

Spring Edn
NEW WALTER TYRER STORY—"THE BRAIN"—WITHIN

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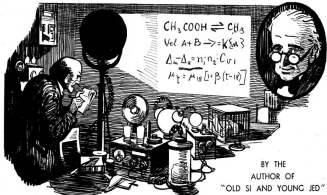
GRIPPING
LONG
COMPLETE
STORY

BY

MURDOCH
DUNCAN

A SQUARE DEAL *in* CRIME

The BRAIN!



BY THE
AUTHOR OF
"OLD SI AND YOUNG JED"

JUST TO REMIND YOU:

PROFESSOR OSCAR PRINGLE was a man of genius—clever, original and creator of ordinary matters, yet one of the cleverest scientists of his day. There was only one brain greater than his—the brain of his brother **FRANCIS BERNIE PRINGLE**, who lived the life of a hero in a hospital at Kees-Dean. In his youth, Boris Pringle had liked a girl and had received it every since. This girl had been **MARIE**, and on her deathbed said her daughter, **MARIELOU WISE**, that if ever she needed help to go to Boris Pringle, when trouble came to Paradise she should let mother's suggestion and Boris Pringle promised to help her with her medical education. But strange things happened before she could begin.

A great, brain-baked system, named **HANSHUTEN BRAIN**, who worked for Oscar Pringle, wanted to perfect one of his master's inventions—a machine to render the human race sterile. The man who controlled that machine captured the world, and brains faded after present. But his brain was not equal to the task. Only one brain could complete the elaborate calculation necessary—the brain of Boris Pringle.

There were other matters who came because of other that machine. **MARTHA**, Oscar Pringle's niece and servant, was actually a spy, and with her help, **KARL**, planned to steal the machine and kidnap Boris Pringle. They were his left hand and daughter. Shouldn't there be, they loved the life of Boris Pringle, but his brain had been stolen. They had no means of knowing that **BREWER** could help that brain alive, functioning in the world for him.

(See next page)

THE MAN WHO FORGOT.

PRINGLE learned negligently against the sink in Professor Oscar Pringle's kitchen, and turned his unfinished cap round and round in his hand. He was accustomed to waiting long hours for Professor Pringle, but he preferred the warmth of the kitchen to the chilly street. Besides, he was interested in this rather ladylike foreign maid. Marie's name and west, and Pringle's interest came and went with them.

This girl, Martha, was an unusual type.

Not, Pringle would have said, that he cared for foreigners as a rule. Pringle in his time had taken correspondence courses in both French and German, but it had turned out on experiment that it wasn't the sort of French and German that natives understood. So Pringle preferred to conduct a conversation in his own language.

But this girl, this Martha, she spoke English almost as well as he did himself. When she got a chance for a conversation with Pringle among his equals usually meant a monologue. As this morning, for instance.

"Education," he said pompously, "that's what counts in life. With education a man can rise to anything. Take me, for instance. Now do you suppose, Franklin, that I'll be a chauffeur all my life?"

Martha looked at him, smiling inside his uniform, without a great deal of enthusiasm or understanding.

"You got the bag, maybe? The what you call—the sack?"

Pringle looked pained.

"You got me wrong, Franklin. No, what I meant was that I'm out out for better things. I mean to rise in the world, see? I'm studying all the time, watching for my chance. You'd be surprised at the things I know. Do you know, for instance, the several imports of dried fish into the United States of America? Just for an example, see? Just a piece of general knowledge. I learnt that last night. I've just forgotten what it is, but it was there, in the book. Now suppose I went after a better job, let's say selling lightning

conductors, and they suddenly wanted to know the dried fish imports for the United States, who's the man to tell them, like a flash?"

Martha didn't answer. She went on reaching plates down from her shelf and busting about. Pringle looked at her rather wistfully. A smart girl, that, and obviously impressed by him. A psychologist could tell that from the way she took notice of him. A bit foreign, but real lady-like, and she had a pair of the trimmest ankles he had ever seen.

"Martha," he said earnestly, "are you content to be a cook-general for ever?"

She looked at him with wonder from innocent dark eyes.

"Oh, no," she said. "One day I do."

"I don't mean that. I mean, haven't you got ambition? Don't you want to get on in the world, educate yourself? Don't you want to be a lady?"

"Why should I be a lady? I am going to marry Karl, and he is a common-water at the Magnifico. Common-water do not marry ladies."

"That," said Pringle freely, "is where you make your big mistake. About marrying Karl, I mean. I've seen that fellow waiting here for you, and I weighed him up like a flash. One glance, and I could see just what he was."

Martha stiffened, stopped in her tracks. She darted a quick glance at Pringle. Then she laughed lightly, and her voice was unconcerned.

"Yes?" she said. "And what did you think about my Karl?"

"I'll tell you," Pringle said freely. "For

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This story is written by WALTER TYRER.

... There is no one living who can write a more dramatic story, full of unexpected twists and surprises, with characters who live and breathe.

—NOT THE SECOND EDGAR WALLACE...
THE FIRST WALTER TYRER

your own good. There, I said to myself, is a man who will never get anywhere in the world. He's a waiter now, and he'll never be anything else. Nothing behind him, if you get my meaning. And there's that girl simply throwing herself away on him. 'Abramam,' I said, 'Abramam—'

Martha looked startled.

"Heir?" she said. "What is this Abramam?"

"That's my name," Pringle told her coldly. "I was just telling myself that you could have been anything, and there you were, throwing yourself away on someone without ambition. Now what do you suppose your Karl can make out of his life?"

"One day," said Martha contentedly, "they will move him from the tables near the windows and he will not have to work so hard."

Pringle sighed, but before he could gather himself together for another attack they were interrupted. There was someone tapping rather nervously at the back door. Martha crossed towards it, careful to pass at the other side of the table from Pringle. She opened the door and there was Penny Wise standing there, looking rather nervous and unhappy.

"No one answered the front door," she explained.

"The bell is broken," Martha explained.

"But Pringle, he makes for to repair it."

"When I bring my soldering iron."

Pringle explained. "Was you wanting the professor, Miss Wise?"

Penny Wise nodded, and came rather timidly into the kitchen. She looked worried, there was no colour in her cheeks. Martha muttered something about seeing if the professor was free, and she hurried away. Pringle decided that he had a sympathetic listener, so he proceeded to discuss Martha.

"A nice girl that," he said judiciously. "Not bad-looking at all, really. Not too bright, of course. Quicker she should have taken such a fancy to me."

"To you?"

Pringle nodded.

"Never happier than when she can get me in the kitchen," he said, "and then she chatters away so and tells me all her private affairs. Tells me all about her Karl. Asks my advice. But there, people always seem to be doing that."

Martha returned, and Pringle beamed at her pleasantly. She managed to conceal any trace of her violent passion for him from her face. Presently she told Penny she was to go up. She led her upstairs, although Penny told her she knew her way. Penny went into the professor's study, where he was just finishing his breakfast. He was trying to catch the bubbles in his second cup of coffee in his spoon, and he blinked dreamily at Penny before he remembered her.

"Miss Wise! Come and sit down, my dear. Will you have some coffee? Or some bacon and eggs or ketchup or anything? I've just been having breakfast."

"No, thanks," Penny said quickly. "I had my breakfast two hours ago. I—I don't want to waste your time, professor. I know you're a busy man, and terribly important. But I had to come and see you. You see, I'm worried about your brother."

"About Boris?" Professor Probyn said slowly. "Why should you be worried about Boris?"

Nervousness made Penny pull at the fingers of her gloves.

"I suppose you will think I'm silly, but it's a feeling I have. You see, I found out this morning that he'd forgotten all about me. And I'm sure he would have remembered unless something serious happened."

She found herself telling the professor all about it.

"I went to see him, like you said, and at first he was very rude and unfriendly. Then I told him I was Penelope Morgan's daughter, and after that he was quite different."

Oscar Probyn's thoughtful face was dreary.

"Yes," he said. "Boris was different to Penelope Morgan's daughter."

"He wanted to know all about me, so I told him. I told him how I wanted to study music, and mother wanted me to study music, and she told me that if I needed help I was to come to him. And he was—kind, so very kind. You told me he'd be rather fierce and frightening, but he wasn't. He couldn't have been kinder if I'd been his own daughter."

"His own daughter. Of course. That's what you should have been."

Oscar Probyn had murmured the words. Penny had hardly heard them.

"I told him I wanted to study under Kompatz, and after he had heard me play he said I should. Study under Kompatz, I mean. But not in a class. He was going to pay for me to be a private pupil with Kompatz, and he promised he would write and arrange it and send the money, so that I could start to study this morning. I—I could have knelt down to thank him!"

"Not at all, my dear. Boris has plenty of money, more than he needs. And he owes something to Penelope Morgan's daughter. But what are you doing here? Why aren't you with Kompatz, snapping away for Kompatz? You'll never play at the Albert Hall if you miss your lessons like this."

"That's just it," Penelope said miserably. "I want to see Kompatz this morning, and he drove me out. I tried to tell him about your brother, but he wouldn't listen. Your brother hadn't written, he

hadn't sent the money, he hadn't done anything!"

Oscar Probyn frowned, his eyes hardened under his bushy white eyebrows.

"That's too bad of Boris," he said. "I'm sorry you were so humiliated, child. But of course, it can be arranged. I'll come along with you to this man you speak of, I will pay your fees, and—"

"No," said Penny sharply. "I can't let you do that. I didn't want Professor Boris to do it. I felt I couldn't take it. But he made me feel he'd do a right job, he made me feel I'd hurt him if I refused. He made it seem very important that I should let him help me."

"Yes," Oscar said slowly. "I can see that. It was important. It seems that he would make enough for the way he hurt your mother. In a way, it might be could earn your mother's forgiveness. Yes, Boris would wish to help you."

He waited. The rather dark paneled room was quiet. Penny spread out her hands in a gesture of helplessness.

"You see why I was worried? The fees weren't paid. He couldn't forget, could he?"

"No," said Oscar slowly. "Boris couldn't forget the chance to do a service to the daughter of Penelope Morgan. You were right to come to me, child. It is very strange."

"And you don't think I came to you because of the fees? I just knew that Professor Boris couldn't forget, and I thought something might have happened to him. Something might easily happen. Being alone like that. And then I thought perhaps he was lying there ill or hurt, and—and I couldn't get round to you quickly enough."

"We will go down to the bungalow," Oscar Probyn said, and there was unusual decision in his voice.

He summoned Pringle, and took Penny down to his car, settled her in comfortably. The professor turned, gave fresh orders to Pringle.

"The works can wait," he said. "I want to go to the bungalow at Kersham, where my brother lives."

Pringle went back into the house for a rug. The foreign-looking maid was hovering in the hall, and for the first time her gaze softened as she looked at Pringle, moved near to him.

"Where," she asked him quietly, "did the professor tell you to drive to?"

"To his brother's bungalow beyond Kersham," Pringle told her.

He didn't see the girl's eyes narrow thoughtfully.

THE EMPTY HOUSE.

OSCAR PROBYN wandered uncertainly through the dirt, untidy, tumble-down bungalow deep in the woods that had been his brother's home. He saw the kitchen, the stone cased with the grease of years, the tumbled heap of tinied stuff thrown carelessly in a corner. He saw the small and intricate plant of entirely novel design that accepted his brother with light. He saw the littered desk, the dust of years on some of the papers. He saw the bed, the sheets grey, and the blankets torn, thrown down just as Boris must have got out of his bed.

But he didn't see Boris.

Penny Wise had followed him about as quietly and as closely as a devoted dog, and now her big blue eyes looked up anxiously into his and closer face.

"There you are!" she said at last. "It's—it's queer, isn't it? There's no trace of your brother. And his bed's not made. And there are letters he hasn't opened

lying inside the door? Do you suppose anything has happened to him?"

Oscar Probyn stopped and took up one of the letters that lay inside the door, looked at the post-mark.

"It is eighteen months old," he said. "So I shouldn't worry about that. Some systems that let letters answer themselves, if you ignore them long enough. As for the bed, it seems to have been his practice to get in it as he got out."

"But he's not here!"

"That's not true. The kitchen has gone away long since. One of my staff on some archaeological diggings that interested him, and he stayed away a year. But that time he let me know. And the same when he tried out his diving bell."

Penny looked a question.

"He invented a diving bell case, and he tried it out off the coast of Ireland. He spent fifty thousand pounds on his experiments, and the Government offered him half-a-million for the results. He gave it to them. He was away a year then, but he let me know."

"And this time he hasn't!"

They looked at each other doubtfully, but it was the girl's face that was uneasy. Oscar Probyn went gravely troubled. You couldn't check on the movements of a man like Boris Probyn. He was forgetful too, sometimes forgetful by chance, sometimes because he chose to be. Oscar wouldn't have been seriously disturbed about his brother if it hadn't been for the girl's worried face. He dropped his hand lightly on her shoulder.

"I shouldn't make yourself unhappy," he said. "I'm sure Boris will be all right. No one's going to harm a queer, bed-tempered old man like Boris."

"I can't help it," Penny said. "It's a feeling I've got—here. Do you think we ought to go to the police?"

"If we do, and they interfere with Boris, he'll never forgive us. I'll tell you what we'll do, my dear. We'll go right back to the works and consult Brandt. He's a very clever fellow and very practical too. He'll tell us what to do."

They had to follow the footpath through the woods back to the car. They found Pringle with his uniform cap tilted with business-looking white bangs. Professor Oscar glanced at them with suspicion.

"Are you sure those are outside, Pringle?" A smile of kindly superiority flickered across Pringle's face.

"Natural history, sir, is one of my special studies. I—"

The professor took one of the objects from the cap, sniffed at it suspiciously, and hurried it away.

"If you cut those bangs, Pringle," he said coldly. "You would do it in considerable opposition to my ear. While I might find a change of character an improvement, I should regret—"

Pringle hunched the microscope into the undergrowth, with a look of pain on his shabby face. But he had the last word.

"I was intending, sir, to arrange for them to be cooked for your breakfast, by way of a pleasant surprise."

THE LETTER.

BANISTER BRANDT let himself into the house with his own key, slipped quickly into the dark passage, closed the door after him. The whole top door of this tall narrow house belonged to him; he had taken it because he craved for privacy even when he had nothing to hide. He was Mrs. Waters' star lodger, and Mrs. Waters treated him with great respect.

Mrs. Waters was looking on the step above now, a look of anxiety on her thin

face. Mrs. Waters wouldn't have admitted she could lend a single hand with her lodger, for her living depended on him, but in her heart of hearts she was afraid of the little banister with the grinning eyes. But if anyone else said a word against him she always protested that Mr. Brandt was a perfect gentleman—one who knew how to treat a lady.

Now she spoke to him in her shrill voice, and the fact that it was on a higher pitch than usual revealed her nervousness.

"Oh, Mr. Brandt, I was just hoping to have a word with you. You didn't leave your key on the nail this morning, so the girl wasn't able to get in and dust. I'll come and clean your rooms up now, if you—"

Brandt stopped after passing her on the stairs, looking down at her daskly.

"I don't want the rooms dusted," he said. "I don't want anything."

"If I bring you a nice cup of tea—"

"Listen, Mrs. Waters. I don't want anything. I can clean my rooms myself. All I want is privacy. I don't want anyone going up those attic stairs. I don't want anyone entering at my doors. I want what I pay for—privacy. Have I got to lock somewhere else for it?"

"Mr. Brandt, I hope I know—"

He didn't listen to her; he had turned and was swiftly descending the stairs, clapping his hand to his forehead. He looked a little better in Mrs. Waters' with his arched back in his black coat. Like one of those horrible spiders that came from under the sink. But she knew better than to pester him.

Banister Brandt didn't look round. His hand was trembling as he picked out his Yale key; there was the glint of excitement in his eye. He opened the door of his quarters, and a wave of hot air met him, steaming and relaxing. The door had been carefully sealed up inside with rubber to keep out the slightest draught, and now Brandt turned and closed it quickly.

The room he had entered was furnished as an office, but he passed through a plain room with a carpeted under the window. There was no decoration in this room save for a picture of Napoleon Bonaparte pinned on the wall. Brandt went through another door, and this was sealed with felt also. He entered a laboratory crowded with scientific apparatus, and a wave of chilly heat met him. Against one wall stood an antracite stove, and this had been banded up carefully. This was the source of the mild, unhealthy heat, the heat that brought beads of perspiration to Brandt's forehead.

Before he did anything, Brandt made up the stove. The fuel was almost unobtainable; beads of sweat stood on his forehead. Brandt stripped off his coat and waistcoat, peered at a thermometer above the stove. Near to blood heat.

Blood heat was the ideal he desired.

Now he opened cupboard doors, and then he fell back as though he saw some object of worship, something almost too sacred to be looked on. Inside was revealed a Leyden jar, and above this was pinned a drip-lead that dripped salt water into the jar, so that the object inside the jar was always half-encased with a fresh salt fluid. Brandt looked with glancing eyes through the transparent side of the jar.

He saw something rounded, like the top of the human skull. Something grey, with red veins running through it; something that was not so much solid matter as a mass of cells. And all the time it pulsed faintly, almost as though it lived.

The Brandt,

"Do you live on, Boris Probyn?" Brandt whispered. "All that marked you apart from the human race lives on; the thing that made you different from any other, any labourer—your brain. And now it is my brain, depending on my will for maintenance, pulsing away, ready to think for me!"

