The Achievements of Luther Trant

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#Publishers FOREWORD#

Except for its characters and plot, this book is not a work of the imagination.

The methods which the fictitious Trant — one time assistant in a psychological laboratory, now turned detective — here uses to solve the mysteries which present themselves to him, are real methods; the tests he employs are real tests. Though little known to the general public, they are precisely such as are being used daily in the psychological laboratories of the great universities — both in America and Europe — by means of which modern men of science are at last disclosing and denning the workings of that oldest of world-mysteries — the human mind.

The facts which Trant uses are in no way debatable facts; nor do they rest on evidence of untrained, imaginative observers. Innumerable experiments in our university laboratories have established beyond question that, for instance, the resistance of the human body to a weak electric current varies when the subject is frightened or undergoes emotion; and the consequent variation in the strength of the current, depending directly upon the amount of emotional disturbance, can be registered by the galvanometer for all to see. The hand resting upon an automatograph will travel toward an object which excites emotion, however capable its possessor may be of restraining all other evidence of what he feels. If these facts are not used as yet except in the academic experiments of the psychological laboratories and the very real and useful purpose to which they have been put in the diagnosis of insanities, it is not because they are incapable of wider use. The results of the “new psychology” are coming every day closer to an exact interpretation. The hour is close at hand when they will be used not merely in the determination of guilt and innocence, but to establish in the courts the credibility of witnesses and the impartiality of jurors, and by employers to ascertain the fitness and particular abilities of their employees. Luther Trant, therefore, nowhere in this book needs to invent or devise an experiment or an instrument for any of the results he here attains; he has merely to adapt a part of the tried and accepted experiments of modern, scientific psychology. He himself

is a character of fiction; but his methods are matters of fact.

THE AUTHORS.

THE MAN IN THE ROOM

“Amazing, Trant.”

“More than merely amazing! Face the fact, Dr. Reiland, and it is astounding, incredible, disgraceful, that after five thousand years of civilization, our police and court procedures recognize no higher knowledge of men than the first Pharaoh put into practice in Egypt before the pyramids!”

Young Luther Trant ground his heel impatiently into the hoar frost on the campus walk. His queerly mismated eyes — one more gray than blue, the other more blue than gray — flashed at his older companion earnestly. Then, with the same rebellious impatience, he caught step once more with Reiland, as he went on in his intentness:

“You saw the paper this morning, Dr. Reiland? ‘A man’s body found in Jackson Park’; six suspects seen near the spot have been arrested. ‘The Schlaack’s abduction or murder’; three men under arrest for that since last Wednesday. ‘The Lawton trial progressing’; with the likelihood that young Lawton will be declared innocent; eighteen months he has been in confinement — eighteen months of indelible association with criminals! And then the big one: ‘Sixteen men held as suspected of complicity in the murder of Bronson, the prosecuting attorney.’ Did you ever hear of such a carnival of arrest? And put beside that the fact that for ninety-three out of every one hundred homicides no one is ever punished!”

The old professor turned his ruddy face, glowing with the frosty, early-morning air, patiently and questioningly toward his young companion. For some time Dr. Reiland had noted uneasily the growing restlessness of his brilliant but hotheaded young aid, without being able to tell what it portended.

“Well, Trant,” he asked now, “what is it?”

“Just that, professor! Five thousand years of being civilized,” Trant burst on, “and we still have the ‘third degree’! We still confront a suspect with his crime, hoping he will ‘flush’ or ‘lose color,’ ‘gasp’ or ‘stammer.’ And if in the face of this crude test we find him prepared or hardened so that he can prevent the blood from suffusing his face, or too noticeably leaving it; if he inflates his lungs properly and controls his tongue when he speaks, we are ready to call him

innocent. Is it not so, sir?”

“Yes,” the old man nodded, patiently. “It is so, I fear. What then, Trant?”

“What, Dr. Reiland? Why, you and I and every psychologist in every psychological laboratory in this country and abroad have been playing with the answer for years! For years we have been measuring the effect of every thought, impulse and act in the human being. Daily I have been proving, as mere laboratory experiments to astonish a row of staring sophomores, that which — applied in courts and jails — would conclusively prove a man innocent in five minutes, or condemn him as a criminal on the evidence of his own uncontrollable reactions. And more than that, Dr. Reiland! Teach any detective what you have taught to me, and if he has half the persistence in looking for the marks of crime on men that he had in tracing its marks on things, he can clear up half the cases that fill the jail in three days.”

“And the other half within the week, I suppose, Trant?”

The older man smiled at the other’s enthusiasm.

For five years Reiland had seen his young companion almost daily; first as a freshman in the elementary psychology class — a red-haired, energetic country-boy, ill at ease among even the slight restrictions of this fresh-water university. The boy’s eager, active mind had attracted his attention in the beginning; as he watched him change into a man, Trant’s almost startling powers of analysis and comprehension had aroused the old professor’s admiration. The compact, muscular body, which endured without fatigue the great demands Trant made upon it and brought him fresh to recitations from two hours sleep after a night of work; and the tireless eagerness which drove him at a gallop through courses where others plodded, had led Reiland to appoint Trant his assistant just before his graduation. But this energy told Reiland, too, that he could not hope to hold Trant long to the narrow activities of a university; and it was with marked uneasiness that the old professor glanced sideways now while he waited for the younger man to finish what he was saying.

“Dr. Reiland,” Trant went on more soberly, “you have taught me the use of the cardiograph, by which the effect upon the heart of every act and passion can be read as a physician reads the pulse chart of his patient, the pneumograph, which traces the minutest meaning of the breathing; the galvanometer, that wonderful

instrument which, though a man hold every feature and muscle passionless as death, will betray him through the sweat glands in the palms of his hands. You have taught me — as a scientific experiment — how a man not seen to stammer or hesitate, in perfect control of his speech and faculties, must surely show through his thought associations, which he cannot know he is betraying, the marks that any important act and every crime must make indelibly upon his mind —"

"Associations?" Dr. Reiland interrupted him less patiently. "That is merely the method of the German doctors — Freud's method — used by Jung in Zurich to diagnose the causes of adolescent insanity."

"Precisely." Trant's eyes flashed, as he faced the old professor. "Merely the method of the German doctors! The method of Freud and Jung! Do you think that I, with that method, would not have known eighteen months ago that Lawton was innocent? Do you suppose that I could not pick out among those sixteen men the Bronson murderer? If ever such a problem comes to me I shall not take eighteen months to solve it. I will not take a week."

In spite of himself Dr. Reiland's lips curled at this arrogant assertion. "It may be so," he said. "I have seen, Trant, how the work of the German, Swiss and American investigators, and the delicate experiments in the psychological laboratory which make visible and record the secrets of men's minds, have fired your imagination. It may be that the murderer would be as little, or even less, able to conceal his guilt than the sophomores we test are to hide their knowledge of the sentences we have had previously read to them. But I myself am too old a man to try such new things; and you will not meet here any such problems," he motioned to the quiet campus with its skeleton trees and white-frosted grass plots. "But why," he demanded suddenly in a startled tone, "is a delicate girl like Margaret Lawrie running across the campus at seven o'clock on this chilly morning without either hat or jacket?"

The girl who was speeding toward them along an intersecting walk, had plainly caught up as she left her home the first thing handy — a shawl — which she clutched about her shoulders. On her forehead, very white under the mass of her dark hair, in her wide gray eyes and in the tense lines of her straight mouth and rounded chin, Trant read at once the nervous anxiety of a highly-strung woman.

"Professor Reiland," she demanded, in a quick voice, "do you know where my

father is?”

“My dear Margaret,” the old man took her hand, which trembled violently, “you must not excite yourself this way.”

“You do not know!” the girl cried excitedly. “I see it in your face. Dr. Reiland, father did not come home last night! He sent no word.”

Reiland’s face went blank. No one knew better than he how great was the break in Dr. Lawrie’s habits that this fact implied, for the man was his dearest friend. Dr. Lawrie had been treasurer of the university twenty years, and in that time only three events — his marriage, the birth of his daughter, and his wife’s death — had been allowed to interfere with the stern and rigorous routine into which he had welded his lonely life. So Reiland paled, and drew the trembling girl toward him.

“When did you see him last, Miss Lawrie?” Trant asked gently.

“Dr. Reiland, last night he went to his university office to work,” she replied, as though the older man had spoken. “Sunday night. It was very unusual. All day he had acted so strangely. He looked so tired, and he has not come back. I am on my way there now to see — if — I can find him.”

“We will go with you,” Trant said quickly, as the girl helplessly broke off. “Harrison, if he is there so early, can tell us what has called your father away. There is not one chance in a thousand, Miss Lawrie, that anything has happened to him.”

“Trant is right, my dear.” Reiland had recovered himself, and looked up at University Hall in front of them with its fifty windows on the east glimmering like great eyes in the early morning sun. Only, on three of these eyes the lids were closed — the shutters of the treasurer’s office, all saw plainly, were fastened. Trant could not remember that ever before he had seen shutters closed on University Hall. They had stood open until, on many, the hinges had rusted solid. He glanced at Dr. Reiland, who shuddered, but straightened again, stiffly.

“There must be a gas leak,” Trant commented, sniffing, as they entered the empty building. But the white-faced man and girl beside him paid no heed, as they sped down the corridor.

At the door of Dr. Lawrie's office — the third of the doors with high, ground-glass transoms which opened on both sides into the corridor — the smell of gas grew stronger. Trant stooped to the keyhole and found it plugged with paper. He caught the transom bar, set his foot upon the knob and, drawing himself up, pushed against the transom. It resisted; but he pounded it in, and, as its glass panes fell tinkling, the fumes of illuminating gas burst out and choked him.

"A foot," he called down to his trembling companions, as he peered into the darkened room. "Some one on the lounge!"

Dropping down, he hurried to a recitation room across the corridor and dragged out a heavy table. Together they drove a corner of this against the lock; it broke, and as the door whirled back on its hinges the fumes of gas poured forth, stifling them and driving them back. Trant rushed in, threw up the three windows, one after the other, and beat open the shutters. As the gray autumn light flooded the room, a shriek from the girl and a choking exclamation from Reiland greeted the figure stretched motionless upon the couch. Trant leaped upon the flat-topped desk under the gas fixtures in the center of the room and turned off the four jets from which the gas was pouring. Darting across the hall, he opened the windows of the room opposite.

As the strong morning breeze eddied through the building, clearing the gas before it, while Reiland with tears streaming from his eyes knelt by the body of his lifelong friend, it lifted from a metal tray upon the desk scores of fragments of charred paper which scattered over the room, over the floor and furniture, over even the couch where the still figure lay, with its white face drawn and contorted.

Reiland arose and touched his old friend's hand, his voice breaking. "He has been dead for hours. Oh, Lawrie!"

He caught to him the trembling, horrified girl, and she burst into sobs against his shoulder. Then, while the two men stood beside the dead body of him in whose charge had been all finances of this great institution, their eyes met, and in those of Trant was a silent question. Reddening and paling by turns, Reiland answered it, "No, Trant, nothing lies behind this death. Whether it was of purpose or by accident, no secret, no disgrace, drove him to it. That I know."

The young man's oddly mismated eyes glowed into his, questioningly. "We must

get President Joslyn," Reiland said. "And Margaret," he lifted the girl's head from his shoulder, while she shuddered and clung to him, "you must go home. Do you feel able to go home alone, dearie? Everything that is necessary here shall be done."

She gathered herself together, choked and nodded. Reiland led her to the door, and she hurried away, sobbing.

While Trant was at the telephone Dr. Reiland swept the fragments of glass across the sill, and closed the door and windows.

Already feet were sounding in the corridors; and the rooms about were fast filling before Trant made out the president's thin figure bending against the wind as he hurried across the campus.

Dr. Joslyn's swift glance as Trant opened the door to him — a glance which, in spite of the student pallor of his high-boned face, marked the man of action — considered and comprehended all.

"So it has come to this," he said, sadly. "But — who laid Lawrie there?" he asked sharply after an instant."

He laid himself there," Reiland softly replied. "It was there we found him."

Trant put his finger on a scratch on the wall paper made by the sharp corner of the davenport lounge; the corner was still white with plaster. Plainly, the lounge had been violently pushed out of its position, scratching the paper.

Dr. Joslyn's eyes passed on about the room, passed by Reiland's appeal, met Trant's direct look and followed it to the smaller desk beside the dead treasurer's. He opened the door to his own office.

"When Mr. Harrison comes," he commanded, speaking of Dr. Lawrie's secretary and assistant, "tell him I wish to see him. The treasurer's office will not be opened this morning."

"Harrison is late," he commented, as he returned to the others. "He usually is here by seven-thirty. We must notify Branower also." He picked up the telephone and called Branower, the president of the board of trustees, asking him merely to come to the treasurer's office at once.

“Now give me the particulars,” the president said, turning to Trant.

“They are all before you,” Trant replied briefly. “The room was filled with gas. These four outlets of the fixture were turned full on. And besides,” he touched now with his fingers four tips with composition ends to regulate the flow, which lay upon the table, “these tips had been removed, probably with these pincers that lie beside them. Where the nippers came from I do not know.”

“They belong here,” Joslyn answered, absently. “Lawrie had the tinkering habit.” He opened a lower desk drawer, filled with tools and nails and screws, and dropped the nippers into it.

“The door was locked inside?” inquired the president.

“Yes, it is a spring lock,” Trant answered.

“And he had been burning papers.” The president pointed quietly to the metal tray.

Dr. Reiland winced.

“Some one had been burning papers,” Trant softly interpolated.

“Some one?” The president looked up sharply.

“These ashes were all in the tray, I think,” Trant contented himself with answering. “They scattered when I opened the windows.”

Joslyn lifted a stiletto letter-opener from the desk and tried to separate, so as to read, the carbonized ashes left in the tray. They fell into a thousand pieces; and as he gave up the hopeless attempt to decipher the writing on them, suddenly the young assistant bent before the couch, slipped his hand under the body, and drew out a crumpled paper. It was a recently canceled note for twenty thousand dollars drawn on the University regularly and signed by Dr. Lawrie, as treasurer. But as the young psychologist started to study it more closely, President Joslyn’s hand closed over it and took it from Trant’s grasp. The president himself merely glanced at it; then, with whitening face, folded it carefully and put it in his pocket.

“What is the matter, Joslyn?” Dr. Reiland started up.

“A note,” the president answered shortly. He took a turn or two nervously up and down the room, paused and stared down at the face of the man upon the couch; then turned almost pityingly to the old professor.

“Reiland,” he said compassionately, “I must tell you that this shocking affair is not the surprise to me that it seems to have been to you. I have known for two weeks, and Branower has known for nearly as long — for I took him into my confidence — that there were irregularities in the treasurer’s office. I questioned Lawrie about it when I first stumbled upon the evidence. To my surprise, Lawrie — one of my oldest personal friends and certainly the man of all men in whose perfect honesty I trusted most implicitly — refused to reply to my questions. He would neither admit nor deny the truth of my accusations; and he begged me almost tearfully to say nothing about the matter until the meeting of the trustees tomorrow night. I understood from him that at, or before, the trustees’ meeting he would have an explanation to make to me; I did not dream, Reiland, that he would make instead this” — he motioned to the figure on the couch, “this confession! This note,” he nervously unfolded the paper again, “is drawn for twenty thousand dollars. I recall the circumstances of it clearly, Reiland; and I remember that it was authorized by the trustees for two thousand dollars, not twenty.”

“But it has been canceled. See, he paid it! And these,” the old professor pointed in protest to the ashes in the tray, “if these, too, were notes — raised, as you clearly accuse — he must have paid them. They were returned.”

“Paid? Yes!” Dr. Joslyn’s voice rang accusingly. “Paid from the university funds! The examination which I made personally of his books, unknown to Lawrie — for I could not confess at first to my old friend the suspicions I held against him — showed that he had methodically entered the notes at the amounts we authorized, and later entered them again at their face amounts as he paid them. The total discrepancy exceeds one hundred thousand dollars!”

“Hush!” Reiland was upon him. “Hush.”

The morning was advancing. The halls resounded with the tread of students passing to recitation rooms. Trant’s eyes had registered all the room, and now measured Joslyn and Dr. Reiland. They had ceased to be trusted men and friends of his as, with the quick analysis that the old professor had so admired in his young assistant, he incorporated them in his problem.

“Who filled this out?” Trant had taken the paper from the hand of the president and asked this question suddenly.

“Harrison. It was the custom. The signature is Lawrie’s, and the note is regular. Oh, there can be no doubt, Reiland!”

“No, no!” the old man objected. “James Lawrie was not a thief!”

“How else can it be? The tips taken from the fixture, the keyhole plugged with paper, the shutters — never closed before for ten years — fastened within, the door locked! Burned notes, the single one left signed in his own hand! And all this on the very day before his books must have been presented to the trustees! You must face it, Reiland — you, who have been closer to Lawrie than any other man — face it as I do! Lawrie is a suicide — a hundred thousand dollars short in his accounts!”

“I have been close to him,” the old man answered bravely. “You and I, Joslyn, were almost his only friends. Lawrie’s life has been open as the day; and we at least should know that there can have been no disgraceful reason for his death.

“Luther,” the old professor turned, stretching out his hands pleadingly to his young assistant, as he saw that the face of the president did not soften, “Do you, too, believe this? It is not so! Oh, my boy, just before this terrible thing, you were telling me of the new training which could be used to clear the innocent and prove the guilty. I thought it braggadocio. I scoffed at your ideas. But if your words were truth, now prove them. Take this shame from this innocent man.”

The young man sprang to his friend as he tottered. “Dr. Reiland, I shall clear him!” he promised wildly. “I shall prove, I swear, not only that Dr. Lawrie was not a thief, but — he was not even a suicide!”

“What madness is this, Trant,” the president demanded impatiently, “when the facts are so plain before us?”

“So plain, Dr. Joslyn? Yes,” the young man rejoined, “very plain indeed — the fact that before the papers were burned, before the gas was turned on or the tips taken from the fixture, before that door was slammed and the spring lock fastened it from the outside — Dr. Lawrie was dead and was laid upon that lounge!”

“What? What — what, Trant?” Reiland and the president exclaimed together. But the young man addressed himself only to the president.

“You yourself, sir, before we told you how we found him, saw that Dr. Lawrie had not himself lain down, but had been laid upon the lounge. He is not light; some one almost dropped him there, since the edge of the lounge cut the plaster on the wall. The single note not burned lay under his body, here it could scarcely have escaped if the notes were burned first; where it would most surely have been overlooked if the body already lay there. Gas would not be pouring out during the burning, so the tips were probably taken off later. It must have struck you how theatric all this is, that some one has thought of its effect, that some one has arranged this room, and, leaving Lawrie dead, has gone away, closing the spring lock —”

“Luther!” Dr. Reiland had risen, his hands stretched out before him. “You are charging murder!”

“Wait!” Dr. Joslyn was standing by the window, and his eyes had caught the swift approach of a limousine automobile which, with its plate glass shimmering in the sun, was taking the broad sweep into the driveway. As it slowed before the entrance, the president swung back to those in the room.

“We two,” he said, “were Lawrie’s nearest friends — he had but one other. Branower is coming now. Go down and prepare him, Trant. His wife is with him. She must not come up.”

Trant hurried down without comment. Through the window of the car he could see the profile of a woman, and beyond it the broad, powerful face of a man, with sandy beard parted and brushed after a foreign fashion. Branower had succeeded his father as president of the board of trustees of the university. At least half a dozen of the surrounding buildings had been erected by the elder Branower, and practically his entire fortune had been bequeathed to the university.

“Well, Trant, what is it?” the trustee asked. He had opened the door of the limousine and was preparing to descend.

“Mr. Branower,” Trant replied, “Dr. Lawrie was found this morning dead in his office.”

“Dead? This morning?” A muddy grayness appeared under the flush of Branower’s cheeks. “Why! I was coming to see him — even before I heard from Joslyn. What was the cause?”

“The room was filled with gas.”

“Asphyxiation!”

“An accident?” the woman asked, leaning forward. Even as she whitened with the horror of this news, Trant found himself wondering at her beauty. Every feature was so perfect, so flawless, and her manner so sweet and full of charm that, at this first close sight of her, Trant found himself excusing and approving Branower’s marriage. She was an unknown American girl, whom Branower had met in Paris and had brought back to reign socially over this proud university suburb where his father’s friends and associates had had to accept her and — criticise.

“Dr. Lawrie asphyxiated,” she repeated, “accidentally, Mr. Trant?”

“We — hope so, Mrs. Branower.”

“There is no clew to the perpetrator?”

“Why, if it was an accident, Mrs. Branower, there was no perpetrator.”

“Cora!” Branower ejaculated.

“How silly of me!” She flushed prettily. “But Dr. Lawrie’s lovely daughter; what a shock to her!”

Branower touched Trant upon the arm. After his first personal shock, he had become at once a trustee — the trustee of the university whose treasurer lay dead in his office just as his accounts were to be submitted to the board. He dismissed his wife hurriedly. “Now, Trant, let us go up.”

President Joslyn met Branower’s grasp mechanically and acquainted the president of the trustees, almost curtly, with the facts as he had found them. Then the eyes of the two men met significantly.

“It seems, Joslyn,” Branower used almost the same words that Joslyn had used

just before his arrival, “like a — confession! It is suicide?” the president of the trustees was revolting at the charge.

“I can see no other solution,” the president replied, “though Mr. Trant —”

“And I might have saved this, at least!” The trustee’s face had grown white as he looked down at the man on the couch. “Oh, Lawrie, why did I put you off to the last moment?”

He turned, fumbling in his pocket for a letter. “He sent this Saturday,” he confessed, pitifully. “I should have come to him at once, but I could not suspect this.”

Joslyn read the letter through with a look of increased conviction. It was in the clear hand of the dead treasurer. “This settles all,” he said, decidedly, and he re-read it aloud:

DEAR BRANOWER: I pray you, as you have pity for a man with sixty years of probity behind him facing dishonor and disgrace, to come to me at the earliest possible hour. Do not, I pray, delay later than Monday, I implore you. JAMES LAWRIE.

Dr. Reiland buried his face in his hands, and Joslyn turned to Trant. On the young man’s face was a look of deep perplexity.

“When did you get that, Mr. Branower?” Trant asked, finally.

“He wrote it Saturday morning. It was delivered to my house Saturday afternoon. But I was motoring with my wife. I did not get it until I returned late Sunday afternoon.”

“Then you could not have come much sooner.”

“No; yet I might have done something if I had suspected that behind this letter was hidden his determination to commit suicide.”

“Not suicide, Mr. Branower!” Trant interrupted curtly.

“What?”

“Look at his face. It is white and drawn. If asphyxiated, it would be blue, swollen. Before the gas was turned on he was dead — struck dead —”

“Struck dead? By whom?”

“By the man in this room last night! By the man who burned those notes, plugged the keyhole, turned on the gas, arranged the rest of these theatricals, and went away to leave Dr. Lawrie a thief and a suicide to — protect himself! Two men had access to the university funds, handled these notes! One lies before us; and the man in this room last night, I should say, was the other —” he glanced at the clock — “the man who at the hour of nine has not yet appeared at his office!”

“Harrison?” cried Joslyn and Reiland together.

“Yes, Harrison,” Trant answered, stoutly. “I certainly prefer him for the man in the room last night.”

“Harrison?” Branower repeated, contemptuously. “Impossible.”

“How impossible?” Trant asked, defiantly.

“Because Harrison, Mr. Trant,” the president of the trustees rejoined, “was struck senseless at Elgin in an automobile accident Saturday noon. He has been in the Elgin hospital, scarcely conscious, ever since.”

“How did you learn that, Mr. Branower?”

“I have helped many young men to positions here. Harrison was one. Because of that, I suppose, he filled in my name on the ‘whom to notify’ line of a personal identification card he carried. The hospital doctors notified me just as I was leaving home in my car. I saw him at the Elgin hospital that afternoon.”

