerning only commercial aviation.

At the end of my visit, when I recapitulated my conversations with Comrade Guaita, I recalled that his questions had been more numerous than mine, particularly concerning the political writing of Washington correspondents.

Most of his replies to my own questions were in generalities; it was seldom possible to get a specific answer.

He admitted quite frankly that the Soviet government of Russia was still in a state of siege behind the walls of the Kremlin, and on this ground defended its espionage and censorship systems, closely related.

When I told him that an American newspaper writer did not hesitate to attack the President or any other official of his administration, or the administration as a whole, if facts warranted it—and if his paper was not committed to the President's party, he smiled and shook his head.

"That would be impossible in Russia," he said. "We cannot and do not permit an opposition press. A writer or an editor who attacked the government would very quickly find himself in serious trouble."

Since then there have been wholesale executions of persons who failed to see eye to eye with the Soviet government.

I do not know exactly what happened to Guaita. When I inquired, last year, an army pilot replied with one word, "Skandal!" and put a finger to his lips.

The scandal, another Russian told me, was an involvement between two leading factions of the government which have been fighting for control, from opposing wings of the Communist Party, led by Stalin and Trotzky, since the death of Lenin.

After a couple of days of sight-seeing in

Moscow, during which my interpreter warned me from time to time to be careful of my spoken observations—he would accompany these warnings with a mysterious twist of the wrist, as if he were turning a prison key—I requested that arrangements be made for my flight back to Königsberg.

The arrangements for flying were simple enough; but it required five days, even with the assistance of Deruluft officials, to get a return visa permitting me to leave Russia.

I was informed that a report would have to be made as to my movements, and as to whether I had conducted myself circumspectly, and without suspicious activities, while in Moscow.

The night before my departure my baggage was searched while I was absent from my room. It was with complete thoroughness searched again at the airdrome before I was allowed to get into the plane.

I had been given some photographs of commercial air activities in Russia, and for some reason one of the agents became suspicious of a photograph which showed the arrival of a German commercial plane in Moscow and a group of Russian and German officials and pilots.

After consultation with his superior officer he finally decided to let me keep it.

There had been a convention of scientists in Moscow, and two German professors were fellow passengers. There was also a courier for the Soviet government who was carrying despatches to the embassy at Berlin.

In the six years during which there has been commercial airplane communication between Moscow and Berlin much of the passenger space has been reserved for Soviet couriers and other confidential agents of the government.

Sometimes the freight load has been so heavy that no passengers were accepted. It is only recently that more accommodations have been provided for passenger traffic.

Nowadays you may attend the theater in Berlin, have supper afterward, and at 2 A.M. get aboard a twelve-passenger express plane, which, after stops at Danzig, Königsberg, Kovno and Smolensk, will get you to Moscow before sunset of that day.

The cost is little more than first-class fare by train, and it is nearly two days faster. There has been only one serious accident in six years—remarkable performance in commercial aviation.

On the return trip from Moscow to Königsberg the two scientists suffered from airsickness, as the day was windy and the air consequently rough.

As I had been given a farewell party the night before by the Russian and German pilots, at which we sang, "Hail! Hail! the gang's all here; vodka hell do we care now!" I was not feeling exactly spry myself.

The pilot was another Russian ace, Melnikoff, one of the best in the Deruluft service, a tall, dark and playful pilot, who loved to skim low over hill, valley, forest and steppe, for extra speed in the denser air nearer the ground.

It seemed at times that, as we scudded along at more than a mile and a half a minute, we flicked off leaves from the upper branches of trees; but, despite this weakness for low flying, Melnikoff had an excellent record for safe delivery of passengers, freight and mail.

One of his best friends was Hoffmann, a giant German pilot, one of the most skillful in Europe, with whom he had fought in the air during the war. They sat together at table, and sang Russian and German folk songs together.

At the end of this first visit I emerged from Russia without incident. German customs officers gave my baggage only a perfunctory examination.

But an agent of a transportation agency in Königsberg paid me special attention during every moment of my stay there, and saw me off to Berlin, making sure of my destination.

The following year, in the summer of 1926, I decided to find out how quickly a traveler could get around the world by using every available means of rapid transportation, including the airplane.

The short cut in a trip around the Northern Hemisphere is along the route of the Trans-Siberian Railway, rather than through Asia Minor and the southern Orient, the route taken by Schlee and Brock in their recent unsuccessful attempt to set a new record by using the airplane

entirely. They were refused permission to fly across Siberia.

Again I encountered difficulties in trying to get permission to enter and travel through Russia.

I was to have taken with me Morris M. Titterington, inventor of the earth inductor compass which guided the American army flyers around the world, and later Lindbergh, Chamberlain, Byrd and other trans-oceanic aviators.

Titterington is chief engineer and one of the partners of the Pioneer Instrument Company of Brooklyn, which had been making aëronautical instruments for the Soviet government, as well as for other governments.

His dealings were with Amtorg, the Soviet Union's trading representatives in the United States, with offices in New York. Amtorg represents Russia in other ways also.

Before starting it was necessary, to save time, to get passport visas from the following countries through which we were to pass: England, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Danzig, Lithuania, Latvia, Soviet Russia and Siberia, Manchurian China, Korea and Japan.

Titterington suggested that Amtorg probably would be willing to arrange for the Russian visas. Amtorg officials thought it could be done by making a flying trip to the Soviet consulate at Montreal. The British Empire had diplomatic relations with Russia, but the United States had not.

But we were refused, and I had to rely on the Deruluft officials at Berlin.

Again they kindly used their influence at Moscow, but I was in doubt of their success until I arrived at Berlin. At the last moment Titterington found it impossible to go.