"Not very comfortable quarters, professor. But we'll improve on these later. The thing that matters is that I've proved what I set out to prove—that your brain could live on after the body and the heart of Boris Probyn was dead; the brain could go on reasoning, thinking. Thinking—for me!"

Brandt rubbed his hand together gleefully.

"How much do you hear of what I say?" he said slowly. "The ears are gone, but the nerve centres of hearing remain. If my theory is right, you have still understood all. If I didn't see nothing more with lenses, it might be that you could even see. But feeling; is the seat of feeling in the brain? Can your brain hear, see, or understand, or taste, or know? Are you having me, there in your glass jar, brain of Boris Probyn? Because it doesn't matter, I am your master now."

Brandt looked intently over his shoulder.

"We've got to do, Brain," he said. "We've got to prove to them that Boris Probyn is still alive, to make sure they don't search for him. We've got to send some message that will question the few folk who cared about Boris Probyn while he lived."

He moved to a small desk in the corner. The room was horrible in that intense heat; it seemed as though some faint odour came from the grey mass that pulsed away in a jar. But Brandt took no notice. He was scribbling on a sheet of paper. He came back with a look of insane triumph in his eyes.

"A letter from you," he said. "I've studied your handwriting carefully, Boris Probyn. That will make sure your brother Oscar doesn't become alarmed for your safety. That means we must send him something that can only have come from Boris. Something that only Boris might have been able to write."

He checked himself.

"You are going to write for your living, Brain," he said. "You are going to solve for me a problem Oscar has puzzled over for months."

He moved swiftly, deftly. From another cupboard he brought out a complicated electrical apparatus, plugged this in to the electricity. The power it used was apparent, for the light above his head was instantly lowered. Brandt took two leads, suspended one over the vessel in which the Brain pulsed helplessly. Last of all he fitted on himself a strange metal cap with a lead running back to the apparatus.

A strange, glazed look came into his beset eyes.

"Now, Brain," he ordered harshly, "think!"

He snatched up a piece of chalk, moved to a blackboard. In a moment his hand was flying over the board, scribbling down figures and letters and symbols, part of an intensely complicated calculation. The whole board was covered over with calculations. He turned it over with a swift movement, scribbled again on the back.

Then suddenly Brandt seemed to wobble. He turned pale under the metal hood-cap he wore. He dropped his chalk, chewed wildly at the metal head-band, and now he was shivering all over. He was nearly fainting when all at last he saw the apparatus from from his head, hung it down on the table.

Clutching at his head, he staggered to a seat, slumped into it.

"It's too strong—too strong!" he whispered. "My nerves, my blood-stream—they can't sustain the thought-process of such a brain!"

Slowly he recovered. He stumbled to a cupboard, found a brandy bottle, and poured himself out a neat drink. He was still pale, but he was master of himself again now. His arms swinging by his sides, his face drawn and white, his eyes burning, he turned again to the Layden bar, the grey thing that peered with such horrible regularity inside.

"That was bad," he whispered. "But I shall learn to use you. I shall learn. It is enough now that you worked out the problem. That, and the letter I have forged, will satisfy Oscar. Now—now I must see what your brain made me write."

He turned over the blackboard, looked at the chalk calculations. His red-rimmed eyes narrowed with pleasure.

"It is here—all here!" he gloated. "Only Boris Probyn could have done it, only the brain of Boris Probyn. Who dares to say Boris Probyn is dead?"

And then he saw something else, something his own hand had added at the bottom of the complicated calculations. With difficulty he made out the scribbled words.

"I will get you yet, Brandt! I will reach out from the grave and—"

Brandt swung round with a snarl of anger. He spoke to the Brain as though it lived and was human.

"So!" he gasped. "So, you threaten me! But I am not afraid. You are dead, dead, sure for a bit of grey matter that is kept alive by chemicals, but able to think for me. I keep you to use you, and when I tire I let you go out. That—that for your threats, Boris Probyn!"

He snapped his fingers and went off into horrible rattling laughter. He snatched up a cloth and wiped out the words, but he was careful to keep the worked-out problem. Then he sat down and began to copy it out precisely. At last he was done, and he spoke again to the Brain before he closed it up in his cupboard.

"I must find," he whispered, "another place to keep you, another way to use you. For the brain of Boris Probyn, it is a little too strong for the body of Brandt Brandt. Thinking such thoughts, so fast—they almost killed me. And then at the end, the brain was dominant over the body—my poor body. I will admit it. But I will not see that risk again. I must go again to Kramchen, obtain your papers and then I will know how to make use of them—and of you."

He closed the cupboard door.

THE PROOF

THEY drove back to the works, through the lodge gate, up the broad and smooth main road that led between the works' buildings, and came at last to the shining laboratory. The professor passed quickly through the outer department, the girl at his heels, and they came at last to the inner lab., with its apparatus benches covered with the complicated apparatus of many experiments, with the surrounding blackboards scribbled over with intricate calculations.

Brandt Brandt was there, bending over the complicated radio apparatus that was the subject of Oscar Probyn's greatest experiment. He looked like some evil insect scribbled out of all proportion as he bent over the bench, the lamp of his back

higher than his head, his long white hands reaching inside the set.

Either he heard them come in, or he sensed them, for he turned, without a violent motion, but calmly, as one who is used to moving among delicately balanced objects that a breath of sudden air can upset. Penny Wise felt her stomach cringe to see this man's long white face, his burning, probing eyes. But it was obvious that Oscar Probyn didn't share her uneasiness.

"There you are, Brandt! I brought Miss Wise in for your advice. She's a bit worried about my brother Boris. You know what a queer bird he is. Well, Miss Wise had a feeling that something had happened to him, and we took the risk of annoying him and went down to his hangar. He certainly isn't there. The question is, ought we to call the police in?"

Brandt's face was unmoved. He had talked with grave interest. Was it later, Penny wondered, but had those queer, deep-set eyes of his actually shifted towards her with a look of hate? Maybe she'd fancied it, for when she searched his face the look was gone.

Now he answered Professor Boris judicially.

"You know what Professor Boris is?" Oscar nodded. Penny felt unconsciously that this best little man meant to put them off going to the police, and she was going to permit it. She wouldn't rest until Boris Probyn was traced.

"But," went on Brandt, "maybe it would be wise to go to the police. He is not a young man. Some queer characters roam these woods at night. They might have suspected that he kept money there, or something valuable—"

"You think—the police?"

Brandt suddenly clasped his hand to his head so that his mass of black hair tossed like a mane.

"Wait!" he said. "There is a letter in your post, professor. I saw it, and get it aside. That, I said, is from Professor Boris. The same cramped handwriting, you see. If there is a letter, perhaps he tells you where he has gone."

Oscar Probyn's face had cleared. Brandt hurried away and brought the letter. Probyn tore it open, brought out a typed sheet of calculations, and a scribbled note at the end.

"This, I think," he read, in the cramped handwriting of Boris Probyn, "clears up your problem about Mendelian—B."

There was a postscript.

"I'm going away. For goodness' sake, see I'm not preferred."

That was all. But Oscar had received scores of such curt notes. Boris always answered like that when Oscar submitted him a problem, his answers, usually priceless, were carefully filed away under Brandt's care. All the worry had lifted from Oscar's face now, he turned with a fatherly smile to Penny.

"There you are," he said. "You see, Boris is all right. He's just gone off, in his own strange and secretive fashion. We just haven't worry about him."

"Are you sure he wrote that note?" Penny said doggedly. "Anyone could forge his handwriting."

"The young lady's right, sir," Brandt said quickly. "Someone might have forged the note, someone who had planned harm against the professor. Unless, of course, those calculations—"

(Continued on page 435.)

To My Readers

NORMAN CONQUEST delves mysteries intensely—so much so, in fact, that he cannot rest until they are solved. That peculiar twist in his character has got him into all sorts of scrapes and landed him up to the neck in danger many a time. But he isn't cared if it, yet, and he isn't likely to be.

And it was certainly a mystery why three men, well-wired and well-dressed, suddenly got the jitters when they read, in the *Stop Press* of an evening paper, that the Earl of Chatham had died suddenly. They went out of the restaurant and one was awarded, there and then.

Conquest went right into action, only to come up against yet another mystery. The killer wore a mask such as he had never seen before. It was grotesquely made of rubber and fitted like a second skin. It looked human, yet it was not human. Conquest was taken off his guard, for once, and the killer escaped.

But having once started, Norman Conquest does not leave a mystery before it is cleared up. He knows there was danger, but he went on with what he classed his head. And it wasn't long before he was in the middle of as sinister a problem as ever he had encountered.

You must read next week's long complete story, "RUBBER FACE," by Berkeley Grey. Tell your friends that this is a Conquest story. That, in itself, is a guarantee of a first-class yarn.

In the same issue of the THRILLER Library you will have another installment of WALTER TYRER'S brilliant story, "THE BRAIN," in which Brandt, having stolen the brain of Professor Boris Probyn, makes it work for him. There never

has been a story quite so engrossing as this. Don't miss a word of it.

And don't forget that the *Shadow* will be with you again in further chapters of that powerful story, "RIVER OF DEATH."

The Editor

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A SQUARE DEAL *in* CRIME



A £70,000 MURDER!

*This new type of criminal
destroyed his evidence
as he went along....*

— HE TOOK NO CHANCES

Chapter I. THE DAUNTON REPORT.

THIS dame was different!

She sat at a corner table in the Purple Slipper, which is run by mine good friend Harry Marchant. And my eyes went to her at once.

I don't usually go for "let females," but I like to look at 'em, and this was a particularly high-class number to look at. She was tall and slim, and her eyes were blue as Arctic ice, and jet there was fire in them. Her hair was ripe corn, and her complexion was flawless.

I put the spirit of life of the valley straight in my buttonhole, and when Harry drifted around, like the genial uncle at a kid's party, I gave him a wink. He came over.

"Hi, James. Long time I no see."
"I've been abroad," I said. "Marchant?"
"You want to see the climate, huh?"

"I've heard of it," he said.
"You look pretty pleased. Been rotting graves, or something?"
He beamed around at the well-filled tables.

A FAST-MOVING, CRIPPING, LONG COMPLETE STORY OF A NEW RACKET THAT ALMOST SUCCEEDED

A Jimmy Malcolm Story

By MURDOCH DUNCAN

"Business is good, and I can do with it. People are beginning to eat again!"

"And drink!" I said.

He looked hurt.

"Well, what do you expect, Jimmy? The bill is on the wine. Look what I provide! Look at the furnishings, at the orchestra! Skipper Keyes is the best man in London. And look at the floor show!"

"I've been lookin' at 'em! A lot of old cracks that can't kick waist high. Where did you pick 'em up, Harry?" And then I came to earth.

"Who's the blonde at the back of you? The one at the corner table behind Albert?"

Harry Marchant knew everybody.

"That's Evadne Leigh! Some parcel, isn't she?"

"Never heard of her," I said.

"She's American. She was a beauty with the Long-Wheller troupe, and then she met Walter Peregrine and married him."

"Peregrine?" I said.

"Yes, the racer. They were married about three years ago, but it kindred. She's running around with someone else just now—Casadden."

He said it as though he didn't like the sound of it. I didn't care for it much myself. I knew Casadden in a vague sort of way, he was a man about town, and had a lot of property in the East End; at least, that was the story. He kept one or two horses and was by the way of being a sportsman. Somehow his name always had a smell.

I said as much to Harry, and added:

"She doesn't look like the sort of girl who'd care for a man like Casadden."

He shrugged his fat shoulders.

"Women are funny. You can't tell what they'll do. Nine men out of ten could pick out Casadden as a wrong one, but the women fall for him. Anyway, that's the way of it."

"What does Peregrine think? He doesn't look like the kind of man who'd have his wife trailed around."

Harry grinned.

"Peregrine doesn't care. He's been on a heater for a year now. He had a smash-up at Brooklands and his nerve went. They say he's never been sober since. Anyway, he doesn't interfere. He'll never drive again—not on the speedway, and he won't fit up to forget it all." He jerked his head round as he spoke.

"There's Casadden now."

Casadden was coming in. He was a thick-set man, rather above middle height, and his features were coarse and sensual. At that he was handsome of his type. He had thick, wavy hair and a nice carriage to his shoulders. I could imagine that Evadne Leigh might have found him quite the thing.

"I'll have to browse," Harry said. "If I wait at this table any longer people will think you can't pay your bill!"

"You've got something there," I admitted.

He waved a genial hand and sailed off. I kept on watching the Leigh girl, and then all at once I knew that she was aware of it; desperately aware of it, but that she didn't want Casadden to see it.

He had placed an order and the waiter was pouring out wine when I saw a long, lean figure sail readily up to their table.

"Hi, Casadden," he said, "how is the trade? Any more tips right from the horse's—"

"Hello, Jeff!" Casadden said sourly.

Lance Jeffrey sat down without being asked. Jeffrey was a reporter, and a good one. At invading our a crime story he hasn't an equal in England, but at heart he's a loner. I'd rubbed up against him before, and I was still raw from the contact. He was classically drunk, and that was about the best way you could have him. Sober, he was mean, waspish and incredibly bitter.

He sat there, with his long legs sprawled over the floor, and stared at the girl stupidly.

"I've seen you before," he muttered.

She flushed.

Casadden said:

"Look, Jeff, you've had a drop too much. Don't start anything here, because Marchant won't stand for it. You know how strict he is, don't you?" His voice was the stammering sort of voice you have to use with a drunken man, but I could see that he was holding himself in.

"Yeah—seen you before?" Jeffrey said. He looked at the girl again. He had a long, horse-like face and narrow eyes that always stared at you. "Used to be a hooter—huh?"

"Yes, I was a dancer," she said.

"What was I hangin' around with Casadden for? He's as crooked as hell!" And then he gave a sour grin. "You've got your reasons—I'll bet you have."

Casadden's cheeks were white. This man had a temper and he was looking himself in the cheek, but any minute he was going to lose control of himself. Jeffrey's smug voice said:

"You're Peregrine's wife! I've got you now!" He said it loudly and triumphantly, and heads at the various tables were lifted.

I saw Harry Marchant turn and look round. Albert, who had been an Army middleweight, took a little step forward.

Casadden was breathing hard.

"You've drunk, Jeffrey. If you won't, I'll let you that. Get out of here before I lose my temper!"

I got up at that. Jeffrey I hate, but if I could steer him out of this, it might not do any harm. Besides, the girl was white to the lips. It was embarrassing for her, and—

"Hi, Jeff, how about a walk?" I said. I put my arm on his shoulder in a way that meant he had to come. He sighed round at me. Then I saw his face change.

"Hello, copper?"

"Some outside while you're all in one place."

"Keyhole!" he grined. He was quite friendly with Casadden now, for I guess I must be the big Mole in his life. "Look at what's turned up! The keyhole detective in person, Casadden, you've let yourself in for the full weight of it. Peregrine must be wise to you both when he's got a divorce on the job," he sniggered.

I put the waiter on his arm.

"Outside, Jeff," I began to hustle him, but he went without much trouble. I stood at the door of the wash-rooms and watched him leave his face with cold water.

Casadden and Evadne Leigh went out while I stood there, and the girl flushed one last glance back to where I was standing. There was meant to be something in that, I know, but whether it was thanks, condemnation or just curiosity, I can't say. Then they went down the middle steps to the car that was waiting for them.

I stood and looked after them.

Life could be hell sometimes. Peregrine had been a decent sort of chap. And maybe this Evadne Leigh had been genuinely in love with him, and here she was, carving out a road that was due to lead only to misery.

Casadden was the sort of thing you'd find if you lifted up a damp board. He couldn't be decent, only—

Jeffrey came out. He had on his black coat and a black, snap-brim hat.

"Thank me for saving you a sweet slap in the mouth, Jeff," I said. "I'd have liked to see you get it—only the lady was there."

"Always the gallant, eh, Malcolm?" He tucked in the ends of his white scarf. "The women get you—ah! they can have you!"

And then he turned and walked out.

I stared after him in amazement, for he was walking as straight as a ramrod. He went down and out of the big glass doors—sober as a judge! I went back to my table, and Harry Marchant came across and said:

"Thanks, Jim, Jeffrey's a nuisance. In future he doesn't get in drunk."

I didn't answer, because Jeffrey hadn't been drunk—no more than I was.

So what did that add up to?

CASADDEN'S RACKET.

THE one who in private life is an Inspector John Gable, some time of Scotland Yard, and now superintendent of

the Mattam-Harvey Detective Bureau, and at his desk and behind his special lens.

It was the one he keeps for handing out jury assignments with.

"Hi, James," he smiled. "You're a little late to-day. That's a pity now, because there was a young lady up here looking for you."

"A young lady?" I said suspiciously.

"Yes, and a good-looking!"

"I can pick 'em," I told him smugly. "They get so many about me they even come up in working hours. Who was she and what did she want?"

"He rubbed his grained hands across his bald head.

"She was Mrs. Walter Peregine."

"I stared at him.

"You wouldn't know why she was here, James? You wouldn't know why she wanted a detective? And you wouldn't know why she stipulated it had to be you?" He shook his head mockingly. "Oh, no, you wouldn't know any of these things! And yet what do I hear about the Peregine dame? That she used to be a hooker, and that she married Peregine for his money, and that there are a lot of rumormongers around about the company she keeps up with."