Young Trant stared into the steady eyes of the president of the trustees. “Then Harrison could not have been the man in the room last night. Do you realize what that implies?” he asked, whitening. “I preferred, I said, to fix him as Harrison. That would keep both Dr. Lawrie from being the thief and any close personal intimate of his from being the man who struck him dead here last night. But with Harrison not here, the treasurer himself must have known all the particulars of this crime,” he struck the canceled note in his hand, “and been concealing it for — that close friend of his who came here with him. You see

how very terribly it simplifies our problem? It was some one close enough to Lawrie to cause him to conceal the thing as long as he could, and some one intimate enough to know of the treasurer's tinkering habits, so that, even in great haste, he could think at once of the gas nippers in Lawrie's private tool drawer. Gentlemen," the young assistant tensely added, "I must ask you which of you three was the one in this room with Dr. Lawrie last night?"

"What!" The word in three different cadences burst from their lips — amazement, anger, threat.

He lifted a shaking hand to stop them.

"I realize," he went on more quickly, "that, after having suggested one charge and having it shown false, I am now making a far more serious one, which, if I cannot prove it, must cost me my position here. But I make it now again, directly. One of you three was in this room with Dr. Lawrie last night. Which one? I could tell within the hour if I could take you successively to the psychological laboratory and submit you to a test. But, perhaps I need not. Even without that, I hope soon to be able to tell the other two, for which of you Dr. Lawrie concerned himself with this crime, and who it was that in return struck him dead Sunday night and left him to bear a double disgrace as a suicide."

The young psychologist stood an instant gazing into their startled faces, half frightened at his own temerity in charging thus the three most respected men in the university; then, as President Joslyn eyed him sternly, he caught again the enthusiasm of his reasoning, and flushed and paled.

"One of you, at least, knows that I speak the truth," he said, determinedly; and without a backward look he burst from the room and, running down the steps, left the campus. It was five o'clock that afternoon, when Trant rang the bell at Dr. Joslyn's door. He saw that Mr. Branower and Dr. Reiland had been taken into the president's private study before him; and that the manner of all three was less stern toward him than he had expected.

"Dr. Reiland and Mr. Branower have come to hear the coroner's report to me," Joslyn explained. "The physicians say Lawrie did not die from asphyxiation. An autopsy tomorrow will show the cause of his death. But, at least, Trant — you made accusations this morning which can have no foundation in truth, but in part of what you said you must have been correct; for obviously some other person

was in the room."

"But not Harrison," Trant replied. "I have just come from Elgin, where, though I was not allowed to speak with him, I saw him in the hospital."

"You doubted he was there?" Branower asked.

"I wanted to make sure, Mr. Branower. And I have traced the notes, too," the young man continued. "All were made out as usual, signed regularly by Dr. Lawrie and paid by him personally, upon maturity, from the university reserve. So I have made only more certain that the man in the room must have been one of Dr. Lawrie's closest friends. I came back and saw Margaret Lawrie."

Reiland's eyes filled with tears. "This terrible thing, with her unfortunate presence with us at the finding of her father's body, has prostrated poor Margaret," he said.

"I found it so," Trant rejoined. "Her memory is temporarily destroyed. I could make her comprehend little. Yet she knows only of her father's death; nothing at all has been said to her of the suspicions against him. Does his death alone seem cause enough for her prostration? More likely, I think, it points to some guilty knowledge of her father's trouble and whom he was protecting. If so, her very condition makes it impossible for her to conceal those guilty associations under examination."

"Guilty associations?" Dr. Reiland rose nervously. "Do you mean, Trant, that you think Margaret knows anything of the loss of this money? Oh, no, no; it is impossible!"

"It would at any rate account for her prostration," the assistant repeated quietly, "and I have determined to make a test of her for association with her father's guilt. I will use in this case, Dr. Reiland, only the simple association of words — Freud's method."

"How? What do you mean?" Branower and Joslyn exclaimed.

"It is a method for getting at the concealed causes of mental disturbance. It is especially useful in diagnosing cases of insanity or mental breakdown from insufficiently known causes.

“We have a machine, the chronoscope,” Trant continued, as the others waited, interrogatively, “which registers the time to a thousandth part of a second, if necessary. The German physicians merely speak a series of words which may arouse in the patient ideas that are at the bottom of his insanity. Those words which are connected with the trouble cause deeper feeling in the subject and are marked by longer intervals of time before the word in reply can be spoken. The nature of the word spoken by the patient often clears the causes for his mental agitation or prostration.

“In this case, if Margaret Lawrie had reason to believe that any one of you were closely associated with her father’s trouble, the speaking of that one’s name or the mentioning of anything connected with that one, must betray an easily registered and decidedly measurable disturbance.”

“I have heard of this,” Joslyn commented.

“Excellent,” the president of the trustees agreed, “if Margaret’s physician does not object.”

“I have already spoken with him,” Trant replied. “Can I expect you all at Dr. Lawrie’s tomorrow morning when I test Margaret to discover the identity of the intimate friend who caused the crime charged to her father?”

Dr. Lawrie’s three dearest friends nodded in turn. Trant came early the next morning to the dead treasurer’s house to set up the chronoscope in the spare bedroom next to Margaret Lawrie’s.

The instrument he had decided to use was the pendulum chronoscope, as adapted by Professor Fitz of Harvard University. It somewhat resembled a brass dumb-bell very delicately poised upon an axle so that the lower part, which was heavier, could swing slowly back and forth like a pendulum. A light, sharp pointer paralleled this pendulum. The weight, when started, swung to and fro in the arc of a circle; the pointer swung beside it. But the pointer, after starting to swing, could be instantaneously stopped by an electro-magnet. This magnet was connected with a battery and wires led from it to the two instruments used in the test. The first pair of wires connected with two bits of steel which Trant, in conducting the test, would hold between his lips. The least motion of his lips to enunciate a word would break the electric circuit and start swinging the pendulum and the pointer beside it. The second pair of wires led to a sort of

telephone receiver. When Margaret would reply into this, it would close the circuit and instantaneously the electro-magnet clamped and held the pointer. A scale along which the pointer traveled gave, down to thousandths of a second, the time between the speaking of the suggesting word and the first associated word replied.

Trant had this instrument set up and tested before he had to turn and admit Dr. Reiland. Mr. Branower and President Joslyn soon joined them, and a moment after a nurse entered supporting Margaret Lawrie. Dr. Reiland himself scarcely recognized her as the same girl who had come running across the campus to them only the morning before. Her whole life had been centered on the father so suddenly taken away.

Trant nodded to the nurse, who withdrew. He looked to Dr. Reiland.

“Please be sure that she understands,” he said, softly. The older man bent over the girl, who had been placed upon the bed.

“Margaret,” he said tenderly, “we know you cannot speak well this morning, my dear, and that you cannot think very clearly. We shall not ask you to do much. Mr. Trant is merely going to say some words to you slowly, one word at a time; and we want you to answer — you need only speak very gently — anything at all, any word at all, my dear, which you think of first. I will hold this little horn over you to speak into. Do you understand, my dear?”

The big eyes closed in assent. The others drew nervously nearer. Reiland took the receiving drum at the end of the second set of wires and held it before the girl’s lips. Trant picked up the mouth metals attached to the starting wires.

“We may as well begin at once,” Trant said, as he seated himself beside the table which held the chronoscope and took a pencil to write upon a pad of paper the words he suggested, the words associated and the time elapsing. Then he put his mouthpiece between his lips.

“Dress!” he enunciated clearly. The pendulum, released by the magnet, started to swing. The pointer swung beside it in an arc along the scale. “Skirt!” Miss Lawrie answered, feebly, into the drum at her lips. The current caught the pointer instantaneously, and Trant noted the result thus:

Dress — 2.7 seconds — skirt.

“Dog!” Trant spoke, and started the pointer again. “Cat!” the girl answered and stopped it, Trant wrote:

Dog — 2.6 seconds — cat.

A faint smile appeared on the faces of Mr. Branower and Dr. Joslyn, but Reiland knew that his young assistant was merely establishing the normal time of Margaret’s associations through words without probable connection with any disturbance in her mind.

“Home,” Trant said; and it was five and two-tenths seconds before he could write “father.” Reiland moved, sympathetically, but the other men still watched without seeing any significance in the time extension. Trant waited a moment. “Money!” he said, suddenly. Dr. Reiland watched the swinging pointer tremblingly. But “purse” from Margaret stopped it before it had registered more than her established normal time for innocent associations.

Money — 2.7 seconds — purse.

“Note!” Trant said, suddenly; and “letter” he wrote again in two and six-tenths seconds. Dr. Joslyn moved impatiently; and Trant brusquely pulled his chair nearer the table. The chair legs rasped on the hard-wood floor. Margaret shivered and, when Trant tried her with the next words, she merely repeated them. President Joslyn moved again.

“Cannot you proceed, Trant?” he asked.

“Not unless we can make her understand again, sir,” the young man answered. “But I think, Dr. Joslyn, if you would show her what we mean — not merely try to explain again — we might go on. I mean, when I say the next word, will you take the mouthpiece from Dr. Reiland and speak into it some different one?”

“Very well,” the president agreed, impatiently, “if you think it will do any good.”

“Thank you!” Trant replaced his mouthpieces. “October!” He named the month just ended. The pointer started. “Recitations!” the president of the university answered in one and nine-tenths seconds.

“Thank you. Now for Miss Lawrie, Dr. Reiland!”

“Steal!” he tried; and the girl associated “iron “in two and seven-tenths seconds.

“Good!” Trant exclaimed. “If you will show her again, I think we can go ahead. Fourteenth!” he said to the president. Joslyn replied “fifteenth” in precisely two seconds and passed the drum back. All watched Miss Lawrie. But again Trant rasped carelessly his chair upon the floor and the girl merely repeated the next words. Reiland was unable to make her understand. Joslyn tried to help. Branower shook his head skeptically. But Trant turned to him.

“Mr. Branower, you can help me, I believe, if you will take Dr. Joslyn’s place. I beg your pardon, Dr. Joslyn, but I am sure your nervousness prevents you from helping now.”

Branower hesitated a moment, skeptically; then, smiling, acquiesced and took up the drum. Trant replaced his mouthpieces. “Blow!” he said. “Wind!” Branower answered, quietly. Trant mechanically noted the time, two seconds, for all were intent upon the next trial with the girl.

“Books!” Trant said. “Library!” said the girl, now able to associate the different words and in her minimum time of two and a half seconds.

“I think we are going again,” said Trant. “If you will keep on, Mr. Branower. Strike!” he exclaimed, to start the pointer. “Labor trouble,” Branower returned in just under two seconds; and again he guided the girl. For “conceal” she answered “hide “at once. Then Trant tested rapidly this series:

Margaret, conceal — 2.6 — hide. Branower, figure — 2.1 — shape. Margaret, thief — 2.8 — silver. Branower, twenty-fifth — 4.5 — twenty-sixth.

“Joslyn!” Trant tried an intelligible test word suddenly. He had just suggested “thief “to the girl; now he named her father’s friend, the president of the university. But “friend “she was able to associate in two and six-tenths seconds. Trant sank back and wrote this series without comment:

Margaret, Joslyn — 2.6 — friend. Branower, wife — 4.4 — Cora. Margaret, secret — 2.7 — Alice.

Trant glanced up, surprised, considered a moment, but then bowed to Mr. Branower to guide the girl again, saying “wound, to which he wrote the reply “no,” after four and six-tenths seconds. Immediately Trant made the second

direct and intelligible test.

“Branower!” he shot, suggestively, to the girl; but “friend” she was again able to associate at once. As the moment before the president of the trustees had glanced at Joslyn, now the president of the University nodded to Branower. Trant continued his list rapidly:

Margaret, Branower — 2.7 — friend. Branower, letter-opener — 4.9 — desk.

“Father!” Trant tried next. But from this there came no association, as the emotion was too deep. Trant, recognizing this, nodded to Mr. Branower to start the next test, and wrote:

Margaret, father — no association. Branower, Harrison — 5.3 — Cleveland.
Margaret, university — 2.5 — study. Branower, married — 2.1 — wife.
Margaret, expose — 2.6 — camera. Branower, brother — 4.9 — sister.
Margaret, sink — 2.7 — kitchen. Branower, collapse — 4.8 — balloon.

“Reiland!” Trant said to the girl at last. It was as if he had put off the trial for his own old friend as long as he could. Yet if anyone had been watching him, they would have noted now the quick flash of his mismated eyes. But all eyes were upon the swinging pointer of the chronoscope which, at the mention of her father’s best and oldest friend in that way, Margaret was unable to stop. One full second it swung, two, three, four, five, six —

The young assistant in psychology picked up his papers and arose. He went to the door and called in the nurse from the next room. “That is all, gentlemen,” he said. “Shall we go down to the study?”

“Well, Trant?” President Joslyn demanded impatiently, as the four filed into the room below, which had been Dr. Lawrie’s. “You act as if you had discovered some clew. What is it?”

Trant was closing the door carefully, when a surprised exclamation made him turn.

“Cora!” Mr. Branower exclaimed; “you here? Oh! You came to see poor Margaret!”

“I couldn’t stay home thinking of you torturing her so this morning!” The

beautiful woman swept their faces with a glance of anxious inquiry.

“I told Cora last night something about our test, Joslyn,” Branower explained, leading his wife toward the door. “You can go up to Margaret now, my dear.”

She seemed to resist. Trant fixed his eyes upon her, speculatively.

“I see no reason for sending Mrs. Branower away if she wishes to stay and hear with us the results of our test which Dr. Reiland is about to give us.” Trant turned to the old professor and handed him the sheets upon which he had written his record.

“Now, Dr. Reiland, please! Will you explain to us what these tell you?”

Dr. Joslyn’s hands clenched and Branower drew toward his wife as Reiland took the papers and examined them earnestly. But the old professor raised a puzzled face.

“Luther,” he appealed, “to me these show nothing! Margaret’s normal association-time for innocent words, as you established at the start, is about two and one-half seconds. She did not exceed that in any of the words with guilty associations which you put to her. From these results, I should say, it is scientifically impossible that she even knows her father is accused. Her replies indicate nothing unless — unless,” he paused, painfully, “because she could associate nothing with my name you consider that implies—”

“That you are so close to her that at your name, as at the name of her father, the emotion was very deep, Dr. Reiland,” the young man interrupted. “But do not look only at Margaret’s associations! Tell us, instead, what Dr. Joslyn’s and Mr. Branower’s show!”

“Dr. Joslyn’s and Mr. Branower’s?”

“Yes! For they show, do they not — unconsciously, but scientifically and quite irrefutably — that Dr. Joslyn could not possibly have been concerned in any way with those notes, part of which were due and paid upon the fourteenth of October; but that Mr. Branower has a far from innocent association with them, and with the twenty-fifth of the month, on which the rest were paid!”

He swung toward the trustee. “So, Mr. Branower, you were the man in the room

Sunday night! You, to save the rascal Harrison, your wife's brother and the real thief, struck Dr. Lawrie dead in his office, burned the raised notes, turned on the gas and left him to seem a suicide and a thief!"

For the second time within twenty-four hours, Trant held Dr. Reiland and the president of the university astounded before him. But Branower gave an ugly laugh.

"If you could not spare me, you might at least have spared my wife this last raving accusation! Come, Cora!" he commanded.

"I thought you might control yourself, Mr. Branower," Trant returned. "And when I saw your wife wished to stay I thought I might keep her to convince even President Joslyn. You see?" he quietly indicated Mrs. Branower as she fell, white and shaking, into a chair. "Do not think that I would have told it in this way if these facts were new to her. I was sure the only surprise to her would be that we knew them."

Branower bent to his wife; but she straightened and recovered.

"Mr. Branower," Trant continued then, "if you will excuse chance errors, I will make a fuller statement.

"I should say, first, that since you kept his relationship a secret, this Harrison, your wife's brother, was a rascal before he came here. Still you procured him his position in the treasurer's office, where he soon began to steal. It was very easy. Dr. Lawrie merely signed notes; Harrison made them out. He could make them out in erasable ink and raise them after they were signed, or in any other simple way. Suffice it that he did raise them and stole one hundred thousand dollars. When the notes were presented for payment, the matter was laid before you. You must have promised Dr. Lawrie to make up the loss, for he paid the notes and entered the payment in his books. Then the time came when the books must be presented for audit. Lawrie wrote that last appeal to you to put off the settlement no longer. But before the letter was delivered you and Mrs. Branower had hurried off to Elgin to see this Harrison, who was hurt. You got back Sunday evening and read Dr. Lawrie's note. You went to him; and, unable to make payment, there in his office you struck him dead —"

But Branower was upon him with a harsh cry.

“You devil! You — devil! But you lie! I did not kill him!”

“With a blow? Oh, no! You raised no hand against him. But his heart was weak. At your refusal to carry out your promise, which meant his ruin, he collapsed before you — dead. Do you wish to continue the statement now yourself?”

The wife gathered herself. “It is not so! No!” she forbade, “no!” But Branower turned on President Joslyn a haggard face.

“Is this true?” the president demanded sternly. Branower buried his face in his hands.

“I will tell you all,” he said thickly. “Harrison, as this fellow found out somehow, is my wife’s brother. He has always been reckless, wild; but she — Cora, do not stop me now — loved him and clung to him as — as a sister sometimes clings to such a brother. They were alone in the world, Joslyn. She married me only on condition that I save and protect him. He demanded a position here. I hesitated. His life had been one long scandal; but never before had he been dishonest with money. Finally I made it a condition to keep his relationship secret, and sent for him. I myself first discovered he had raised the notes, weeks before you came to me with the evidence you had discovered that something was wrong in the treasurer’s office. As soon as I found it out, I went to Lawrie. He agreed to keep Harrison about the office until I could remove him quietly. He paid the notes from the university reserve, just raised, upon my promise to make it up. David had lost all speculating in stocks. I could not pay this tremendous amount in cash at once; but the books were to be audited. Lawrie, who had expected immediate repayment from me, would not even once present a false statement. In our argument his heart gave out — I did not know it was weak — and he collapsed in his chair — dead.”

Dr. Reiland groaned, wringing his hands.

“Oh, Professor Reiland!” Mrs. Branower cried now. “He has not told everything. I — I had followed him!”

“You followed him?” Trant cried. “Ah, of course!”

“1 thought — I told him,” the wife burst on, “this had happened by Providence to save David!”

“Then it was you who suggested to him to leave the stiletto letter opener in Lawrie’s hand as an evidence of suicide!”

Branower and his wife both stared at Trant in fresh terror.

“But you, Mr. Branower,” Trant went on, “not being a woman with a precious brother to save, could not think of making a wound. You thought of the gas. Of course! But it was inexcusable in me not to test for Mrs. Branower’s presence. It was her odd mental association of a perpetrator with the news of the suspected suicide that first aroused my suspicions.”

He turned as though the matter were finished; but met Dr. Joslyn’s perplexed eyes. The end attained was plain; but to the president of the university the road by which they had come was dark as ever. Branower had taken his wife into another room. He returned.

“Dr. Joslyn,” said Trant, “it is scientifically impossible — as any psychologist will tell you — for a person who associates the first suggested idea in two and one-half seconds, like Margaret, to substitute another without almost doubling the time interval.

“Observe Margaret’s replies. ‘Iron’ followed ‘steal’ as quickly as ‘cat’ followed ‘dog.’ ‘Silver,’ the thing a woman first thinks of in connection with burglary, was the first association she had with ‘thief.’ No possible guilty thought there. No guilty secret connected with her father prevented her from associating, in her regular time, some girl’s secret with Alice Seaton next door. I saw her innocence at once and continued questioning her merely to avoid a more formal examination of the others. I rasped my chair over the floor to disturb her nerves, therefore, and got you into the test.

“The first two tests of you, Dr. Joslyn, showed that you had no association with the notes. The date half of them came due meant nothing to you. ‘October’ suggested only recitations and ‘fourteenth’ permitted you to associate simply the succeeding day in an entirely unsuspicious time. I substituted Mr. Branower. I had explained this system as getting results from persons with poor mental resistance. I had not mentioned it as even surer of results when the person tested is in full control of his faculties, even suspicious and trying to prevent betraying himself. Mr. Branower clearly thought he could guard himself from giving me anything. Now notice his replies.

“The twenty-fifth, the day most of the notes were due, meant so much that it took double the time, before he could drive out his first suspicious association, merely to say ‘twenty-sixth.’ I told you I suspected his wife was at least cognizant of something wrong. It took him twice the necessary time to say ‘Cora’ after ‘wife’ was mentioned. He gave the first association, but the chronoscope registered mercilessly that he had to think it over. ‘Wound’ then brought the remarkable association ‘no’ at the end of four and six-tenths seconds. There was no wound; but something had made it so that he had to think it over to see if it was suspicious. When I first saw that dagger letter opener on Dr. Lawrie’s desk, I thought that if a man were trying to make it seem suicide, he must at least have thought of using the dagger before the gas. Now note the next test, ‘Harrison.’ Any innocent man, not overdoing it, would have answered at once the name of the Harrison immediately in all our minds. Mr. Branower thought of him first, of course, and could have answered in two seconds. To drive out that and think of President Harrison so as to give a seemingly ‘innocent’ association, ‘Cleveland,’ took him over five seconds. I then went for the hold of this Harrison, probably, upon Mrs. Branower. I tried for it twice. The second trial, ‘brother,’ made him think again for five seconds, practically, before he could decide that sister was not a guilty word to give. As the first words ‘blow’ only brought ‘wind’ in two seconds and ‘strike ‘suggested ‘labor ‘at once, I knew he could not have struck Dr. Lawrie a blow; and my last words showed, indeed, that Lawrie probably collapsed before him. And I was done.”

Dr. Joslyn was pacing the room with rapid steps. “It is plain. Branower, you offer nothing in your defense?”

“There is nothing.”

“There is much. The university owes a great debt to your father. The autopsy will show conclusively that Dr. Lawrie died of heart failure. The other facts are private with ourselves. You can restore this money. Its absence I will reveal only to the trustees. I shall present to them at the same time your resignation from the board.”

He turned to Trant. “But this secrecy, young man, will deprive you of the reputation you might have gained through the really remarkable method you used through this investigation.”

“It makes no difference,” Trant answered, “if you will give me a short leave

from the university. As I mentioned to Dr. Reiland yesterday, the prosecuting attorney of Chicago was murdered two weeks ago. Sixteen men — one of them surely guilty — are held; but the criminal cannot be picked among them. I wish to try the scientific psychology again. If I succeed, I shall resign and keep after crime — in the new way!”

II

THE FAST WATCH

Police Captain Crowley — red-headed, alert, brave — stamped into the North Side police station an hour later than usual and in a very bad temper. He glared defiantly at the row of patrolmen, reporters, and busybodies, elbowed aside his desk sergeant without a word, and slammed into his private office. The customary pile of morning papers, flaying him in stinging frontpage columns, covered his desk. He glanced them over, grunting; then swept them to the floor and let himself drop heavily into his chair.

“He’s got to be guilty!” The big fist struck the table top desperately. “It’s got to be,” the hoarse voice iterated determinedly — “him!” He had checked the last word as the door swung open, only to utter it more forcibly as he recognized the desk sergeant.

“Kanlan, eh, Ed?” the desk sergeant ventured. “You have him at Harrison Street station again the boys tell me.”

“Yes, we have him.”

“You got nothing out of him yet?”

“No, nothing — yet!”

“But you think it’s him?”

“Who said anything about thinking?” Crowley glanced to see that the door was shut. “I said it’s got to be him! And — it’s got to, whether or no, ain’t it?”

A month before, Randolph Bronson — the city prosecuting attorney for whose unpunished murder Crowley was under fire — had dared to try to break up and send to the penitentiary the sixteen men who formed the most notorious and dangerous gambling “ring” in the city. It grew certain that some of the sixteen would stick at nothing to put the prosecutor out of the way. The chief of police particularly charged Crowley, therefore, to see to Bronson’s safety in the North Side precinct, where the young attorney boarded. But Crowley had failed; for within twelve days of the warning, early one morning, Bronson had been found dead a block from his boarding house — murdered. Crowley had been unable to fix a clew upon a single one of the sixteen. He had confidently arrested them all

at once, but after his stiffest “third degree” had to release them. Now, in desperation, he had rearrested Kanlan.