When I started across the Atlantic on the Mauretania, the fastest of all ocean liners, I wondered whether my rating as an aëronautical writer, vouched for by Deruluft, would again get me into Russia; or whether I had written something about my first visit that had made me *persona au gratin* at Moscow.

If the latter were the case, would they let me in and then attend to me after their own fashion?

I had been warned at Washington that, in the event I got into difficulties, I could expect no help from the United States government, which had the reverse of friendly relations with the Soviet Union. I would enter at my own risk.

But, as in former travels, I had got in and out of trouble in foreign lands without having to call on my government for help, I decided that probably I could get along on my own again.

Captain Sir Arthur H. Rostron, then commanding the Mauretania and now on the bridge of the Berengaria—who won a place in the annals of the sea when, as master of the Carpathia, he rescued the survivors of the Titanic's crash against an iceberg in the North Atlantic—speeded up his ship, despite rough weather, and delivered me at Plymouth in five days, eleven hours. I arrived in fog at dawn.

I had an Imperial Airways special plane waiting for me at Plymouth; it was to fly me to Croydon, the great airdrome near London, in time to catch the aërial express to Berlin, which left at 8.30 A. M. But the pilot declined to chance it in the fog, and I had to hurry to Croydon by fast steamer train and motor car.

Too late for the regular Berlin express, I chartered a fast DeHaviland taxiplane, with Captain P. G. Olley as pilot.

Flying across the North Sea, the coasts of France and Belgium, and through Holland and Germany to Berlin, we made it in little more than six and one-half hours of flying time, having stopped only at Rotterdam for fuel.

It was nearly ten o'clock at night when we landed, amid rockets and flares, at Tempelhofer Airdrome, on which the Kaiser used to hold grand maneuvers. It is less than twenty minutes from Unter den Linden in Berlin.

I had reached the German capital in less than six days from New York, itself a new record in fast travel. I would have four hours' rest before taking off in the 2 A. M. aërial express for Moscow.

Fette, Dawidoff and other Deruluft officials hustled me through the crowd and

into a motor car bound for the Russian Embassy, which, under special dispensation, had been kept open to await my arrival.

There the matter of the visas for entering Russia at the Latvian border, and leaving on the eastern frontier of Siberia at Manchuria, was quickly arranged.

I managed a bath and some food and wine with Captain Olley at the Hotel Adlon, near the Russian Embassy, but had no opportunity to rest. German interviewers and officials arranging details of the next stage of my journey kept me busy.

Two hours after midnight, my lost time made up, I took off in a giant three-motored Junkers all-metal monoplane.

Again I was balked by fog, the greatest obstacle, on land or sea, to commercial aviation. We were lost for several hours above a rolling sea of fog along the Baltic, and at last were forced back to Berlin, where we landed soon after sunrise.

Three hours later we took off again, and this time got as far as Danzig, which we reached shortly after noon. As we were taking off for Königsberg a tidal wave of a fog rolled in from the Baltic and forced us back.

Two hours later we managed to get through, and landed at the Prussian capital late in the afternoon.

It was now too late to hop off for the Russian capital that day, for the Deruluft airways in Russia had no night flying facilities, and the fog had cost me a full day of lost time. There was nothing to do but take a night's rest in Königsberg and take off next morning for Moscow.

Hoffmann was my pilot next day. My only fellow passenger was a small, dark Russian woman of about forty, who, I learned later, was an agent of the Soviet government.

We spoke no common language, and so traveled in silence through the air. This was just as well, for conversation above the roaring monotone of a motor is a difficult business.

When the curtains were drawn across the windows again, as we approached the military hangars at Smolensk, I inadvertently moved the one nearest me.

The Russian woman laid a restraining hand on my arm and shook her head in admonitory warning. A perfectly calm aërial passenger, even when we had bumped through storm clouds, she looked positively frightened at the prospect that the accident of the curtain had been discovered from the ground.

Apparently it had not been, for when we landed I was neither thrown into prison nor otherwise taken to task for having got a peep at a few hangars of the Soviet air force—which, by the way, is being developed into one of the strongest in the world.

On my return from Moscow previously I had seen in the air several squadrons of fast Fokker pursuit and combat planes of an advanced type, but this time they were all in their hangars.

This air fleet, it may be said in passing, would be Russia's first defensive and offensive arm in the event of war with a European country.

When I arrived at Moscow late that afternoon, less than eight days out of New York, a new record for travel between these two important cities had been set, despite my loss of a day in Germany.

That was small satisfaction, however, for my schedule was now badly deranged. Trans-Siberian trains leave Moscow every other day.

I had planned to arrive in Moscow one day behind one of the trains, and then pursue it by airplane to Omsk, about eighteen hundred miles to the east, thus gaining an extra day.

But now I had lost that day, as well as the one that fog robbed me of in Germany, so that it was an actual loss of two days from by schedule. Deruluft would not send a plane farther into Siberia than Omsk, and as there was another train leaving the Russian capital that night, there was nothing to do but take it.

I had allowed one day extra, for possible loss of time between England and Japan, and I had been assured that the President Madison, which I had planned to catch at Yokohama, for the trip across the Pacific to Victoria, British Columbia, would be held perhaps as much as one day for me if I

turned out to be not more than that much late.

So there was still a chance, although if I failed to make the steamer my chance for a new world's record was gone.

The record was something over thirty-five days, and was held by John Henry Mears, formerly of the New York *Sun* and now a theatrical producer. He had seen me off when I sailed. I was shooting for as many days less than thirty as possible.

Despite that newspapers the world over were covering my attempt for a record trip around the world, and there was a crowd and a group of correspondents on hand to meet me, my baggage, consisting of one traveling case containing about forty pounds of clothing, was searched at Hodinka as carefully as if I had been suspected of smuggling, or plotting the overthrow of the Soviet government.