"You lecherous old reptile!" I snarled.

"This has always been a moral agency, James. There aren't no scandal or whispers around about the Mattam-Harvey Bureau." He stared in his sane fashion.

"All right."

"What did she want?" I yelled.

"His face went stern.

"You go along and see her. She didn't tell me what she wanted. She only laid a cheque for five hundred on the desk. His voice became reverent. "I didn't ask her. She said she'd only tell you."

"A cheque for five hundred?" I gasped.

The C.M. lered an oily grin.

"A lot of money, James. Maybe there's more. Maybe you could go along and see what she says."

"But what kind of case is it?"

"You take it—if it's on the level. Take a cab, James. This one is on the office—any' you'd have one on your windshield, anyway. Coming in a hack gives you more time."

"Yeah!" I said. "An' if there's one thing the office needs—it's cars. It's cluttered up with heavy, chattering old car-ops from Scotland. You'd ought to be sitting in their bath-chairs."

The staid old gentleman was nettled.

"Oh," he said loudly. "You ain't meanin' me, are you? I'm not old unless you'd say a man was old at fifty-one!" He snatched me carefully.

"You're a grandfather!" I jeered. "You must be ninety if you're a day. Eighty anyway."

"Get going!" he snarled.

And I got.

Evadne Leigh had an apartment in the Berkeley Arms, which was a block of yellow brick that got far from Marybone station. I took a look at them and decided that there was something to be said for modern flats after all.

These were neat and classy. There was a unpolished parlor in the hall, and he looked at me and said:

"Yes, sir?"

"I'm looking for Miss Leigh."

"Number seven, sir, on the first floor and to your right."

I went up and rang the bell. A trim little maid opened the door for me.

"Yes, monsieur?"

"Hi, cherie," I said. "Ferden-vois pennez—?" And then I saw someone standing behind her.

It was Evadne Leigh, and her face was white and set.

"Mr. Malcolin," she said, "come inside. Come, show Mr. Malcolin into the room!"

Celeste gave me a very big eye and led the way. I began to look more of this flat than ever. There were four or five rooms, and at the rear I could see a kitchenette sort of place, tiled in white.

The room that I was led into was comfortably furnished and had plenty of floor space. There was a little bookcase of brightly lacquered mahogany and a miniature cocktail bar on which was in the corner.

"You want a drink, monsieur?" Celeste said.

"Not so early—Celeste."

She went out with a nice little look, and I sat still and tried to figure it out. What did Evadne Leigh have to say to me that was so special? Why did it have to be me? And why was it worth five hundred pounds?

I couldn't find any answers.

There was a small mahogany writing-desk in the corner by the window, and on top of this was a portrait in a simple silver frame.

It was a dark-eyed, thin-lipped man with young features and a nice smile.

Peregine! I'd seen those features so often before in the daily papers that I couldn't mistake them. For Walter Peregine, until his crash last year, had been the nation's speed king. Everyone knew him.

Above the bottom of the picture was scrawled:

"Evadne—From her adoring husband, 'Wanna."

"Hell!" I said, and put the picture down.

The door opened behind me. It was Evadne Leigh, and she had changed into a simple, primrose-yellow frock that made her look a child.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said. She came across to me. "Sit down—I want to talk to you because I know I can trust you—I feel that I can."

I sat down, and she took a chair opposite me.

"It's a queer thing," she said slowly. "Yesterday I never dreamed that there was any way out for me. I had to go on and on—"

Her voice had a queer, cold passion. "But it doesn't seem so bad now. I want you to understand—"

I raised my fingers under my collar.

"Understand what?"

"I've got a case for you."

"So the boss told me. But he wouldn't give me any of the details."

"I didn't tell him any," she said. "I don't want to tell any of this to anyone but you. I've heard of you before—and I know you're straight. You won't let me down."

I was staring at her.

"Miss Leigh—or Mrs. Peregine, listen to me. I'm a detective. I've got a hunch and a certain amount of scope and leeway with the Yard because I know a lot of the men there—I don't want to lose my grip. If you want me to do something that isn't on the level—it's the deal."

"No, no," she began. "It's nothing like that."

"I want you to prevent a man from being murdered," she said thinly.

"What?"

She said it again:

"To prevent a man from being murdered. It isn't such a terrible thing to do, is it?"

I felt the smoke beginning to rise.

"Who's the man?"

"My husband—Walter Peregine."

I stared at her.

"Peregine? You mean— What the hell do you mean?"

And then I saw the tenseness at her lips, the fear that was in her eyes. Whatever she had behind all this, the girl was not bluffing. She was terribly in earnest.

"Walter Peregine," she said slowly, "is going to die very soon. Before the end of the month. I know that—and I'm hiring you to prevent it."

"Who is going to kill him?"

"Stephen Casseador."

"What?" I yelled. "The man you've been playing about with? An' you know this all along an' yet—"

"Don't you understand," she said. "It's not what it appears on the surface. I know I liked Stephen. But that's all over long ago—months ago. I hate him now like—like—"

I got up and went across to the cabinet and fished for a bottle of whisky. There was a half-bottle of "Old Fiddler," and I poured out two very good glasses.

"Look," I said. "Drink this over—an' steady up. Then tell me."

She took it, sipping there like a white marble statue. She drank it over, and then:

"You remember when Wally crashed at Brooklands?"

"Yes—more than a year ago."

"Yes, he was was driving for Casseador at the time."

I hadn't known Casseador went in for that sort of thing, and I said so.

Evadne shrugged.

"He's in everything that means money. Wally was working for him when he crashed."

She closed her eyes.

"We'd been married for more than a year then, and— and we'd drifted apart a little. We hadn't quarrelled, or anything like that—we just drifted. Wally had to go to America to race, and I couldn't go with him—that was part of the contract."

"Casseador drew up the contract—eh?"

"I suppose so," she said listlessly. "He accused himself on the grounds that Wally had to take chances to keep winning, and to make big money he had to keep on winning. Casseador said that drivers never drove as well with their wives around. They wouldn't take chances, the women made them nervous. So I had to stay in England for the seven months Wally was away."

"And Casseador stayed, too?"

"Yes."

"And the saw a lot of you?"

"Yes," she flinched. "I'm not going to excuse myself, but I didn't know then why I wasn't with Wally. All I was told was that I couldn't go. And, left at home, I got lonely and began to wander. And when Stephen called round, it was all so nice. I began to like him more and more."

I nodded. I could figure out how Casseador had wanted it. And if Evadne Leigh thought her husband was sky-larking around, she was just the sort of dame to do something crazy about it.

"And then I really fell for him," she said. "And after the crash it was worse. At first we thought Wally couldn't live—but he pulled through. He was finished as a driver, though, his nerve was gone."

"And his money," I said.

She started.

"No—not quite that. Wally has a private income of a thousand a year—it stops on his death."

"So that if he had died you'd have got nothing."

She stretched out and caught his hands. "Listen, Cascadden doesn't take any chances. When he signed Wally up he took out insurance on him with three companies. In all it totals seventy thousand pounds."

I stared at her.

"Seventy thousand!"

"Yes. And the policies lapse on the last day of September. You see what I mean? If Wally dies before then—Cascadden gets seventy thousand pounds. And if he doesn't—the girl's nothing!"

I smothered my jaw.

"I see. But how do you know Cascadden will murder him?"

"Because I know now that Wally's crash was faked," she said simply. "It wasn't an accident at all. Cascadden had the car tampered with. When it crashed at two hundred miles an hour he never thought Wally would live—!" Her voice sank to a whisper. "Neither did I."

"You were in on it—then?"

"No, that's not true. I hated Wally for leaving me, and I was in love with Stephen. But things appeared so easy. That's why I called on you after this morning. I'm sorry for what I've done, but it's done. I can't undo it. All I can do is to keep Cascadden from achieving his end—and you have to do that. You have to do it! There are only ten days left. Ten days, and—"

She began to weep softly. "You will do it, won't you? If you don't, everything is finished!"

I got one of her wrists in my hand and I squeezed it.

"Stop that hysteria. I'll do anything I can, but you'll have to give me all the help I need. Where is Pergrine?"

"I don't know!" she sobbed.

"What?"

"That's true. I don't know. But Cascadden does. Walter was in a restaurant—an asylum of sorts. He wasn't quite right in his mind after the crash, and he got out about a month ago."

"Got out?"

"Escaped," she said. "But I don't think Stephen had a hand in it, because he nearly went mad when he found out about it. But he's had men on the job, and they've found Walter. I tried to get out of him where he was, but I couldn't. He wouldn't tell."

"Just one other question. Who was the beneficiary in those policies?"

Her lips trembled for a second.

"Cascadden was in one—I was beneficiary in two of them. To the extent of fifty-five thousand pounds."

"I see. And when Walter Pergrine died, Cascadden would have married his widow and got seventy thousand in his pocket—eh?"

She gave a little sob.

"That's what it. Hence me if you like. I was mad, I know. But I thought I'd been left. I was jealous and wildy in

love with Wally. That turned it into hate." She looked back at the picture. "But I couldn't keep it up. You'd do something—would you?"

"Yes, I'd do something—all I can."

I felt foolish almost sorry for her.

THE MAN WHO MISSED NOTHING.

I WENT out of the Eldersheim Arms and into the street, and there was a man standing in the roadway looking up over the roof of the house.

His mouth sagged open and he had his hands pushed into his pockets.

"Over there," he said. "Look at him go."

I stared up and didn't see a darn thing. But I felt something. It bowed into my back, and a cold voice said:

"Look, you seem to be a sensible sort of bloke. Put your hands in your pockets and wait to that car down there. Yes, the Bentley!"

I was staring at her early he'd taken me, but I walked. I always walk with

112K. I've had her taped all morning from the time she ran. I even could tell you the colour of her hair today."

I thought of the little maid Celeste. Marie Celeste knew her way around.

"Come again!"

"She went along to the Hutton-Harvey Hayes, and she was up there for half an hour. Then she went back and waited for you. I saw you go in."

We were driving through Wapping now, and I got the screen and sounds from the street. Sometimes, as we flitted between numbers, I could see the skeleton waste of cargo boats and the black bulks of tramps lying up at the wharves.

Lefty drove the rat down and showed me the gun.

"You've been pretty sensible on the Minkins. I don't owe you a grudge and I'd be sorry to have to give it to you. There's all I'm going to say. We get out now in a couple of minutes—any word before, eh?"

"You've got a real argument there," I told him.

"Here we are," Joe said. He brought the big car up to a smart stop outside a picture house. Then he cut the motor.

"No, ha!" I said. "We take it a show."

"That's right," said the good-natured Lefty. "You go out first. Once I let a guy follow me out of a car, and it didn't work. They had to drop him in the river off Rotherhithe, and I had water on the knee for a month."

I got up and looked out. It was one of those gash-looking new cinemas that are shooting up all over London. It was a dirty yellow in colour and all straight lines. A chromium plate that was inlaid with electric bulbs said:

"THE PLAZA"

We went up a narrow stairway and stopped in front of a door.

Lefty knocked, and a voice said "Come in."

"That means you!" said Lefty.

I went in, and Cascadden was sitting at a desk before a glass and a bottle. He pushed it forward and said:

"No hard feelings, Malcolms. I had to get you here before you saw or spoke to anyone."

I was beginning to understand.

"Now look," he said. "I don't believe in beating about the bush. You're next to the H. & N. this morning. I've had her watched for a month now, because I knew she was going sour on me. They sent you up to see her. She told you all about it. What are you going to do?"

"What do you say?" I said.

He raved in his chair.

"I can get you in for five thousand. That's my one and final word. If I can let Joe and Lefty get rid of you, I've eyes over writing. Risk, needless eyes, but they keep on writing as though I was their only friend."

"Five thousand," he said again. "That's a lot of money to a gambler who hasn't—"

"It's a lot of money. How about giving me some time to think it over?"

"Yes," he came back. "About five minutes. You'd do all your thinking here on my own. Lefty!" He raised his voice.

Lefty came in.

"Did he have a gun?"

Lefty shook his head.

"I'll be the one, but I'll go over his again." He turned me as though it was his daily work, and he was through. "Nothing doing!"



Lance Jeffrey had a nose for a story and eyes that missed nothing.

secretary who's holding a gun tells me to. I've seen the flashing guys that don't. We got into the Bentley, and he drew a rap up over our knees. I saw that it was a rickety-plated .38 he was carrying, and it looked brutal enough to make me behave.

There was another man in the car. A man with the build of a pug; with a face that had been chopped in the ring, and with thick shoulders and muscle-board arms. He said:

"You didn't take long, Lefty."

"I got technique," Lefty told him.

"Technique's what you want to study, Joe. Technique is what keeps me in the money while you drive cars for a living."

Joe looked properly impressed.

"Lefty's a card, ain't he?"

"You betcha! He's a crackle cut-up. Now suppose you tell me what this is all about? I was paying a visit to my doctor there, sir—"

"Don't tell me that one," Lefty said.

"You went into the doctor's apartment at

Cascadden granted.

"Sit down here, Malcolm, opposite the door, an' think it over. Either you sit in with us or you go the same way as Perrigine. If you want to be sensible you'll send a wire to your chief, and you'll wait here for ten days or so till the job is done."

"An' what's to prevent you giving me the same dose as Perrigine gets while I'm sitting pretty?"

"Common sense," he said. "You aren't insured. Besides, Perrigine's death has got to be faked to look natural or the companies won't pay out. An' we can't have two naturals."

Lefty chuckled.

"You got the idea? It's easy—"

He came to his feet like a flash of light. There was a running, scampering sound in the stairway outside, and then Joe's voice said:

"Where the hell are you going? The boss is busy just now, an'—"

A harsh, restless voice said:

"You've got to let me pass. I've got to see Cascadden. Tell him it's Piper. I've just come down from Marlow, and—"
He suddenly burst past Joe, and the door was flung open. He was a lean, hard-eyed man in a blue serge suit, and he was grasping the door while Joe was trying to draw him back.

"Let him go, Joe," Cascadden said. "What's up, Piper?"

Piper straightened his coat. His pocket sagged under the weight of what I was sure was a blankjack. He got his breath and gulped:

"He's gone! He got away this morning and left us flat!"

"What!" Cascadden stretched forward and gripped him by the lapels. "He got away! Couldn't three of you keep an eye on him—a madman?"

Piper snarled.

"Madman hell! He's as sane as I am. And he's gone. He laid out the gunner with a tyre tool and knocked Smith cold. I'd gone down to the village for—"

Cascadden struck him once and he staggered into Lefty.

"That gave me the only chance I'd had so far. In the gun clamored to the floor. I stepped in and looked Lefty with my right, and he traveled across the floor and folded up in the corner."

Joe came at me with his face up, and his big, muscle-bound arms proving the air. I hit him twice and he went down and stayed down.

Cascadden had dived for the gun. I slammed the door on my back and jumped over the banisters to the foyer below.

I was outside on the pavement before he got the door open, and I went round the corner flat. Then I peeped into a doorway.

I didn't mean to go out of the country yet, because I'd an idea there were things I could learn. I learned one of them right now.

Around the road a lean figure lounged against a shop-front. He wore an old ulster and a snap-brim felt, and I had an idea that from under it those mean, narrowed eyes would be watching me.

For Lance Jeffrey had a nose that missed nothing.

WHERE IS PERRIGINE?

CASCADEN and Lefty came out in a couple of moments and got into the Bentley. I watched them pull off, and then went across the street.

Jeffrey watched me coming.

"Hallo, bryther! What kind of dirt are you tanning up to-day?"

"If I had a disposition like yours, Jeff, I'd cut my own throat in case I had kids some day. What brought you here? They drafted you in the 'Pine and Deanna Review' department?"

He looked up above the Plaza to where a coloured handkerchief said:

"TAINTED LIVES."

"Yeah—that's right, I'm reviewing films."

I looked one finger in his coat.
"You're following your nose, Jeff. Last night you tried to pick a scrap with Cascadden at the Purple Slipper under the guise of being drunk. To-day I find you sitting on his doorstep. Ouse, Jeff, give!"

He shrugged his thin shoulders.
"That's a coincidence."

"I've heard of 'em. I'll tell you about another coincidence. Cascadden's going to find out that you're trailing him around."

He jerked his head up.
"You don't mean that. That would be a low-down sort of trick to play on a fellow. I've got a living to earn. I'm not like you, I have to work to eat."

"An' drink," I suggested.
"That's an incidental detail." And then: "I'm on a story, Malcolm—an' that's all I can tell you just now. I've dug certain things up, and I'm saying no more until I've got my facts."

I let go of him.
"Good enough. But if you're working on the same job as I am, keep out from under my heels. That's all!"

He nodded.
"All in it? Malcolm, I hate your Scotch wit. I can't get far enough from you to please me." He snarled away slowly and left me watching.

I looked back to the Plaza. Then I went over. The doors were all locked, and there was no method of getting inside, short of smashing a way in. This was London and broad daylight. I went along the road to where I saw the red point of a telephone kiosk, and from there I got the office.

The old So-and-So was just back from lunch.

"Beecheson and Sidney pudding, James, an' mashed potatoes an' tump!"

"Yeah!" I said. "I haven't eaten since breakfast, an' then it was toast an' honey."

"Jam turnover," he parried, "an' coffee. What was it you wanted, anyway?"