“Sure,” said the desk sergeant, “Kanlan or some one’s got to be guilty soon — whether or no. But if you ain’t got the goods on Kanlan yet, maybe you’d want to talk to a lad that’s waiting in front.”

“Who is he? What does he know?”

“Trant’s his name — from the university, he says. And he says he can pick our man.”

“What is he — student?”

“He says some sort of perfesser.”

“Professor!” Crowley half turned away.

“Not that kind, Ed.” The desk sergeant bent one arm and tapped his biceps. “He’s got plenty of this; and he’s got hair, too “— the sergeant glanced at Crowley’s red head — “as red as any, Cap.”

“Send him in.”

Crowley looked up quickly at Trant when he entered. He saw a young man with hair indeed as thick and red as his own; and with a figure, for his more medium height, quite as muscular as any police officer’s. He saw that the young man’s blue-gray eyes were not exact mates — that the right was quite noticeably more blue than the other, and under it was a small, pink scar which reddened conspicuously with the slightest flush of the face.

“Luther Trant, Captain Crowley,” Trant introduced himself. “For two years I have been conducting experiments in the psychological laboratory of the university —”

“Psycho — Lord! Another clairvoyant!”

“If the man who killed Bronson is one of the sixteen men you suspect, and you will let me examine them, properly, I can pick the murderer at once.”

“Examine them properly! Saints in Heaven, son! Say! that gang needed a stiff drink all round when we were through examining them; and never a word or a move gave a man away!”

“Those men — of course not!” Trant returned hotly. “For they can hold their tongues and their faces, and you looked at nothing else! But while you were examining them, if I, or any other trained psychologist, had had a galvanometer contact against the palms of their hands, or —”

“A palmist, Lord preserve us!” Crowley cried. “Say! don’t ever think we needed you. We got our man yesterday — Kanlan — and we’ll have a confession out of him by night. Sergeant!” he called, as the door opened to admit a man, “do you know what you let in — a palmist!” But it was not the sergeant who entered. “A-ah! Inspector Walker!”

“Morning, Crowley,” Trant heard the quiet response behind him as he turned. A giant in the uniform of an inspector of police almost filled the doorway.

“Come with me, young man,” he said. “Miss Allison was passing with me outside here and we heard some of what you’ve been saying. We’d like to hear more.”

Trant looked up at the intelligent face and followed. A young woman was waiting outside the door. As the inspector pointed Trant toward a quiet room in the rear of the building, she followed. Inspector Walker fastened the door behind them. The girl had seated herself beside the table in the center, and as she turned to Trant she raised her veil above her brown, curling hair, and pinned it over her hat. He recognized her at once as the girl to whom Bronson had become engaged barely a week before he had been killed. On her had fallen all the horrors as well as the grief of Bronson’s murder, and Trant did not wonder that the shadow of that event was visible in her sweet face. But he read there also another look — a look of apprehension and defiance.

“I was coming in with Inspector Walker to see Captain Crowley,” the girl explained to Trant, “when I overheard you telling him that you think this — Kanlan — couldn’t have killed Mr. Bronson. I hope this is so.”

Trant looked to Walker. “Miss Allison’s father was Judge Allison, the truest man who ever sat on the bench in this city,” Walker responded. “His daughter knows she must not try to prevent us from punishing a man who murders; but neither of

us wants to believe Kanlan is the man — for good reasons. Now, what was that you were telling Crowley?"

"I was trying to tell Captain Crowley of a simple test which must prove Kanlan's guilt or innocence at once, and, if necessary, then find the guilty man. I have been conducting experiments to register and measure the effects and reactions of emotions. A person under the influence of fear or the stress of guilt must always betray signs. A hardened man can control all the signs for which the police ordinarily look; he can control his features, prevent his face flushing noticeably. But no man, however hardened or trained to control himself, can prevent many minute changes which by scientific means are measurable and betray him hopelessly. No man, however on his guard — to take the simplest test — can control the sweat glands in the palms of his hands, which always moisten under emotion."

"A scared man sweats; that's so," Walker assented.

"So psychologists have devised a simple way of registering the emotions shown through the glands in the palms of the hand," Trant continued, "by means of the galvanometer. I have one in the box I left with the desk sergeant. It is merely a device for measuring the varying strength of an ordinary electric current. The man tested holds in each hand a contact metal wired to the battery. When he grasps them a weak and imperceptible current passes through his body or — if his hands are very dry — perhaps no current at all. He is then examined and confronted with circumstances or objects connected with the crime. If he is innocent, the objects have no significance in his mind, and cause no emotion. His face betrays none; neither can his hands. But if he is guilty, though he still manages to control his face, he cannot prevent the moisture from flowing from the glands in his palms. Understand me; I do not mean an amount of moisture noticeable to the eye, but it is enough to make an electric contact through the metals which he holds — enough to register very plainly upon the galvanometer, whose moving needle, traveling in the scale, betrays him pitilessly!"

The inspector shook his head skeptically.

"I recognize that this is new to you," said Trant. "But I am telling you no theory. Using the galvanometer properly, we can this morning determine — scientifically and irrefutably — whether or not Kanlan killed Mr. Bronson, and later, if it is not he, which of the others is the assassin. May I try it?"

Miss Allison, more white than before, had risen, and laid her hand upon Trant's sleeve.

"Oh, try it, Mr. Trant!" she cried. "Try — try anything which can stop them from showing through this gambler, Kanlan, and Mrs. Hawtin that Mr. Bronson —" She broke off, and turned to the inspector. Walker was looking Trant over again. The psychologist faced the police officer eagerly. "I can't believe it's Kanlan," said Walker.

Until now Trant had been impressed chiefly by the huge bulk of the inspector, but as Walker spoke of the gambler whom Crowley, to save his own face, was trying to "railroad "to execution, Trant saw in the inspector something approaching sentimentality. For he was that common anomaly of the police department, an officer born and bred among the criminals he is set to watch.

"I'll take you to Kanlan," the inspector granted at last. "As things are going with him, you can't hurt, and maybe you can help. Everyone knows Kanlan would have put out Bronson; but not — I am certain — that way. I was born in the basement opposite Kanlan's. If Mr. Bronson had been attacked in broad day, with a detective on each side of him and all of them had been beaten up or killed, I'd have been the first to step over to Kanlan and say, 'Jake, you're wanted.' But Bronson was not caught that way. The man that killed him waited till the house was quiet, until Crowley's guards were asleep, and then somehow or other — how is a bigger mystery than the murder itself — got him out alone in the street at two o'clock in the morning, and struck him dead from a dark doorway.

"But I'm not taking you to Kanlan only to help save him from Crowley." Walker straightened suddenly as his eyes met the girl's. "It's to help Miss Allison, too. For the only clew Crowley or anyone else has to the man who murdered Bronson is in connection with the means of getting Bronson out of the house that way. Crowley has discovered that a Mrs. Hawtin, whom Kanlan can control through her gambling debts to him, is living a few doors beyond the place where Bronson's body was found. Crowley claims he can show Mrs. Hawtin was a friend of Bronson's, and —" The inspector hesitated, glancing at the girl.

"Captain Crowley's case," said Miss Allison, finishing, "is based on the charge that after Randolph — Mr. Bronson — had returned to his rooms from seeing me that evening, he went out again two hours later to answer a summons from this — this Mrs. Hawtin. So long as Captain Crowley can convict some one for this

crime, they seem to care nothing how they slander and blacken the name of the man who is killed — as little as they care for those left who — love him."

"I see," said Trant. His eyes rested a moment upon the inspector, then again upon the girl. It surprised him to feel, as his eyes met hers that short moment, how suddenly this problem, which he had set himself to solve, had changed from a scientific examination and selection of a guilty man to the saving — though through the same science — of the reputation of a man no longer able to defend himself, and the honor of a woman devoted to that man's memory.

"But before I can examine Kanlan, or help you in any other way, Miss Allison," he explained gently, "I must be sure of my facts. It is not too much to ask you to go over them with me? No, Inspector Walker," he anticipated the big police officer's objection as Walker started to speak, "if I am to help Miss Allison, I cannot spare her now."

"Please do not, Mr. Trant," the girl begged bravely.

"Thank you. Mr. Bronson, I believe, was still boarding on Superior Street at a bachelor's boarding house?"

"Yes," the girl replied. "It is kept by Mrs. Mitchell, a very respectable widow with a little boy. Randolph had boarded with her for six years. She had once been in great trouble and he was kind to her. He often spoke of how she gave him motherly care."

"Motherly?" Trant asked. "How old is she?"

"Twenty-seven or eight, I should think."

"Thank you. How long had you known Mr. Bronson, Miss Allison?"

"A little over two years."

"Yes; and intimately, how long?"

"Almost from the first."

"But you were not engaged to him until just the week before his death?"

“Yes; our engagement was not made known till just two days before his — death.”

“Inspector Walker, how long before Mr. Bronson was killed was any of the ‘ring’ likely to put him out of their way?”

“For two weeks at least.”

“It fits Crowley’s case, of course, as well as — any other,” said Trant, thoughtfully, “that two days after the announcement of his engagement was the first time anyone could actually catch him alone. But it is worth noting, inspector. Mr. Bronson called upon you that evening, Miss Allison? Everything was as usual between you?”

“Entirely, Mr. Trant. Of course we both recognized the constant danger he was in. I knew how and why he had to be guarded. His regular man, from the city detail, had been with him all day downtown; and Captain Crowley’s man came with him to our house. Mr. Bronson went back to his boarding house with him precisely at half past ten.”

“He reached the boarding house,” Inspector Walker took up the account, “a little before eleven and went at once to his room. At twelve-thirty the last boarder came in. Crowley’s man immediately chained the front door and made all fast. He went to the kitchen to get something to eat, he says, and may have fallen asleep, though he denies it. However, until after Bronson’s body was found, we have made certain, there was no alarm inside or out.”

“There is no doubt that Mr. Bronson was in the house when it was locked up?”

“None. The last boarder, as he went to his room, saw Bronson sitting at his table going over some papers. He was still dressed but said he was going to bed immediately. An hour and a half later — with no clew as to how he went out, with no discoverable reason for his going out except that given by Crowley — a patrolman found Bronson’s body on the sidewalk a block east of his boarding house. He had been struck in the forehead and killed instantly by a man who must have waited for him in the vestibule of a little electroplating shop.”

“Must have, inspector?” Trant questioned.

“Yes; he chose this shop doorway because it was the darkest place in the block.”

“At what time was that — exactly?” Trant interrupted. “The papers say the attack was made ten minutes after two o’clock — that the watch in his pocket was broken and stopped by his fall at exactly ten minutes after two. Is that correct?”

“Yes,” the inspector replied. “The watch stopped at 2.10; but, in spite of that, the exact time of the murder must have been nearer two than ten minutes later, for Mr. Bronson’s watch was fast.”

“What?” Trant cried. “You say his watch was fast? I had not heard of that!”

“It was noticed two days ago,” the inspector explained, “that the record shows that the patrolman who found Bronson’s body rang up from the nearest patrol box at five minutes after two. If the attack was made just before, the watch must have been at least ten minutes fast, so we have the time, after all, only approximately.”

“I see.” Trant turned to the girl. “It is strange, Miss Allison, that a man like Mr. Bronson carried an incorrect watch.”

“He did not. It was always right.”

“Was it right that evening?”

“Why, yes. I remember that he compared his time with our clock before leaving.”

Trant leaped up, excitedly. “What? What? But still,” he calmed himself, “whether at two or ten minutes after two, the main question is the same. You, too, Miss Allison, can you give no possible reason why Mr. Bronson might have gone out?”

“I have tried a thousand times in these terrible two weeks to think of some reason, but I cannot. Our house is in a different direction than that he took. The car line to the city is another way. He knew no one in that direction — except Mrs. Hawtin.”

“You knew that he knew her?”

“Of course, Mr. Trant! He had convicted her once for shoplifting, but, like

everyone whom his place had made him punish, he watched her afterwards, and, when she tried to be honest, he helped her as he had helped a hundred like her — men and women — though his enemies tried to discredit and disgrace him by accusing him of untrue motives. Oh, Mr. Trant, you do not know — you cannot understand — what shadows and pitfalls surround a man in the position Mr. Bronson held. That is why, though for two years we had known and loved each other, he waited so long before asking me to marry him. I am thankful that he spoke in time to give me the right to defend him now before the world! They took his life; they shall not take his good name! No! No! They shall not! Help me, Mr. Trant, if you can — help me!"

"Inspector Walker!" said Trant tensely, "I understand that all of the sixteen men of the ring claimed alibis. Was Kanlan's one of the best or the worst?"

The inspector hesitated. "One of the worst," he replied, unwillingly. "I am sorry to say, the very worst."

To his surprise, Trant's eyes blazed triumphantly. "Miss Allison," said he, quietly and decidedly, "I had not expected till I had tested Kanlan to be able to assure you that he is not guilty. But now I think I am safe in promising it — provided you are sure that Mr. Bronson's watch was right when he left you that night. And, Inspector Walker, if you are also certain that the murderer waited in the vestibule of that electroplating shop, it will be soon, indeed, that we can give Crowley a better — or rather a worse — man to send to trial in Kanlan's place."

Again Trant was conscious that the giant inspector was estimating not the incomprehensible statement he had made, but Trant himself. And again Walker seemed satisfied.

"When can I go with you to Harrison Street to prove this, inspector?"

"I shall see Miss Allison home, and meet you at Harrison Street in an hour."

"You will let me know the result of the test at once, Mr. Trant?"

"At once, Miss Allison." Trant took his hat and dashed from the station.

Harrison Street police station, Chicago, is headquarters of the first police division in the third city of the world. But neither London nor New York, the two larger cities, nor Paris, whose population of two million and a half Chicago is

now passing, possesses a police division more complex, diverse, and puzzling in the cosmopolitan diversity of the persons arrested than this first of Chicago.

But from all the dozen diversities brought to the Harrison Street station daily, for two weeks none had challenged in interest the case against Jake Kanlan, the racing man and gambler, rearrested and held for the murder of Bronson. Trant appreciated this as, with his galvanometer and batteries in a suit case, he pushed his way among patrolmen, detectives, reporters, and the curious into the station. But at once he caught sight of the giant inspector, Walker.

“You’re late.” Walker led him into a side room. “I’ve been putting in the time telling Sweeny here,” Walker introduced him to one of the two men within, “and Captain Crowley, how you mean to work your scheme. We’ve been waiting for you an hour!”

“I’m sorry,” Trant apologized. “I have been going over the files of the papers just before and after the murder. And I must admit, Captain Crowley,” Trant conceded, “that Kanlan had as strong a reason as any for wanting Bronson out of the way. But I found one remarkably significant thing. You have seen it?” He pulled a folded newspaper from his pocket and handed it to them. “I mean this paragraph at the bottom of the front page.”

The captain read it eagerly, then leaned back and laughed. “Sure, I saw it,” he derided. “It’s that old Johanson fake, Sweeny — and he thought it was a clew!” The inspector took the paper.

“Threatener of Bronson Breaks Jail” was the heading, and under it was this short paragraph: James Johanson, the notorious Stockyards murderer, whom City Attorney Bronson sent up for life three years ago, escaped from the penitentiary early this morning and is thought by the officials to be making his way to this city. His trial will be remembered for the dramatic and spectacular denunciation of the Prosecuting Attorney by the convicted man upon his condemnation, and his threat to free himself and “do for” Bronson.

“You see the date of the paper?” said Trant. “It is the five o’clock edition of the evening before Bronson was murdered! Johanson is reported escaped and at once Bronson is killed.”

Crowley snickered patronizingly. “So you thought, before your palmistry, you could string us with that?” he jeered. “You might better have kept us waiting a

little longer, young man, and you'd have found out that Johanson couldn't have done it, for he never escaped. It was a slip of a sneak thief, Johnson, that escaped, and he was on his way back to Joliet before night. The News got the name wrong, that's all, son."

"I was quite able to find that out, too, before coming here, Captain Crowley," Trant said quietly, "both that Johanson never escaped and that all evening papers except the News had the name correctly. Even the News corrected its account in its later edition. And I did not say that Johanson himself had anything to do with it. But either you must claim it a strange coincidence that, within eight hours after a report was current in the city that Johanson had broken out and was coming to murder Bronson, Bronson was actually murdered, or else you must admit the practical certainty that the man waiting to murder Bronson saw this account, and, not knowing it was incorrect, chose that night to kill the attorney, so as to lay it to Johanson." He picked up his suit case. "But come, let us test Kanlan."

"I haven't told Jake what you're going to do to him," Walker volunteered, as he led the three to the cells below. Sweeny, at Crowley's nod, had brought with him a satchel from the upper office.

Trant had trained himself to avoid definite expectation; yet as he faced the man within he felt a momentary surprise. For at first he could see in Kanlan only a portly, quiet man, carelessly dressed in clothes a knowing tailor had cut. But as his eyes saw clearer he perceived that the portliness was not of flesh but of huge muscles, thinly coated with fat, that the plump, olive-skinned cheeks concealed a square, fighting jaw, and that his quiet was the loll of the successful, city-bred animal, bound by no laws but his own — but an animal powerful enough to prefer to fight fair. His heavy lids lifted to watch listlessly as Trant opened his suit case and took out the instruments for the test.

The galvanometer consisted merely of a little dial with a needle arranged to register on a scale an electric current down to hundredths of a milliampere. Trant attached two wires to the binding posts of the instrument, the circuit including a single cell battery. Each wire connected with a simple steel cylinder electrode. With one held in each hand, and the palms of the hands slightly dampened to perfect the contact, a light current passed through the body and swung the delicate needle over the scale to register the change in the current. Walker, and even Captain Crowley, saw more clearly now how, if it was a fact that moisture

must come from the glands in the palm of the hand under emotion, the changes in the amount of the current passing through the person holding the electrodes must register upon the dial, and the subject be unable to conceal his emotional change when confronted with guilty objects. Kanlan, comprehending nothing, but assured by Walker's nod that the test was fair, put out his hands for the electrodes.

"You're wrong, friend," he said, quietly. "I don't know your game. But I ain't afraid, if it's on the square. Of course, I ain't sorry he's dead, but — I didn't do it!"

Trant glanced quickly at the dial. A current, so very slight that he knew it must be entirely imperceptible to Kanlan, registered upon the scale; and having registered it, the needle remained steady.

"Watch it!" he commanded; then checked himself. "No; wait." He felt in his pocket. Removing the newspaper which he had there, still folded at the account of the escape of the convict Johanson, he looked about for some place to put it, and then laid it upon Kanlan's knee. He took a little phial from his pocket, uncorked it as if to oil the mechanism about the galvanometer, but spilled it on the floor. The stifling, sickening odor of banana oil pervaded the cell; and as Kanlan smiled at his clumsiness, Trant took his watch from his pocket and — with the gamester still watching him curiously — slowly set it forward an hour. The needle of the galvanometer dial, in plain view of all, waited steady in its place. The young psychologist glanced at it satisfiedly.

"Well, what's the matter with the show?" Crowley jeered, impatiently. "Commence."

"Commence, Captain Crowley?" Trant raised himself triumphantly. "I have finished it." They stared at him as though distrusting his sanity. "You have seen for yourself the needle stand steady in place," Trant continued. "Inspector Walker "— he turned to the friendly superior officer as he recognized the hopelessness of explaining to Crowley — "I understood, of course, when I asked you to bring me here that, even if my test should prove conclusive to me, yet I could scarcely hope to have the police yet accept it. I shall let Miss Allison know that Kanlan can have had no possible connection with the crime against Mr. Bronson; but I understand that I can clear Kanlan in the eyes of the police only by giving Captain Crowley," Trant bowed to that astounded officer, "the real

murderer in his place."

"You say you have made the test, Trant?" Walker challenged, in stupefaction. But before Trant could answer, Crowley pushed him aside, roughly, and stooped to the satchel which Sweeny had brought.

"Of course he hasn't, Walker!" he answered, disgustedly. "He don't dare to, and is throwing a bluff. But I'll show him, with his own machine, too, if there's anything to it at all!" The captain stooped and, pulling from the opened valise a photograph of the spot where the murder was committed, he dashed it before Kanlan's face. Instantly, as both the captain and inspector turned to Trant's galvanometer needle, the little instrument showed a reaction. Up it crept, higher and higher, over the scale of the dial, as the sweat, surprised by the guilty picture from the gambler's hands, made the contact with the electrodes in his palms and the current flowed through his body.

"See! So it wasn't all a lie!" Crowley pointed triumphantly to the instrument. He stooped again to the satchel and put a photograph of the body of the murdered attorney before the suspect's eyes. The 'stolid Kanlan still held the muscles of his face firm and no flush betrayed him; but again, as Crowley, Sweeny, and Walker excitedly stared at the galvanometer needle it jumped and registered the stronger current. Crowley, with a victorious grunt, lifted the blood-stained coat of the murdered attorney and rubbed the sleeve against Kanlan's cheek. At this, and again and again with each presentation of objects connected with the crime, the merciless little galvanometer showed an ever-increasing reaction. Trant shrugged his shoulders.

"Jake, we got the goods on you now!" Crowley took the gambler's chin roughly between his tough fists and pushed back his head until the uneasy eyes met his own. "You'd best confess. You killed him!"

"I did not!" Kanlan choked. "You're a liar! You killed him. I knew it, anyway. If you were a nigger you'd have been lynched before this!"

For the first time since Crowley took the test into his own hands, Trant, watching the galvanometer needle, started in surprise. He gazed suddenly at Kanlan's olive face, surmounted by his curly black hair, and smiled. The needle had jumped up higher again, completing Crowley's triumph. They filed out of the cell, and back to the little office.

“So I proved him on your own machine,” Crowley rejoiced openly, “you four-flushing patent palmist!”

“You’ve proved, Captain Crowley,” Trant returned quietly, “what I already knew, that in your previous examinations with Kanlan, and probably with the rest also, you have ruined the value of those things you have there for any proper test, by exhibiting them with threats again and again. That was why I had to make the test I did. I tell you once more that Kanlan is not the murderer of Bronson. And I am glad to be able to tell Miss Allison the same thing, as I promised her, at the very earliest moment.” He picked up the telephone receiver and gave the Allisons’ number. But suddenly the receiver was wrenched from his hand.

“Not yet,” Inspector Walker commanded. “You’ll tell Miss Allison nothing until we know more about this case.”

“I don’t ask you to release Kanlan yet, inspector,” Trant said quietly. Crowley laughed offensively. “That is, not until I have proved for you the proper man in his place.” He drew a paper from his pocket. “I cannot surely name him yet; but picking the most likely of them from what I read, I advise you to rearrest Caylis.”

Crowley, throwing himself into a chair, burst into loud laughter. “He chose Caylis, Sweeny, did you hear that?” Crowley gasped. “That’s in the same class as the rest of your performance, young fellow. Say, I’m sorry not to be able to oblige you,” he went on, derisively, “but, you see, Caylis was the only one of the whole sixteen who couldn’t have killed Bronson; for he was with me — talking to me — in the station, from half past one that morning, half an hour before the murder, till half past two, a half hour after!”

Trant sprang to his feet excitedly. “He was?” he cried. “Why didn’t you tell me that before? Inspector Walker, I said a moment ago that I could not be sure which of the other fifteen killed Bronson; but now I say arrest Caylis — Caylis is the murderer!”

Captain Crowley and Sweeny stared at him again, as if believing him demented.

“I would try to explain, Inspector Walker,” said Trant, “but believe me, I mean no offense when I say that I think it would be absolutely useless now. But —” he hesitated, as the inspector turned coldly away. “Inspector Walker, you said this morning you knew Kanlan from his birth. How much negro blood is there in

him?”

“How did you know that?” cried Walker, staring at Trant in amazement. “He’s always passed for white. He’s one eighth nigger. But not three people know it. Who told you?”