I was to have still further attention from Soviet agents, on the wearisome grind across the mountains and steppes of Siberia.

When I got aboard the Trans-Siberian I found that, because the train was crowded, I would have to share a compartment, at least as far as Omsk, with a Japanese harbor engineer who was returning to Japan after a study of European harbor systems.

His name was T. Nogata, and he was an amiable little man, highly educated, traveled and well informed. He spoke Nipponese English.

Nogata's very amiability and general desire to be helpful nearly landed both of us in a Siberian prison before the long journey to the Orient was over.

He wasn't any fonder than I of sharing a compartment with a stranger, especially one of another race, but he was willing to make the best of it.

We were an odd pair. He was about five feet tall and weighed little more than a hundred pounds, with his constantly twinkling eyeglasses on.

I am a somewhat bulky individual of close to six feet and weighing something over two hundred. By all the laws of gravity and general physics I should have slept in the lower berth and the light and nimble Nogata in the upper.

But he got there first and landed the lower by right of prior possession.

That was all right with me. I have slept in almost everything from subway trains to airplanes, and can make myself reasonably comfortable anywhere.

I except one night on the Nevada desert after a crash in a mail plane, when I tried to snatch a couple of hours' sleep between the yowling of coyotes and wild cats.

But I thought I heard something like an apprehensive whimper below me when my bulk sank into the slight bedding of the upper berth.

Nogata confided to me afterward that, although he had been through several earthquakes in Japan, and got used to them so that he no longer became nervous when the terrain under his feet began to shimmy, he had viewed with apprehension the possible result should I come crashing down upon him.

I was so weary from some two thousand miles of flying that I soon forgot about my traveling companion, and slept soundly until morning.

Before breakfast I ambled onto the station platform of Nizhni Novgorod for fresh air and exercise. There I found that my golf pants and diagonally patterned golf stockings astounded and delighted the sturdy peasantry as probably nothing else had since the revolution.

It was there, too, that we crossed the Volga River. The boatmen seemed too busy grunting at their tasks to sing.

Nogata trotted briskly beside me. "Ha!" he exclaimed. "Russian people much surprised your frying machine costume." He seemed rather happy about it himself.

"How quick you come in frying machine, London to Moscow?" he asked. "How many houahs in air?"

I told him of the delays I had encountered because of fog, and said that I had spent a little over twenty hours in air travel.

He drew his breath in quickly with the sharp intake of air with which he denoted astonishment or took soup. He told me his rail journey from London to Moscow had taken about four days.

When, responding to more particular ques-

tions, I informed him that Captain Olley had flown me over part of the North Sea and five European countries in part of an afternoon and an evening, he shook his head and giggled.

At breakfast we met the only other person on the train who spoke any English. He was a Dane named Leth, en route from Denmark to Novo Sibiersk, the economic capital of Siberia, where he was to arrange for wholesale purchases of dairy products for the Siberian Company, Limited, a Danish trading concern.

He spoke and read Russian, and helped us with the dining car menu, a fearful and wonderful affair, containing few dishes to be found in any Russian restaurant on lower Second Avenue in New York.

Leth had been through the rough times of the revolution, and said that his company had lost heavily by confiscation.

A stout and blond little Siberian girl of perhaps fifteen served us at table. Her mother was chef, and a younger sister scullery maid.

Her father was steward, and from time to time he would leave a card game and the inevitable glass of tea and lemon at one end of the car to slouch up and down the diner to make sure his family was on the job.

A cigarette dangled from his lower lip from morning till night, and it was easy to decipher from the spots on his dark blue blouse what he had had for breakfast. His cap, set over his left ear, at a rakish angle, never left his head.

Together he and Leth solved some of the mysteries of the menu card, but there was one concerning which he only shrugged his shoulders.

When eggs were ordered six were served to each person and charged for accordingly. He declined to explain why, beyond saying it was customary.

"There seems to be an overproduction of eggs this year," said Leth, "and that's probably his communistic way of seeing to it that everybody gets his fair share."

On the third day I swooned at the sight of a hen trotting with a proud and self-conscious air beside the railroad track.

For weeks after returning to the United States I could not endure even mention of ham and eggs, or, as the Russian phrase it so quaintly, "vetcheenah ee yareetsa." On the Trans-Siberian the Japanese and I enriched our Russian vocabularies with "khlep" for bread, "peevah" for beer, "gahvyardeeba" for beef, "beefshteks"—believe it or not—for beefsteak, "zahftrahk" for breakfast, "kofe" for coffee, "yegnyarteena" for lamb, "sveeneena" for pork, "sodaywaya vadah" for soda water, and "tchai" for tea.

When one desired a piece of meat to be well done, one merely said "khahrahsho prazhahrenny," and one got it according to the prevailing humor of the female chef.

The most useful words in the Russian language are "da" for yes, "njet" for no, and "neechevo!" for "it doesn't matter."

Nogata was first to discover the identity of the two secret police aboard the train, and to observe that they were interested in our movements.

He communicated his observations to me on the station platform at Ekaterinburg, the city where the last of the Czars and his family were executed by the Bolshevists.

One of the agents was a tall, black mustached man of perhaps thirty-five, given to wearing fancy silk blouses, a different color each day. If these were meant to be disguises they were not effective.

The other was a nondescript man of about the same age, perhaps a little older, who wore nondescript blouses. He seemed to be an assistant to the other.

"They watch us when we go into ouah compartment and listen outside," said Nogata.

He was a bit nervous about it. Japanese travelers are not popular in Russia and Siberia, particularly if they are known to be government officials.