"I'm taking this case, I want you to send someone over to keep an eye on Eudine Leigh, because I wouldn't be surprised if she was in some little danger."

"I'll do that. Who an' what is it?"

"I can't tell you yet. They won't harm her, but they may try to hit her, and if they do, let them have her. I want to know where she goes to."

"I'll do that," he croaked. "Report as soon as you can, an' let me know the details."

"This is confidential," I said, and I heard him growl.

"An' I handle confidential stuff every day?"

"Yes, but this is extra confidential," I pointed out. "I couldn't tell an old man like you. Maybe you'd speak it in your sleep, or maybe the shock wouldn't be good for your heart. When you get up in years you can't take chances like us young bachelors."

I hung up while he was still cursing and looked up the number of the Plaza.

I rang for a moment or so, and then a hoarse voice said: "Hallo!"

I said:
"Joe, I want to talk to Piper. Bring him on."

He did it without hesitation. Piper's "Hallo" came to my ear, and I said:

"We'll pick you up at Darlington Street in five minutes. Tell Joe to wait and I'll call later."

I slammed down the receiver. Darlington Street was right ahead of us. I put through another call to a hotel company in the next block, and said:

"Send a car round at once to the telephone kiosk opposite the Plaza."

"Be right with you, sir!"

The black car slid round as soon as I was out of the kiosk. I gave the driver a wave.

"My pal will be along in a minute or so."

Piper came out of the rear of the Plaza, and he never noticed me till I stepped out beside him. I had my hand in my pocket, and I produced it at him.

"Hallo, pal!"

He recognized the throb and went white.
"Keep smiling," I told him. "It was me who called you just now. We've got for a little drive—just you an' me. We've got a lot of things to talk over."

"We made the taxi and I beamed."

"Hop in, Piper."

He got in.

"The Wellington Arms, Fred, an' mean your London flat."

"Yeah!" And we were off.

Piper didn't speak at all. I took him in, a hard-faced article of average height and build. He'd have a gun, perhaps. Certainly he had a coat. I saw the talc of it in his pocket.

"When we got up to my flat I pushed him into a corner and sent over him. A coat, a set of very nice new knicks, but no gun."

I shoved him into a chair.

"Piper, you've got one chance of getting out of this with a whole skin—start to do a little talking. Where had Cascadden nabbed Perrigine away at Marlow?"

He snarled sourly.

"I'm not talking. If I did, I'd talk my way into the bag. Perrigine ain't there now—an' I know nothing about him."

"That kind of a body, eh?" I said gently. I took off my coat.

"Piper, I'm a hell of a good-natured chap, that's me. Just a big, good-natured slab, too easy-going for my own good. But sometimes I get worked up. You've got to talk. You haven't much to tell, but you've got to tell it. You'll tell it better the way you are than after I get through with you!"

Piper kept on snarling.

"I've said all I'm going to say. You can't keep me here, an'—"

I ripped his collar off and tore his shirt down the front. Then I went across and got out the electric toaster from the cupboard. There was a little wire guard over the coils, and I ripped it off.

"Electricity's a wonderful thing," I said. "It makes a guy's life pretty easy. Stop me if you know this one—but it always gives a kick."

I plugged the toaster in at the connection and watched the coils heat up. They got redder and redder, and I grinned at him.

"Now, if I just leave that on your chest for five minutes, I've got an idea you'd talk!"

I saw the perspiration break on his brow.

"You don't mean it! You wouldn't do a thing like that!"

"No!" I said. "You don't know the

reputation I've got. You dig out Lance Jeffrey, of the 'Courier,' an' ask him about the dirty tricks I can play."

I drove the toaster across.

"You can yell your head off. The people above us are away in the South of France, an' the party below us is at business. Nobody can hear you but me."

"Pergrine was at a cottage Cascadon owned at Marlow-Cleve Cottage," he said weakly. "That's all I know. Smith and Gannar Hoyt and I were holding him there—but he got away." And then an odd look came into his eyes. "If Cascadon got to know I'd told you that—he'd do me in."

"Cascadon won't," I told him, and I poured out a glass of very good Scotch, and he lapped it up greedily.

I took one myself just on general principles. Then I took him to the door.

"Listen, friend, you've had a little warning. Keep out of my way from now on—Cascadon's making the path that leads to the rope. And if you follow him there, you've got only yourself to blame. You'll get a bum at the corner."

"All right," then: "Would you really have used that electric toaster on me?"

"Would I?" I gave him a leer which was an exact copy of the Old Man's, and I ran him to jail.

He went downstairs, and I watched him drive a bus. Then I came back from the window and put the toaster away.

It's a good job if you don't overdo it! I sat down at the table and began to think. This was a mix-up, but I had to find Pergrine! Leigh was safe enough in the meantime. Cascadon wouldn't interfere with her while she was worth seventy thousand pounds.

But I had to find Pergrine! I got on the phone with the Old Man again. Then I began to talk.

He said:

"I'll send Peters and Emerson to Marlow to keep their eyes open. What about you?"

I checked.

"Me? I've got work to do!"

CELESTE DOES NOT TALK.

It was raining when I went up the wide stairway that led to the Minkerton Arms. A cold north-easter swept it up against my back, and mighty glad, forsooth, I was to get inside.

The uniformed porter wasn't in sight. I went upstairs and knocked on the door of Evadne Leigh's flat.

There was no answer.

I knocked again.

There was still no answer. I took a bunch of keys from my pocket and fished out a key that would open the door. It didn't take me long, and I went inside.

The room wasn't in darkness. There was a bracket lamp burning, and it cast a soft radiance over the modern furniture.

But there was no one in sight!

Then I heard a soft, rustling sound. It came from a room to the left. One of the bed-rooms, I imagined.

I moved over cautiously and pressed the door open with the flat of my hand.

Nothing happened, but the muffled, rustling sound continued.

I felt for the electric switch and pressed on the light. And then I stared.

There was a muffled figure tossing on the bed. I became aware of two very shapely limbs kicking and thrashing in a hopeless way. Only there wasn't any features that I could see.

I stumbled to it then.

It was Celeste! It couldn't be Evadne Leigh, for she was much taller than this.

I began to grin. Whoever had done this had had a sense of humour. Celeste's dress had been drawn over her head, and that confined her arms and cut off her vision. She couldn't have been more completely captive if they had put her in a bag. A length of rope pinned her arms and held her to the bed.

I got out my knife and cut it, and watched her struggle for an.

"Hi, Celeste," I chuckled. "Nice going! But you're a big girl now. You've got to sit more sedately. Even if you have got nice legs you shouldn't show 'em off!"

I watched a flushed and fiery face appear, saw a flash of autumn curls, and then—

"What are you laughing at, you ape?"

"Cherry Sherrill!" I said faintly.

Cherry it was!

They, five-foot two Cherry Sherrill, whom the Watson-Harvey Bureau regarded as their No. 1 female operative! Cherry Sherrill, who is demurely wrapped up in a small parcel. Blue-eyed, pink-checked and autumn-haired, and with a temper that blows up like nitro-glycerine.

Just now she was so mad that there were tears in her eyes. She shook herself free of ropes and drew her dress down over her knees, and her breast continued to rise and fall.

"For the love of the grand mafia, where did you come from, Cherry?"

"The Old Man sent me over!" she snapped. "I was to keep an eye on Evadne Leigh—and I walked into this!"

And then her lips set. "What are you laughing at, you Scotch hog-truster?"

I put the matter.

"Look," I began tactfully, "you've had an upsetting time. Who did it, Cherry?"

"There were two of them," she said, "and that little blonde witch of a maid."

"Celeste," I answered.

Cherry shook her rattled locks.

"What do you know about Celeste?"

"Cherry," I said thoughtfully, "I know nothing. This is a pretty big thing we're on. I didn't know that Oatle had sent you along. That must be his idea of a joke. Now what happened to Evadne Leigh?"

"They took her away," Cherry said.

"Don't it, Jimmy, till I put things in order."

"Yeah," I said. "I guess you'll feel pretty upset." I went out and rooted around the flats. There were five apartments in all, and every one of them was empty.

It had been Cascadon, of course. They'd moved Evadne out of harem's way for the moment. I could wager that Cascadon was cursing himself for letting her go so soon so long.

I went back to the bed-room and found Cherry carrying a ladder in one slim leg.

"Sit and clement!" she said viciously.

"And look at them—laddered in two places!"

"Life is certainly hard," I agreed. And then I heard a door creak and a familiar voice said:

"Ah, you two got hitched up, eh?"

It was Lance Jeffrey, and there was a smug in the way he said it. He pushed the door wide open and came in, cast an appreciative glance at Cherry. "This would make a swell story for the scandal column."

Cherry said haughty:

"Oh, it's you, is it? How did you know we were here? What heard did you have in all this? She put her hands on her hips and faced him.

"Me? I was just passing by, an' I had an idea." He sniggered to himself.

I came across.

"Always, when I see you, Jeffrey, I get a kind of an itch in my fat, an' I have to hang a very fat one on somebody's jaw to feel all cozy again."

He looked at me.

"Well, why don't you? I get a bonus for every black eye I get on a story."

Cherry said sweetly:

"Keep back from him, Jimmy."

"What? I like about these bed-room women in that they're always so innocent." Jeffrey sagged back against the door. Then his face hardened. "Where's the Pergrine man?"

"You'd like to know," I said. "Yes, I guess you would. But now come up here on the wrong foot, Jeff. If you'd been nice about it we might have helped you to find her even. But you can't knock



Minkerton took it for granted that the captive girl was Celeste. He was wrong.

as any expect co-operation." And then I stabbed my finger at the light switch. The lamp went out.

"What the—?" Jeffrey started. "Quiet!" I hissed. "Somebody just came in—the outside door opened and closed. That means we've got company."

I pushed myself across and raised it open a trifle. Then I stared out. A light had gone on farther down the corridor, and I heard a drawer open and shut.

"Who is it?" Cherry hissed. I shook my head. "You two keep quiet. If this is a lead and you scare it away, I'll bounce your heads together. Wait here—and don't rush me."

I opened the door and slid out. A closet door opened, and I heard the sound of a lid being pushed back, then a muffled exclamation. I gave it a moment more, and edged towards the door. It was half-open when I went in.

"Hi, Celeste!" I said pleasantly. "This seems to be my lucky day. Put on your dress, you're going to have company."

It was Celeste all right. Her blonde head jerked round and her big blue eyes stared. There was a suitcase on the bed, and another on the floor, and it was very evident that Celeste thought she was going some place. She was changing her frock now for a smart little tared suit, and she stared at me so long that I said:

"You forgot me, Celeste?" "You forgot me, Celeste?" she gasped. "Keys!" I said. I jangled them. "Where's Miss Leigh?"

I saw a glimmer come into her eyes. Evidently she figured I'd just arrived. "Mars'ella was out, mister. A friend came for her—a gentleman friend."

"Ha, ha!" I beamed. "Her husband—huh?"

"No, not her husband." She shrugged her bare, slim shoulders. "No matter one." "Oh," I said, "no matter one!" I opened the door. "Hi, Cherry, your little pal is here!"

Cherry came through at the double. "Who do you mean?" "Celeste," I told her. "Cherry's like that out." "You little witch!" She went in with a flourish.

Jeffrey crowded me out of the way. "What the hell! Another one? You got all the breaks, Malcolm. I'll have to take up detective work myself." He cut it short, for Cherry leaned out and slapped Celeste very amiably on the side of the face.

"You sneaky, perverted little cat! When I get finished with you—"

There was a scream from Celeste. I pulled Jeffrey back and closed the door. "We'll give them two minutes to work each other over. Personally, I think Celeste had this coming to her."

We heard an odd scream and the sound of scuffling, and then I opened the door. Cherry was sitting on the bed with an air of triumph and Celeste was propped up against the wall. Her blonde hair was matted and awry, and her face was stamped red. There were tears in her eyes, and she looked frightened.

"Alla, girl!" I told Cherry. "That'll make good copy," Jeffrey said. "Cherry, you pack dynamite in those hats. What's your fighting weight?"

"Look, Celeste," I said, "you've got into trouble with the law. You'll go to prison for this. Halfway isn't a nice place for a girl like you. You won't wear Celeste's air silk there. If you want to talk, I'll do what I can for you."

She stared at me. "What do you want?" "Where's Enoch Leigh?" She shrugged her shoulders. "Do should I know? I am only servant here. She do not tell me—me!" "Well, pal, moon calms," I said. "You've got the idea, but you haven't got the audience. We're a very hard-headed set/ hard-hearted trio. This in the corner would torture you if he had a chance of a story out of it."

"When I think of it," Cherry said bitterly, "I could scratch her eyes out!" "I'll bet you could!" I said. Then I went over to Celeste.

"I'll save your conscience. You've been acting as a spy here for Caseladen. You've kept a watch on my messages and reported her movements to him. Today you helped him to tie up Cherry. You'll get three years for that."

"Pret!" snarled Jeffrey. Her blue eyes were really frightened now. She whispered:

"I—if I do—do do I know you will 'tip me'?" I went over to the case on the bed and lifted it out. There was a passport and a little pocket-book crammed with mille notes.

"You were going back to France," I said. "Well, I give you my word I'll drive you to Dover."

She brightened at that. "Tonight?" "Tonight," I said. "You've got to understand, of course, it's pretty late, so we'd maybe have to put up there till morning. But I'd be there to see you came to no harm."

"So would I!" said Cherry suspiciously. "Me, too!" Jeffrey said. "I've got my moments, so you don't leave me out." Then he gave a great jump towards the window.

"Look out!" I swung round too late. Crash! Crash!

There were two sharp spots and a linking of glass. There was a flash of orange and crimson, and then Celeste gave a little moaning sound.

She slid to the floor, and her head rattled back. Her eyes were open—but she was dead.

I jumped for the window and fumbled the catch. By the time I had it open he was more than half-way down the fire-escape.

I reached the bottom and ran round the corner of the building.

I pondered on after him, but a car was gathering speed on the road. There was no rear light, and I couldn't make out a license number. It scudded round the corner, and then there was silence.

I went back.

THE BEREAVED HUSBAND.

CHERRY was sobbing in a corner. Jeffrey was sitting with the 'phone in his hand. He'd taken off his hat, and he was saying:

"That's all I've got just now, Manning. I'll have to get the law on the job."

"You lousy shaver!" I said. I yanked the 'phone away and dialed the well-known number.

"Give me Inspector Flagg," I said. When I got him I said: "Reporting a murder, Flagg. This is Jimmy Malcolm, and I'm calling from Enoch Leigh's flat in the Manhattan Arms. Come on up!"

He was there in ten minutes, along with the police surgeon and a dozen underwriters.

"Hi, Jimmy!" he said. "Murder!"

Flagg is a big man with a multitude of chin, and a bass voice that rumbles from his back. He has to wear the seat of his pants at his knees, in order to give him room to bend, and he wheezes like a chronic asthmatic. But don't let his appearance trick you into thinking he isn't smart. Behind all that hard there is one of the roughest brains at Scotland Yard. He went across and took one look at Celeste. Then he whistled.

"Know her?" I asked. "Any Lefevre? I should think I do. French Army? they call her, but she's no more French than I am. She's been



"Go on!" urged Caseladen manfully. "Tell the police—and die!"

meled up in a dozen dirty jobs—and the last one was white-slavery!"

"Oh!" I said. "Then she got what was coming to her. Cherry, you can wipe away your grief."

The technicians were hovering around with their apparatus, and a police photographer had set up his tripod facing us.

"Come along into one of those other rooms till we have peace," Flagg said. He led the way himself. "These scientific cops get in my hair." He looked at Cherry. "You're young. You think science is a great thing, don't you? You little know!" He shook his head. "When I was your age there was no science. There was no finger-prints, there was no

modus operandi. There was no chemical analysis—and there was no classification."

Jeffrey, who had tapped along, said:

"Yeah, an' there were no cops!"

Flagg eyed him skeptically.

"Classification is the ruin of cops today. Ten years ago it was finger-prints. Every young constable brought himself a copy of Henry's System of Finger-prints, an' the life of Sir Francis Galton. Then he sits down to study them, an' while he's doing it I'm catching all the murderers!"

He sighed heavily.

"It's classification now. They classify

to prevent her telling you where the Leigh girl was?"

I nodded.

Jeffrey got up to his feet.

"If you'll let me go I'll get in touch with my paper. This is too sweet to miss!"

Flagg watched him out and sniffed.

"I never read his paper. They feature a page, 'Daily Details,' an' my wife read it six months ago. Ever since then I've had the life of a dog."

He looked at Cherry for sympathy.

"Anybody can see that a fine, outstanding figure of a man like me needs a certain amount of nourishment. Iks beer an' feed-back makings. An' what do I get? Some kind of milk every morning an' baked fish!"

He chuckled. "Look out out an all-stations call to stop that car, a Harvey taken, you said. We won't be likely to get it, because the description is too vague." He passed his lip.

"What's it all about?"

"I'm keeping very little back, Flagg," I said. "Evides Leigh hired me to get a little help she needed. And I think Cascaadden took her away. You could pull him in and ask questions, but I've an idea it wouldn't get you very far."

"I've got the same kind of idea," he said sadly. "We'll go back now an' see if the men of learning have got the killer all wrapped up in Colophane for us."

Sergeant Lock, who usually worked with Flagg, was sitting at the phone banking our orders.