“The galvanometer,” Trant replied, quietly, “the same way it told me that he was innocent and Crowley’s test useless. Now, will you rearrest Caylis at once and hold him till I can get the galvanometer on him?”

“I will, young fellow!” Walker promised, still staring at him. “If only for that nigger blood.”

But Crowley had one more shot to make. “Say, you,” he interrupted, “you threw a bluff about an hour back that the man who killed Bronson got the idea from the News. Sweeny, here, has been having these fellows shadowed since weeks before the murder. Sweeny knows what papers they read.” He turned to the detective. “Sweeny, what paper did Kanlan always read?”

“The News.”

“And Caylis — what did he never read?”

“The News,” the detective answered.

“Well, what have you for that now, son?” Crowley swung back.

“Only thanks, Captain Crowley, for that additional help. Inspector Walker, I am willing to rest my case against Caylis upon the fact that he was with Crowley at two o’clock. That alone is enough to hang him, and not as an accessory, but as the principal who himself struck the blow. But as there obviously was an accessory — and what Crowley has just said makes it more certain — perhaps I had better make as sure of that accessory, and also get a better answer for the real mystery, which is why and how Bronson left his house and went in that direction at that time in the morning, before I give Miss Allison the news for which she is waiting.”

He took his hat and left them staring after him.

An hour later Trant jumped from a North Side car and hurried down Superior

Street. Two blocks east of the car line he recognized from the familiar pictures in the newspapers the frescoed and once fashionable front of the Mitchell boarding house, where Bronson had lived. He was seeing it for the first time, but with barely more than a curious glance, he went on toward the place, a block east, where the attorney's body had been found. He noted carefully the character of the buildings on both sides of the street.

There was a grocery, between two old mansions; beyond the next house a cigar store; then another boarding house, and the electroplater's shop before which the body was found. The little shop, smelling strongly of the oils and acids used in the electroplater's trade, was of one story. Trant noted the convenient vestibule flush with the walk, and the position of the street lamp which would throw its light on anyone approaching, while concealing with a dark shadow one waiting in the vestibule.

The physical arrangement was all as he had seen it a score of times in the newspapers; but as he stared about, the true key to the mystery of Bronson's death came to him magnified a hundred times in its intensity. Who waited there in that vestibule and struck the blow which slew Bronson, he had felt from the first would be at once answerable under scientific investigation. But the other question, how could the murderer wait so confidently there, knowing that Bronson would come out of his house alone at that time of the night and pass that way, was less simple of solution.

He glanced beyond the shop to the house where, Inspector Walker had told him, the questionable Mrs. Hawtin lived. Beyond that he saw a sign — that of a Dr. O'Connor. He swung about and returned to the house where Bronson had boarded.

"Tell Mrs. Mitchell that Mr. Trant, who is working with Inspector Walker, wishes to speak with her," he said to the maid, and he had a moment to estimate the parlor before the mistress of the house entered.

A white-faced, brown-eyed little boy of seven, with pallid cheeks and golden hair, had fled between the portieres as Trant entered. The room was not at all typical of the boarding house. Its ornament and its arrangement showed the imprint of a decided, if not cultivated, feminine personality. The walls lacked the usual faded family portraits, and there was an entire absence of ancient knickknacks to give evidence of a past gentility. So he was not surprised when

the mistress of this house entered, pretty after a spectacular fashion, impressing him with a quiet reserve of passion and power.

“I am always ready to see anyone who comes to help poor Mr. Bronson,” she said.

The little boy, who had fled at Trant’s approach, ran to her. But even as she sat with her arms about the child, Trant tried in vain to cloak her with that atmosphere of motherliness of which Miss Allison had spoken.

“I heard so, Mrs. Mitchell,” said Trant. “But as you have had to tell the painful details so many times to the police and the reporters, I shall not ask you for them again.”

“Do you mean,” she looked up quickly, “that you bring me news instead of coming to ask it?”

“No, I want your help, but only in one particular. You must have known Mr. Bronson’s habits and needs more intimately than any other person. Recently you may have thought of some possible reason for his going out in that manner and at that time, other than that held by the police.”

“Oh, I wish I could, Mr. Trant!” the woman cried. “But I cannot!”

“I saw the sign of a doctor — Doctor O’Connor — just beyond the place where he was killed. Do you think it possible that he was going to Doctor O’Connor’s, or have you never thought of that?”

“I thought of that, Mr. Trant,” the woman returned, a little defiantly. “I tried to hope, at first, that that might be the reason for his going out. But, as I had to tell the detectives who asked me of that some time ago, I know that Mr. Bronson so intensely disliked Doctor O’Connor that he could not have been going to him, no matter how urgent the need. Besides, Doctor Carmeachal, who always attended him, lives around this corner, the other way.” She indicated the direction of the car line.

“I see,” Trant acknowledged, thoughtfully. “Yet, if Mr. Bronson disliked Doctor O’Connor, he must have met him. Was it here?” He leaned over and took the hand of the pallid little boy. “Perhaps Doctor O’Connor comes to see your son?”

“Oh, yes, Mr. Trant!” the child put in eagerly. “Doctor O’Connor always comes to see me. I like Doctor O’Connor.”

“Still, I agree with you, Mrs. Mitchell,” Trant raised his eyes calmly to meet the woman’s suddenly agitated ones, “that Mr. Bronson could scarcely have been going to consult Doctor O’Connor for himself in such a fashion and at — half past one.”

“At two, Mr. Trant,” the woman corrected.

“Ten minutes after, to be exact, if you mean when the watch was stopped!” The woman arose suddenly, with a motion sinuous as that of a startled tiger. It was as though in the quiet parlor a note of passion and alarm had been struck. Trant bowed quietly as she rang for the maid to show him out. But when he was alone with the maid in the hall his eyes flashed suddenly.

“Tell me,” he demanded, swiftly, “the night Mr. Bronson was killed, was there anything the matter with the telephone?”

The girl hesitated and stared at him queerly. “Why, yes, sir,” she said. “A man had to come next day to fix it.”

“The break was on the inside — I mean, the man worked in the house?”

“Why — yes, sir.” The maid had opened the door. Trant stopped with a smothered exclamation and picked up a newspaper just delivered. He spread it open and saw that it was the five o’clock edition of the News.

“This is Mrs. Mitchell’s paper,” he demanded, “the one she always reads?”

“Why, yes, sir,” the girl answered again.

Trant paused to consider. “Tell Mrs. Mitchell everything I asked you,” he decided finally, and hurried down the steps and back to the police station.

In the room where the desk sergeant told him Inspector Walker was awaiting him Trant found both Crowley and Sweeny with the big officer, and a fourth man, a stranger to him. The stranger was slight and dark. He had a weak, vain face, but one of startling beauty, with great, lazy brown eyes, filled with childlike innocence. He twisted his mustache and measured Trant curiously, as the blunt,

red-headed young man entered.

“So this is the fellow,” he asked Crowley, derisively, “that made you think I sent a double to talk with you while I went out to do Bronson?”

“Will you have Caylis taken out of the room for a few moments, inspector?” Trant requested, in reply. The inspector motioned to Sweeny, who led out the prisoner.

“Where’s your accessory?” asked Crowley, grinning.

“I’ll tell you presently,” Trant put him off. “I want to test Caylis without his knowing anything unusual is being tried. Captain Crowley, can we have the brass-knobbed chair from your office?”

“What for?” Crowley demanded.

“I will show you when I have it.”

At Walker’s nod Crowley brought in the chair. It was a deep, high-backed, wooden chair, with high arms; and on each arm was a brass knob, so placed that a person sitting in the chair would almost inevitably place his palms over them. As the captain brought in the chair, Trant opened his suit case and took out his galvanometer, batteries and wires. Cutting off the cylinder electrodes which Kanlan had held in his hands during the test of that morning, Trant ran the wires under each arm of the chair and made a contact with each brass knob. He connected them with the battery, which he hid under the chair, and with the galvanometer dial, which he placed behind the chair upon a table, concealing it behind his hat.

He seated himself in the chair and grasped the knobs in his palms. With his hands dry no perceptible current passed through his body from knob to knob to register upon the dial.

“Scare me!” he suddenly commanded the inspector.

“What?” Walker bent his brows.

“Scare me, and watch the needle.”

Walker, half comprehending, fumbled in the drawer of a desk, straightened suddenly, a cocked revolver in his hand, and snapped it at Trant's head. At once the needle of the galvanometer leaped across the scale, and Crowley and Walker both stared.

"Thank you, inspector," said Trant as he rose from the chair. "It works very well; you see, my palms couldn't help sweating when you snapped the gun at me before I appreciated that it wasn't loaded. Now, we'll test Caylis as we did Kanlan."

The inspector went to the door, took Caylis from Sweeny, and led him to the chair.

"Sit down," he said. "Mr. Trant wants to talk to you."

The childlike, brown eyes, covertly alert and watchful, followed Trant, and Caylis nervously grasped the two inviting knobs on the arms of his chair. Walker and Crowley, standing where they could watch both Trant and the galvanometer dial, saw that the needle stood where it had stood for Trant before Walker put the revolver to his head.

Trant quietly took from his pocket the newspaper containing the false account of Johanson's escape, and, looking about as though for a place to put it — as he had done in his trial of Kanlan — laid it, with the Johanson paragraph uppermost, in Caylis's lap. Walker smothered an exclamation; Crowley looked up startled. The needle — which had remained so still when the paper was laid upon Kanlan's knee — had jumped across the scale.

Caylis gave no sign; his hands still grasped the brass knobs nervously; his face was quiet and calm. Trant took from his pocket the little phial refilled with banana oil and emptied its contents on the floor as he had done that morning. Again Walker and Crowley, with startled eyes, watched the needle move. Trant took his watch from his pocket, and, as in the morning, before Caylis's face he set it an hour ahead.

"What are all these tricks?" said Caylis, contemptuously.

But Walker and Crowley, with flushed faces bent above the moving needle, paid no heed. Trant posted himself between Caylis and the door.

“You see now,” Trant cried, triumphantly, to the police officers, “the difference between showing the false account of the escape of Johanson to an innocent man, and showing it to the man whom it sent out to do murder. You see the difference between loosing the stench of banana oil before a man who associates nothing with it, and before the criminal who waited in the vestibule of the electroplater’s shop and can never in his life smell banana oil again without its bringing upon him the fear of the murderer. You see the difference, too, Captain Crowley, between setting a watch forward in front of a man to whom it can suggest nothing criminal, and setting it an hour ahead in front of the man who, after he had murdered Bronson — not at two, but a little after one — stooped to the body and set the watch at least an hour fast, then rushed in to talk coolly with you, in order to establish an incontestable alibi for the time he had so fixed for the murder!”

Police Captain Crowley, livid with the first flash of fear that the murderer had made of him a tool, swung threateningly toward Caylis. For a moment, as though stiffened by the strain of following the accusation, Caylis had sat apparently paralyzed. Now in the sudden change from his absolute security to complete despair, he faced Crowley, white as paper; then, as his heart began to pound again, his skin turned to purple. His handsome, vain face changed to the face of a demon; his childlike eyes flared; he sprang toward Trant. But when he had drawn the two police officers together to stop his rush, he turned and leaped for a window. Before he could dash it open, Walker’s powerful hand clutched him back.

“This, I think,” Trant gasped, and controlled himself, as he surveyed the now weak and nerveless prisoner, “should convince even Captain Crowley. But it was not needed, Caylis. From the time Mrs. Mitchell showed you the report of Johanson’s escape in the *News* and you thought you could kill Bronson safely, and you got her to send him out to you, until you had struck him down, set his watch forward and rushed to Crowley for your alibi, my case was complete.”

“She — she”— Caylis’s hands clenched — “peached on me — but you — got her?” he shouted vengefully.

Walker and Crowley turned to Trant in amazement.

“Mrs. Mitchell?” they demanded.

“Yes — your wife, Caylis?” Trant pressed.

“Yes, my wife, and mine,” the man hissed defiantly, “eight years ago back in St. Louis till, till this cursed Bronson broke up the gang and sent me over the road for three years, and she got to thinking he must be stuck on her and might marry her, because he helped her, until — until she found out!”

“Ah; I thought she had been your wife when I saw you, after the boy; but, of course —” Trant checked himself as he heard a knock on the door.

“Miss Allison is in her carriage outside sir,” the officer who had knocked saluted Inspector Walker. “She has come to see you, sir. She says you sent no word.” Walker looked from the cringing Caylis to Trant.

“We do not need Caylis any longer, inspector,” said Trant. “I can tell Miss Allison all the facts now, if you wish to have her hear them.”

The door, which shut behind Crowley and his prisoner, reopened almost immediately to admit the inspector, and Miss Allison. With her fair, sweet face flushed with the hope which had taken the place of the white fear and defiance of the morning, Trant barely knew her.

“The inspector tells me, Mr. Trant,” she stretched out both her hands to him, “that you have good news for me — that Kanlan was not guilty — and so Randolph was not going out as — as they said he was when they killed him.”

“No; he was not!” Trant returned, triumphantly. “He was going instead on an errand of mercy, Miss Allison, to summon a doctor for a little child whom he had been told was suddenly and dangerously ill. The telephone in the house had been broken, so at the sudden summons he dashed out, without remembering his danger. I am glad to be able to tell you of that fine, brave thing when I must tell you, also, the terrible truth that the woman whom he had helped and protected was the one who, in a fit of jealousy, when she found he had merely meant to be kind to her, sent him out to his death.”

“Mrs. Mitchell?” the girl cried in horror. “Oh, not Mrs. Mitchell!”

“Yes, Mrs. Mitchell, for whom he had done so much and whose past he protected, in the noblest way, even from you. But as she was the wife of the criminal we have just caught, I am glad to believe this man played upon her old

passions, so that for a while he held his old sway over her and she did his bidding without counting the consequences.

“I told you this morning, Inspector Walker, that I could not explain to you my conclusions in the test of Kanlan. But I owe you now a full explanation. You will recall that I commented upon the fact that the crime which was puzzling you was committed within so short a time after the knowledge of Mr. Bronson’s engagement became known, that I divined a possible connection. But that, at best, was only indirect. The first direct thing which struck me was the circumstance that the man waited in the vestibule of the electroplater’s shop. I was certain that the very pungent fruit-ether odor of banana oil — the thinning material used by electroplaters in preparing their lacquers — must be forever intimately connected with the crime in the mind of the man who waited in that vestibule. To no one else could that odor connect itself with crime. So I knew that if I could test all sixteen men it would be child’s play to pick the murderer. But such a test was cumbersome. And the next circumstance you gave me made it unnecessary. I mean the fact of the ‘fast watch ‘which, Miss Allison was able to tell me, could not have been fast at all. I saw that the watch must therefore have been set forward at least ten minutes, probably much longer. Who, between half past ten and two, could have done this, and for what reason? The one convincing possibility was that the assassin had set it forward, trusting it would not be found till morning, and his only object could have been to establish for himself an alibi — for two o’clock.

“I surprised you, therefore, by assuring you, even before I saw Kanlan, that he was innocent, because Kanlan had no alibi whatever. I proved his innocence to my own satisfaction by exhibiting before him without exciting any emotional reaction at all, the report in the News which, I felt fairly sure, must have had something to do with the crime; by loosing the smell of banana oil, and setting forward a watch in his presence. The objects which Crowley used had been so thoroughly connected with the crime in Kanlan’s mind that — though he is innocent — they caused reactions to which I paid no attention, except the one reaction which, at Crowley’s threat, told me of Kanlan’s negro blood. As for the rest, they merely scared Kanlan as your pistol scared me, and as they would have scared any innocent man under the same conditions. My own tests could cause reactions only in the guilty man.

“That man, I think you understand now,” Trant continued rapidly, “I was practically sure of when Crowley told me of Caylis’s alibi. You have just seen

the effect upon him of the same tests I tried on Kanlan, and the conclusive evidence the galvanometer gave. The fact that Caylis himself never read the News only contributed to my certainty that another person was concerned, a person who could have either decoyed or sent Mr. Bronson out. So I went to the place, found the doctor's sign just beyond, discovered that that doctor treated, not Bronson, but the little Mitchell boy, that the telephone had been broken inside the house that evening to furnish an excuse for sending Bronson out, and that Mrs. Mitchell reads the *News*."

"The Mitchell woman sent him out, of course," Walker checked him almost irritably. "Six blocks away — Crowley ought to have her by now."

Miss Allison gathered herself together and arose. She clutched the inspector's sleeve. "Inspector Walker, must you —" she faltered.

"None of us is called upon to say how she shall be punished, Miss Allison," Trant said, compassionately. "We must trust all to the twelve men who shall try these two." But to her eyes, searching his, Trant seemed to be awaiting something. Suddenly the telephone rang. Walker took up the receiver. "It's Crowley," he cried. "He says Mrs. Mitchell skipped — cleared. You could have taken her," he accused Trant, "but you let her go!"

Trant stood watching the face of Miss Allison, unmoved. The desk sergeant burst in upon them.

"Mrs. Mitchell's outside, inspector! She said she's come to give herself up!"

"You counted upon that, I suppose," Walker turned again upon Trant. "But don't do it again," he warned, "for the sake of what's before you!"

III

THE RED DRESS

“Another morning; and nothing! Three days gone and no word, no sign from her; or any mark of weakening!”

The powerful man at the window clenched his hands. Then he swung about to face his confidential secretary and stared at her uncertainly. It was the tenth time that morning, and the fiftieth time in the three days just gone, that Walter Eldredge, the young president of the great Chicago drygoods house of Eldredge and Company, had paused, incapable of continuing business.

“Never mind that letter, Miss Webster,” he commanded. “But tell me again — are you sure that no one has come to see me, and there has been no message, about my wife — I mean about Edward — about Edward?”

“No; no one, I am sure, Mr. Eldredge!”

“Send Mr. Murray to me!” he said. “Raymond, something more effective must be done!” he cried, as his brother-in-law appeared in the doorway. “It is impossible for matters to remain longer in this condition!” His face grew gray. “I am going to put it into the hands of the police!”

“The police!” cried Murray. “After the way the papers treated you and Isabel when you married? You and Isabel in the papers again, and the police making it a public scandal! Surely there’s still some private way! Why not this fellow Trant. You must have followed in the papers the way he got immediate action in the Bronson murder mystery, after the police force was at fault for two weeks. He’s our man for this sort of thing, Walter! Where can we get his address?”

“Try the University Club,” said Eldredge.

Murray lifted the desk phone. “He’s a member; he’s there. What shall I tell him, “Eldredge himself took up the conversation.

“Yes! Mr. Trant? Mr. Trant, this is Walter Eldredge, of Eldredge and Company. Yes; there is a private matter — something has happened in my family; I cannot tell you over the phone. If you could come to me here… . Yes! It is criminal.” His voice broke. “For God’s sake come and help me!”

Ten minutes later a boy showed Trant into the young president's private room. If the psychologist had never seen Walter Eldredge's portrait in the papers he could have seen at a glance that he was a man trained to concentrate his attention on large matters; and he as quickly recognized that the pale, high-bred, but weak features of Eldredge's companion belonged to a dependent, subordinate to the other. Eldredge had sprung nervously to his feet and Trant was conscious that he was estimating him with the acuteness of one accustomed to judge another quickly and to act upon his judgment. Yet it was Murray who spoke first.

"Mr. Eldredge wished to apply to the police this morning, Mr. Trant," he explained, patronizingly, "in a matter of the most delicate nature; but I — I am Raymond Murray, Mr. Eldredge's brother-in-law — persuaded him to send for you. I did this, trusting quite as much to your delicacy in guarding Mr. Eldredge from public scandal as to your ability to help us directly. We understand that you are not a regular private detective."

"I am a psychologist, Mr. Eldredge," Trant replied to the older man, stifling his irritation at Murray's manner. "I have merely made some practical applications of simple psychological experiments, which should have been put into police procedure years ago. Whether I am able to assist you or not, you may be sure that I will keep your confidence."

"Then this is the case, Trant." Murray came to the point quickly. "My nephew, Edward Eldredge, Walter's older son, was kidnapped three days ago."

"What?" Trant turned from one to the other in evident astonishment.

"Since the Whitman case in Ohio," continued Murray, "and the Bradley kidnapping in St. Louis last week — where they got the description of the woman but have caught no one yet — the papers predicted an epidemic of child stealing. And it has begun in Chicago with the stealing of Walter's son!"

"That didn't surprise me — that the boy may be missing," Trant rejoined. "But it surprised me, Mr. Eldredge, that no one has heard of it! Why did you not at once give it the greatest publicity? Why have you not called in the police? What made you wait three days before calling in even me?"

"Because the family," Murray replied, "have known from the first that it was Mrs. Eldredge who had the child abducted."

“Mrs. Eldredge?” Trant cried incredulously. “Your wife, sir?” he appealed to the older man.

“Yes, Mr. Trant,” Eldredge answered, miserably.

“Then why have you sent for me at all?”

“Because in three days we have gained nothing from her,” the brother-in-law replied before Eldredge could answer. “And, from the accounts of your ability, we thought you could, in some way, learn from her where the child is concealed.”

The young president of Eldredge and Company was twisting under the torture of these preliminaries. But Trant turned curiously to Murray. “Mrs. Eldredge is not your sister?”

“No; not the present Mrs. Eldredge. My sister, Walter’s first wife, died six years ago, when Edward was born. She gave her life for the boy whom the second Mrs. Eldredge —” he remembered himself as Eldredge moved quickly.

“Isabel, my second wife, Mr. Trant,” Eldredge burst out in the bitterness of having to explain to a stranger his most intimate emotion, “as I thought all the world knew, was my private secretary — my stenographer — in this office. We were married a little over two years ago. If you remember the way the papers treated her then, you will understand what it would mean if this matter became public! The boy —” he hesitated. “I suppose I must make the circumstances plain to you. Seven years ago I married Edith Murray, Raymond’s sister. A year later she died. About the same time my father died, and I had to take up the business. Mrs. Murray, who was in the house at the time of Edith’s death, was good enough to stay and take charge of my child and my household.”

“And Mr. Murray? He stayed too?”

“Raymond was in college. Afterwards he came to my house, naturally. Two years ago I married my second wife. At Mrs. Eldredge’s wish, as much as my own, the Murrays remained with us. My wife appreciated even better than I that her training had scarcely fitted her to take up at once her social duties: the newspapers had prejudiced society against her, so Mrs. Murray remained to introduce her socially.”

“I see — for over two years. But meanwhile Mrs. Eldredge had taken charge of the child?”

“My wife was — not at ease with the boy.” Eldredge winced at the direct question. “Edward liked her, but — I found her a hundred times crying over her incompetence with children, and she was contented to let Mrs. Murray continue to look after him. But after her own son was born —”

“Ah!” said Trant, expectantly.

“I shall conceal nothing. After her own son was born, I am obliged to admit that Mrs. Eldredge’s attitude changed. She became insistent to have charge of Edward, and his grandmother, Mrs. Murray, still hesitated to trust Isabel. But finally I agreed to give my wife charge of everything and complete control over Edward. If all went well, Mrs. Murray was to reopen her old home and leave us, when — it was Tuesday afternoon, three days ago, Mr. Trant — my wife took Edward, with her maid, out in the motor. It was the boy’s sixth birthday. It was almost the first time in his life he had left the house to go any distance without his grandmother. My wife did not bring him back.

“Why she never brought him back — what happened to the boy, Mr. Trant,” Eldredge stooped to a private drawer for papers, “I wish you to determine for yourself from the evidence here. As soon as I saw how personal a matter it was, I had my secretary, Miss Webster, take down the evidence of the four people who saw the child taken away: my chauffeur, Mrs. Eldredge’s maid, Miss Hendricks and Mrs. Eldredge. The chauffeur, Morris, has been in my employ for five years. I am confident that he is truthful. Moreover, he distinctly prefers Mrs. Eldredge over everyone else. The maid, Lucy Carew, has been also singularly devoted to my wife. She, too, is truthful.