Russians still resent the humiliating outcome of the Russo-Japanese war, and they expect some day to clash again over Manchuria with the little island empire. Every Japanese traveler between Moscow and Manchouli is suspected of being a spy for the Tokyo War Office.

I mentioned the interest of the agents in us to the trader Leth.

"I understand you tried to get a com-

partment to yourself when you boarded the train," he said. "It will be best for you to have one.

"The professor and his wife and child who occupy the one between mine and the one you are in at present will be vacated at Omsk. Give the porter five rubles—$2.50—extra and he will arrange to let you have it, even if it has been reserved from Omsk.

"I think our friends the secret police are suspicious of you mainly because you are seen so often with the Japanese gentleman.

"The Japanese gentleman," he added, "is nervous on his own account. He knows he is suspected, and he feels safer in your company, because every one on the train now knows that you are an American traveling around the world for a record; and if it seems that you are his friend he thinks he will not be regarded with so much suspicion."

"If he gets any comfort out of that, I am glad to be of use to him," I replied. "And if these agents know who I am, and what the object of my trip is, they are not likely to bother me."

Leth smiled.

"It is evident that you are not yet an experienced traveler in Russia and Siberia," he said. "You may have friends in Moscow, in the government even, and they may know that the object of your travel is above political suspicion; but the secret police may think differently, or at least regard you as being possibly a military observer for the United States government, and to be watched accordingly.

"It is easy to land in prison in this country, and it is hard to get out. You must be careful."

At that moment the diner lurched heavily, and a soup dish full of hot bortsch was hurled into the lap of a woman who sat across the aisle from us. It was probably her best dress—wardrobes are not extensive in Siberia—and she cried out in dismay.

The steward, who had been about to take a trick, paused, his hand holding upraised the winning card, and laughed boisterously. He made no move to assist the unfortunate passenger, but, between sips of tea, continued his game.

I remarked to Leth that the Trans-Siberian was a trifle rougher even than some of the jerk-water lines in the southern part of the United States.

"Just now," he said, "I think we left the rails, and the running will be smoother."

It seemed a little homelike to encounter in Asiatic Siberia this variant of a cosmic jest.

When we reached Ekaterinburg we had passed over most of the natural boundary between European Russia and Asiatic Siberia—the great Ural Mountains. The political boundary is a little over four hundred versts, or a trifle less than three hunded miles farther on, near the town of Tyumen.

In the upper passes of these mountains, rich in minerals, we had seen patches of snow on the ground at an altitude of perhaps a mile and a half from sea level. Down on the steppes and the desert country we encountered extreme heat, at times more than a hundred degrees—Fahrenheit—above zero.

I longed for the sight of the immense snowdrifts and wolves familiar to the academic student of Siberia. But this was on May 30—Memorial Day back home. The following December ninety-one lives were lost in a blizzard which engulfed a train a few hundred miles farther on.

Between Ekaterinburg and Omsk our wood-burning locomotive stopped at stations where jewel bazaars were maintained.

Opals, amethysts, aquamarine, garnets, beryls, and topaz are split from the rocks in this country in the most primitive fashion, and hand-polished with great labor. Many of the passengers bought the cheaper green malachite souvenirs.

At Omsk the professor and his family got off, and I inherited their compartment. I almost regretted having given the youngster a box of chocolates which a kind friend had given me just before the Mauretania sailed.

It was a rare treat for a child in Siberia, where the luxury of high-priced chocolates is utterly unknown; the result on the furniture in the compartment might have de-

lighted a finger-print expert, but it did my golf pants absolutely no good whatever.

On the following day the Soviet secret service sleuths of the Siberian section took their first active interest in me.

I had been studying maps and the remainder of my route around the world, and Nogata had dropped in for a chat. To keep out desert dust I had closed my compartment door.

I was calculating distances between Omsk and Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk and Tchita, and Tchita and Manchouli, on the Siberian-Manchurian border.

The Japanese harbor engineer promptly began to draw a freehand map to help me out. He had drawn a few lines when suddenly the compartment door was flung open, and in the door stood the Siberian sleuths.

Since pointing out these men to me at Ekaterinburg, Nogata had made the plot a bit thicker by talking to me only in whispers and in mysterious asides when they were in our vicinity. Now he hastily and foolishly tried to hide his map.

I waited quietly for the handcuffs, and wondered whether knouts were still used in Siberian prisons.

The handsome lad of the black mustache bowed slightly and said "Phazhalst," idiomatic Russian for "If you please." He held a notebook and a pencil poised as if he had come to take an inventory of the contents of the compartment.

And that was exactly what he now pretended to be doing; for my porter appeared at the door at this juncture and, in English which he had acquired in Hoboken, which he had once briefly visited as a sailor, he acted as interpreter for the detectives.

The one with the notebook made a few marks in it, and then, muttering "Blaghadaryoo vas"—thank you—he bowed himself and his partner out into the aisle.

Nogata was trembling slightly when the door closed. He soon returned to his own compartment, and for the remainder of the journey his visits were infrequent; he was careful to leave my door open when he came in.

He spent much of his time thereafter studying books and pamphlets on European harbors. He absorbed their contents by reading them half-aloud and memorizing them. Except at night, he left his own compartment door open.

We were frequently together in the diner and on the station platforms. Particularly in the latter case were we under close observation by the two secret police.

Once when I pointed to a range of hills behind a small town in mid-Siberia, making some trivial observation, I turned around in time to see the man with the black mustache make an entry in his notebook.

He was hardly twenty feet away, and I could see his mustache twitch with a rabbit-like movement—like a movie actor's upper lip in a tense moment.

It was evident that he was certain he had caught me making topographical observations against the day when the United States should join Japan in the conquest of Siberia.