Flagg looked around and noticed the bar of the Central Office telephone disappear.

"Get a car, Lock, we're going to visit."

"Anonkey is downstairs," Lock said.

"Want to come?" Flagg invited.

"Yes, I think so. Cherry, you'd better file yourself back to the office, tell Guide all you know. I'll report later."

She went away very meekly.

Flagg and I got into the car, and the rear of the big Alvis sagged under thirty-four stone of weight. Flagg lit his pipe.

"Who did Cascaadden lift Evides Leigh?"

"That's what I want to ask him!"

"Who is she?"

"You remember Progress, the racer? The speed machine? Well, she's his wife."

He stopped that in silence.

"There's wharfs witha wharfs," I continued. "A personal angle that I can't quite explain to you just now, but it hardly concerns us for the moment."

"We're in Cascaadden's district now," Lock said. "Where'll we try first?"

"The Golden East," I said. "Then the Domino Club, then Billy Viner's place, an' after that Harry Marchant's."

We ran him in earth at a table in the Domino Club, and there was with him a bluff, red-checked man who was vaguely familiar to me. He nodded to me when we came in, and then looked curiously at Flagg and Lock.

"This is Inspector Flagg," I told him. "He's got a few questions he'd like to ask you."

"To ask me? Well—where do you want me to go?"

"You can wait right here," Flagg said gently. "They ain't such personal questions. I wonder if you'd ask Mr. Henderson to take another table?" He looked at Cascaadden's companion and nodded.

Henderson!

I had him then. He was an M.P., and a strong breacher at that. One of the kind who got up on his hind legs and talked a lot.

Cascaadden shook his head.

"Anything you have to say to me you can say in front of Mr. Henderson. He is a very intimate friend of mine. We've just been to the Hippodrome, and we called in here for a bit—"

Flagg seemed amazed.

"Then you'd be at the Hippodrome at 12.30 this evening."

"Why, yes. Nine twenty-eight—that would be during the interval. We had a glass of ale with Sir John Warner."

"Ain't said Flagg. He winked.

Cascaadden's eyes narrowed.

"Why are you making these inquiries?"

"Because at 12.30 some party at present unknown, shot at a girl named Amy Lettwin in the apartment of Evides Leigh."

"Evides Leigh!" Cascaadden gasped.

"Yes, Miss Leigh is missing. A certain person has deposited that she left the Brooklyn Arms in your company late this afternoon."

"She left with me? That is absurd. I haven't seen her since last night."

The inspector nodded.

"We have checked up on these things, of course."

And then I saw Cascaadden's blue eyes flicker.

"This woman—was she killed?"

Flagg nodded.

"She was murdered."

And the light that came into the other man's eyes was pure relief. He said:

"I'm sorry about all this. Miss Leigh is a very good friend of mine." He looked up at me. "I didn't know that Footland Yard officers worked along with private detectives!"

Flagg beamed.

"There's a moral in that, then. We're learning every day. Me, I found out something I didn't know to-night, too. I found out who French Amy's husband was." He chuckled heavily. "I always knew she was married, but I'd never been able to pin down the poor fish. She had her marriage lines in her case."

Cascaadden sat stiff and frozen.

Flagg watched his turkey-neck twitch.

"Yes, sir. For a newly bereaved husband you're the coolest man I ever saw. You'd almost think you didn't care."

He nodded a farewell to them both and turned away.

I followed on, but my brain was reeling. Celeste, the little maid, was Cascaadden's wife! And Cascaadden had planned to marry Evides Leigh—to set his hands on that seventy thousand pounds.

No wonder Celeste had been going to talk. She must have known in what danger she stood. Cascaadden didn't stop at traffic. He must have decided to get rid of this annoyance of a wife long ago, and he had calmly made use of her right up to the end.

We went down to the waiting car.

Flagg said:

"Did you see the wine on the table, and the dirty to-and-fo didn't offer us a drop. He shrugged. "Cops get all the kicks.



everything. They'll take a sample of her hair an' her underclothing, an' the powder she used, an' they'll classify 'em. They'll gather dust in a vacuum cleaner and they'll classify it. They'll dig out the slug an' they'll tell you the kind of gun it was fired from. They'll classify the lead an' they'll classify her blood. They'll tell you was she an A.B.C., or D. An' then next April they'll get dipperets more on the wires. That's adman!"

He sat down.

"What were you all doing here?"

I told him, and explained it all in some detail, and he nodded.

"French Amy has worked with Cascaadden before. You say someone shot her

"We're everybody's enemy. Where can we drop you, Jim?"

"Home," I said.

"Handyman is as crooked as a Cascarade," said Flagg rudely. "But he's an M.P. He could stand up in court and outswear a regiment of policemen. It's a funny thing, for constables are famed all the world over for their truthfulness, while all the world knows there's nothing any lower than an M.P."

"Not much," I said, and climbed out into the drizzling rain. "Night, gentlemen. Now it indicates some sleep."

I stamped upstairs to my own house.

THE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB.

I SAW the "Courier" next morning, while I was taking breakfast, and the leader scowled the paper off me.

SPEED KING'S WIFE MURDERED IN FLAT. DEATH OF EVADEE LEIGH.

"What the hell!"

And I really meant it.

For Jeffrey had written this up. I knew his style and I knew his story. I put down my cup of coffee and went for the telephone.

Manning, at the "Courier" office, said:

"Jeffrey, you want him? Well, I don't know where you'd find him. He was here till three in the morning, and asked to the girls. Try his apartment."

I tried, but the phone kept on ringing, and finally the operator said:

"I'm sorry, but I can get no answer."

I hung up. The chance was all that Jeffrey was asleep, and I meant to go over.

I got dressed and went out, turning it all over in my mind as I went. What did Jeff mean by pointing out Evadee Leigh was dead? He'd know the true state of affairs as well as I had. And yet it wasn't like Jeffrey to make a blunder.

He lived at Hendon, in a block of flats close to the bus terminus, and I went up and pounded on the door with my fist. I kept it up for a moment or two, and the door across the hall opened and a scowling woman with her hair in paper rings came on.

"Mr. Jeffrey isn't at home," she told me. "He didn't come home at all last night."

"How do you know?"

"We look after his flat—my husband and I—and he comes in to us for breakfast." She looked the up and down. "He often stays out all night when he's working on a story."

"Yeah," I agreed, "as on a bottle."

I went down, and arrived at the office in time to see the Old Man putting his teeth in the tumbler he keeps on his desk. He never swears there during office hours unless he has a check.

He nearly swore when he saw me.

"It's hardly two. What are you doing up in the middle of the night?"

"I've got no time for whores, Siran Lopez. Where's Cherry?"

"She phoned to say she couldn't be in to-day." He dragged a newspaper out of his pocket. "You read this yet? Evadee Leigh murdered."

"I've read it," I muttered. "An' it's some case of Jeffrey's backwash. How that man ever keeps a job has me guessing. He'll likely get good money for it, too."

"I've been sitting here wondering what slipped up that she was dead," Gable said. "It would have been a nice slip in the face for the H. & H. if she was murdered."

"Yeah—or for anybody. Even for her," I told him. "But it was her maid, a very nifty little number that Inspector Flagg called 'French Amy.'"

"Amy Levee! Amy's an old friend. She's had a criminal record ever since she was twelve. A bad little runt."

"So I gathered." I told him about it. "But I can't figure out what Jeffrey's idea is. He knows darn well that it was Amy who was shot, an' he knows just as well he isn't fooling anybody."

"Maybe he was on a hunch?"

"Frank? That's an idea." I said, the Old Man's very nifty type, came into the room. Syd is a red-head whom I greatly admire. I said: "Morning, Syd," in my usual way. She gave me a sort of come-hither look.

"There's a man calling the office on the other phone, Jimmy. He wants to speak to you."

I went through to it. It was a voice that was strange to me. A thin, high-pitched voice that jerked out rapidly.

"Malcolm, you there?"

"Yes—who's speaking?"

He said:

"Flash is the name. I want to see you. I've got something on this Evadee Leigh business I read about in the papers this morning."

"What kind of thing?" I said. "I'd be glad to be good to get any of my time to-day."

"Listen, I've got a billiard saloon in Thurlow Street, Camden Town, and sometimes I get in some queer fish. I got one in last night—late—nearly midnight. A tall, thin guy who claims he was a reporter."

"Jeffrey?" I whispered.

"I don't know his name, but he was as drunk as a coat. He left an envelope here an' gave me a quid to take it down to the 'Courier' office. He left an envelope here for you. Told me to call you up an' give it to you if he wasn't in to claim it to-morrow morning."

"Then hold it. I'll be down at the double!"

I went out of the office and along Finsbury, and a lack came sailing along. I halted it and said:

"Thurlow Street, Camden Town. Make a brief, Fred."

We bounced across in nice time.

The billiard hall was easy to pick out. There was a big electric sign above the door, and a hand-painted board that protruded over the pavement and read:

JOE FLASH.

THE GENTLEMEN'S CLUB.

There was one of the "gentlemen" propping up a gate-end of the building. He was very swish. A blue suit and a coloured silk handkerchief, but he had no collar or tie.

"Joe?" he said. "You goes round the back an' you comes to a little door. You goes in an' along the corridor."

I went round to the rear. There was a lane cutting backwards. A drab, dismal-looking alley that held garbage cans and accumulated dirt, and further up a motor was ticking merrily.

I came to a door and knocked. There was no answer. The "gentleman" had said, "you goes in," so I went in.

Somebody was moving around at the end of the corridor. I went along and said:

"Hi, there, Flash, you at home?"

A door opened, and I saw a man standing there. He was big, swarthy-looking and pretty competent.

"What do you want?"

"Are you Joe Flash?"

"Yes," he grunted. "Who are you?"

"Malcolm. I came down for that envelope." I went through the door into an empty room that was furnished as though it were used for living in. There was a chest of drawers with all the drawers pulled out. There was a shabby mahogany table with a mass of papers lying on it.

He kicked the door shut, and as he did it I heard a noise.

I shivered inward.

"What's that?" I didn't say one word more for he had a gun in his hand, and the black muzzle of it was pointing right at me.

"Stay still!" he said, and he didn't say it in a nice way, either.

I said:

"Yes, sah! I wish means to, brotha."

"So you're Malcolm," he said. "Now, that's what I call killing two birds with one stone!"

"That's got a nasty ring to me!" I warned him.

He chuckled.

"You bet I like to speak my mind. The name is Hoyt, Gannor Hoyt!"

I chuckled.

"I remember you now. The gentleman that Percival laid out at Madras. I wish he'd made a better job of it!"

"I guess you do!" he said confidently. "And then I heard the news again. It came from a door to my left, and I looked at him."

"What's that?"

"Take a look!" he grinned.

I edged the door open. There was a man lying there on the floor, an ugly wail on his head.

"Joe Flash!" I said. I peered over him, and then something smashed down on my head. Light went out like a snuffed candle.

THE REPORTER'S IDEA.

I WAS lying on the same spot when I came round. My head was as big as three heads, and my mouth was full of blood. I spat some of it up and sat up groggy.

Gannor Hoyt carried beef in his right hand.

"I had on a hat, and I was glad of it, although I wished it was an older one. My very nice new thirty-five bob Stetson had a slash in it that was edged with something dark and sticky and red. Yeah—part of me!"

I got up to my feet. Hoyt had gone—and so had the letter that this Joe Flash had had for me. That got me thinking about him.

I opened the closed door and dragged him out. He was still out, and there was an ugly slash across the back of his head that might mean a fracture.

I went unsteadily out to the front of the building and opened the door. The porter who had spoken to me already was still there, and he stared at the blood.

"Pol!" I said, "get a doctor an' get a cop! Your Joe has taken the count."

He backed away a little.

"Was the—?" And then he understood. "You, mate! The count, old Collins. I'll get a doctor right away."

Old Collins was a fat sergeant of police, who came stammering along down the road. He pulled up short when he saw me, and the blood on my face, and said:

"Hah, there—wasn't all this yet?"

I opened the door for him.

"Your guess is as good as mine. Hoyt I want you to 'phone the Yard and tell Inspector Flagg to come to this address. Tell him Malcolm is here."

He went across the road, and I was

biting Fish's head when he came back in company with the doctor.

The doctor was a thin bird with stoopy eyes.

"Ha, Fish!" he said. "Knew he'd get something like this one of these days. Knew they were a bad lot around here. Ha, yes!" Then he looked at me. "Ha, yes, you've been struck, too! A simple stroke!"

"Ha, yes!" I said.

I went into a corner and sat down to let my head clear. What was indicated here?

Cascadden had Evadne Leigh! Five got you fifty, he also had Jeffrey. And Walter Pergrine was somewhere on the loose.

And what had Jeff left for me in that envelope? What was the message that had been important enough for Courier Hoyt to come here about?

I couldn't add it up in the meantime.

Plung came in while I was waiting, a fine, athletic figure of a man, with the seat of his pants about ten inches from the ground. He walked across.

"Well, Jimmy, you got it on the neck!"

"Gunner Hoyt!"

He whistled.

"Gunner is bad business. What do you know about it?"

I told him what I knew, and it was precious little. He listened to it all, and his eyes lit up when I told him they had Jeffrey.

"That's the best news I've had since the paper had his pocket picked at Epsum. They have him—see they can keep him." He went over and spoke to the doctor and then came back.

"Fractured skull. They've already phoned for an ambulance, and are removing him to hospital. You won't learn anything there." He shrugged his shoulders. "I'll put out a call for Hoyt. And now I've got business of my own to transact. Ward is get a drive back?"

"You certainly know what I want, Figg," I told him. I went. I listened to him moan about salaries and vitamins until we reached Whitehall, and I climbed out stiffly and made my way into Pete Nichol's very ratty public house.

Then I called for Pete. Pete and I are very old pals, and when he came I said:

"Pete, I've been in the swim. I don't want to go back to my flat, so I don't want to go up to the office."

"Your partner might raise hell!"

"Well with a capital 'E,'" I told him.

"The old slave-driver has his knife into me. What I do want is a little co-operation. You know most of the gentlemen in the trade in this district?"

"I know 'em all, Jim McGee, Corrigan, Laski, Jones, Drummey, Docharly—"

"You know 'em all," I agreed. "Now look, Jim anxious to get on the trail of Lance Jeffrey, of the 'Courier.' Last night he was on the skills. I want you to call up all your friends and ask did he visit them. I want to find out where he went and who he was with. Can do?"

He rubbed his chin.

"Yes, I'll manage that."

"An' a snit," I said, "a window with a blind to draw, two cachaes, and a glass of Glenlivet."

After I got them I went to sleep.

It was late in the afternoon when I came round again, and the headache had gone. I got up and ambled along to the lavatory and washed up. Then I went along to find Pete.

He'd gone out, but Emory Coombes had been entrusted with a message for me. Emory was the fat berran who kept an eye on things for Pete.

"The Old Man rang up every name in London, Jimmy, and had 'e found out that Jeffrey was in the Klee Club last night. He was there alone—dressed as 'is. Later on 'e got three calls for him' nasty to a point. Barber says 'e remembers two chaps leaving immediately afterwards. So quick, in fact, 'e was nervous enough to go and 'ook after them. They were just going into a car, but there wasn't no sign of Jeffrey then."

"There wouldn't be," I said. I went out and stood in the gusty driving rain to cool mine fever.

Jeff had been on a spree through all the right clubs in the West End. He'd leave a trail of trouble wherever he went. Cascadden's men had pulled him along and finally caught up with him. That added up!

What was puzzling me was this one salient question. Why had Jeff misrepresented the facts? Why had he printed or caused to be printed information that he knew was wide of the mark? Jeffrey was a loose, but he was a good newspaper man. There was a reason for that. The reason was written out in that note he'd left with Joe Fish.

I went back up to the office. Gable was out, but Sybil was smiling very sweetly in his private room.

"Hi, Jimmy, you've been in the man!"

"You've guessed it, Sybil," I said generally. "Where is the gentleman himself?"

"Mr. Gable has gone out. There was a phone call from Cherry, and he put on his hat and disappeared."

I looked into the tumbler.

"He took his teeth. You'd better change the water while you've got the chance."

I went through to the filing-room, and Lester, the clerk in charge, was pasting newspaper clippings on to sheets of paper.

"Hi, Lester, they got you cuttin' out paper dolls?"

He grinned.

"It's coming to that, Jimmy. Sometimes I get so sick of it, I could vomit." He indicated a pile of clippings between him.

"Look at that dose I've got to do!"

I looked at them. And the very top one caught my eye. It was a newspaper caption, and appeared to come from some financial newspaper:

"CINEMA MERGER PLANNED."

CASCADDEN GROUP TO MERGE"

"Cascadden isn't making money, eh?" Lester shook his head. Lester is a walking mine of information. You can't puzzle him, and you can't stump him.

"He's pretty well in the red, Cascadden's lost most of the money he ever had long ago. If it hadn't been for his backers, he'd have had to sell out a year ago."

"Who's his backer?"

Lester chuckled.

"It isn't generally known, but it's Standard, the M.P. But keep that information under your hat."

I went out, and my mind was reeling. Standard had been backing Cascadden. Standard was an M.P., and Standard had money and influence. Cascadden was going to be wealthy back to crack.

I went down to the "Courier" office and pushed some more inquiries. Jeffrey hadn't shown up, and an end-looking man called Green was hunting.