“The testimony of the third person — Miss Hendricks — is far the most damaging against my wife. Miss Hendricks makes a direct and inevasive charge; it is practical proof. For I must tell you truthfully, Mr. Trant, that Miss Hendricks is far the best educated and capable witness of all. She saw the whole affair much nearer than any of the others. She is a person of irreproachable character, a rich old maid, living with her married sister on the street corner where the kidnapping occurred. Moreover, her testimony, though more elaborate, is substantiated in every important particular by both Morris and Lucy Carew.”

Eldredge handed over the first pages.

“Against these, Mr. Trant, is this statement of — my wife’s. My home faces the park, and is the second house from the street corner. There is, however, no driveway entrance into the park at this intersecting street. There are entrances a long block and a half away in one direction and more than two blocks in the other. But the winding drive inside the park approaches the front of the house within four hundred feet, and is separated from it by the park greensward.”

“I understand.” Trant took the pages of evidence eagerly. Eldredge went to the window and stood knotting the curtain cord in suspense. But Murray crossed his legs, and, lighting a cigarette, watched Trant attentively. Trant read the testimony of the chauffeur, which was dated by Eldredge as taken Tuesday afternoon at five o’clock. It read thus:

Mrs. Eldredge herself called to me about one o’clock to have the motor ready at half-past two. Mrs. Eldredge and her maid and Master Edward came down and got in. We went through the park, then down the Lake Shore Drive almost to the river and turned back. Mrs. Eldredge told me to return more slowly; we were almost forty minutes returning where we had been less than twenty coming down. Reaching the park, she wanted to go slower yet. She was very nervous and undecided. She stopped the machine three or four times while she pointed out things to Master Edward. She kept me winding in and out the different roads. Suddenly she asked me the time, and I told her it was just four; and she told me to go home at once. But on the curved park road in front of the house and about four hundred feet away from it, I “killed “my engine. I was some minutes starting it. Mrs. Eldredge kept asking how soon we could go on; but I could not tell her. After she had asked me three or four times, she opened the door and let Master Edward down. I thought he was coming around to watch me — a number of other boys had been standing about me just before. But she sent him across the park lawn toward the house. I was busy with my engine. Half a minute later the maid screamed. She jumped down and grabbed me. A woman was making off with Master Edward, running with him up the cross street toward the car line. Master Edward was crying and fighting. Just then my engines started. The maid and I jumped into the machine and went around by the park driveway as fast as we could to the place where the woman had picked up Master Edward. This did not take more than two minutes, but the woman and Master Edward had disappeared. Mrs. Eldredge pointed out a boy to me who was running up the street, but when we got to him it was not Master Edward. We went all over the

neighborhood at high speed, but we did not find him. I think we might have found him if Mrs. Eldredge had not first sent us after the other boy. I did not see the woman who carried off Master Edward very plainly. She was small.

Eldredge swung about and fixed on the young psychologist a look of anxious inquiry. But without comment, Trant picked up the testimony of the maid. It read:

Mrs. Eldredge told me after luncheon that we were going out in the automobile with Master Edward. Master Edward did not want to go, because it was his birthday and he had received presents from his grandmother with which he wanted to play. Mrs. Eldredge — who was excited — made him come. We went through the park and down the Lake Shore Drive and came back again. It seemed to me that Mrs. Eldredge was getting more excited, but I thought that it was because this was the first time she had been out with Master Edward. But when we had got back almost to the house the automobile broke down, and she became more excited still. Finally she said to Master Edward that he would better get out and run home, and she helped him out of the car and he started. We could see him all the way, and could see right up to the front steps of the house. But before he got there a woman came running around the corner and started to run away with him. He screamed, and I screamed, too, and took hold of Mrs. Eldredge's arm and pointed. But Mrs. Eldredge just sat still and watched. Then I jumped up, and Mrs. Eldredge, who was shaking all over, put out her hand. But I got past her and jumped out of the automobile. I screamed again, and grabbed the chauffeur, and pointed. Just then the engine started. We both got back into the automobile and went around by the driveway in the park. All this happened as fast as you can think, but we did not see either Master Edward or the woman. Mrs. Eldredge did not cry or take on at all. I am sure she did not scream when the woman picked up Master Edward, but she kept on being very much excited. I saw the woman who carried Master Edward off very plainly. She was a small blond, and wore a hat with violet-colored flowers in it and a violet-colored tailor-made dress. She looked like a lady.

Trant laid the maid's testimony aside and looked up quickly.

"There is one extremely important thing, Mr. Eldredge," he said. "Were the witnesses examined separately? — that is, none of them heard the testimony given by any other?"

“None of them, Mr. Trant.”

Then Trant picked up the testimony of Miss Hendricks which read as follows:

It so happened that I was looking out of the library window — though I do not often look out at the window for fear people will think I am watching them — when I saw the automobile containing Mrs. Eldredge, Edward, the maid, and the chauffeur stop at the edge of the park driveway opposite the Eldredge home. The chauffeur descended and began doing something to the front of the car. But Mrs. Eldredge looked eagerly around in all directions, and finally toward the street corner on which our house stands; and almost immediately I noticed a woman hurrying down the cross street toward the corner. She had evidently just descended from a street car, for she came from the direction of the car line; and her haste made me understand at once that she was late for some appointment. As soon as Mrs. Eldredge caught sight of the woman she lifted Edward from the automobile to the ground, and pushed him in the woman’s direction. She sent him across the grass toward her. At first, however, the woman did not catch sight of Edward. Then she saw the automobile, raised her hand and made a signal. The signal was returned by Mrs. Eldredge, who pointed to the child. Immediately the woman ran forward, pulled Edward along in spite of his struggles, and ran toward the car line. It all happened very quickly. I am confident the kidnapping was prearranged between Mrs. Eldredge and the woman. I saw the woman plainly. She was small and dark. Her face was marked by smallpox and she looked like an Italian She wore a flat hat with white feathers, a gray coat, and a black skirt.

“You say you can have no doubt of Miss Hendricks’ veracity?” asked Trant.

Eldredge shook his head, miserably. “I have known Miss Hendricks for a number of years, and I should as soon accuse myself of falsehood. She came running over to the house as soon as this had happened, and it was from her account that I first learned, through Mrs. Murray, that something had occurred.”

Trant’s glance fell to the remaining sheets in his hand, the testimony of Mrs. Eldredge; and the psychologist’s slightly mismated eyes — blue and gray — flashed suddenly as he read the following:

I had gone with Edward for a ride in the park to celebrate his birthday. It was the first time we had been out together. We stopped to look at the flowers and the

animals. My husband had not told me that he expected to be home from the store early, but Edward reminded me that on his birthday his father always came home in the middle of the afternoon and brought him presents. The time passed quickly, and I was surprised when I learned that it was already four o'clock. I was greatly troubled to think that Edward's father might be awaiting him, and we hurried back as rapidly as possible. We had almost reached the house when the engine of the automobile stopped. It took a very long time to fix it, and Edward was all the time growing more excited and impatient to see his father. It was only a short distance across the park to the house, which we could see plainly. Finally I lifted Edward out of the machine and told him to run across the grass to the house. He did so, but he went very slowly. I motioned to him to hurry. Then suddenly I saw the woman coming toward Edward, and the minute I saw her I was frightened. She came toward him slowly, stopped, and talked with him for quite a long time. She spoke loudly — I could hear her voice but I could not make out what she said. Then she took his hand — it must have been ten minutes after she had first spoken to him. He struggled with her, but she pulled him after her. She went rather slowly. But it took a very long time, perhaps fifteen minutes, for the motor to go around by the drive; and when we got to the spot Edward and the woman had disappeared. We looked everywhere, but could not find any trace of them, and she would have had time to go a considerable distance —

Trant looked up suddenly at Eldredge who had left his position by the window and over Trant's shoulder was reading the testimony. His face was gray.

"I asked Mrs. Eldredge," the husband said, pitifully, "why, if she suspected the woman from the first, and so much time elapsed, she did not try to prevent the kidnapping, and — she would not answer me!"

Trant nodded, and read the final paragraph of Mrs. Eldredge's testimony:

The woman who took Edward was unusually large — a very big woman, not stout, but tall and big. She was very dark, with black hair, and she wore a red dress and a hat with red flowers in it.

The psychologist laid down the papers and looked from one to the other of his companions reflectively. "What had happened that afternoon before Mrs. Eldredge and the boy went motoring?" he asked abruptly.

“Nothing out of the ordinary, Mr. Trant,” said Eldredge. “Why do you ask that?”

Trant’s fingertip followed on the table the last words of the evidence. “And what woman does Mrs. Eldredge know that answers that description — ‘unusually large, not stout, but tall and big, very dark, with black hair?’”

“No one,” said Eldredge. “No one except,” young Murray laughed frankly, “my mother. Trant,” he said, contemptuously, “don’t start any false leads of that sort! My mother was with Walter at the time the kidnapping took place!”

“Mrs. Murray was with me,” Eldredge assented, “from four till five o’clock that afternoon. She has nothing to do with the matter. But, Trant, if you see in this mass of accusation one ray of hope that Mrs. Eldredge is not guilty, for God’s sake give it to me, for I need it!”

The psychologist ran his fingers through his red hair and arose, strongly affected by the appeal of the white-lipped man who faced him. “I can give you more than a ray of hope, Mr. Eldredge,” he said. “I am almost certain that Mrs. Eldredge not only did not cause your son’s disappearance, but that she knows absolutely nothing about the matter. And I am nearly, though not quite, so sure that this is not a case of kidnapping at all!”

“What, Trant? Man, you can’t tell me that from that evidence?”

“I do, Mr. Eldredge!” Trant returned a little defiantly. “Just from this evidence!”

“But, Trant,” the husband cried, trying to grasp the hope this stranger gave him against all his better reason, “if you can think that, why did she describe everything — the time, the circumstance, the size and appearance of the woman and even the color of her dress — so differently from all the rest? Why did she lie when she told me this, Mr. Trant?”

“I do not think she lied, Mr. Eldredge.”

“Then the rest lied and it is a conspiracy of the witnesses against her?”

“No; no one lied, I think. And there was no conspiracy. That is my inference from the testimony and the one other fact we have — that there had been no demand for ransom.”

Eldredge stared at him almost wildly. His brother-in-law moved up beside him.

“Then where is my son, and who has taken him?”

“I cannot say yet,” Trant answered. There was a knock on the door.

“You asked to have everything personal brought to you at once, Mr. Eldredge,” said Miss Webster, holding out a note. “This just came in the ten o’clock delivery.” Eldredge snatched it from her — a soiled, creased envelope bearing a postmark of the Lake View substation just west of his home. It was addressed in a scrawling, illiterate hand, and conspicuously marked personal. He tore it open, caught the import of it almost at a glance; then with a smothered cry threw it on the desk in front of Murray, who read it aloud.

Yure son E. is safe, and we have him where he is not in dangir. Your wife has not payed us the money she promised us for taking him away, and we do not consider we are bound any longer by our bargain with her. If you will put the money she promised (one hund. dollars) on the seat behind Lincoln’s statue in the Park tonight at ten thurty (be exact) you will get yure son E. back. Look out for trubble to the boy if you notify the police.

N. B. — If you try to make any investigation about this case our above promiss will not be kept.

“Well, Trant, what do you say now?” asked Murray.

“That it was the only thing needed,” Trant answered, triumphantly, “to complete my case. Now, I am sure I need only go to your house to make a short examination of Mrs. Eldredge and the case against her!”

He swung about suddenly at a stifled exclamation behind him, and found himself looking into the white face of the private secretary; but she turned at once and left the office. Trant swung back to Murray. “No, thank you,” he said, refusing the proffer of the paper. “I read from the marks made upon minds by a crime, not from scrawls and thumbprints upon paper. And my means of reading those marks are fortunately in my possession this morning. No, I do not mean that I have other evidence upon this case than that you have just given me, Mr. Eldredge,” Trant explained. “I refer to my psychological apparatus which, the express company notified me, arrived from New York this morning. If you will let me have my appliance delivered direct to your house it will save much time.”

“I will order it myself!” Eldredge took up the telephone and quickly arranged the delivery.

“Thank you,” Trant acknowledged. “And if you will also see that I have a photograph, a souvenir postal, or some sort of a picture of every possible locality within a few blocks of your house you will probably help in my examination greatly. Also,” he checked himself and stood thoughtfully a moment, “will you have these words” — he wrote “Armenia, invitation, inviolate, sedate” and “pioseer” upon a paper — “carefully lettered for me and brought to your house?”

“What?” Eldredge stared at the list in astonishment. He looked up at Trant’s direct, intelligent features and checked himself. “Is there not some mistake in that last word, Mr. Trant? ‘Pioseer’ is not a word at all.”

“I don’t wish it to be,” Trant replied. His glance fell suddenly on a gaudily lithographed card — an advertisement showing the interior of a room. He took it from the desk.

“This will be very helpful, Mr. Eldredge,” he said. “If you will have this brought with the other cards I think that will be all. At three o’clock, then, at your house?”

He left them, looking at each other in perplexity. He stopped a moment at a newspaper office, and then returned to the University Club thoughtfully. By the authority of all precedent procedure of the world, he recognized how hopelessly the case stood against the stepmother of the missing child. But by the authority of the new science — the new knowledge of humanity — which he was laboring to establish, he felt certain he could save her.

Yet he fully appreciated that he could accomplish nothing until his experimental instruments were delivered. He must be content to wait until he could test his belief in Mrs. Eldredge’s innocence for himself, and at the same time convince Eldredge conclusively. So he played billiards, and lunched, and was waiting for the hour he had set with Eldredge, when he was summoned to the telephone. A man who said he was Mrs. Eldredge’s chauffeur, informed him that Mrs. Eldredge was in the motor before the club and she wished to speak with him at once.

Trant immediately went down to the motor. The single woman in the curtained limousine had drawn back into the farthest corner to avoid the glances of

passersby. But as Trant came toward the car she leaned forward and searched his face anxiously. She was a wonderfully beautiful woman, though her frail face bore evidences of long continued anxiety and of present excitement. Her hair was unusually rich in color; the dilated, defiant eyes were deep and flawless; the pale cheeks were clear and soft, and the trembling lips were curved and perfect. Trant, before a word had been exchanged between them, recognized the ineffable appeal of her personality.

“I must speak with you, Mr. Trant,” she said, as the chauffeur at her nod, opened the door of the car. “I cannot leave the motor. You must get in.”

Trant stepped quietly into the limousine, filled with the soft perfume of her presence. The chauffeur closed the door behind him, and at once started the car.

“My husband has consulted you, Mr. Trant, regarding the — the trouble that has come upon us, the — the disappearance of his son, Edward,” she asked.

“Why do you not say at once, Mrs. Eldredge, that you know he has consulted me and asked me to come and examine you this afternoon? You must have learned it through his secretary.”

The woman hesitated. “It is true,” she said nervously. “Miss Webster telephoned me. I see that you have not forgotten that I was once my husband’s stenographer, and — I still have friends in his office.”

“Then there is something you want to tell me that you cannot tell in the presence of the others?”

The woman turned, her large eyes meeting his with an almost frightened expression, but she recovered herself immediately. “No, Mr. Trant; it is because I know that he — my husband — that no one is making any search, or trying to recover Edward — except through watching me.”

“That is true, Mrs. Eldredge,” the psychologist helped her.

“You must not do that too, Mr. Trant!” she leaned toward him appealingly. “You must search for the boy — my husband’s boy! You must not waste time in questioning me, or in trying me with your new methods! That is why I came to see you — to tell you, on my word of honor, that I know nothing of it!”

“I should feel more certain if you would be frank with me,” Trant returned, “and tell me what happened on that afternoon before the child disappeared.”

“We went motoring,” the woman replied.

“Before you went motoring, Mrs. Eldredge,” the psychologist pressed, “what happened?”

She shrank suddenly, and turned upon him eyes filled with unconquerable terror. He waited, but she did not answer.

“Did not some one tell you,” the psychologist took a shot half in the dark, “or accuse you that you were taking the child out in order to get rid of him?”

The woman fell back upon the cushions, chalk-white and shuddering.

“You have answered me,” Trant said quietly. He glanced at her pityingly, and as she shrank from him, he tingled with an unbidden sympathy for this beautiful woman. “But in spite of the fact that you never brought the boy back,” Trant cried impetuously, “and in spite of — or rather because of all that is so dark against you, believe me that I expect to clear you before them all!” He glanced at his watch. “I am glad that you have been taking me toward your home, for it is almost time for my appointment with your husband.”

The car was running on the street bounding the park on the west. It stopped suddenly before a great stone house, the second from the intersecting street. Eldredge was running down the steps, and in a moment young Murray came after him. The husband opened the door of the limousine and helped his wife tenderly up the steps. Murray and Trant followed him together. Eldredge’s second wife — though she could comprehend nothing of what lay behind Trant’s assurance of help for her — met her husband’s look with eyes that had suddenly grown bright. Murray stared from the woman to Trant with disapproval. He nodded to the psychologist to follow him into Eldredge’s study on one side; but there he waited for his brother-in-law to return to voice his reproach.

“What have you been saying to her, Trant?” Eldredge demanded sternly as he entered and shut the door.

“Only what I told you this morning,” the psychologist answered — “that I believe her innocent. And after seeing what relief it brought her, I can not be

sorry!”

“You can’t?” Eldredge rebuked. “I can! When I called you in you had the right to tell me whatever you thought, however wild and without ground it was. It could not hurt me much. But now you have encouraged my wife still to hold out against us — still to defy us and to deny that she knows anything when — when, since we saw you, the case has become only more conclusive against her. We have just discovered a most startling confirmation of Miss Hendrick’s evidence. Raymond, show him!” he gestured in sorry triumph.

Young Murray opened the library desk and pulled out a piece of newspaper, which he put in Trant’s hand. He pointed to the heading. “You see, Trant, it is the account of the kidnapping in St. Louis which occurred just before Edward was stolen.”

All witnesses describe the kidnaper as a short, dark woman, marked with smallpox. She wore a gray coat and black skirt, a hat with white feathers, and appeared to be an Italian.

“I knew that. It exactly corresponds with the woman described by Miss Hendricks,” Trant rejoined. “I was aware of it this morning. But I can only repeat that the case has turned more and more conclusively in favor of Mrs. Eldredge.”

“Why, even before we recognized the woman described by Miss Hendricks the evidence was conclusive against Isabel!” Murray shot back. “Listen! She was nervously excited all that day; when the woman snatched Edward, Isabel did nothing. She denies she signaled the woman, but Miss Hendricks saw the signal. Isabel says the automobile took fifteen minutes making the circuit in the park, which is ridiculous! But she wants to give an idea in every case exactly contrary to what really occurred, and the other witnesses are agreed that the run was very quick. And most of all, she tried to throw us off in her description of the woman. The other three are agreed that she was short and slight. Isabel declares she was large and tall. The testimony of the chauffeur and the maid agrees with Miss Hendricks’ in every particular — except that the maid says the woman was dressed in violet. In that one particular she is probably mistaken, for Miss Hendricks’ description is most minute. Certainly the woman was not, as Isabel has again and again repeated in her efforts to throw us off the track, and in the face of all other evidence, clothed in a red dress!”

“Very well summarized!” said Trant. “Analyzed and summarized just as evidence has been ten million times in a hundred thousand law courts since the taking of evidence began. You could convict Mrs. Eldredge on that evidence. Juries have convicted thousands of other innocent people on evidence less trustworthy. The numerous convictions of innocent persons are as black a shame to-day as burnings and torturings were in the Middle Ages; as tests by fire and water, or as executions for witchcraft. Courts take evidence to-day exactly as it was taken when Joseph was a prisoner in Egypt. They hang and imprison on grounds of ‘precedent’ and ‘common sense.’ They accept the word of a witness where its truth seems likely, and refuse it where it seems otherwise. And, having determined the preponderance of evidence, they sometimes say, as you have just said of Lucy Carew, ‘though correct in everything else, in this one particular fact our truthful witness is mistaken.’ There is no room for mistakes, Mr. Eldredge, in scientific psychology. Instead of analyzing evidence by the haphazard methods of the courts, we can analyze it scientifically, exactly, incontrovertibly — we can select infallibly the true from the false. And that is what I mean to do now,” he added, “if my apparatus, for which you telephoned this morning, has come.”

“The boxes are in the rear hall,” Eldredge replied. “I have obtained over a hundred views of the locality, and the cards you requested me to secure are here too.”

“Good! Then you will get together the witnesses? The maid and the chauffeur I need to see only for a moment. I will question them while you are sending for Miss Hendricks.”

Eldredge rang for the butler. “Bring in those boxes which have just come for Mr. Trant,” he commanded. “Send this note to Miss Hendricks” — he wrote a few lines swiftly — “and tell Lucy and Morris to come here at once.”

He watched Trant curiously while he bent to his boxes and began taking out his apparatus. Trant first unpacked a varnished wooden box with a small drop window in one end. Opposite the window was a rack upon which cards or pictures could be placed. They could then be seen only through the drop-window. This window worked like the shutter of a camera, and was so controlled that it could be set to remain open for a fixed time, in seconds or parts of a second, after which it closed automatically. As Trant set this up and tested the shutter, the maid and chauffeur came to the door of the library. Trant admitted the girl and shut the door.

“On Tuesday afternoon,” he said to her, kindly, “was Mrs. Eldredge excited — very much excited — before you came to the place where the machine broke down, and before she saw the woman who took Edward away?”

“Yes, sir,” the girl answered. “She was more excited than I’d seen her ever before, all the afternoon, from the time we started.”

The young psychologist then admitted the chauffeur, and repeated his question.

“She was most nervous, yes, sir; and excited, sir, from the very first,” the chauffeur answered.

“That is all,” said Trant, suddenly dismissing both, then turning without expression to Eldredge. “If Miss Hendricks is here I will examine her at once.”

Eldredge went out, and returned with the little old maid. Miss Hendricks had a high-bred, refined and delicate face; and a sweet, though rather loquacious, manner. She acknowledged the introduction to Trant with old-fashioned formality.

“Please sit down, Miss Hendricks,” said Trant, motioning her to a chair facing the drop-window of the exposure box. “This little window will open and stand open an instant. I want you to look in and read the word that you will see.” He dropped a card quickly into the rack.

“Do not be surprised,” he begged, as she looked at the drop-window curiously, “if this examination seems puerile to you. It is not really so; but only unfamiliar in this country, yet. The Germans have carried psychological work further than any one in this nation, though the United States is now awakening to its importance.” While speaking, he had lifted the shutter and kept it raised a moment.

“It must be very interesting,” Miss Hendricks commented. “That word was ‘America,’ Mr. Trant.”

Trant changed the card quickly. “And I’m glad to say, Miss Hendricks,” he continued, while the maiden lady watched for the next word, interested, “that Americans are taking it up intelligently, not servilely copying the Germans!”

“That word was ‘imitation,’ Mr. Trant!” said Miss Hendricks.

“So now much is being done,” Trant continued, again shifting the card, “in the fifty psychological laboratories of this country through painstaking experiments and researches.”

“And that word was ‘investigate!’” said Miss Hendricks, as the shutter lifted and dropped again.

“That was quite satisfactory, Miss Hendricks,” Trant acknowledged. “Now look at this please.” Trant swiftly substituted the lithograph he had picked up at Eldredge’s office. “What was that, Miss Hendricks?”

“It was a colored picture of a room with several people in it.”

“Did you see the boy in the picture, Miss Hendricks?”

“Why — yes, of course, Mr. Trant,” the woman answered, after a little hesitation.

“Good. Did you also see his book?”

“Yes; I saw that he was reading.”

“Can you describe him?”

“Yes; he was about fifteen years old, in a dark suit with a brown tie, black-haired, slender, and he sat in a corner with a book on his knee.”

“That was indeed most satisfactory! Thank you, Miss Hendricks.” Trant congratulated and dismissed her. “Now your wife, if you please, Mr. Eldredge.”