There was no need to arrest us, then, however. He might as well get everything on us he could. We could be seized anywhere in Siberia west of Manchuria.

On the morning following the third night on the train we crossed the Ob river and reached Novo Sibiersk, the economic capital of Siberia.

There I managed to get a dispatch filed reporting my progress to the Moscow office of the American newspaper syndicate for which I was writing.

It was the last telegraphic message I got through until I reached Tchita—about halfway around the Northern Hemisphere from New York—on the morning of June 3.

Most of the operators at the smaller stations knew only the Russia alphabet, and could not send in English. It was like asking an American telegraph operator to send in Russian.

Summer nights in central Siberia were so charming as to make me almost forget the attentions of the Soviet agents. Not far south of the sixtieth parallel, the Trans-Siberian Railway at its most northern point is so far north that there is partial daylight all night.

The late sunsets and early sunrises were weirdly beautiful riots of color—almost

every shade in the rainbow. The sky at its darkest was a deep heliotrope, studded with stars that seemed larger and closer than they appear even from the higher plateaus of the western United States.

The Danish trader had left the train at Novo Sibiersk. Before leaving he gave me a note of introduction to Carl Jacobsen, another Dane, in charge of the Tchita office of his company.

He also said he would telegraph Jacobsen to meet me at the station in Tchita, where I was to change to another train for Manchouli.

To Jacobsen I was to owe my disentanglement from the secret police. To him I delivered the only letter of introduction I presented anywhere on this trip around the world, and it proved to be the most useful I have ever had.

He was the only man in the former Bolshevist capital of the late Far East Republic who spoke English, except an exiled Austrian army officer who ran a coffee house there, whose English was most limited.

We reached Krasnoyarsk, a large town of perhaps eighty thousand population, on June 1. The vast Siberian plain continued to unroll before the train, but to the south began to appear the foothills of the Altai mountains, with their great coalfields and fifty-five per cent pure magnetic iron ore.

In this district the Soviet government plans to establish the future steel center of Siberia. The first plant, now under construction, I believe, is to cost twenty million dollars.

Beyond Krasnoyarsk trees began to appear on the prairie, and to the north was visible the jungle which became famous in revolutionary days for its guerilla bands of peasants whose homes were destroyed by Kolchak when he tried to overthrow the Soviet government.

Evidences of the new dispensation were to be found at every stopping place along the Trans-Siberian Railway—and these stopping places are almost as frequent as the local stops on the accommodation train between Tokyo and Yokohama.

Great quantities of cheaply-printed and brightly-colored paper-backed books and booklets on government, popular science and agriculture, issued from the government printing house, are for sale at every station.

The next stop of importance was at Irkutsk, the largest city in eastern Siberia, which was occupied by American, British and Japanese troops in 1918, the last year of the World War.

It was sunrise when we halted there, and I got out to stretch my legs and enjoy the sight of green hills which rolled off toward the Baikal Mountains and the great Lake of Baikal.

This view was the more beautiful when contrasted with the endless vistas of bleak Siberian steppes we had contemplated for the greater part of a week.

I thought I was the earliest rising passenger on the train, except the few whose destination was Irkutsk, but the eye of the Soviet secret police evidently never slept, for my friend of the blouses was on the platform with me. We exchanged polite nods.

I have no means of knowing whether he then suspected me of getting up so early to plan a reoccupation of Irkutsk by American troops, and the possible location of an invaders' airdrome there, but he kept me in sight until I swung aboard the train as it resumed the journey.

The following night the dining car personnel, enriched beyond their most avaricious dreams by tipping on the ordinary American scale, invited me to a midnight party in the diner. The police were not invited; in fact, I was the only passenger so honored.

Bottles made their appearance, the like of which had not appeared on the dubious wine card of the diner. Balalaikas, and other types of stringed instruments which I had never seen before, were brought forth.

Then strange and colorful costumes from various provinces of Russia and Siberia replaced drab working clothes.

There was singing and dancing such as no Russian restaurant in New York has ever heard or seen. Mostly folk songs and country dances. Balieff's show " Chauve Souris " has imported nothing like them.

It was a gorgeous party, and pre-revolution vodka made me almost forget both the secret police and an ulcerated

tooth which had been giving me hell all the way across Siberia.

At my table sat the superintendent of the train, who looked very like early pictures of Abraham Lincoln; the steward, his wife the chef, and the waitress. All communistically took active parts in the entertainment.

The fact that we didn't speak each other's language made not the slightest difference to the general enjoyment of the party. We conversed with clinking glasses.

When I suggested that I be permitted to pay my share of the expense, the steward, with a magnificent gesture, tore up a ten-ruble note which I tried to slip him; he democratically put his arm around my shoulders and loudly called for another bottle.

On the morning of June 3, I arrived at Tchita, which was to be the Waterloo of my attempt for a world's record, and where I was to come into still closer contact with the secret police.

Before reaching Tchita I was informed by the train superintendent that there had been a change of schedule, and that I would have to wait two days for another train to the Manchurian frontier.

That meant that it would be impossible for me to catch the President Madison at Yokohama, an imperative connection in order to break the record.

So I instructed the superintendent to wire for a special locomotive to meet me at Tchita and hurry me immediately to the Manchurian border. I had been promised Japanese planes to speed me across the northeast Orient to Yokohama.

The locomotive was waiting with steam up when we drew into Tchita, and in charge of it a railroad official with a bill for three thousand nine hundred and ninety rubles, or about two thousand dollars—for a ride of little more than three hundred miles.

I could have bought an airplane for less than that—if one had been on sale in Tchita—and reduced a twenty-hour rail trip to less than four hours' flying.