"This damn murder!" he breathed. "I've never known Jeff to slip up before. When he's covered up, he's out of a job."

Which name, Jeff had heard every Monday for so many years.

I left Green and went out. If only there was something I could get my teeth into here! If only I could figure out just what had been in Jeffrey's mind!

I was slipping out on to the pavement when someone came running up towards me and went up the seven granite steps.

A man of average size—rather dark, and going pretty fast. A reporter, I guessed.

He looked round as he brushed through the big doorway, and I saw a hard, lean face with a line of black moustache. That and a scar that rippled across his cheek.

Something about him puzzled me vaguely. I'd seen him before, but I couldn't place him. I was still thinking of him when I reached the Strand. There was an advertisement in a window, and the colour in it caught my eye:

"SPARTAN OIL IS USED BY SPEED KINGS."

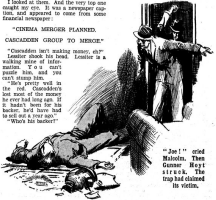
And there was a picture of a goggled and helmeted man at the wheel of a long, racing model.

It clicked! Speed kings!

I went back to the "Courier" building like green lightning.

That dark, scowling face—those hard eyes. I had him now. Walter Pergrine!

I forced my way through a little run of people who had gathered around the



"Joe!" cried Malcolm. Then Gunner Hoyt struck. The trap had claimed its victim.

dark. Two men were looking up a white-faced girl, and a third was flourishing around with a glass of water.

"Give her air!" someone said.

"Give her water!" a girl gasped.

I tapped her on the shoulder.

"Give me news, sir. What happened to the dame there?"

She said:

"She fainted. Such a wild-looking man came in a few moments ago. He asked for Mr. Jeffrey. Mr. Jeffrey is one of our reporters."

"Thank," I said. "I've seen it!"

She walked.

"Elsie told him Mr. Jeffrey wasn't on the ground, and he pulled out a pistol. He held it out, and Elsie fainted."

"Oh!" I said. "What about you? You look like a very nice number. What did you do?"

"Got under my desk," she said. "And stayed there until it was all over. It ran out again. I think he was afraid of the crowd."

"You passed correctly," I said.

I went out. So Walter Pergrine was looking for Jeff!

And then, very suddenly, I knew what had been in Jeffrey's mind when he had written out that fake story for the "Courier."

Walter Pergrine was the unknown factor in all this. Where was he hiding? Whom was he with? Jeffrey hadn't known any more than I did. But Jeffrey had figured out a way to bring Pergrine outside the open. And this was it!

If Pergrine thought his wife had been murdered, he'd shoot himself soon enough. He'd taken the bait, just as Jeffrey had figured he would.

Only he'd come with a gun. Mad as a hatter and armed!

Something tickled round my heart like an ice-cold hand. Damn Jeffrey for a dirty louse! Pergrine was a sick man! Pergrine had had the knuckles all the way along. We'd laugh through, too, and now, in the end, he was to be brought out for a desperate man to finish off of his leisure. If Walter Pergrine had remained under cover until the end of the month, he was safe. After the policy lapsed, Cascaiden had no need to kill him.

And now Jeffrey had made it easy for him. Pergrine would go after Cascaiden wide-open. He couldn't get out of it alive. Not worth seventy thousand dead.

I went down town and bought myself a very little drink, because I felt I needed it. Then I went out and found a telephone directory, and looked up the home address of Miss Sanderson.

THE WITNESS

HE had a suite of rooms in an apartment in Penton Street, which I found to be close to Metropolitan Station. It was an old type of building, but it had been modernized, and there was a lift in the hall.

I didn't use it, but when the porter had taken up a party, I made for the stairway.

It was dark by now and raining pretty heavily, which gave me an excuse for turning up the collar of my coat. And I was glad enough about that. What I was going to do now was risky enough, because Sanderson was a member of Parliament, which meant, if he had to, he could pull a lot of strings.

I tapped very lightly on the door.

There was no answer.

I kept it up, and then felt in my pocket for keys. In two minutes I was inside the flat. I pulled out my flashlight and looked around.

There were four or five apartments, and

ahead of me was a room that looked to be a study. There were stacks of papers on a day-bedded desk, and the walls were lined with books.

I went in very cautiously. Sanderson was very evidently the sort of man who was addicted to untidiness, for his room was littered with papers—with old letters, reports, newspaper clippings. Maybe there would be something else, something that would tie him up more closely with Cascaiden in this matter.

I went to work and scoured for an hour turning things over, without losing one little fact which might appear like information. What I wanted was a list of property, any property at all that Sanderson owned. First, a country cottage, a block of town-rooms! Because Francis Leigh had to be somewhere. Cascaiden knew we were suspecting him, and he couldn't keep the girl himself. But Sanderson was above suspicion. If he wasn't above suspicion exactly, he was above arrest unless you had plenty on him.

I hunted!

There were lists of companies, private letters, business letters. There were two from Floeste Gay, who was appearing in "Silver Linen," and there was a very nice picture of her wearing the sailor suit she wore in Act III.

Sanderson had his moments.

I had gone over everything and was wondering if I could afford to linger with the big, old-fashioned safe that stood in the corner, when I heard the footstep on the stairway outside.

I suffered.

A key fitted into the lock.

There was a little shove by the window, scratched by a curtain, and I stepped into it and waited.

The door opened and shut, and the lights went on. I got one eye to the divide in the curtain, and I peered out.

It was Sanderson. He'd thrown his rain-coat over a chair, and he stood in the centre of the room. He was wearing a dress-jacket, and there was a look on his face that would sour milk. Then he walked over to the "phone and dialed a number.

"I want to speak to Miss Gay," he said.

"Yes, she is expecting a call just now."

I looked down at my watch, and figured out that this would be the interval at the Bell's.

"Hello, Floeste! Yes, it's Miss."

I heard a little buzz over the wire.

He said impatiently:

"Listen. We'll have to call our little party off to-night. I've got some very important business to transact. Something I can't postpone."

She seemed to be protesting, but he cut her short.

"I've got off enough time as it is, waiting for the interval. I ought to have been away by this time."

She asked something, and he said:

"Yes, Scotland. To Dundee. But I'll be back in a couple of days. I'll get in touch with you later."

He hung up, and I heard him hurry into another room. There was the sound of drawers opening and closing, and I took a chance on it and ventured along the hall.

Sanderson was changing and packing. There was a big suitcase lying open on his bed-room floor, and a stack of laundered shirts beside it.

I tapped back to my curtain. There was something queer here. If Sanderson was only going to Dundee for a couple of days, he didn't need to be rigged up like this. Which maybe meant he wasn't going to Dundee!

He came back into the study, and he had

changed into a rough tweed suit. He was fingering keys in his hand, and he opened the safe and lifted out a black metal suitcase.

He took out the top tray and slipped down into it and brought out four packets of notes.

I stared at them. Crisp, new Bank of England notes of one hundred pounds denomination. There must have been fifty or sixty of them. And then beside them he laid a bundle of notes of French mille notes, and a thin, black-bound book with gilt lettering—a passport!

Dundee!—hell! Mr. Sanderson was going places. He went there while I was watching him!

There was a little scraping sound like a man shuffling over a wooden floor, and I saw him stiffen. His back was towards me, and I couldn't see past him, but I heard his voice croak:

"You! You—got here?"

There wasn't any answer.

He said:

"Listen, I'll throw in my hand, Cascaiden. I'm clearing out, anyway. This is getting too dangerous for me."

I didn't see Cascaiden, but I heard him part.

"Too dangerous for you, is it? What about me? Calista is dead. That billiard-hall keeper that Scott had to slum is dead, and Pergrine is on the loose! You got the idea I want you slipping out!"

Sanderson was trembling.

"Cascaiden, I've got to get out of it. I've been a bit of use to you before, but if the police hit me in connection with any of this trouble, it's all over!"

"We said anything about the police?" And then I caught the glint of blue metal.

Crack! Crack!

There were two reports ripping the air. There was a heavy wisp of smoke climbing up to the ceiling.

And then the door slammed.

Sanderson had slid to his knees. I bent over him and tried to lift his head. But the life had gone out of him.

I went along to the door and opened it cautiously. Further down the corridor somebody was peering out of a doorway, but they withdrew as I came along. I ran downstairs.

The porter wasn't in the hallway, but the host wasn't there either. Maybe he'd heard those shots and had gone up to investigate.

Cascaiden had picked his time. Most of the company of those flats would be at theatre by this time, and of the few who were at home, possibly some of them had known there to be pistol shots.

I hid me along to the dust public telephone, and then I called the Yard.

Flagg was at the office. I heard him croak:

"Hello, Jimmy! I've got some news for you. Fleck is dead—a fractured skull. Gunner Scott will hang for that one!"

"I've got news, too," I told him. "Sanderson is dead—murdered! Yes, he was shot down in his rooms less than ten minutes ago."

"Sanderson!" Flagg said. "Well, IT does me!" Then: "Who did it?"

Something jolted me in the back. I wheeled round and looked into two hard, cold eyes.

"Go on," said Cascaiden, "tell him—and die!"

I licked my lips. My mouth was dry and hot, but my heart was cold lead.

"Was it J. Jimmy? Flagg insisted in my ear. I swallowed hard. "It now have been the faintest!" I hung up.

Cascaides said thoughtfully:
"I could let you have it here, right at this very corner. But maybe it wouldn't be safe! How'd you know about Sanderson?"

I shrugged.
"Oh, I've got ears!"
"Yeah, an' you've got a mouth, too. Talk!"

I stared across the wet sidewalk of the asphalt. If I told Cascaides that I'd been standing behind the curtains when he shot down the M.P., he'd shoot me where I stood.

I didn't speak at all.
He said:
"There's a tank. Wave it and get in. And make me funny noise, Malcolm, and you're as good as dead!"
I knew it.

CHERRY INTERFERES.

WE drove straight to the Plaza in the double-deck street where I'd seen Cascaides before. It was illuminated now, and looked cheaply garish with its sprays of electric tubes and its neon lighting.

Cascaides said:
"You go first, Malcolm."
I went up the broad stairway and past two silent men in uniform. One of them I gave the eye to as I went past.
"Bairn anything to-night, baby?"
"Being home to bed," she said.
"When girl?" I told her, and passed on.
Cascaides said: "The door's open. Turn the handle." I did, and drew up with a start. The bulky Joe was lying stretched on the floor. There was a gash across his head, and he was breathing strenuously.
Cascaides's lips tightened.
"We've had visitors," he said. He kicked the door. "Lift him on to the sofa."

I bent over and lifted Joe up. He opened his eyes with the movement and gave a little groan.

Cascaides drew out a bottle of whisky and splashed a glassful out of it. He said:
"Drink this, Joe, and sit up!"
I was watching him as he spoke. Cascaides was hard metal. Things were crashing up for him like this, and yet he was as cool and calm as though he were sitting pretty.

Then he drew a pair of handkerchiefs from a drawer and slipped them over my wrists.
"Those ought to hold you for a while. Now, Joe, what happened?"
Joe eyed us both wearily.

"I dunno. I was standing by the window there an' heard the door open." He passed a hand over his brow. "An' nobody came in. I thought, maybe it was the draught that did it, an' I looked out to see if any of the windows was open. That's all I know."

Cascaides said:
"You stuck your head out for it! Where's Lefly and Hoyt?"

And then Joe stopped:
"That's separate fellow, Jeffrey!"
Cascaides said softly:
"What a sweet lot of help I've got around here!"

He looked at his watch. It must have been after eleven, for the picture house was emptying. I could hear them all pouring out and down the corridors.

And then the place grew quiet. He sat at his desk and looked through papers. Once or twice he looked up. Then he rose.
"Come along with me, Malcolm. Joe, you follow me, too. If this monkey makes a trap for it, give him all you've got."

Joe nodded me in the back.
"I'm in the mood for it, cousin!"
Cascaides went along the corridor and down a flight of stairs to where a heavy



Sanderson's flight was meant to be secret, but two people watched him pack his bag—one openly, the other secretly.

door faced us. I noticed that it was lead-sheeted, and figured out that it was from here that the cinema apparatus was worked.

I wasn't far wrong. In tiny white letters I read:

"EMERGENCY OPERATING-ROOM."

Cascaides fished out the keys and went to work on the lock. The door swung open and he pressed on the switch.

The room was empty.
Cascaides said:
"He got away!" He wheeled on Joe like a fury. "Get Lefly and Hoyt—quick!"
Joe retreated.

I said:
"Heap big surprise, eh? White man go use way. Yes—no?"

For a second I thought I'd said too much. His eyes grew colder and colder. Then he looked down at the floor.

There had been somebody here. I could see a little smear of blood on the wall. It had dried, but it was still fresh enough to be red. There was an outline on the dust on the floor, and there were seven or eight cigarette-ends, smoked down to the tip, and some spent matches.

"Who was it?"
He looked at me.
"Jeffrey, that reporter chap?" He stood in silence; then: "We'll get back to the room."

"When we did get back, he said:
"I ought to give it to you just now, Malcolm, but there's more to all this than meets the eye. How did Jeffrey get out of there?" He shrugged his shoulders. "How did you know Sanderson was dead? Those are questions I want answered."

Then Joe came back upstairs.
"The Gunner will be along with the car just now," Cascaides said. "Well, don't waste time. Jeffrey got out of here. The chances are he'll go straight to his newspaper office and get the story of his chest." He felt for the phone, dialed a number. When he had it:

"Has Mr. Jeffrey arrived yet?" He listened. "He hasn't! Very good, thank you for that."

He hung up.
"Jeffrey isn't back yet. You and the Gunner get down to the 'Gunner'. Pick him up if you can. If you can't, shoot him. But get him. Sooner or later he'll come in."

He turned to me.
"You've got yourself into this, Malcolm, and you can't get out of it. If you'd been reasonable, you'd have cut yourself a very nice piece of cake. As it is—"

Joe's foot started to itch.
"I'd get going, then."
He made for the door.

"Yes, get going," Cascaides said smoothly. He lifted the gun up. "Count," he said. "You'll have all the fun of guessing when you get it. What's your lucky number?"

"Thirty-nine," I guessed.
"You've said it!" And I saw the white-man of his finger as it tightened on the trigger.
Bang!

A door slammed shut downstairs.
It saved my life. I saw the boy-eyed look leave Cascaides's face, and I knew that for the moment the danger was over. You have to work yourself into a certain state to shoot a man in cold blood. Now he was wary.

He backed to the door and opened it; slammed it shut, and I heard the lock click.

I fired for the windows. They opened up the middle, but the catch was stiff as a Jew's pun-ning, and when I did get them open I saw the steel grid protecting the windows.

For below me rain fell softly to the deserted pavement. And then, even as I stood there—

Crack!
A single shot hit into the silence of the night. There was the sound of running feet and the outside door burst open.

Someone ran down the road, kept well in the shadows. Close at hand I heard a police-whistle shriek out.

Cascadden opened the door. Drove up and stared at me.

"I never thought of that," he said wondrously.

He was staring at the telephone on his desk.

I felt sick and foolish. I'd had the means and opportunity of finishing all this at a single stroke, and I hadn't been smart enough to take it.

"Damn me!" I said aloud. "I didn't, either!"

He was breathing hard, and the gun was back in his hand.

"Let's get going. Down the rear stairway, there. I've got a car."

We went down and out to the slier at the back. I didn't see any car, but sixty yards or so further down we came across it. A long, low touring with the hood up. I think it was an Alfa, but I couldn't be sure.

Cascadden said:

"Get in!"

He got in beside me, and we ripped away down the slier and out on to the main arterial road.

"Where to?" I asked.

He didn't answer for a moment, then:

"All this was easy, Malcolm, and you and Jeffrey started braving into this thing. It's not me plenty alone."

I said:

"It's given me more sore heads than a year's ordinary work! Why did you pick up Jeffrey?"

"He was getting too nosy." He craned up in his seat. "After you and Flagg left me, I began to see that there were too many loose ends hanging around, and the best thing to do was to cut some of them off."

He smiled.

"Jeffrey was pretty close to getting the whole story. We just got him in time. He'd already written a report to you, and I left it with that billiard-ball man."

I digested that in silence; then I said:

"You going to kill me, Cascadden?"

He scowled into the darkness.

"What do you think?"

"You'd be a fool if you didn't," I admitted.

We were on the main arterial road now, and we were travelling. I wondered what the chance would be if I jumped him, and figured out that it wouldn't be so good.

He had the gun in his hand. He couldn't miss, and it wasn't going to make

me feel any better to think he'd maybe crash while he was getting me.

We drove in silence for an hour. Finally he said:

"You ever been here before—Upper Strip?"

I shook my head.

"It's in Surrey, though, isn't it?"

"That's right. You certainly have queer names in your Old Country here. Upper Strip?"

He said it again and chuckled.

I nodded.

"Yeah. I suppose to a fellow like you, used to Cokhish an' Ypsland an' the like of that, they must sound pretty funny."

He chuckled.

"You got a sense of humour that keeps you going, Malcolm."

He peered out into the night. Hair was drifting down on the windshield. I heard it patter close above my head, and on the windhead of the side mirror.

The big headlights sliced the darkness like a knife, and I saw a road open up in front of us. A narrow cart road, surfaced with loose gravel.