Eldredge was curiously turning over the cards which Trant had been exhibiting, and stared at the young psychologist in bewilderment. But at Trant’s words he went for his wife. She came down at once with Mrs. Murray. Though she had been described to him, it was the first time Trant had seen the grandmother of the missing boy; and, as she entered, a movement of admiration escaped him. She was taller even than her son — who was the tallest man in the room — and she had retained surprisingly much of the grace and beauty of youth. She was a majestic and commanding figure. After settling her charge in a chair, she turned solicitously to Trant.

“Mr. Eldredge tells me that you consider it necessary to question poor Isabel again,” she said. “But, Mr. Trant, you must be careful not to subject her to any greater strain than is necessary. We all have told her that if she would be entirely frank with us we would make allowance for one whose girlhood has been passed in poverty which obliged her to work for a living.”

Mrs. Eldredge shrank nervously and Trant turned to Murray. “Mr. Murray,” he said, “I want as little distraction as possible during my examination of Mrs. Eldredge, so if you will be good enough to bring in to me from the study the automatograph — the other apparatus which I took from the box — and then wait outside till I have completed the test, it will assist me greatly. Mrs. Murray, you can help me if you remain.”

Young Murray glanced at his mother and complied. The automatograph, which Trant set upon another table, was that designed by Prof. Jastrow, of the University of Wisconsin, for the study of involuntary movements. It consisted of a plate of glass in a light frame mounted on adjustable brass legs, so that it could be set exactly level. Three polished glass balls, three-quarters of an inch in diameter, rested on this plate; and on these again there rested a very light plate of glass. To the upper plate was connected a simple system of levers, which carried a needle point at their end, so holding the needle as to travel over a sheet of smoked paper.

While Trant was setting up this instrument Mrs. Eldredge’s nervousness had greatly increased. And the few words which she spoke to her husband and Mrs. Murray — who alone remained in the room — showed that her mind was filled with thoughts of the missing child. Trant, observing her, seemed to change his plan suddenly and, instead of taking Mrs. Eldredge to the new instrument, he seated her in the chair in front of the drop-window. He explained gently to the trembling woman that he wanted her to read to him the words he exposed; and, as in the case of Miss Hendricks, he tried to put her at ease by speaking of the test itself.

“These word tests, Mrs. Eldredge, will probably seem rather pointless. For that matter all proceedings with which one is not familiar must seem pointless; even the proceedings of the national legislature in Washington seem pointless to the spectators in the gallery.” At this point the shutter lifted and exposed a word. “What was the word, please, Mrs. Eldredge?”

“‘Sedate,’” the woman faltered.

“But though the tests seem pointless, Mrs. Eldredge, they are not really so. To the trained investigator each test word is as full of meaning as each mark upon the trail is to the backwoodsman on the edge of civilization. Now what word was that?” he questioned quickly, as the shutter raised and lowered again.

The woman turned her dilated eyes on Trant. “That — that,” she hesitated — “I could make it out only as ‘p-i-o-s-e-e-r,’ “she spelled, uneasily. “I do not know any such word.”

“I shall not try you on words any longer, Mrs. Eldredge,” Trant decided. He took his stop-watch in his hand. “But I shall ask you to tell me how much time elapses between two taps with my lead pencil on the table. Now!”

“Two minutes,” the woman stammered.

Eldredge, who, observing what Trant was doing, had taken his own watch from his pocket and timed the brief interval, stared at Trant in astonishment. But without giving the wife time to compose herself, Trant went on quickly:

“Look again at the little window, Mrs. Eldredge. I shall expose to you a photograph; and if you are to help me recover your husband’s son, I hope you can recognize it. Who was it?” the psychologist demanded as the shutter dropped.

“That was a photograph of Edward!” the woman cried. “But I never saw that picture before!” She sat back, palpitating with uneasiness.

Mrs. Murray quickly took up the picture which had just been recognized as her grandson. “That is not Edward, Mr. Trant,” she said.

Trant laid a finger on his lips to silence her. “Mrs. Murray,” he said in quick appeal, “I wished, as you probably noted, to use this instrument, the automatograph, a moment ago: I will try it now. Will you be good enough to test it for me? Merely rest your fingers lightly — as lightly as you please — upon this upper glass plate.” Mrs. Murray complied, willingly. “Now please hold your hand there while I lay out these about you.” He swiftly distributed the photographic views of the surrounding blocks which Eldredge had collected for him.

Mrs. Murray watched him curiously as he placed about a dozen in a circle upon the table; and, almost as swiftly, swept them away and distributed others in their place. Again, after glancing at her hand to see that it was held in position, he set out a third lot, his eyes fixed, as before, on the smoked paper under the needle at the end of the levers. Suddenly he halted, looked keenly at the third set of cards and, without a word, left the room. In an instant he returned and after a quick, sympathetic glance at Mrs. Eldredge, turned to her husband.

“I need not examine Mrs. Eldredge further,” he said. “You had better take her to her room. But before you go, he grasped the woman’s cold hand encouragingly, “I want to tell you, Mrs. Eldredge, that I have every assurance of having the boy back within a very few minutes, and I have proof of your complete innocence. No, Mrs. Murray,” he forbade, as the older woman started to follow the others. “Remain here.” He closed the door after the other and faced her. “I have just sent your son to get Edward Eldredge from the place on Clark Street just south of Webster Avenue where you have been keeping him these three days.”

“Are you a madman?” the powerful woman cried, as she tried to push by him, staring at him stonily.

“Really it is no use, madam.” Trant prevented her. “Your son has been a most unworthy confederate from the first; and when I had excluded him from the room for a few moments and spoke to him of the place which you pointed out to me so definitely, it frightened him into acquiescence. I expect him back with the boy within a few minutes: and meanwhile—”

“What is that?” Eldredge had stepped inside the door.

“I was just telling Mrs. Murray,” said Trant, “that I had sent Raymond Murray after your son in the place where she has had him concealed.”

“What — what?” the father cried, incredulously, staring into the woman’s cold face.

“Oh, she has most enviable control of herself,” Trant commented. “She will not believe that her son has gone for Edward until he brings him back. And I might say that Mrs. Murray probably did not make away with the boy, but merely had him kept away, after he had been taken.”

Mrs. Murray had reseated herself, after her short struggle with Trant; and her

face was absolutely devoid of expression. “He is a madman!” she said, calmly.

“Perhaps it will hasten matters,” suggested Trant, “if I explain to you the road by which I reached this conclusion. As a number of startling cases of kidnapping have occurred recently, the very prevalent fear they have aroused has made it likely that kidnapping will be the first theory in any case even remotely resembling it. In view of this I could accept your statement of kidnapping only if the circumstances made it conclusive, which they did not. With the absence of any demand for a real ransom they made it impossible even for you to hold the idea of kidnapping, except by presuming it a plot of Mrs. Eldredge’s.

“But when I began considering whether this could be her plan, as charged, I noted a singular inconsistency in the attitude of Raymond Murray. He showed obvious eagerness to disgrace Mrs. Eldredge, but for some reason — not on the surface — was most actively opposed to police interference and the publicity which would most thoroughly carry out his object. So I felt from the first that he, and perhaps his mother — who was established over Mrs. Eldredge in her own home, but, by your statement, was to leave if Mrs. Eldredge came into charge of things — knew something which they were concealing. This much I saw before I read a word of the evidence.

“The evidence of the maid and the chauffeur told only two things — that a small woman rushed into the park and ran off with your son; and that your wife was in an extremely agitated condition. The maid said that the woman was blond and dressed in violet; and I knew, when I had read the evidence of other witnesses, that that was undoubtedly the truth.”

Eldredge, pacing the rug, stopped short and opened his lips; but checked himself.

“Without Miss Hendricks’ testimony there was positively nothing against your wife in the evidence of the chauffeur and the maid. I then took up Miss Hendricks’ evidence and had not read two lines before I saw that — as an accusation against your wife, Mr. Eldredge — it was worthless. Miss Hendricks is one of those most dangerous persons, absolutely truthful, and — absolutely unable to tell the truth! She showed a common, but hopeless, state of suggestibility. Her first sentence, in which she said she did not often look out of the window for fear people would think she was watching them, showed her habit of confusing what she saw with ideas that existed only in her own mind. Her testimony was a mass of unwarranted inferences. She saw a woman coming

from the direction of the car line, so to Miss Hendricks ‘it was evident that she had just descended from a car.’ The woman was hurrying, so ‘she was late for an appointment.’ ‘As soon as she caught sight of the woman’ Mrs. Eldredge lifted Edward to the ground. And so on through a dozen things which showed the highest susceptibility to suggestion. You told me that before telling her story to you she had told it to Mrs. Murray. Miss Hendricks had rushed to her at once: the bias and suggestions which made her testimony apparently so damning against your wife could only have come from Mrs. Murray.”

Eldredge’s glance shot to his mother-in-law. But Trant ran on rapidly. “I took up your wife’s evidence; and though apparently entirely at variance with the others, I saw at once that it really corroborated the testimony of the nurse and the chauffeur.”

“Her evidence confirmed?” Eldredge demanded, brusquely.

“Yes,” Trant replied; “to the psychologist, who understood Mrs. Eldredge’s mental condition, her evidence was the same as theirs. I had already seen for myself, by the aid of what you had told me, Mrs. Eldredge’s position in this household, after leaving your office to become your wife. On entering your house, she was brought face to face with a woman already in control here — a strong and dominant woman, who had immense influence over you. Everything told of a struggle between these women — slights, obstructions, merciless criticisms, of which your wife could not complain, which had brought her close to nervous prostration. You remember that immediately after reading her statement I asked you what particular thing had occurred just before she went motoring to throw her into that noticeably excitable condition described by the maid and the chauffeur. You said nothing had happened. But I was certain even then that there had been something — I know now that Mrs. Murray had put a climax to her persecution of your wife by charging that Mrs. Eldredge was taking the boy out to get rid of him — and my knowledge of psychology told me that, allowing for Mrs. Eldredge’s hysterical condition, she had stated in her evidence the same things that the maid and the chauffeur had stated. It is a fact that in her condition of hyperaesthesia — a condition readily brought on not only in weak women, but sometimes in strong men, by excitement and excessive nervous strain — her senses would be highly over-stimulated. Barely hearing the sound of the woman’s voice, she would honestly describe her as speaking in a loud tone.

“All time intervals would also be greatly prolonged. It truly seemed to her that the child took a long time to cross the grass and that the woman talked with him several minutes, instead of seconds. The sensation of a similarly long time elapsing after the woman took the boy’s hand gave her the impression of a long struggle. She would honestly believe that it took the automobile fifteen minutes to make the circuit of the park. When you asked your wife why, if so much time elapsed, she tried to do nothing, she was unable to answer; for no time was wasted at all.

“But most vital of all, I recognized her description of the woman as wearing a red dress as most conclusive confirmation of the maid’s testimony and a final proof, not that Mrs. Eldredge was trying to mislead you, but that she was telling the truth as well as she could. For it is a common psychological fact that in a hysterical condition red is the color most commonly seen subjectively; the sensation of red not only persists in hysteria, when other color sensations disappear, but it is common to have it take the place of another color, especially violet. It was discovered and recorded over thirty years ago that, in excessive excitability known psychologically as hyperaesthesia, all colors are lifted in the spectrum scale and, to the overexcited retina, the shorter waves of violet may give the sensation of the longer ones producing red. So what to you seemed an intentional contradiction was to me the most positive and complete assurance of your wife’s honesty.

“And finally, to be consistent with this condition, I knew that if her state was due to expectation of harm to herself or the child from any unusually large, dark woman, she would see the woman in her excitement, as large and dark. For it is one of the commonest facts known to the psychologist that our senses in excitement can be so influenced by our expectation of any event that we actually see things, not as they are, but as we expect them to be. So when you told me that Mrs. Murray answered the description given by Mrs. Eldredge, all threads of the skein had led to Mrs. Murray.

“Now, as it was clear to me that Mrs. Murray herself had used Miss Hendricks’ easy suggestibility to prejudice her evidence against Mrs. Eldredge, Mrs. Murray could not herself have believed that Mrs. Eldredge had taken the boy away. So, since the Murrays were making no search, they must have soon found out where the boy was and were satisfied that he was safe and that they could produce him, after they had finished ruining Mrs. Eldredge.

“Therefore I was in a position to appreciate Mrs. Murray’s ridiculous letter when it came, with its painfully misspelled demand for an absurdly small ransom that would not be refused for a moment, as the object of the letter was only to make the final move in the case against Mrs. Eldredge and enable them to return the boy. So far, it is clear?” Trant checked his rapid explanation.

Still Eldredge stared at the set, defiant features of his mother-in-law; and made no reply.

“I appreciated thoroughly that I must prove all this,” Trant then shot on rapidly. “You, Mr. Eldredge, discovered that Miss Hendricks’ description of the woman tallied precisely with the published description of the St. Louis kidnaper, without appreciating that the description was in her mind. With her high suggestibility she substituted it for the woman she actually saw as unconsciously — and as honestly — as she substituted Mrs. Murray’s suggestions for her own observations.

“But perhaps you can appreciate it now. You saw how I showed her the word ‘Armenia’ and spoke of the United States to lead her mind to substitute ‘America’ to prove how easily her mind substituted acts, motions and everything at Mrs. Murray’s suggestion. I had only to speak of ‘servilely copying’ to have her change ‘invitation’ into ‘imitation.’ A mere mention of researches made her think she saw ‘investigate,’ when the word was ‘inviolate.’ Finally, after showing her a picture in which there were two women and a man, but no boy, she stated, at my slight suggestion, that she saw a boy, and even described him for me and told me what he was doing. I had proved beyond cavil the utter worthlessness of evidence given by this woman, and dismissed her.”

“I followed that!” Eldredge granted.

Trant continued: “So I tested your wife to show that she had not suggestibility, like Miss Hendricks — that is, she could not be made to say that she saw ‘senate’ instead of ‘sedate’ by a mere mention of the national legislature at the time the word was shown; nor would she make over ‘pioseer’ into ‘pioneer’ under the suggestion of backwoodsman. But by getting her into an excitable condition with her mind emotionally set to expect a picture of the missing boy, her excited mind at the moment of perception altered the picture of the totally different six-year-old boy I showed her into the picture of Edward, as readily as her highly excited senses — fearing for herself and for the boy through Mrs. Murray — altered the

woman she saw taking Edward into an emotional semblance of Mrs. Murray.

“I had understood it as essential to clear your wife as to find the boy — whom I appreciated could be in no danger. So I made the next test with Mrs. Murray. This, I admit, depended largely upon chance. I knew, of course, that she must know where the boy was and that probably her son did too. The place was also probably in the vicinity. The automatograph is a device to register the slightest and most involuntary motions. It is a basic psychological fact that there is an inevitable muscular impulse toward any object which arouses emotion. If one spreads a score of playing cards about a table and the subject has a special one in mind, his hand on the automatograph will quickly show a faint impulse toward the card, although the subject is entirely unaware of it. So I knew that if the place where the boy was kept was shown in any of the pictures, I would get a reaction from Mrs. Murray; which I did — with the result, Mr. Eldredge,” Trant went to the window and watched the street, expectantly, “that Mr. Raymond Murray is now bringing your son around the corner and—”

But the father had burst from the room and toward the door. Trant heard a cry of joy and the stumble of an almost hysterical woman as Mrs. Eldredge rushed down the stairs after her husband. He turned as Mrs. Murray, taking advantage of the excitement, endeavored to push past him.

“You are leaving the house?” he asked. “But tell me first,” he demanded, “how did the boy come to be taken out of the park? Had the boys whom the chauffeur said stopped around his car anything to do with it?”

“They were a class which a kindergarten teacher — a new teacher — had taken to see the animals,” the woman answered, coldly.

“Ah! So one of them was left behind — the one whom they saw running and mistook for Edward — and the teacher, running back, took Edward by mistake. But she must have discovered her mistake when she rejoined the others.”

“Only after she got on the car. There one of my former servants recognized him and took him to her home.”

“And when the servant came to tell you, and you understood how Miss Hendricks’ suggestibility had played into your hands, the temptation was too much for you, and you made this last desperate attempt to discredit Mrs. Eldredge. I see!” He stood back and let her by.

Raymond Murray, after bringing back the boy, had disappeared. In the hall Eldredge and his wife bent over the boy, the woman completely hysterical in the joy of the recovery, laughing and crying alternately. She caught the boy to her frantically as she stared wildly at a woman ascending the steps.

“The woman in red — the woman in red!” she cried suddenly.

Trant stepped to her side quickly. “But she doesn’t look big and dark to you now, does she?” he asked. “And see, now,” he said, trying to calm her, “the dress is violet again. Yes, Mr. Eldredge, this, I believe, is the woman in violet — the small blond woman who took your boy from the park by mistake — as I will explain to you. She is coming, undoubtedly, in response to an advertisement that I put in The Journal this noon. But we do not require her help now, for Mrs. Murray has told me all.”

The maid, Lucy Carew, ran suddenly up the hall.

“Mrs. Murray and Mr. Murray are leaving the house, Mr. Eldredge!” she cried, bewilderedly.

“Are they?” the master of the house returned. He put his arm about its mistress and together they took the boy to his room.

THE PRIVATE BANK PUZZLE

“Planning to rob us?”

“I am sure of it!”

“But I don’t understand, Gordon! Who? How? What are they planning to rob?” the young acting-president of the bank demanded, sharply.

“The safe, Mr. Howell — the safe!” the old cashier repeated. “Some one inside the bank is planning to rob it!”

“How do you know?”

“I feel it; I know it. I am as certain of it as though I had overheard the plot being made! But I cannot tell you how I know. Put an extra man on guard here tonight,” the old man appealed, anxiously, “for I am certain that some one in this office means to enter the safe!”

The acting-president swung his chair away from the anxious little man before him, and glanced quickly through the glass door of his private office at the dozen clerks and tellers busy in the big room who sufficed to carry on the affairs of the little bank.

It was just before noon on the last Wednesday in November, in the old-established private banking house of Henry Howell & Son, on La Salle Street; and it was the beginning of the sixth week that young Howell had been running the bank by himself. For the first two or three weeks, since his father’s rheumatism suddenly sent him to Carlsbad, the business of the bank had seemed to go on as smoothly as usual. But for the last month, as young Howell himself could not deny, there had been a difference.

“A premonition, Gordon?” Howell’s brown eyes scrutinized the cashier curiously. “I did not know your nerve had been so shaken!”

“Call it premonition if you wish,” the old cashier answered, almost wildly. “But I have warned you! If anything happens now you cannot hold me to blame for it. I know the safe is going to be entered! Why else should they search my waste-basket? Why was my coat taken? Who took my pocketbook? Who just to-day

tried to break into my old typewriter desk?”

“Gordon! Gordon!” The young man jumped to his feet with an expression of relief. “You need a vacation! I know better than anybody how much has happened in the last two months to shake and disturb you; but if you attach any meaning to those insignificant incidents you must be going crazy!”

The cashier tore himself from the other’s grasp and left the office. Young Howell stood looking after him in perplexity an instant, then glanced at his watch and, taking up his overcoat, hastened out. He had a firm, well-built figure, a trifle stout; his expression, step, and all his bearing was usually quick, decisive, cheerful. But now as he passed into the street his step slowed and his head bent before the puzzle which his old cashier had just presented to him.

After walking a block his pace quickened, however, and he turned abruptly into a great office building towering sixteen stories from the street. Halting for an instant before the building directory, he took the express elevator to the twelfth floor and, at the end of the hall, halted again before an office door upon which was stenciled in clear letters:

“LUTHER TRANT, PRACTICAL PSYCHOLOGIST.”

At the call to come in, he opened the door and found himself facing a red-haired, broad-shouldered young man with blue-gray eyes, who had looked up from a delicate instrument which he was adjusting upon his desk. The young banker noted, half unconsciously, the apparatus of various kinds — dials, measuring machines and clocks, electrical batteries with strange meters wired to them, and the dozen delicate machines that stood on two sides of the room, for his conscious interest was centered in the quiet but alert young man that rose to meet him.

“Mr. Luther Trant?” he questioned.

“Yes.”

“I am Harry Howell, the ‘son’ of Howell & Son,” the banker introduced himself. “I heard of you, Mr. Trant, in connection with the Bronson murder; but more recently Walter Eldredge told me something of the remarkable way in which you apply scientific psychology, which has so far been recognized only in the universities, to practical problems. He made no secret to me that you saved him

from wrecking the whole happiness of his home. I have come to ask you to do, perhaps, as much for me."

The psychologist nodded.

"I do not mean, Mr. Trant," said the banker, dropping into the chair toward which Trant directed him, "that our home is in danger, as Eldredge's was. But our cashier —" The banker broke off. "Two months ago, Mr. Trant, our bank suffered its first default, under circumstances which affected the cashier very strongly. A few weeks later father had to go to Europe for his health, leaving me with old Gordon, the cashier, in charge of things. Almost immediately a series of disorders commenced, little annoyances and persecutions against the cashier. They have continued almost daily. They are so senseless, contemptible, and trivial that I have disregarded them, but they have shaken Gordon's nerve. Twenty minutes ago he came to me, trembling with anxiety, to tell me that they mean that one of the men in the office is trying to rob the safe. I feel confident that it is only Gordon's nervousness; but in the absence of my father I feel that I cannot let the matter go longer unexplained."

"What are these apparently trivial things which have been going on for the last month, Mr. Howell?" Trant asked.

"They are so insignificant that I am almost ashamed to tell you. The papers in Gordon's waste-basket have been disturbed. Some one takes his pads and blotters. His coat, which hangs on a hook in his office, disappeared and was brought back again. An old pocketbook that he keeps in his desk, which never contains anything of importance, has been taken away and brought back in the same manner. Everything disturbed has been completely valueless, the sole object being apparently to plague the man. But it has shaken Gordon amazingly, incomprehensibly. And this morning, when he found some one had been trying to break into an old typewriter desk in his office — though it was entirely empty, even the typewriter having been taken out of it two days ago — he went absolutely to pieces, and made the statement about robbing the safe which I have just repeated to you."

"That is very strange," said Trant, thoughtfully. "So these apparently senseless tricks terrorize your cashier! He was not keeping anything in the typewriter desk, was he?"

“He told me not,” Howell answered. “Gordon might conceal something from me; but he would not lie.”

“Tell me,” Trant demanded, suddenly, “what was the defalcation in the bank, which, as you just mentioned, so greatly affected your cashier just before your father left for Europe?”

“Ten thousand dollars was taken; in plain words stolen outright by young Robert Gordon, the cashier’s — William Gordon’s — son.”

“The cashier’s son!” Trant replied with interest.

“His only son,” Howell confirmed. “A boy about twenty. Gordon has a daughter older. The boy seemed a clean, straightforward fellow like his father, who has been with us forty years, twenty years our cashier; but something was different in him underneath, for the first time he had the chance he stole from the bank.”

“And the particulars?” Trant requested quickly.

“There are no especial particulars; it was a perfectly clear case against Robert,” the banker replied, reluctantly. “Our bank has a South Side branch on Cottage Grove Avenue, near Fifty-first Street, for the use of storekeepers and merchants in the neighborhood. On the 29th of September they telephoned us that there was a sudden demand for currency resembling a run on the bank. Our regular messenger, with the officer who accompanies him, was out; so Gordon called his son to carry the money alone. It never occurred to either father or myself, or, of course, to Gordon, not to trust to the boy. Gordon himself got the money from the safe — twenty-four thousand dollars, fourteen thousand in small bills and ten thousand in two small packets of ten five-hundred-dollar bills apiece. He himself counted it into the bag, locked it, and sealed it in. We all told the boy that we were sending him on an emergency call and to rush above all things. Now, it takes about thirty-five minutes to reach our branch on the car; but in spite of being told to hurry, young Gordon was over an hour getting there; and when the officers of the branch opened his bag they found that both packets of five-hundred-dollar bills — ten thousand dollars — had been taken out — stolen! He had fixed up the lock, the seal of the bag, somehow, after taking the money.”

“What explanation did the boy make?” Trant pressed, quickly.

“None. He evidently depended entirely upon the way he fixed up the lock and

seal."