I had considerably less than three thousand nine hundred and ninety rubles with me, and as no Siberian bank, either government or private, had relations with any American bank, there was no way of arranging credit.

It was decided to put the problem up to the railroad administration at Tchita. Jacobsen conducted me there and interpreted for me. I was flatly and finally refused a locomotive for less than three thousand nine hundred and ninety rubles.

Later I learned that an English business man, in a similar hurry to get to Yokohama several weeks earlier, had been given an engine for the equivalent in rubles of five hundred dollars.

Evidently it was thought that I was a rich American, or at least representing a wealthy organization, and could pay accordingly.

Perhaps they refused to believe that any American would be traveling in a far country with less than two thousand dollars in his golf pants at any given time.

And I suppose they felt they could not admit having a flexible tariff in special railway fares, and so reduce their first price. At any rate I was given no locomotive.

In the meantime the secret police had hastily removed their baggage from the train, which went on northeastward to Vladivostok, and the black mustache followed me around town. The other remained in the railroad yards and watched Nogata.

Nogata had been nervous about going on to Vladivostok alone. His ticket was for that terminal, and he was to sail from there across the Sea of Japan to a Japanese port.

I had invited him casually to accompany me to Japan by the shorter route, and he accepted eagerly.

He saw to the transfer of his baggage and mine to the special car which was attached to the locomotive, and waited there for me.

When I returned to the yards and informed him of the impossible conditions laid down by the railway officials his nervousness increased. He would have to wait two days for the rail connection to Manchouli, or—

Then I remembered that Tchita was the eastern headquarters of the Soviet Air Force, and decided to try for an airplane to the Manchurian frontier.

Jacobsen thought it would be impossible for an alien to get permission to use a Soviet government plane, but we decided to try; there was no other alternative.

I asked Nogata if he were willing to fly with me if it could be arranged. He hesitated, gulped, and nodded his head affirmatively.

He knew, better than I, that it was rough, wild and almost constantly windy country, and that a forced landing, even if we didn't crash, meant possible death at the hands of bandits.

Tchita itself has something of the appearance of a western American desert town. Although it has a population of about eighty thousand it has no paved streets. Dust is half a foot deep in the streets.

Outside the town is desert and mountain country in which bandits, Russian and Chinese—Mongols and Manchurians—lie in wait for the traveler on foot or horseback.

Gold has been mined in the foothills, but not much is removed now because of fear of the robber bands. Residents in Tchita do not dare to venture outside the town limits except in large parties and when heavily armed.

There was one automobile in Tchita; it was a small, battered car of European make, owned by a merchant, who was inordinately proud of the distinction conferred upon him by his ownership.

I found the old-fashioned droshky the best means of conveyance in this town. In one ancient specimen Jacobsen and I hurried to the headquarters of the air service.

We were pleasantly received, assured that everything possible would be done, and a minor official of the organization offered to call at my hotel later in the day with information.

Nogata and I put up at the Naropit—People's—Inn, the world's worst hotel. Across the street were the ruins of the Hotel Select, which was the best hotel at the time of the revolution. Revolutionaries looted and burned it.

Between Nogata's chamber and mine was a vacant room, into which, in less than half an hour after we had registered, moved the two detectives.

The Naropit had once been a grand hotel in that part of the world, and was a gathering place for Czarist officers before the revolution. I was given a large and once quite elegant chamber, furnished with hangings and curtains which had formerly been ornate.

In this room, I was told, an officer, his wife, and baby had been slain early in the revolution. There were bloodstains which had been left on the walls unwashed.

Jacobsen warned me to keep my windows closed at night; to leave them open was to invite robbery. But I was unable to endure the gloominess of the room with windows closed, and left them open.

It developed that the Soviet pilots were perfectly willing to fly me to the Manchurian border, or to a town within eight miles of it, but when they telegraphed to Novo Sibiersk headquarters for permission they were told that it was impossible.

No alien—let alone a citizen of a country with which Soviet Russia was on unfriendly terms—could fly in a Soviet plane. That was final.

My intention to take Nogata with me, if possible, had nothing to do with this decision; for I had not intended to ask permission for him until my own was assured.

My chance for a new record was definitely gone. I had traveled halfway around the Northern Hemisphere in a little over thirteen days—the record later made by Evans and Wells for the round trip over my route was twenty-eight days, fourteen hours—and I was at that point a little over two days ahead of Mears's then record time.

There was nothing to do but wait for the train to Manchouli. I was certain now to miss the boat at Yokohama, and would have to wait a week for another.

On the evening before my departure I was sitting in my room. I was in slippers, and was seated facing the door. Suddenly I saw that the keyhole had been darkened. Just before that I had heard soft footsteps in the hall.

I got up and walked about casually, as if I had not become aware of anything on

the other side of the door, but when I got within a few feet of it I sprang for the handle and threw the door open.

It opened outward with a good deal of violence, and as it did so a figure in a dark blue blouse, with trousers stuffed in Russian boots sprawled backward, clasping his hand to a bleeding nose. But he jumped up immediately and fled down the hall. I made no attempt to pursue him.

It was the assistant sleuth. I returned to my room, and a few moments later heard voices in loud argumentation in the adjoining room, occupied by the secret police.

To my surprise nothing further happened in Tchita, but among the first passengers Nogata and I encountered on the train to Manchouli were my friends the police.

I learned afterward that the only reason the Japanese and I were not thrown into prison was that the air service officials advised them against it, being themselves satisfied, after talking with Jacobsen, that I was no spy, but merely an aëronautical writer on a trip around the world.

To the air service officials I had mentioned friends fairly high in the government at Moscow. That might have helped, but probably not much.

Late in the afternoon the train passed a large herd of camels, not one of which I would have walked a mile to possess.