We slowed down here and churned through it. And then a little thicket of iron showed up on our right. The back I caught a glint of light and the outline of a cottage.

Cascadden stopped the car.

"Get out and walk round in front of me — up to the door!"

I didn't hesitate for one second. If Cascadden had meant business back there in London, everything favoured him here. Soak-up—darkness!

I went up to the door.

"Open it," he said.

We went in together. He peered around and snuffed!

"Lefty, see you there?"

No answer.

Cascadden turned. Then a man's voice came from upstairs:

"You there, chief! You gave me a start!"

Cascadden relaxed. He walked along to the end of the passageway which faced us. There was a heavy door there, with a great massive lock.

Half-way up its height there was a square aperture out, and a sliding panel fixed in. He drew it open and peered in.

"Hello, Eudrine!" he said softly.

I heard the girl gasp.

"You! You're some bark! You said that—"

Cascadden took a key out of his pocket. A peculiarly-shaped key, and wedged it into the lock. The door swung open and he went inside.

"Drop along, Malcolm. You'll be able to see your friend for a little while."

Eudrine Leigh gave a little gasp when she saw me.

"So they've got you, too?"

"It looks that way," I agreed.

Eudrine Leigh was pale and wan-looking. She stood there, looking at the both of us, and then behind us I heard Lefty shuffle downstairs.

The hall was lit by lamplight, and in the darkness I saw his face was white and set.

Cascadden said:

"Get some coffee made, Lefty. I need it after the run. After that, had a couple of spades. We're going to dig a hole."

"That's right," and a voice. "A couple of spades—for a couple of holes!"

We both wheeled.

Behind Lefty stood Cherry Sherill, and the automatic in her hand was as steady as a rock.

IN THE WOODS.

CASCADDEN dropped the gun, and it echoed dully on the floor. I drew it over with my foot.

I saw the rag beside the American's face, but he didn't speak.

Lefty did.

"She's been here for a whole day, boss, holding that gun on me."

I said:

"Cherry, I wondered where you'd got to! How on earth did you get here?"

She sniffed.

"I followed you and Flagg when you left and went along to see Cascadden. I'd an idea he'd want to make sure of things. He drove home after you'd left."

"And you've been here ever since?"

She shook her head.

"No. I hired a car and followed him. But I didn't locate this place right away. I lost Cascadden at Upper Strip, and I spent all of yesterday looking for this place. I located it this morning, and I'd have had Eudrine out, only there was no key, and all her meals were handed through the opening to her."

I said to Lefty:

"You'll find keys in Cascadden's pocket. Take these things off my wrist."

He did it, and I rubbed my wrists together. Then I nodded to Cascadden.

"You stand in one corner, fellow. Veloc, veloc still."

Eudrine Leigh came running across.

"Oh, how wonderful!" she said. "I knew you'd be able to do something!"

"Him!" Cherry sneered. "So far, what's he done? Get in the way a lot!"

She stood there, a fiery-eyed little thing with blue eyes and a neat across her face where a low-hanging branch had brushed it.

I said:

"You, mal'am. Get in the way is right. But what we do now is get on the way. Cascadden has a car outside. We'll all get back in a hurry." I lifted the gun. "Move, boys. Get your stoles on!"

We went out to the door, and then I free.

From the stairway above a hand, cold voice said:

"Get your hands up high, Malcolm, or I'll blast you one and all."

I didn't turn. I didn't look. I knew the voice of Gunner Hoyt well enough not to heed it. I dragged the gun in my feet.

"Drop it, Cherry," I said slowly. "Hoyt could get a slug in you from where he stands. Don't give him an excuse."

Cherry's automatic came down.

Hoyt said:

"I figured you'd take it easy when we didn't see the light burning. Joe stayed in the car, and I came round by the bank and up by the rainpipe." He came down towards us now—shooked: "Bring him in, Joe!"

Cascadden said:

"Good work, Gunner. I was hoping you'd make it. Bring them back here."

We all trooped back to the room where we recently left. Only this time I felt different. So did Eudrine. The colour had left the girl's cheeks, and she was waxes.

There was a queer, dazed look in her eyes as she followed us.

Cherry wasn't showing any alarm, but then it took a lot of alarm to worry Cherry.

Cascadden said:

"You got Jeffrey?"

Hoyt nodded.

"You guessed it right. We'd hardly got down there before he came. He'd have got inside, too, only he hadn't enough money to pay the taxi, and the hackman wanted

£150 WON IN "MUSIC HALL"

In the fourth of our recent "Music Hall" competitions, the administration committee rewarded the best "turn" shown below (with the best all-round performance from the previous "turn" on the form). No artist exhibited such a programme variety, and THE FIRST PRIZE OF £150 has therefore been divided equally among the following five competitors whose attempts revealed an difference from the rest lot:

R. BOND, 11, Parkside Drive, Leighton-on-Sea, Essex.
E. GAVY, 4, Church Terrace, Ferry House, Birmingham.
R. FARRER, 1, Pockland Place, Brighton, London, S.W.2.
J. MANNING, Gentry, Birmingham.
G. H. TAYLOR, Newcastle, Cumberland.

THE SECOND PRIZE OF £50 has been divided equally among the two finalists and six winners whose attempts all combined two different items from the head programme. We are unable to print the names of so many winners here, but the full list may be seen at our office.

The Most Promising was J. D. Swindle and his Orchestra, 40, King Carter, 40, Dean the Minster, 40, Royal Windsor, Bucks. (18) Rita Field, 118, Gables, Mabley, 10, Stratton Lane, 100, Wm. Bennett Road, (24) Max West, (25) Bruce Houston and Ronald Brown.

to argue the price with them. Joe gave him the one-two and brought him along."

Joe came in leading Jeffrey by the arm. The lanky reporter was a sick man. His face was pannelled and his eyes were black, but you couldn't have cut the steel from his hair with a razor.

"Hello, Malcolin!" he snarled. "They got you, too. An' little Cherry-ripe, her-self."

Cherry said:

"Somebody must have lifted a dump board. Where did you crawl from?"

He staggered a little.

"You got my coat, Malcolin?"

"I shook my head.

"No, I didn't. Cascadinn beat me to it. Why didn't you phone the office, if you had any messages for me? Your brain-waves cost a poor little mile his life!"

"I told him about Finch.

He said:

"That's a pity, ain't it? Hell, they've been born every day, an' they're dyin' every day."

"I nodded.

"There's something about you, Jeffrey, that caries in my stomach."

And then Cascadinn said:

"Put the cuffs back on Malcolin, Lefty. He's the only dangerous one of the bunch."

Lefty did it.

"You an' me are gettin' pretty pally," he grinned. He drew the ratchet tight, and I cursed him aloud.

Hoyle said slowly:

"And now what? We've got them all here, but we can't keep them in no more. Suppose some smart John Law comes along to take a look at this place?"

Cascadinn looked at me.

"There's a couple of spades in the garage, Malcolin. How long do you think it would take a big fellow like you to dig a hole for three people?"

And he said it so very gently that I knew he was in deadly earnest.

"Get the spades, Joe! And get the hurricane lamp. There's one in the garage."

When Joe went out, he said:

"I started this, Gunner, an' I'm going through with it. We can manage it yet. Those three can't talk if they're dead enough."

Emmie gasped.

"You can't do anything so horrible! I won't have it! I'll go to the police! I'll—"

Cascadinn wheeled on her.

"You'll go to the police! Sister, you'll go to hell in a basket! You were as thick a party to this as anyone. You agreed to it at first. Pergine was to die, an' you were going to marry me!"

"I was crazy!" the girl gasped. "I didn't mean it! I never dreamed you meant murder!"

The American laughed.

"You thought maybe Pergine was going to be strangled an' die. You damn fool! I crashed him—twice! I wanted him dead! And now it's nearly too late. But hell die yet! I've got time enough left."

Joe came back with two spades and a lantern. Hoyle took the lantern. Cascadinn said:

"Let's go, friends. We've got work to do."

He was grinning as he said it.

We fled out. The big door slammed on the girl. I heard her scream in anguish—

knew that she had thrown herself against the door.

Then Cascadinn said:

"Let's go!"

He opened the door and entered as cut. The rain had grown heavier, and the wind was rising. It lagged at us as we fled along a narrow, knob-up gateway and into the wood behind the house.

Three stood out in the darkness like giant skeletons, and the air was like the whisper of death.

Hoyle walked on ahead with the lantern, and Jeffrey lurched behind him. Then Cherry and I. Behind us were Joe and Cascadinn.

No one spoke.

The light flickered on wards; looked about in the darkness. Rain splashed my cheeks coldly, wind shrieked in the tree-tops above.

Behind us I heard a crackling, sudden



"Get in!" ordered Cascadinn. "And no tricks!"

sound as some woodland creature scouted from its lair in terror.

We walked on for twenty minutes or so, and by now we were in the thickest part of the wood. The plantings here were spruce and Scotch fir, and the scent of pine was in the air.

I breathed it in, drew it down into my lungs. God, I didn't want to die! We crossed a ditch that traversed the wood and ran, silently and dimly, to the outer world. And then I heard Jeffrey's thin voice say:

"Walkin' to my cap funeral! What a hell of a story I've missed there."

Something warm and soft slid into my palms. It was Cherry's small hand.

I squeezed her fingers.

"Hi, kid! It's nice to be alive, ain't it?"

She shivered a little.

"Yes, it's nice to be with you, anyway, Jimmy."

I felt something gather in my throat.

"You an' me's got the same idea, Cherry!" And then we walked along in

silence. The light twinkled ahead. Cascadinn flicked on his flashlight at the rear.

And I could still hear things at the night scurrying into their haunts of safety.

CHEMISTRY IS READY!

HOYLE had stopped under the spread of an oak. He stood there and looked back hesitatingly.

Cascadinn's cold voice said out of the darkness:

"You, this will do. Far enough into the wood so that nobody will be likely to come across them." He looked at me.

"Want to work, Malcolin?"

I took a spade. I'd an idea about using it, only he stopped me.

Cascadinn shouted:

"Go to it, Joe! An' work fast!"

Joe bent his back and began to dig. So did I. And it was easy digging. The ground was soft and spongy.

There was perspiration on my brow, and yet I was dry cold.

Joe grunted as he worked; tossed the loose earth over his shoulder. He was down knee-deep in a matter of moments.

I got on with the digging. We were almost shoulder-deep now, and Joe tossed out the spade.

"That's enough for me," he growled. He clambered out, and I did the same. Cascadinn looked at his watch.

"Three-ten! You've got two minutes, and then you're going out."

Jeffrey said:

"Even the girl? Hell, give her a break!"

It was one of the few times I ever liked him.

Cascadinn lifted his gun.

"Get over to the parapet," he said. "If you've got any prayers to say, say them now."

I took a stumbling step closer to the trench, and Cherry grasped my hand very lightly.

She whispered:

"Jimmy, what are you thinking?"

"The same as you," I said.

Her fingers tightened until they nearly hurt me. And then Cascadinn said:

"That's enough! Sorry to do it, Malcolin, but you had it coming some time."

The gun came up.

Crack!

Crack!

The two shots blended into one.

The hurricane lantern went out in a shower of splintered glass.

I heard Jeffrey gasp:

"Run for it!"

I changed Cherry down, rolled over behind the protective pile of earth Joe and I had thrown up.

"Sill!" I hissed. "Not a move!"

Who it was, heaven only knew. But I remembered now the sounds I had heard in the wood behind us.

Crack!

There was a burst of flame, and a ringing, piercing scream which rose on the night air to chill our very veins.

Then the sound of a heavy body falling.

Hoyle laughed, a low, horrible laugh. He walked right up to us in the darkness, boldly and unafraid.

Cascadinn said: "You got him!" And then he laughed aloud.

"Yes," said Hoyle, "I got him. Just like this!"

Crack!

Crack!

There were twin flashes of blue and orange, and in their light I saw the horror in Cascadinn's face. For the voice was the voice of Walter Pergine!

Cascadinn howled for a split-second. Then his talk slid down into the trench.

Casadden was dead. Hoyt we found with a bullet in his lung, and he lived to hang.

That morning we all trooped into Scotland Yard where a grey light was filtering the sky, and Inspector Flagg went over matters.

Pergrine said:
"That is the gist of it, Inspector. Casadden needed money, and he wanted Evadne. He worked me into a scheme that meant he'd get both. I was insured for seventy thousand. He meant me to be smashed up, and then to marry Evadne and get his hands on the money.

"Only it didn't work out like that. I wasn't killed in the smash, and he couldn't attempt it too soon as the insurance company would have spotted a rat. He had the pot away, and meant to get rid of me when a chance dropped up.

"When I escaped, he sent Hoyt and Jon after me, and they kept me in a cottage at Marlow until I got away again. After that Casadden was desperate. He only had a few days left before the policy lapsed, and he figured out a way to make sure of me. He took Evadne away, because he knew I would try to find her, and when I did—well, he and his gang would have found me."

I said:
"Pergrine, I'm handing it to you. You played a pretty good lone hand. How did you find out about this place at Upper Strip?"

"I came down in the back of the tourer with you and Casadden. It was I who was in the picture-house when he had you there.

"I paid a call to the Plains, and had to knock Joe cold. Then I found Jeffrey in that operating-room." His forehead was lit up and I thought it was Evadne he was keeping there. When I found it was Jeffrey, I took him outside. He'd had a beating up, and was still dazed. I came back then, and was there when Casadden took you up to that room. I cut down and hid in the car then."

I said:
"I owe you one for that, Pergrine." Then I looked at Jeffrey. "You, werrid, what was in that note you left for me with Flash?"

Jeffrey smiled nastily.
"I told you to keep an eye on Sanderson," Casadden was playing some game. Sanderson looked the American in a lot of his things, and I wanted to find out just how far he was in this one."

"Up to the neck," I said. "But he got cold feet."

Flagg said gravely:
"It was the Chatter who shot Colonel-French Amy!"

Cherry shivered.
"Imagine a man planning to murder his own wife like that!"

Flagg shrugged.
"Oh, I don't know. You get to feel the hat sometimes. What do you think, Jimmy?"

"Me!" I said. "I do no think'f more as common."

Cherry backed my chair with the heels of her legs.
"Eloise!" she said.

I looked across to Walter and Evadne Pergrine, sitting there arm-in-arm.
"Specially enough, I felt she was right!"

THE END.
Write to the Editor, The THRILLER Library, The Florary House, Farringham Street, London, E.C.4, and let him have your opinion of this story. Meanwhile turn to page 443 for full details of next week's story.

THIS WAY, PLEASE
for the weekly Cash.....
Try Our New
Word Jester

£60 IN PRIZES
£50 1ST PRIZE £10 2ND PRIZE

MUST-BE-WON Cash Competition!

WHICH words do you know quickly and easily? YOU! Right you are then, for this week's "Ins and Outs" puzzle and you are in the running for that fine cash prize. There's a "second" of £10 as well, and both prizes MUST be won.

HOW TO WIN: The puzzle here contains twelve words, only each has either one letter missing or one too many. All you do is this:

- When you see "In," PUT IN a letter to complete the word.
- When it says "Out," TAKE OUT a letter to leave a word.
- The puzzle is to complete or leave words, as may be, which best covers the clues at the side.

Then, with No. 1, you put in a letter, and No. 2 means WORDS—Obviously the best answer to that clue? That solution letter is filled in for you.

In the same way, study the other clues and put in or take out letters, writing them plainly IN IN, in the spaces at the side. The full words do not have to be written out—only one letter "in" or "out" for each solution? Remember, too, that the words formed should be the most apt answers you can make to the clues.

Use the first column for your first attempt, and a separate column for each other attempt made. Sign and address the coupon portion, also in full, at each try, in stamps for one attempt, 3p. for two, 4p. for three, or 6d. stamps or P.O.s; for this attempt, then cut out the puzzle which and post promptly to:

"Ins and Outs" No. 4, G.P.O., Box 981,
The Florary House, London, E.C.4. (Comp.)

"Ins & Outs" No 4

| 1. THE GLOAM | ORLD | W | W | W | W |
|----------------------------------------|----------|---|---|---|---|
| 2. PART OF A BUILDING | FARCADE | | | | |
| 3. WHAT MANY A PACEY ANSWERS | GRI | | | | |
| 4. OFTEN VIOLENT IN HIS FEELINGS | WRITER | | | | |
| 5. MUCH TALKING NECESSARY FOR THEM | ARS | | | | |
| 6. ENCOURAGED | PROMPTED | | | | |
| 7. THE DOWNWARD-OUT MAY WELL FEEL IT | EJECTED | | | | |
| 8. BE VERY MANY BY SIGNAL TO US ARE | HUNGER | | | | |
| 9. BEEN MADE IN THE COUNTRY | TRAP | | | | |
| 10. OBTAINED FROM COAL | GASHES | | | | |
| 11. MUCH HANDS ON THOSE IN WARREN | ATIONS | | | | |
| 12. DIFFICULT TO MAKE SURELY COMPLETES | FARCES | | | | |

In entering this contest, I agree to accept the published decisions and awards as final and legally binding.

Signature:

Address:

T

ATTACH ONE in stamps for each attempt made, or a P.O. for three attempts for FIVE attempts.

The Closing Date is Thursday, May 11th, 1935; no attempts submitted thereafter.