"The delay?"

"The cars, he said."

"You said a moment ago that it was impossible that your cashier would lie to you. Is it absolutely out of the question that he held back the missing bills?"

"And ruined his own son, Mr. Trant? Impossible! But you do not have to take my opinion for that. The older Gordon returned the money — all of it — though he had to mortgage his home, which was all he had, to make up the amount. Out of regard for the father, who was heartbroken, we did not prosecute the boy. It was kept secret, even from the employees of the bank, why he was dismissed, and only the officers yet know that the money was stolen. But you can see how deeply all this must have affected Gordon, and it may be enough to account fully for his nervousness under the petty annoyances which have been going on ever since."

"Annoyances," cried Trant, "which began almost immediately after this first defalcation in forty years! That may, or may not, be coincidence. But, if it is convenient, I would like to go with you to the bank, Mr. Howell, at once!" The young psychologist leaped to his feet; the banker rose more slowly.

It was not quite one o'clock when the two young men entered the old building where Howell & Son had had their offices for thirty-six years. Trant hurried on directly up to the big banking room on the second floor. Inside the offices the psychologist's quick eyes, before they sought individuals, seemed to take stock of the furnishings and equipment of the place. The arrangement of all was staid, solid, old-fashioned. Many of the desks and chairs, and most of the other equipment, seemed to date back as far as the founding of the bank by the senior Howell three years after the great Chicago fire. The clerks' and tellers' cages were of the heavy, over-elaborate brass scroll work of the generation before; the counters of thick, almost ponderous, mahogany, now deeply scored, but not discolored. And the massive safe, set into a rear wall, especially attracted Trant's attention. He paused before its open door and curiously inspected the complicated mechanism of revolving dials, lettered on their rims, which required to be set to a certain combination of letters in order to open it.

"This is still good enough under ordinary conditions, I dare say," he commented,

as he turned the barrels experimentally; “but it is rather old, is it not?”

“It is as old as the bank and the building,” Howell answered. “It is one of the Rittenhouse six-letter combination locks; and was built in, as you see, in ‘74 when they put up this building for us. Just about that time, I believe, the Sargent time lock was invented; but this was still new, and besides, father has always been very conservative. He lets things go on until a real need arises to change them; and in thirty-six years, as I told you at your office, nothing has happened to worry him particularly about this safe.”

“I see. The combination, I suppose, is a word?”

“Yes; a word of six letters, changed every Monday.”

“And given to—”

“Only to the cashier.”

“Gordon, that is,” Trant acknowledged, as he turned away and appeared to take his first interest in any of the employees of the bank, “the man alone in the cashier’s room over there?” The psychologist pointed through the open door of the room at his right to the thin, strained figure bent far over his desk. He was the only one of all the men about the bank who seemed not to have noticed the stranger whom the acting-president had brought with him to inspect the safe.

“Yes; that is Gordon!” the president answered, caught forward quickly by something in the manner, or the posture, of the cashier. “But what is he doing? What is the matter with him now?” He hurried toward the old man through the open door.

Trant followed him, and they could see over the cashier’s shoulder, before he was conscious of their presence, that he was arranging and fitting together small scraps of paper. Then he jerked himself up in his chair, trembling, arose, and faced them with bloodless lips and cheeks, one tremulous hand pressed guiltily upon the papers, hiding them.

“What is the matter? What are you doing, Gordon?” Howell said in surprise.

Trant reached forward swiftly, seized the cashier’s thin wrist and lifted his hand forcibly from the desk. The scraps were five in number and upon them, as

Gordon had arranged them, were printed in pencil merely meaningless equations. The first, which was written on two of the scraps, read:

43$=8o.

The second, torn into three pieces, was even more enigmatical, reading:

35=8?$

But the pieces appeared to be properly put together; and Trant noted that, besides the two and three pieces fitting, all the scraps evidently belonged together, and had originally formed a part of a large sheet of paper which had been torn and thrown away.

“They are nothing — nothing, Mr. Howell!” The old man tried to wrench his hand away, staring in terror at the banker. “They are only scraps of paper which I found. Oh, Mr. Howell, I warned you this morning that the bank is in danger. I know that now better than ever! But these,” he grew still whiter, “are nothing!”

Trant had to catch the cashier’s hand again, as he tried to snatch up the scraps. “Who is this man, Mr. Howell?” Gordon turned indignantly to the young banker.

“My name is Trant. Mr. Howell came to me this morning to advise him as to the things which have been terrifying you here in this office. And, Mr. Gordon,” said Trant, sternly, “it is perfectly useless for you to tell us that these bits of paper have no meaning, or that their meaning is unknown to you. But since you will not explain the mystery to us, I must go about the matter in some other way.”

“You do not imagine, Mr. Trant,” the cashier fell back into his chair as though the psychologist had struck him, “that I have any connection with the plot against the bank of which I warned Mr. Howell!”

“I am quite certain,” Trant answered, firmly, “that if a plot exists, you have some connection with it. Whether your connection is innocent or guilty I can determine at once by a short test, if you will submit to it.”

Gordon’s eyes met those of the acting-president in startled terror, but he gathered himself together and arose.

“Mr. Howell knows,” he said, hollowly, “how mad an accusation you are

making. But I will submit to your test, of course."

Trant took up a blank sheet of paper from the desk and drew on it two rows of geometric figures in rapid succession, like these:

He handed the sheet to the cashier, who stared at it in wondering astonishment.

"Look at these carefully, Mr. Gordon," Trant took out his watch, "and study them till I tell you to stop. Stop now!" he commanded, "and draw upon the pad on your desk as many of the figures as you can."

The cashier and the acting-president stared into Trant's face with increasing amazement; then the cashier asked to see Trant's sheets again and drew from memory, after a few seconds, two figures, thus:

"Thank you," said Trant, tearing the sheet from the pad without giving either time to question him. He closed the office door carefully and returned with his watch in his hand.

"You can hear this tick?" He held it about eighteen inches from Gordon's ear.

"Of course," the cashier answered. "Then move your finger, please, as long as you hear it."

The cashier began moving his finger. Trant put the watch on the desk and stepped away. For a moment the finger stopped; but when Trant spoke again the cashier nodded and moved his finger at the ticks. Almost immediately it stopped again, however; and Trant returned and took up his watch.

"I want to ask you one thing more," he said to the weary old man. "I want you to take a pencil and write upon this pad a series of numbers from one up as fast as you care to, no matter how much more rapidly I count. You are ready? Then one, two, three —" Trant counted rapidly in a clear voice up to thirty.

"1-2-3-4-10-11-12-19-20-27-28 —" the cashier wrote, and handed the pad to Trant.

"Thank you. This will be all I need, except these pieces," said Trant, as he swept up the scraps which the cashier had been piecing together.

Gordon started, but said nothing. His gray, anxious eyes followed them, as the banker preceded Trant from the cashier's room into his private office.

"What is the meaning of all this, Mr. Trant?" Howell closed the door and swung round, excitedly. "If Gordon is connected with a plot against the bank, and that in itself is unbelievable, why did he warn me the bank was in danger?"

"Mr. Gordon's connection with what is going on is perfectly innocent," Trant answered. "I have just made certain of that!" He had seated himself before Howell's desk and was spreading out the scraps of paper which he had taken from Gordon. "But tell me. Was not Gordon once a stenographer, or did he not use a typewriter at least?"

"Well, yes," Howell replied, impatiently. "Gordon was private secretary to my father twenty years ago; and, of course, used a typewriter. It was his old machine, which he always kept and still used occasionally, that was in his desk which, as I told you, was broken into this morning."

"But the desk was empty — even the machine had been taken from it!"

"Gordon took it home only a day or so ago. His daughter is taking up typewriting and wanted it to practice upon."

"In spite of the fact that it must be entirely out of date?" Trant pressed. "Probably it was the last of that pattern in this office?"

"Of course," Howell rejoined, still more impatiently. "The others were changed long ago. But what in the world has all this to do with the question whether some one is planning to rob us?"

"It has everything to do, Mr. Howell!" Trant leaped to his feet, his eyes flashing with sudden comprehension. "For what you have just told me makes it certain that, as Gordon warned you, one of your clerks is planning to enter your safe at the first opportunity! Gordon knows as little as you or I, at this moment, which of your men it is; but he is as sure of the fact itself as I am, and he has every reason to know that there is no time to lose in detecting the plotter."

"What is that? What is that? Gordon is right?"

The banker stared at Trant in confusion, then asserted, skeptically: "You cannot

tell that from those papers, Mr. Trant!”

“I feel very certain of it indeed, and — just from these papers. And more than that, Mr. Howell, though I shall ask to postpone explaining this until later, I may say from this second paper here,” Trant held up the series of numbers which the cashier had written, “that this indicates to me that it is entirely possible, if not actually probable, that Gordon’s son did not steal the money for the loss of which he was disgraced!”

The banker strode up and down the room, excitedly. “Robert Gordon not guilty! I understood, Trant, that your methods were surprising. They are more than that; they are incomprehensible. I cannot imagine how you reach these conclusions. But,” he looked into the psychologist’s eyes, “I see no alternative but to put the matter completely in your hands, and for the present to do whatever you say.”

“There is nothing more to be done here now,” said Trant, gathering up the papers, “except to give me Gordon’s home address.”

“Five hundred and thirty-seven Leavenworth Street, on the South Side.”

“I will come back tomorrow after banking hours. Meanwhile, as Gordon warned you, put an extra guard over the bank tonight. I hope to be able to tell you all that underlies this case when I have been to Gordon’s home this evening, and seen his son, and” — Trant turned away — “that old typewriting machine of his.”

He went out, the banker staring after him, perplexed. Trant knew already that forty years of service for the little bank of Howell & Son had left Gordon still a poor man; and he was not surprised when, at seven o’clock that night, he turned into Leavenworth Street, to find Number 537 a typical “small, comfortable home,” put up twenty years before in what had then been a new real estate subdivision and probably purchased by Gordon upon the instalment plan. Gordon’s daughter, who opened the door, was a black-haired, gray-eyed girl of slender figure. She had the air of the housekeeper, careful and economical in the administration of her father’s moderate and unincreasing means. But a look of more direct responsibility upon her face made Trant recollect, as he gave his name and stepped inside, that since her brother’s default and her father’s sacrifice to make it up, this girl herself was going out to help regain the ownership of the little home.

“Father is upstairs lying down,” she explained, solicitously, as she showed Trant

into the living room. “But I can call him,” she offered, reluctantly, “if it is on business of the bank.”

“It is on business of the bank,” Trant replied. “But there is no need to disturb your father. It was your brother I came to see.”

The girl’s face went crimson. “My brother is no longer connected with the bank,” she managed to answer, miserably. “I do not think he would be willing — I think I could not prevail upon him to talk to anyone sent by the bank.”

“That is unfortunate,” said Trant, frankly, “for in that case my journey out here goes half for nothing. I was very anxious to see him. By the way, Miss Gordon, what luck are you having with your typewriting?”

The girl drew back surprised.

“Mr. Howell told me about you,” Trant explained, “when he mentioned that your father had taken his old typewriter home for you to practice upon.”

“Oh, yes; dear father!” exclaimed the girl. “He brought it home with him one night this week. But it is quite out of date — quite useless. Besides, I had hired a modern one last week.”

“Mr. Howell interested me in that old machine. You have no objection to my seeing it?”

“Of course not.” The girl looked at the young psychologist with growing astonishment. “It is right here.” She led the way through the hall, and opened the door to a rear room. Through the doorway Trant could see in the little room two typewriting machines, one new and shiny, the other, under a cover, old and battered.

“Say! what do you want?” A challenging voice brought Trant around swiftly to face a scowling boy clattering down stairs.

“He wants to look at the typewriter, Robert,” the girl explained.

Trant looked the boy over quietly. He was a clean-looking chap, quietly dressed and resembling his father, but was of more powerful physique. His face was marred by sullen brooding, and in his eyes there was a settled flame of defiance.

The psychologist turned away, as though determined to finish first his inspection of the typewriter, and entered the room. The boy and the girl followed.

“Here, you!” said Robert Gordon, harshly, as Trant laid his hand on the cover of the old machine, “that’s not the typewriter you want to look at. This is the one.” And he pointed to the newer of the two.

“It’s the old one I want to see,” answered Trant.

The boy paled suddenly, leaped forward and seized Trant by the wrist. “Say! Who are you, anyway? What do you want to see that machine for?” he demanded, hotly. “You shall not see it, if I can help it!”

“What!” Trant faced him in obvious astonishment. “You! You in that! That alters matters!”

William Gordon had appeared suddenly in the doorway, his face as white as his son’s. Robert’s hand fell from Trant’s wrist. The dazed old man stood watching Trant, who slowly uncovered and studied the keyboard of the old writing machine.

“What does this mean, Mr. Trant?” Gordon faltered, holding to the door frame for support.

“It means, Mr. Gordon” — Trant straightened, his eyes flashing in full comprehension and triumph — “that you must keep your son in tonight, at whatever cost, Mr. Gordon! And bring him with you tomorrow morning when you come to the bank. Do not misunderstand me.” He caught the old man as he tottered. “We are in time to prevent the robbery you feared at the bank. And I hope — I still hope — to be able to prove that your son had nothing to do with the loss of the money for which he was dismissed.” With that he left the house.

Half an hour before the bank of Howell & Son opened the next morning, Trant and the acting-president stepped from the president’s private office into the main banking room.

“You have not asked me,” said Howell, “whether there was any attempt on the bank last night. I had a special man on watch, as you advised, but no attempt was made.”

“After seeing young Gordon last night,” Trant answered, “I expected none.”

The banker looked perplexed; then he glanced quickly about and saw his dozen clerks and tellers in their places, dispatching preliminary business and preparing their accounts. The cashier alone had not yet arrived. The acting-president called them all to places at the desks.

“This gentleman,” he explained, “is Mr. Trant, a psychologist. He has just asked me, and I am going to ask you, to cooperate with him in carrying out a very interesting psychological test which he wants to make on you as men working in the bank.”

“As you all probably have seen in newspapers and magazine articles,” Trant himself took up the explanation, as the banker hesitated, “psychologists, and many other investigators, are much interested just now in following the influences which employments, or business of various kinds, have upon mental characteristics. I want to test this morning the normal ‘first things’ which you think of as a class constantly associated with money and banking operations during most of your conscious hours. To establish your way of thinking as a class, I have asked Mr. Howell’s permission to read you a short list of words; and I ask you to write down, on hearing each of these words, the first thing that connects itself with that word in your minds. Each of you please take a piece of paper, sign it, and number it along one edge to correspond with the numbers of the words on my list.”

There was a rustling of paper as the men, nodding, prepared for the test. Trant took his list from his pocket.

“I am interested chiefly, of course,” he continued, “in following psychologically the influence of your constant association with money. For you work surrounded by money. Every click of the Remington typewriters about you refers to money, and their shift keys are pushed most often to make the dollar mark. The bundles of money around you are not marked in secret writing or symbols, but plainly with the amount, five hundred dollars or ten thousand dollars written on the wrapper. Behind the combination of the safe lies a fortune always. Yet money must of necessity become to you — psychologically — a mere commodity; and the majority of the acts which its transfer and safekeeping demand must grow to be almost mechanical with you; for the mechanical serves you in two ways: First, in the routine of your business, as, for instance, with a promissory note,

which to you means a definite interval — perhaps sixty days — so that you know automatically without looking at your calendars that such a note drawn on September 29th would be due to-day. And second, by enabling you to run through these piles of bills with no more emotion than if you were looking for scraps in a waste-basket, it protects you from temptation, and is the reason why an institution such as this can run for forty years without ever finding it necessary to arrest a thief. I need not tell you that both these mental attitudes are of keen interest to psychologists. Now, if you will write —”

Watch in hand, Trant read slowly, at regular intervals, the words on his list:

1 — reship 2 — ethics 3 — Remington

A stifled exclamation made him lift his eyes, and he saw Howell, who before had appeared merely curious about the test, looking at him in astonishment. Trant smiled, and continued:

4— -shift key 5 — secret writing 6 — combination 7 — waste-basket 8 — ten thousand 9 — five hundred 10 — September 29th 11 — promissory note 12 — arrest

“That finishes it! Thank you all!” Trant looked at Howell, who nodded to one of the clerks to take up the papers. The banker swiftly preceded Trant back to his private office, and when the door was closed turned on him abruptly.

“Who told you the combination of the safe?” he demanded. “You had our word for this week and the word for the week before. That couldn’t be chance. Did Gordon tell you last night?”

“You mean the words ‘reship’ and ‘ethics’?” Trant replied. “No; he didn’t tell me. And it was not chance, Mr. Howell.” He sat down and spread out rapidly his dozen papers. “What — ‘rifles’!” he exclaimed at the third word in one of the first papers he picked up. “And way off on ‘waste-basket’ and ‘shift key,’ too!” He glanced over all the list rapidly and laid it aside. “What’s this?” Something caught him quickly again after he had sifted the next half dozen sheets. “‘Waste-basket’ gave him trouble, too?” Trant stared, thoughtfully. “And think of ten thousand ‘windows’ and five hundred ‘doors’!” He put that paper aside also, glanced through the rest and arose.

“I asked Mr. Gordon to bring his son to the bank with him this morning, Mr.

Howell," he said to his client, seriously. "If he is there now please have him come in. And, also, please send for," he glanced again at the name on the first paper he had put aside, "Byron Ford!"

Gordon had not yet come; but the door opened a moment later and a young man of about twenty-five, dapper and prematurely slightly bald, stood on the threshold. "Ah, Ford!" said Howell, "Mr. Trant asked to see you."

"Shut the door, please, Mr. Ford," Trant commanded, "and then come here; for I want to ask you," he continued without warning as Ford complied, "how you came to be preparing to enter Mr. Howell's safe?"

"What does he mean, Mr. Howell?" the clerk appealed to his employer, with admirable surprise.

"For the past month, Ford," Trant replied, directly, "you have been trying to get the combination of the safe. Several times you probably actually got it, but couldn't make it out, till you got it again this week and at last you guessed the key to the cipher and young Gordon gave you the means of reading it! Why were you going to that trouble to get the combination if you were not going to rob the bank?"

"Rob the bank! I was not going to rob the bank!" the clerk cried, hotly.

"Isn't young Gordon out there now, Mr. Howell?" Trant turned to the wondering banker quickly. "Thank you! Gordon," he said to the cashier's son who came in, reluctantly, "I have just been questioning Ford, as perhaps you may guess, as to why you and he have gone to so much trouble to learn the combination of the safe. He declares that it was not with an intention to rob. However, I think, Mr. Howell," Trant swung away from the boy to the young banker, suggestively, "that if we turn Ford over to the police —"

"No, you shan't!" the boy burst in. "He wasn't going to rob the safe! And you shan't arrest him or disgrace him as you disgraced me! For he was only — only —"

"Only getting the combination for you?" Trant put in quickly, "so you could rob the bank yourself!"

"Rob the bank?" the boy shouted, less in control of himself than before as he

faced Howell with clenched fists and flushed face. “Rob nothing! He was only helping me so I could take back from this — — bank what it stole from my father — the ten thousand dollars it stole from him, for the money I never lost. I was going to take ten thousand dollars — not a cent more or less! And Ford knew it, and thought I was right!”

Trant interrupted, quietly: “I am sure you are telling the truth, Gordon!”

“You mean you are sure they meant only to take the ten thousand?” the banker asked, dazed.

“Yes; and also that young Gordon did not steal the ten thousand dollars which was made up by his father,” Trant assured.

“How can you be sure of that?” Howell charged.

“Send for Carl Shaffer, please!” Trant requested, glancing quickly at the second sheet he had put aside.

“What! Shaffer?” Howell questioned, as he complied.

“Yes; for he can tell us, I think — you can tell, can’t you, Shaffer,” Trant corrected, as, at Howell’s order, a short, stout, and overdressed clerk came in and the door shut behind him, “what really happened to the twenty five-hundred-dollar bills which disappeared from the bank on September 29th? You did not know, when you found them in Gordon’s waste-basket, that they were missed or — if they were — that they had brought anyone into trouble. You have never known, have you,” Trant went on, mercilessly, watching the eyes which could no longer meet his, “that old Gordon, the cashier, thought he had surely locked them into the dispatch bag for his son, and that when the boy was dismissed a little later he was in disgrace and charged as a thief for stealing those bills? You have not known, have you, that a black, bitter shadow has come over the old cashier since then from that disgrace, and that he has had to mortgage his home and give all his savings to make up those twenty little slips of green paper you ‘found’ in his room that morning! But you’ve counted the days, almost the hours, since then, haven’t you? You’ve counted the days till you could feel yourself safe and be sure that no one would call for them? Well, we call for them now! Where are they, Shaffer? You haven’t spent or lost them?”

The clerk stood with eyes fixed on Trant, as if fascinated, and could make no

reply. Twice, and then again as Trant waited, he wet his lips and opened them.

“I don’t know what you are talking about,” he faltered at last.

“Yes you do, Shaffer,” Trant rejoined quickly. “For I’m talking of those twenty five-hundred-dollar bills which you ‘found’ in Gordon’s waste-basket on September 29th — sixty days ago, Shaffer! And, through me, Mr. Howell is giving you a chance to return the money and have the bank present at your trial the extenuating circumstances,” he glanced at Howell, who nodded, “or to refuse and have the bank prosecute you, to the extent of its ability, as a thief!”

“I am not a thief!” the clerk cried, bitterly. “I found the money! If you saw me take it, if you have known all these sixty days that I had it,” he swung in his desperation toward the banker, “you are worse than I am! Why did you let me keep it? Why didn’t you ask me for it?”

“We are asking you for it now, Shaffer,” said Trant, catching the clerk by the arm, “if you still have it.”

The clerk looked at his employer, standing speechless before him, and his head sank suddenly.

“Of course I have it,” he said, sullenly. “You know I have it!”

Howell stepped to the door and called in the bank’s special police officer.

“You will go with Mr. Shaffer,” he said to the burly man, “who will bring back to me here ten thousand dollars in bills. You must be sure that he does not get away from you, and — say nothing about it.”

When the door had closed upon them he turned to the others. “As to you, Ford —”

“Ford has not yet told us,” Trant interrupted, “how he came to be in the game with Gordon.”

“I got him in!” young Gordon answered, boldly. “He — he comes to see — he wants to marry my sister. I told him how they had taken our house from us and were sending my sister to work and — and I got him to help me.”

“But your sister knew nothing of this?” Trant asked.

It brought a flush to both their cheeks. “No; of course not!” the boy answered.

Howell opened the door to the next office. “Go in there, and wait for me,” he commanded. He took out his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration from his hands as he faced Trant alone. “So that was what happened to the money! And what Gordon knew, and was hiding from me, was that his son meant to rob the bank!”

“No, Howell,” Trant denied. “Gordon did not know that.”

“Then what was he trying to hide? Is there another secret in this amazing affair?”

“Yes; William Gordon’s secret; the fact that your cashier is no longer efficient; that he is getting old, and his memory has left him so that he cannot remember during the week, even for a day, the single combination word to open the safe.”

“What do you mean?” Howell demanded.

“I will tell you all. It seemed to me,” Trant explained, “when first you told me of the case, that the cause of the troubles to the cashier was the effort of some one to get at some secret personal paper which the cashier carried, but the existence of which, for some reason, Gordon could not confess to you. It was clear, of course, from the consistent search made of the cashier’s coat, pocketbook, and private papers that the person who was trying to get it believed that Gordon carried it about with him. It was clear, too, from his taking the blotters and pads, that the paper — probably a memorandum of some sort — was often made out by Gordon at the office; for if Gordon wrote in pencil upon a pad and tore off the first sheet, the other man could hope to get an impression from the next in the pad, and if Gordon wrote in ink, he might get an obverse from the blotters. But besides this, from the fact that the waste-baskets were searched, it was clear that the fellow believed that the paper would become valueless to Gordon after a time and he would throw it away.