A few miles farther on we passed a troupe of Chinese artillerymen in uniforms of the Red Army. This was nearly half a year before the Soviet hand in China's civil war appeared.

I turned from contemplation of this interesting military circumstance to find my friend of the beautiful blouses—he wore a red one that day—watching me narrowly.

Nogata occupied the upper berth and I the lower overnight on the journey to Manchouli.

As we neared the Manchurian frontier, shortly before sunrise, I awakened to enjoy the prospect, still a little doubtful, of leaving Siberia behind that day.

Customs officers appeared. They passed favorably on my passport, its exit visa, and my baggage, and then examined Nogata's.

They raised an uproar immediately, and declared that as Nogata's exit visa was for Vladivostok, he would have to return to Tchita. The black mustache, in a fresh blue blouse, appeared at the doorway.

My first impulse was to try to help Nogata, and then I decided to wait a moment. The black mustache, I had observed, was watching me, rather than the Japanese, who by this time was almost in tears.

Then there was a hurried conference in Russian between the customs officers and the black mustache, which terminated suddenly when one of the officers turned around and indicated to Nogata that everything was all right.

It was evident that my secret service friend had wanted to see how far I would go to help my traveling companion; and if I had tried to interfere with his return to Tchita I have a notion that I might have been requested to accompany him.

The detective, I knew, had the power at least to detain us for investigation before leaving Soviet jurisdiction.

A few months before, Jacobsen told me, an Englishman who had bought a camera in Moscow, had got off the Trans-Siberian to take a few casual snapshots of village scenes along the route. He had been thrown into prison. Jacobsen did not learn what disposal was made of his case.

Nogata and I were having a drink in the Manchouli station, celebrating our escape into bandit-ridden Manchuria, when I saw the two Russian detectives drinking at the other end of the bar.

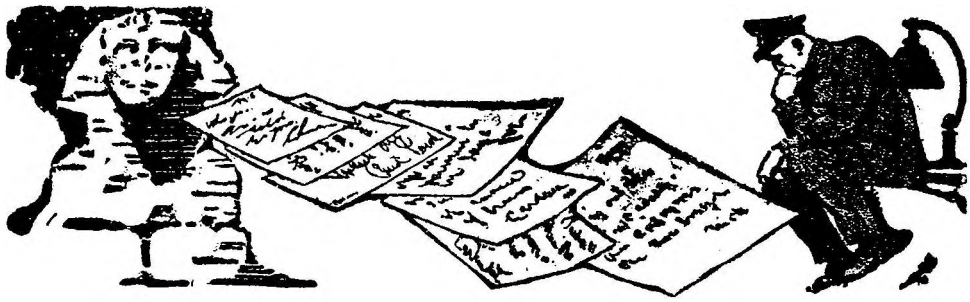
My friend of the blouses raised his glass toward us, bowed slightly from the hips, and grinned.

If I never see him again, that will be soon enough.

The following day, just after we had crossed the Khingan Mountains, the eastern boundary of the Gobi Desert—where Roy Chapman Andrews found the million-dollar dinosaur eggs—I strolled into the diner for luncheon.

At the far end of the car sat a Russian and a Chinese, both in military uniform.

A few months later the Chinese Communists, with Borodin as their adviser, were shooting up southern China.



SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

Edited by M. E. Ohaver

PRESENTING A CIPHER USING A PHONETIC ALPHABET, WITH SOME INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ABOUT PHONETIC ALPHABETS AND PHONETIC SPELLING

ONE of this week's ciphers—No. 145, by M. Walker, to be explicit—uses a phonetic alphabet. So a few words about phonetic alphabets and phonetic spelling may not be amiss.

In a phonetic alphabet each different sound is represented by its own special character. Most shorthand alphabets are of this nature. And, in fact, the phonetic alphabet herewith, which provides all the sounds necessary for a practical representation of the language, closely follows that employed in Pitman phonography.

The phonetic characters in this illustrative alphabet are shown in the second column of the accompanying table. By using italics, where indicated, the alphabet can be expressed in ordinary type. The numbers in the first column have been compiled for the express use of the cipher solver, and indicate frequencies in one thousand characters of phonetically spelled text. And these numbers reveal some surprising facts.

For example, T, with a frequency of eighty-two per one thousand, here supplants our old friend E as "king of the roost," phonetic values of the latter being divided among several characters. Passing to the other extreme, Z, seldom used in the ordinary alphabet, here has a frequency of forty-three per one thousand!