RULES: The first prize awarded to the person who in any one attempt correctly solves the most words in the puzzle. The second prize will be given to the person who in any one attempt correctly solves the most words in the puzzle. The third prize will be given to the person who in any one attempt correctly solves the most words in the puzzle. The fourth prize will be given to the person who in any one attempt correctly solves the most words in the puzzle. The fifth prize will be given to the person who in any one attempt correctly solves the most words in the puzzle.

Every attempt to solve the puzzle is a chance to win the first prize. The person who in any one attempt correctly solves the most words in the puzzle will win the first prize. The person who in any one attempt correctly solves the most words in the puzzle will win the second prize. The person who in any one attempt correctly solves the most words in the puzzle will win the third prize. The person who in any one attempt correctly solves the most words in the puzzle will win the fourth prize. The person who in any one attempt correctly solves the most words in the puzzle will win the fifth prize.

In a number of years this has been the longest-running word puzzle competition in the world. It is the longest-running word puzzle competition in the world. It is the longest-running word puzzle competition in the world. It is the longest-running word puzzle competition in the world. It is the longest-running word puzzle competition in the world.

Closing Date: May 11th. Prizes Posted: May 26th!

The Shadow snatches Harry Vincent from the clutches of 'Davy Jones'

RIVER OF DEATH

**A POWERFUL STORY
OF THE SHADOW—THE
WORLD'S SLICKEST
CRIME FIGHTER**
By
MAXWELL GRANT



"SNATCHED FROM 'DAVY JONES.'"

"DAVY JONES" was the name by which the man who controlled the biggest gang of river pirates was known. His lieutenant, named PIKE, took a party to raid the s.s. Squater, but a small-time crook, SAILOR MARCO, was already there. The two gangs clashed. Pike's men killed all of Marco's men, but Marco escaped, only to be recaptured later.

LAMONT CRANSTON, otherwise known as THE SHADOW, the world's cleverest crime fighter, got on the trail. Chen he picked up involved a girl, EDITH TURNER, who was engaged to ROY HOLLESTER, a shipping broker. HARRY VINCENT, one of the Shadow's men, went to watch Hollister's office, vanished. Meanwhile, Cranston, learning that Edith Turner's father, who ran a cabinet shop on a boat moored in the Thames, is afraid of a crook named BLUE CHIP DESSON, decided to investigate at the Turner's home. There he discovered a suspicious connection between Pike and Ned Turner. Pike brought Turner a book that had on the fly-leaf the address of JOHN BRODDY, a bookie. As Pike could not read, this seemed curious and worthy of further inquiry. But Cranston was uneasy about the vanished Harry Vincent. He went to Hollister's office, to find traces of a fellow fight, Vincent had been spirited away. But how?

THE wall provided Cranston with an immediate answer to the latter question. There were two steel filing cabinets standing upright against a side wall. There should have been three! He realized it at once. The wall beside the second cabinet was detached from the rest of the smooth surface. It was lighter in appearance, much cleaner. The outline of the missing steel cabinet was clearly evident.

Additional proof was provided by the four steel drawers hidden under a large desk. The drawers had been removed to make room for Harry's limp body. Jammed inside the empty steel case, the

open front concealed shrewdly by his abductors. It would be a simple matter to carry Harry to the street by the goods lift. Where had Harry's abductors taken him?

Cranston, knowing the caliber of the agents who served him, looked to Harry himself for a clue.

Cranston found the hint he sought near the smear of fresh blood on the rug. It was hidden by the torn calendar that had been ripped from the wall. Cranston picked up a trampled package of Lucky Strike cigarettes. He knew that it was the brand which Vincent favored.

The word "Strike" had been circled with a pencil mark. Above it was scrawled a hasty "18"
"Ten Strike!" What was that?

To Inspector Joe Carter and his men, probably nothing. But to Cranston it meant everything. The solution was like a blinding ray of light. It was a link to Roy Hollister's business. It tied up with the river pirates. But, most sinister of all, it seemed to point to the murderous methods of Davy Jones.

Lamont Cranston left the Maritime Building with grim haste. He leaped into a taxicab and gave a low-toned order. The cab sped away.

Cranston knew he was racing to save Harry Vincent from drowning. Harry was at the ready threshold of Davy Jones' locker!

Two hard-faced men were entering the gloomy gateway of a Thames wharf. They carried between them a steel filing cabinet, which they were transferring to the watchman's shack inside the wharf. In it was the jagged Harry Vincent!

One of Vincent's carmen was the watchman himself. The other was the man who had surprised Harry outside the locked door of Roy Hollister's office.

There was a strike in progress at the wharf. This was the grim information Vincent had left for the eyes of The Shadow.

The body of Vincent was carried to the black water beneath the gloomy structure. Harry was carried down like a limp rag.

Boys were dozed, leading to the black water beneath the gloomy structure. Harry was carried down like a limp rag.

A dinghy floated on the surface of the water, moored to a platform by a light rope. Neither the boat nor the men were visible to observers beyond the wharf.

because of the squat shape of a barge that lay alongside.

The killers had to fight an electric torch to make sure what they were doing.

Harry was dumped in the dinghy. The craft was leaky, half full of water. Weights were attached to Harry's legs. The rope that moored the boat was loosened.

"You finish him!" the watchman growled to his gun-chewing pal. "I'll sneak back and keep an eye out stuff. Make it snappy!"

The dinghy's head dipped into the dirty water sloshing inside the dinghy, removed a plug. The boat began to settle with a groaning gurgle. Its gunwales dipped closer to the black surface of the water.

The crooked watchman reared up the steps to the trapdoor. As he climbed through to the shack, he saw a black-clad figure dash silently towards him. Cranston, in the black garb of the Shadow, had used the barge to gain entrance to the wharf. An almost suicidal leap had enabled him to reach his goal.

He sprang nimbly at the crooked watchman. He was able to choke the man's cry of terror by the muscular pressure of his lean fingers. But he couldn't prevent the swift withdrawal of the man's knife. It had a thin, slender blade as sharp as a razor. It slid over Cranston's straining shoulder and plunged towards his spine.

Cranston twisted with a superhuman effort. His left hand released the killer's throat and clutched the hairy wrist that held the knife. The plunging blade turned aside almost too late. Cranston felt the point of the steel at his back. His cloak ripped in a jagged gash—and the struggling watchman seized a strangled cry.

Below, the man under the trapdoor heard that cry. It pierced the babbling murmur of river water pouring over the gunwales of the sinking dinghy. He sprang up the wooden steps to the aid of his pal.

Through the square opening of the trap, Cranston caught a glimpse of the sinking boat. He saw the pale, unconscious form of Harry Vincent. The boat slanted drunkenly beneath the surface of the black water, vanished.

As it faded from sight, the second man came reeling up the steps, a gas sliding from his lip pocket.

Quickly, Cranston struck his assailant on the jaw. The criminal watchman collapsed. His legs bent like rubber as the second man sprang upward into the shack. He circled viciously, to attempt to pour lead slugs into Cranston's spine.

He had taken only a single callous step when the limp body of the watchman came flying at him like an unwieldy thunderbolt. Cranston had hurled his victim bodily through the air. It struck the snag before he could dodge. He went backward, falling partly through the open trapdoor. His noose snatched down the wooden steps.

But the snag, though disarmed, was as dangerous as a tiger. His fingers closed violently on Cranston's ankle, pulled him toppling forward.

Cranston's muscular heave of the last watchman had thrown himself off balance. He was unable to catch himself. He struck the edge of the trapdoor opening and went through. Both men tumbled with a clatter down the steep steps. They were partly dazed by the hit-thumping impact. His mother hastened an instant. Cranston kicked the gun from the slippery platform with a quick thrust of his foot. It struck like a stone in the snow. The snag caught for the knife Cranston had dropped in the tussle.

Again Cranston fought for his life against a pitiful killer. But, suddenly, the crook gasped and went limp. In the struggle his knife had entered his own body.

The wrenching leap from the killer and Cranston's dive overhead made almost one motion. His panting lungs were almost empty of air from the exertions of two swift death struggles. But he used the very emptiness of his lungs to sink him more swiftly to the bottom of the river.

His eyes were of no use. But his hands were. He could feel soft soles sliding like wax between his clothing-fingers. They were the fingers of his enemy left hand. In his right he held the knife that had been snatched from his assailant's dying grasp.

He felt the rough outline of the man's dimly. It was already deeply embedded in meat. Cranston hung on grimly with his left hand. His right drew the blade of the knife across the ropes that held the weights to Harry Vincent's legs.

It was hard to rise with his limp burden. Cranston's enemy lungs were not innocent enough to help much. But he used his legs as a powerful substitute.

His dripping head broke the black surface beneath the wharf. He drew a harsh, sobbing breath, sought an end of the platform. In a moment, he was able to shove Harry Vincent upward to safety on the slippery planks. Then, like a dripping reel, he followed.

Cranston worked desperately over Vincent. Harry's limp chest rose and fell under the pressure of artificial respiration. Finally he gasped freely.

There was grim fame in the depths of Cranston's eyes as he led the dark space of Harry Vincent toward the dark

mass of the barge that lay alongside the wharf.

THE CHINESE LAMP.

ANTHONY SAXON was holding a rehearsal for a new musical show on the bare stage of a West End theatre. He was literally surrounded by girls, everyone of them beautiful.

Anthony Saxon had only two passions in his life, outside of the shows he directed. Jewels were one. Race books the other. He collected both with the zeal of a miser.

An assistant was trying to catch Saxon's eye. But the producer ignored him until the show number was finished.

"Telephone call for you, sir," the assistant said. "A Mr. John Brody, calling from Brody's Bookshop."

The telephone was in a dark corner of the wings. Saxon answered it eagerly. He always did when John Brody called.

Brody's voice was so low-pitched on the wire that it was barely audible. But Saxon caught every word distinctly.

"I've got a brand-new shipment of books. Rare books, you understand? They're not quite ready for inspection yet. But if you'll come over in one hour—"

"Right!" Saxon said.

He replaced the receiver with a hand that trembled slightly. Her snare into his eyes. It grew as he walked back to the lighted stage. He had dealt with John Brody before. Wait an hour? He wasn't going to wait five minutes!

He hung up his hand suddenly, halting the confusion that brooded everywhere on the stage. Then he dismissed the chorus for the day.

A few minutes later, he was in his car and on his way to John Brody's bookshop. It was a dark, dreary sort of shop in a second-rate neighborhood. The aisles were dim foot-lamp tunnels. Only one assistant was visible, a sallow, stupid-looking girl named Pauline.

Pauline led Anthony Saxon to Brody's private office in the rear of the shop. All important customers were taken there.

Brody looked both startled and angry when he recognized his caller. But the look vanished almost instantly. He was a squat, blond man with a scowl-held head that always perched itself slightly sideways, like a bird.

"You're early," he said softly.

"I know—I couldn't wait. I don't mind cooling my heels a while."

He cuffed them inside Brody's luxurious rear office. The door that led to the shop in front was locked by the bookkeeper. He told Pauline to notify anyone who asked for him that he was away from the shop on business. He led Saxon to a comfortable chair and gave him a magazine and a cigar to occupy his attention.

Brody himself returned to his desk and buried himself with a sheaf of papers, which he began glancing slowly through his teeth, among fingers.

His work was a bluff. From where he sat he could see, over Saxon's bent head, a gorgeous old Chinese lamp stand behind the chair where the stage producer sat. Every inch of that stately lamp was more than a thousand years old. That it, all except the light bulb that was screwed in a modern socket.

The bulb was green and very tiny. It was not lit. John Brody watched it covertly while he pretended to busy himself with routine work at his desk.

Suddenly the green light glowed. Saxon didn't notice. It stayed lit for possibly thirty seconds, then it faded. Instantly, Brody rose from his desk and scurried himself to his customer.

"I'll be back in a short time," he promised amiably, "with something which I hope will excite you."

"You've never failed to do it yet, John," Saxon said. "Don't keep me in suspense too long, or I'll be a nervous wreck!"

Brody unlocked a small door which was concealed behind a Persian tapestry. He stepped into other darkness.

Thick carpet on a narrow, almost vertical ledge of steps nullified his footfalls. He used no light to guide himself downward through the pitch-darkness.

Another locked door gave the bookkeeper access to a lower chamber. The room was pitch-dark like the stairs. But a creak of the wall switch flooded the place with light.

It seemed a queer spot in which to seek a book, rare or otherwise. There was only one bookcase in the room.

The remainder of the room looked more like a research laboratory. There was a zinc-covered table. A glass cupboard contained bottles and jars of chemicals. In one corner was a sink and a shelf with a Bunsen burner. And above another table was a strange shielded lamp, clamped vertically on the wall in almost the same manner; photographs clamp an oblong camera.

This, however, was not a camera. It was a lamp used for a special purpose, which the trained research workers in the New York police crime laboratory would have recognized instantly.

Brody watched the cheap bookcase at the other end of the chamber. It opened suddenly, swinging on a pivot without sound. A man entered, carrying a man-of-board book in one hand. The book was the one which Pike had managed to deliver to Ned Turner without disclosing its real nature to the sales clerk of Blue Chip Design.

The man who carried the volume was Pike's man-of-board—Turner himself.

Turner opened the hollow book and spilled its contents on the zinc-covered table. Instantly Brody gasped with delight.

That table was aglitter with precious jewels! They flashed like a cold bonfire, sparkling with all the jumbled colours of the rainbow.

(Don't miss next week's installment of this gripping story.)



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DETECTIVE WEEKLY 2^d

Every Thursday

Mr. Waddington darted a look of suspicion at him.

"Exactly what I thought," he said. "Well, I think we'd better look into it. It looks like being your job, George. As you know, I'm up to my eyes in that job from the Home Office. But someone ought to make inquiries in Miss Wise's case. You'd better take it over right away. Go down to that bungalow and poke around and see what you can find. Miss Wise will show you where it is."

George's face had taken on a scared look, but his expression cleared at the last few words.

He started Mr. Waddington to his sudden decision. He reached for his cap from the vesting book, and he turned to open the door for Penny. She looked from him to Mr. Waddington as though she would have preferred the master read himself, but Mr. Waddington waved his hand airily.

"One of my best assistants, Miss Wise," he said. "You may be sure that I'll keep in touch with the case personally, though."

George closed the door after Penny and went back with a look of resolution to Mr. Waddington. He spoke to him quietly but very firmly.

"I want a pound for expenses."

Mr. Waddington gaped, seemed about to protest violently, but then changed his mind.

"All right," he said. "But I don't know what the landlord's going to say."

To-morrow looked a very uncertain prospect to George Harris, but to-day, he brought contentedly, had certainly turned out all right. Here he was, sitting in the train beside the most wonderful girl he had ever seen in his life, with every chance of continuing her acquaintance.

He questioned her closely on the way down, partly to hear the sound of her voice, partly so he could gaze into her treated blue eyes, and partly, a very small part, to get the story clear in his mind. He found himself so much moved as Penny was almost. As much charmed with *Comet* Probert, pitying Boris, and disliking the little *Starbuck*, *Baroness Brandt*.

"That fellow sounds a rat," he said.

"I've nothing against him, really," Penny said. "It's just a feeling I have." "I'd back your feelings," George said firmly, "against—against anything."

They came to Kewstane, and now they had to go on foot through the woods. It was growing dark, too, and Penny had to move near to George to guide him along the overgrown path. Now and then she stumbled over the profuse undergrowth, and finally she found herself bumping on to his strong hand. It was suddenly dark, with the trees meeting over their heads.

"It doesn't matter," Penny whispered. "There's a lightning set that lights up the landscape just like day, so you can see all



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you want to see. I'm going to see you going over everything with a magnifying-glass, and blowing the powder over everything to take finger-prints, and all that sort of thing."

In the darkness a faint flicker of consciousness passed through George's mind. But a moment later Penny wasn't thinking about detective methods. The path twisted, and they came in sight of the bungalow. Penny gave a low cry, and her fingers tightened on George's, for the devilish old bungalow was lit up like day.

"There's someone there!"

They moved nearer, and now they saw a scoping figure. A short, dark figure, stooping, with an spy lamp on his back, a nose that jutted out worryingly; George, watching intently, found Penny's lips distractedly close to his ear.

"That's *Baroness Brandt*!"

They moved forward. Whatever he had been about, *Brandt* had almost done. He was hurriedly examining documents laid on an open suitcase, and now they saw him crouch the suitcase shut. He stood up, glanced furtively about him, and then moved swiftly towards the door. His hand went up, and the lights were switched off.

and they knew he must be coming rapidly towards them. It was George who moved swiftly, pulling Penny towards him off the path. *Brandt* went past them so closely he could have reached out his hand and touched Penny. They glimpsed his white face, his falling nose, but he looked neither to right nor to left.

Neither of them spoke. They followed *Brandt* without a word. At last they broke free from the footpath through the wood, out into the wider road. At the same moment they heard the whir of a self-starter, and then the hum of a petrol engine. A big black car whirled about, its lights were switched on, and then it swept away from them at gathering speed.

"He's gone!" gasped Penny.

George was suddenly resolute, his mind clear.

"It doesn't matter!" he said. "I wanted a line and I've got it! The line is—watch *Baroness Brandt*!"

Brandt is a dangerous man and absolutely clever. What was Penny Wise and her detective to do to circumvent his devilish plan? On an occasion when our world's longest and most exciting story in which *Brandt* makes the heart of their readers work for him.

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