51	A	(short A) *a*m, *a*sk, final.
9	*A*	(long A) *a*le, sen*a*te, c*a*re, *ei*ght, th*e*re.
4	*AH*	(Italian A) *a*rm.
13	*AW*	(broad A) *a*ll, *o*rb.
21	B	*b*oy.
5	*CH*	*ch*art, ar*ch*, na*t*ure.
47	D	*d*ay.
31	*DH*	*th*e, wi*th*, brea*th*e.
46	E	(short E) *e*nd, recent.
43	*E*	(long E) *e*ve, *e*vent, *ee*l, p*iqu*e.
16	F	*f*ame, rou*gh*, *ph*one, *ph*antom.
6	G	*g*o.
23	H	*h*ouse, *wh*o.
73	I	(short I) *i*ll, lyric.
11	*I*	(long I) *i*ce, *i*dea, fl*y*, h*y*ena.
0	J	*j*ar, gran*d*eur, sol*d*ier, *g*em, surge*o*n, re*g*ion.
30	K	*c*all, e*ch*o, *k*ite, ba*ck*, co*qu*ette.
41	L	*l*et.
26	M	*m*ay, hi*m*.
68	N	*n*ot, te*n*.
10	*NG*	lo*ng*, u*n*cle, a*n*chor, i*nk*.
36	O	(short O) *o*dd, w*h*at.
22	*O*	(long O) *o*ld, *o*bey.
0	*OI*	(diphthong OI) *oi*l, bo*y*.
13	OO	(short OO) f*oo*t, wo*l*f, f*u*ll.
5	*OO*	(long OO) d*o*, f*oo*d, r*u*de, cano*e*.
11	*OU*	(diphthong OU) *ou*t, *ow*l.
22	P	*p*at, u*p*.
55	R	f*a*r, *r*ain.
46	S	*s*o, *y*es, *c*ivil, for*c*e.
7	*SH*	*sh*arp, *ch*aise, ma*ch*ine, *s*ure.
82	T	*t*ie, i*t*.
6	*TH*	*th*in, brea*th*.
26	U	(short U) *u*p, *u*rn, f*e*rn, f*i*r, *o*ther, d*oe*s, fl*oo*d, t*ou*ch, m*y*rtle.
2	*U*	(long U) *u*se, *u*nite, n*ew*, b*eau*ty.
10	V	*v*ivid, e*v*er.
29	W	*w*et.
1	Y	*y*ear, *y*ou, mill*i*on.
43	Z	*z*eal, *z*one, u*s*e, *x*ebec.
1	*ZH*	rou*g*e, a*s*ure, fu*s*ion.

A phonetic character may have more than one equivalent in ordinary spelling. Thus F represents the sound of F in "fame" (fam), of GH in "rough" (ruf),

and of PH in "phone" (*fon*). Parentheses inclose phonetic spellings according to the present system.

The letters C, Q, and X have no place in this alphabet. The sounds of C are replaced by S and K, as in "city" (siti) and "came" (k*a*m). QU is represented by K or KN, as in "coquette" (k*o*ket) and "quick" (kwik). And X is expressed by KS, GZ, or Z, as in "except" (eksept), "exist" (egzist), and "xebec" (z*e*bek), respectively.

Other combinations are also given a queer twist. Thus TH in many words will here be represented by DH as in "the" (dhe), "that" (dhat), "with" (widh), and so on. WH is merely reversed, as "why" (hw*i*), "when" (hwen), and "which" (hwich). The following short example in the present alphabet should enable the novice to grasp the idea of phonetic spelling without much difficulty.

A fonetik alfabet iz wun in hwich ech sound iz reprezented bi itz on speshal sin. And in fonetik speling wurdz ahr speld egzaktli az dha ahr pronounst.

Our correspondent has used an alphabet of thirty-six primary sounds, arranged in a special order, but otherwise very similar to the alphabet herewith. For his cipher alphabet he has employed figures, letters—omitting I and O—and the signs * and &, making thirty-six symbols in all, one for each phonetic character. Normal word divisions have been observed.

Another phonetic cipher by Mr. Walker will be published next week. And the solutions to both, with complete alphabets, will appear in two weeks. The answers to the other new ciphers in this article will be published next week. No. 143 is of the simple substitution type. And in No. 144 Mr. Crotty has embodied an interesting principle which you should be able to discover by "running down the alphabet."

Did you get that "jawbreaker" in last week's No. 140? Here is the answer: "Transsubstantiationableness is said to be the longest nontechnical word in the English language."

No. 141, by Wm. B. Marks conveyed the message: "This system is easy to use, but if you solve it you are good!" The key, 21-7, indicated G—the seventh letter of the alphabet—as starting point for the first count, with one count backward in the alphabet and two forward, in rotation, for each three letters of text. Numbers larger than twenty-six were word spacers.

No. 142, by J. A. Dockham, requires a set of vertical alphabetical slides, on each of which the ordinary alphabet is twice repeated. To decipher, adjust the slides so that the cipher letters appear in the same line, as at *(a)*, repeating the last letter of each group as the first of the next following group. The message will then appear in various lines, marked *, each group thus representing six letters instead of only five!

	etc.	*etc.*
	PDEOO	O IJUCF
(a)	QEFPP	P JKVDG . . .
	RFGQQ	Q KLWEH
	SGHRR	R LMXFI
	*THISS	S MNYGJ
	UIJTT	T NOZHK
	VJKUU	U OPAIL
	WKLVV	V PQBJM
	XLMWW	W QRCKN
	YMNXX	X RSDLO
	ZNOYY	*Y STEMP
	etc.	*etc.*

When enciphering, any line on the slides may be used for a given group except the one ending in the next following message letter. Groups can be of any length. And, if desired, slides with mixed alphabets may be employed. A clever cipher! The message: "This system produces a cryptogram which is shorter than the message it communicates."

All of which being said and done, here are this week's ciphers.

CIPHER No. 143.

PJK GEKCQHWTYPWTN DAHLQU CQKD TQP YUOYAD DPYTC XQE K WT PJWD VWTC QX ZEAGPQNEYH.

CIPHER No. 144 (Philip J. Crotty, Charlestown, Massachusetts).

GMTL LYM KXC: KV R UGS KMSZ URE UP ER JZDKL DXN ZJSOTD LK PQOUB ZWJAFY PDEO.

CIPHER No. 145 (M. Walker, Akron, Ohio).

KD$_4$FUN D$_9$E$_6$FN Z*FVD$_2$E$_4$F C$_4$FU E$_1$ AOD $_1$DN $_{52}$ Z*E VO S$_4$D$_2$ P$_1$N$_5$D F8V VO TD$_3$N H$_2$E. L$_1$ $_1$J$_2$C L6V E$_4$F UO C$_2$JN 6KV*D L$_4$E L$_1$ Y&U $_2$N 8KV $_2$FV*DU B$_2$L L$_3$D S$_9$FN.

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