“So much I could make out when you told me the outlines of the case at my office. But I could make absolutely nothing, then, of the reason for the attempt to get into the typewriter desk. You also told me then of young Gordon’s trouble; and I commented at once upon the coincidence of one trouble coming so soon after the other, though I was obviously unable to even guess at the connection.

But even then I was not convinced at all that the mere fact that Gordon and you all thought he had locked twenty-four thousand dollars into the bag he gave his son made it certain — in view of the fact that the seal was unbroken when it was opened with but fourteen thousand dollars in it at the branch bank. When I asked you about that, you replied that old Gordon was unquestionably honest and that he put all the money into the satchel; that is, he thought he did or intended to, but you never questioned at all whether he was able to."

"Able to, Trant?" Howell repeated.

"Yes; able to," Trant reaffirmed. "I mean in the sense of whether his condition made it a certainty that he did what he was sure he was doing. I saw, of course, that you, as a banker, could recognize but two conditions in your employee; either he was honest and the money was put in, or he was dishonest and the money was withheld. But, as a psychologist, I could appreciate that a man might very well be honest and yet not put in the money, though he was sure he did.

"I went to your office then, already fairly sure that Gordon was making some sort of a memorandum there which he carried about for a while and then threw away; that, for some reason, he could not tell you of this; but that some one else was extremely anxious to possess it. I also wished to investigate what I may call the psychological possibility of Gordon's not having put in the ten thousand dollars as he thought he did; and with this was the typewriter-desk episode, of which I could make nothing at all.

"You told me that Gordon had warned you that trouble threatened the safe; and when I saw that it was a simple combination safe with a six-letter word combination intrusted to the cashier, it came to me convincingly at once that Gordon's memorandum might well be the combination of the safe. If he had been carrying the weekly word in his head for twenty years, and now, mentally weakened by the disgrace of his son, found himself unable to remember it, I could appreciate how, with his savings gone, his home mortgaged, untrained in any business but banking, he would desperately conceal his condition from you for fear of losing his position.

"Obviously he would make a memorandum of the combination each week at the office and throw away the old one. This explained clearly why some one was after it; but why that one should be after the old memorandum, and what the breaking open of the typewriter desk could have had to do with it, I could not see

at first, even after we surprised him with his scraps of paper. But I made three short tests of him. The first, a simple test of the psychologists for memory, made by exhibiting to him a half dozen figures formed by different combinations of the same three lines, proved to me, as he could not reproduce one of these figures correctly, that he had need of a memorandum of the combination of the safe. The other two tests — which are tests for attention — showed that, besides having a failing memory, his condition as regards attention was even worse. Gordon lost the watch ticks, which I asked him to mark with his finger, twice within forty-five seconds. And, whereas any person with normal 'attention' can write correctly from one to thirty while counting aloud from one to fifty, Gordon was incapable of keeping correctly to his set of figures under my very slight distraction.

"I assured myself thus that he was incapable of correctly counting money under the distraction and excitement such as was about him the morning of the 'run'; and I felt it probable that the missing money was never put into the bag, and must either have been lost in the bank or taken by some one else. As I set myself, then, to puzzling out the mystery of the scraps which I took from Gordon, I soon saw that the writing '42$=8o' and '35=8?$,' which seemed perfectly senseless equations, might not be equations at all, but secret writing instead, made up of six symbols each, the number of letters in your combination. Besides the numbers, the other three symbols were common ones in commercial correspondence. Then, the attack on old Gordon's typewriter desk. You told me he had been a stenographer; and — it flashed to me.

"He had not dared to write the combination in plain letters; so he had hit on a very simple, but also very ingenious, cipher. He wrote the word, not in letters, but in the figures and symbols which accompanied each letter on the keyboard of his old typewriting machine. The cipher explained why the other man was after the old combination in the waste-basket, hoping to get enough words together so he could figure them out, as he had been doing on the scraps of paper which Gordon found. Till then Gordon might have been in doubt as to the meaning of the annoyances; but, finding those scraps, after the breaking open of his old desk, left him in no doubt, as he warned you."

"I see! I see!" Howell nodded, intently.

"The symbols made no word upon the typewriters here in your office. Before I could be sure, I had to see the cashier's old machine, which Gordon —

beginning to fear his secret was discovered — had taken home. When I saw that machine, ‘43$=8o,’ by the mere change of the shift key, gave me ‘reship,’ and ‘35=8?$’ gave me ‘ethics,’ two words of six letters, as I had expected; but, to my surprise, I found that young Gordon, as well as the fellow still in the bank, was concerning himself strangely with his father’s cipher, and I had him here this morning when I made my test to find out, first, who it was here in the bank that was after the combination; and, second, who, if anyone, had taken the missing bills on September 29th.

“Modern psychology gave me an easy method of detecting these two persons. Before coming here this morning I made up a list of words which must necessarily connect themselves with their crimes in the minds of the man who had plotted against the safe and the one who had taken the bills. ‘Reship’ and ‘ethics’ were the combination words of the safe for the last two weeks. ‘Remington’ suggested ‘typewriter’; ‘shift key,’ ‘combination,’ ‘secret writing,’ and ‘waste-basket’ all were words which would directly connect themselves with the attempt upon the safe. ‘Ten thousand,’ ‘five hundred,’ ‘September 29th’ referred to the stealing of the bills. ‘Arrest,’ with its association of ‘theft,’ would trouble both men.

“You must have seen, I think, that the little speech I made before giving the test was not merely what it pretended to be. That speech was an excuse for me to couple together and lay particular emphasis upon the natural associations of certain words. So I coupled and emphasized the natural association of ‘safe’ with ‘combination,’ ‘scraps’ with ‘waste-basket,’ ‘dollars’ with ‘ten thousand,’ and so on. In no case did I attempt by my speech to supplant in anyone’s mind his normal association with any one of these words. Obviously, to all your clerks the associations I suggested must be the most common, the most impressive; and I took care thus to make them, finally, the most recent. Then I could be sure that if any one of them refused those normal associations upon any considerable number of the words, that person must have ‘suspicious’ connection with the crime as the reason for changing his associations. I did not care even whether he suspected the purpose of my test. To refuse to write it would be a confession of his guilt. And I was confident that if he did write it he could not refrain from changing enough of these associations to betray himself.

“Now, the first thing which struck me with Ford’s paper was that he had obviously erased his first words for ‘reship’ and ‘ethics’ and substituted others. Everyone else treated them easily, not knowing them to be the combination

words. Ford, however, wrote something which didn't satisfy him as being 'innocent' enough, and wrote again. There were no 'normal 'associations for these words, and I had suggested none. But note the next.

"Typewriter was the common, the most insistent and recent association for 'Remington' for all — except Ford. It was for him, too, but any typewriter had gained a guilty association in his mind. He was afraid to put it down, so wrote 'rifles.' 'Shift key,' the next word, of course intensified his connection with the crime; so he refused to write naturally, as the others did, either 'typewriter' or 'dollar mark,' and wrote 'trigger' to give an unsuspicious appearance. 'Secret writing' recalled at once the 'symbols' which I had suggested to him, and which, of course, were in his mind anyway; but he wrote 'cable code' — not in itself entirely unnatural for one in a bank. The next word, 'combination,' to everyone in a bank, at all times — particularly if just emphasized — suggests its association, 'safe'; and every single one of the others, who had no guilty connection to conceal, so associated it. Ford went out of his way to write 'monopoly.' And his next association of 'rifle,' again, with 'waste-basket' is perhaps the most interesting of all. As he had been searching the waste-basket for 'scraps' he thought it suspicious to put down that entirely natural association; but scraps recalled to him those scraps bearing 'typewriter 'symbols, and, avoiding the word typewriter, he substituted for it his innocent association, 'rifle.'

"The next words on my list were those put in to betray the man who had taken the money — Shaffer. 'Ten thousand,' the amount he had taken, suggested dollars to him, of course; but he was afraid to write dollars. He wanted to appear entirely unconnected with any 'ten thousand dollars'; so he wrote 'doors.' At 'five hundred' Shaffer, with twenty stolen five-hundred dollar bills in his possession, referred to appear to be thinking of five hundred 'windows.' 'September 29th,' the day of the theft, was burned into Shaffer's brain, so, avoiding it, he wrote 'last year.' 'Promissory note' in the replies of most of your clerks brought out the natural connection of 'sixty days 'suggested in my speech, but Shaffer — since it was just sixty days since he stole — avoided it, precisely as both he and Ford, fearing arrest as thieves, avoided — and were the only ones who avoided — the line of least resistance in my last word. And the evidence was complete against them!"

Howell was staring at the lists, amazed. "I see! I see!" he cried, in awe. "There is only one thing." He raised his head. "It is clear here, of course, now that you

have explained it, how you knew Shaffer was the one who took the money; but, was it a guess that he found it in the waste-basket?”

“No; rather a chance that I was able to determine it,” Trant replied. “All his associations for the early words, except one, are as natural and easy as anyone else’s, for these were the words put in to detect Ford. But for some reason, ‘waste-basket ‘troubled Shaffer, too. Supposing the money was lost by old Gordon in putting it into the bag, it seemed more than probable that Shaffer’s disturbance over this word came from the fact that Gordon had tossed the missing bills into the waste-basket.”

There was a knock on the door. The special police officer of the bank entered with Shaffer, who laid a package on the desk.

“This is correct, Shaffer,” Howell acknowledged as he ran quickly through the bills. He stepped to the door. “Send Mr. Gordon here,” he commanded.

“You were in time to save Gordon and Ford, Trant,” the banker continued. “I shall merely dismiss Ford. Shaffer is a thief and must be punished. Old Gordon —”

He stopped and turned quickly as the old cashier entered without knocking.

“Gordon,” said the acting-president, pointing to the packet of money on the desk, “I have sent for you to return to you this money — the ten thousand dollars which you gave to the bank — and to tell you that your son was not a thief, though this gentleman has just saved us, I am afraid, from making him one. In saving the boy, Gordon, he had to discover and reveal to me that you have worn yourself out in our service. But, I shall see that you can retire when father returns, with a proper pension.”

The old cashier stared at his young employer dully for a moment; his dim eyes dropped, uncomprehending, to the packet of money on the desk. Then he came forward slowly, with bowed head, and took it.

THE MAN HIGHER UP

The first real blizzard of the winter had burst upon New York from the Atlantic. For seventy-two hours — as Rentland, file clerk in the Broadway offices of the American Commodities Company, saw from the record he was making for President Welter — no ship of any of the dozen expected from foreign ports had been able to make the Company's docks in Brooklyn, or, indeed, had been reported at Sandy Hook. And for the last five days, during which the weather bureau's storm signals had stayed steadily set, no steamer of the six which had finished unloading at the docks the week before had dared to try for the open sea except one, the *Elizabethan Age*, which had cleared the Narrows on Monday night.

On land the storm was scarcely less disastrous to the business of the great importing company. Since Tuesday morning Rentland's reports of the car and train-load consignments which had left the warehouses daily had been a monotonous page of trains stalled. But until that Friday morning, Welter — the big, bull-necked, thick-lipped master of men and money — had borne all the accumulated trouble of the week with serenity, almost with contempt. Only when the file clerk added to his report the minor item that the 3,000-ton steamer, *Elizabethan Age*, which had cleared on Monday night, had been driven into Boston, something suddenly seemed to "break" in the inner office. Rentland heard the president's secretary telephone to Brooklyn for Rowan, the dock superintendent; he heard Welter's heavy steps going to and fro in the private office, his hoarse voice raised angrily; and soon afterwards Rowan blustered in. Rentland could no longer overhear the voices. He went back to his own private office and called the station master at the Grand Central Station on the telephone.

"The seven o'clock train from Chicago?" the clerk asked in a guarded voice. "It came in at 10.30, as expected? Oh, at 10.10! Thank you." He hung up the receiver and opened the door to pass a word with Rowan as he came out of the president's office.

"They've wired that the *Elizabethan Age* couldn't get beyond Boston, Rowan," he cried curiously.

"The — — — hooker!" The dock superintendent had gone strangely white; for

the imperceptible fraction of an instant his eyes dimmed with fear, as he stared into the wondering face of the clerk, but he recovered himself quickly, spat offensively, and slammed the door as he went out. Rentland stood with clenching hands for a moment; then he glanced at the clock and hurried to the entrance of the outer office. The elevator was just bringing up from the street a red-haired, blue-gray-eyed young man of medium height, who, noting with a quick, intelligent glance the arrangement of the offices, advanced directly toward President Welter's door. The chief clerk stepped forward quickly.

"You are Mr. Trant?"

"Yes."

"I am Rentland. This way, please." He led the psychologist to the little room behind the files, where he had telephoned the moment before.

"Your wire to me in Chicago, which brought me here," said Trant, turning from the inscription "File Clerk "on the door to the dogged, decisive features and wiry form of his client, "gave me to understand that you wished to have me investigate the disappearance, or death, of two of your dock scalecheckers. I suppose you were acting for President Welter — of whom I have heard — in sending for me?"

"No," said Rentland, as he waved Trant to a seat. "President Welter is certainly not troubling himself to that extent over an investigation."

"Then the company, or some other officer?" Trant questioned, with increasing curiosity.

"No; nor the company, nor any other officer in it, Mr. Trant." Rentland smiled. "Nor even am I, as file clerk of the American Commodities Company, overtroubling myself about those checkers," he leaned nearer to Trant, confidentially, "but as a special agent for the United States Treasury Department I am extremely interested in the death of one of these men, and in the disappearance of the other. And for that I called you to help me."

"As a secret agent for the Government?" Trant repeated, with rapidly rising interest.

"Yes; a spy, if you wish to call me, but as truly in the ranks of the enemies to my

country as any Nathan Hale, who has a statue in this city. To-day the enemies are the big, corrupting, thieving corporations like this company; and appreciating that, I am not ashamed to be a spy in their ranks, commissioned by the Government to catch and condemn President Welter, and any other officers involved with him, for systematically stealing from the Government for the past ten years, and for probable connivance in the murder of at least one of those two checkers so that the company might continue to steal."

"To steal? How?"

"Customs frauds, thefts, smuggling — anything you wish to call it. Exactly what or how, I can't tell; for that is part of what I sent for you to find out. For a number of years the Customs Department has suspected, upon circumstantial evidence, that the enormous profits of this company upon the thousand and one things which it is importing and distributing must come in part from goods they have got through without paying the proper duty. So at my own suggestion I entered the employ of the company a year ago to get track of the method. But after a year here I was almost ready to give up the investigation in despair, when Ed Landers, the company's checker on the docks in scale house No. 3, was killed — accidentally, the coroner's jury said. To me it looked suspiciously like murder. Within two weeks Morse, who was appointed as checker in his place, suddenly disappeared. The company's officials showed no concern as to the fate of these two men; and my suspicions that something crooked might be going on at scale house No. 3 were strengthened; and I sent for you to help me to get at the bottom of things."

"Is it not best then to begin by giving me as fully as possible the details of the employment of Morse and Landers, and also of their disappearance?" the young psychologist suggested.

"I have told you these things here, Trant, rather than take you to some safer place," the secret agent replied, "because I have been waiting for some one who can tell you what you need to know better than I can. Edith Rowan, the stepdaughter of the dock superintendent, knew Landers well, for he boarded at Rowan's house. She was — or is, if he still lives — engaged to Morse. It is an unusual thing for Rowan himself to come here to see President Welter, as he did just before you came; but every morning since Morse disappeared his daughter has come to see Welter personally. She is already waiting in the outer office." Opening the door, he indicated to Trant a light-haired, overdressed, nervous girl

twisting about uneasily on the seat outside the president's private office.

"Welter thinks it policy, for some reason, to see her a moment every morning. But she always comes out almost at once — crying."

"This is interesting," Trant commented, as he watched the girl go into the president's office. After only a moment she came out, crying. Rentland had already left his room, so it seemed by chance that he and Trant met and supported her to the elevator, and over the slippery pavement to the neat electric coupe which was standing at the curb.

"It's hers," said Rentland, as Trant hesitated before helping the girl into it. "It's one of the things I wanted you to see. Broadway is very slippery, Miss Rowan. You will let me see you home again this morning? This gentleman is Mr. Trant, a private detective. I want him to come along with us."

The girl acquiesced, and Trant crowded into the little automobile. Rentland turned the coupe skillfully out into the swept path of the street, ran swiftly down Fifth Avenue to Fourteenth Street, and stopped three streets to the east before a house in the middle of the block. The house was as narrow and cramped and as cheaply constructed as its neighbors on both sides. It had lace curtains conspicuous in every window, and impressive statuettes, vases, and gaudy bits of bric-a-brac in the front rooms.

"He told me again that Will must still be off drunk; and Will never takes a drink," she spoke to them for the first time, as they entered the little sitting room.

"'He' is Welter," Rentland explained to Trant. "'Will' is Morse, the missing man. Now, Miss Rowan, I have brought Mr. Trant with me because I have asked him to help me find Morse for you, as I promised; and I want you to tell him everything you can about how Landers was killed and how Morse disappeared."

"And remember," Trant interposed, "that I know very little about the American Commodities Company."

"Why, Mr. Trant," the girl gathered herself together, "you cannot help knowing something about the company! It imports almost everything — tobacco, sugar, coffee, wines, olives, and preserved fruits, oils, and all sorts of table delicacies, from all over the world, even from Borneo, Mr. Trant, and from Madagascar and New Zealand. It has big warehouses at the docks with millions of dollars' worth

of goods stored in them. My stepfather has been with the company for years, and has charge of all that goes on at the docks."

"Including the weighing?"

"Yes; everything on which there is a duty when it is taken off the boats has to be weighed, and to do this there are big scales, and for each one a scale house. When a scale is being used there are two men in the scale house. One of these is the Government weigher, who sets the scale to a balance and notes down the weight in a book. The other man, who is an employee of the company, writes the weight also in a book of his own; and he is called the company's checker. But though there are half a dozen scales, almost everything, when it is possible, is unloaded in front of scale No. 3, for that is the best berth for ships."

"And Landers?"

"Landers was the company's checker on scale No. 3. Well, about five weeks ago I began to see that Mr. Landers was troubled about something. Twice a queer, quiet little man with a scar on his cheek came to see him, and each time they went up to Mr. Landers's room and talked a long while. Ed's room was over the sitting room, and after the man had gone I could hear him walking back and forth — walking and walking until it seemed as though he would never stop. I told father about this man who troubled Mr. Landers, and he asked him about it, but Mr. Landers flew into a rage and said it was nothing of importance. Then one night — it was a Wednesday — everybody stayed late at the docks to finish unloading the steamer *Covallo*. About two o'clock father got home, but Mr. Landers had not been ready to come with him. He did not come all that night, and the next day he did not come home.

"Now, Mr. Trant, they are very careful at the warehouses about who goes in and out, because so many valuable things are stored there. On one side the warehouses open onto the docks, and at each end they are fenced off so that you cannot go along the docks and get away from them that way; and on the other side they open onto the street through great driveway doors, and at every door, as long as it is open, there stands a watchman, who sees everybody that goes in and out. Only one door was open that Wednesday night, and the watchman there had not seen Mr. Landers go out. And the second night passed, and he did not come home. But the next morning, Friday morning," the girl caught her breath hysterically, "Mr. Landers's body was found in the engine room back of scale

house No. 3, with the face crushed in horribly!”

“Was the engine room occupied?” said Trant, quickly.

“It must have been occupied in the daytime, and probably on the night when Landers disappeared, as they were unloading the *Covallo*. But on the night after which the body was found — was it occupied that night?”

“I don’t know, Mr. Trant. I think it could not have been, for after the verdict of the coroner’s jury, which was that Mr. Landers had been killed by some part of the machinery, it was said that the accident must have happened either the evening before, just before the engineer shut off his engines, or the first thing that morning, just after he had started them; for otherwise somebody in the engine room would have seen it.”

“But where had Landers been all day Thursday, Miss Rowan, from two o’clock on the second night before, when your father last saw him, until the accident in the engine room?”

“It was supposed he had been drunk. When his body was found, his clothes were covered with fibers from the coffee-sacking, and the jury supposed he had been sleeping off his liquor in the coffee warehouse during Thursday. But I had known Ed Landers for almost three years, and in all that time I never knew him to take even one drink.”

“Then it was a very unlikely supposition. You do not believe in that accident, Miss Rowan?” Trant said, brusquely.

The girl grew white as paper. “Oh, Mr. Trant, I don’t know! I did believe in it. But since Will — Mr. Morse — has disappeared in exactly the same way, under exactly the same circumstances, and everyone acts about it exactly the same way —”

“You say the circumstances of Morse’s disappearance were the same?” Trant pressed quietly when she was able to proceed.

“After Mr. Landers had been found dead,” said the girl, pulling herself together again, “Mr. Morse, who had been checker in one of the other scale houses, was made checker on scale No. 3. We were surprised at that, for it was a sort of promotion, and father did not like Will; he had been greatly displeased at our

engagement. Will's promotion made us very happy, for it seemed as though father must be changing his opinion. But after Will had been checker on scale No. 3 only a few days, the same queer, quiet little man with the scar on his cheek who had begun coming to see Mr. Landers before he was killed began coming to see Will, too! And after he began coming, Will was troubled, terribly troubled, I could see; but he would not tell me the reason. And he expected, after that man began coming, that something would happen to him. And I know, from the way he acted and spoke about Mr. Landers, that he thought he had not been accidentally killed. One evening, when I could see he had been more troubled than ever before, he said that if anything happened to him I was to go at once to his boarding house and take charge of everything in his room, and not to let anyone into the room to search it until I had removed everything in the bureau drawers; everything, no matter how useless anything seemed. Then, the very next night, five days ago, just as while Mr. Landers was checker, everybody stayed overtime at the docks to finish unloading a vessel, the *Elizabethan Age*. And in the morning Will's landlady called me on the phone to tell me that he had not come home. Five days ago, Mr. Trant! And since then no one has seen or heard from him; and the watchman did not see him come out of the warehouse that night just as he did not see Ed Landers,"

"What did you find in Morse's bureau?" asked Trant.

"I found nothing."

"Nothing?" Trant repeated. "That is impossible, Miss Rowan! Think again! Remember he warned you that what you found might seem trivial and useless."

The girl, a little defiantly, studied for an instant Trant's clear-cut features. Suddenly she arose and ran from the room, but returned quickly with a strange little implement in her hand. It was merely a bit of wire, straight for perhaps three inches, and then bent in a half circle of five or six inches, the bent portion of the wire being wound carefully with stout twine, thus:

"Except for his clothes and some blank writing paper and envelopes that was absolutely the only thing in the bureau. It was the only thing at all in the only locked drawer."

Trant and Rentland stared disappointedly at this strange implement, which the girl handed to the psychologist.

“You have shown this to your stepfather, Miss Rowan, for a possible explanation of why a company checker should be so solicitous about such a thing as this?” asked Trant.

“No,” the girl hesitated. “Will had told me not to say anything; and I told you father did not like Will. He had made up his mind that I was to marry Ed Landers. In most ways father is kind and generous. He’s kept the coupe we came here in for mother and me for two years; and you see,” she gestured a little proudly about the bedecked and badly furnished rooms, “you see how he gets everything for us. Mr. Landers was most generous, too. He took me to the theaters two or three times every week — always the best seats, too. I didn’t want to go, but father made me. I preferred Will, though he wasn’t so generous.”

Trant’s eyes returned, with more intelligent scrutiny, to the mysterious implement in his hand.

“What salary do checkers receive, Rentland?” he asked, in a low tone.

“One hundred and twenty-five dollars a month.”

“And her father, the dock superintendent — how much?” Trant’s expressive glance now jumping about from one gaudy, extravagant trifle in the room to another, caught a glimpse again of the electric coupe standing in the street, then returned to the tiny bit of wire in his hand.

“Three thousand a year,” Rentland replied.

“Tell me, Miss Rowan,” said Trant, “this implement — have you by any chance mentioned it to President Welter?”

“Why, no, Mr. Trant.”

“You are sure of that? Excellent! Excellent! Now the queer, quiet little man with the scar on his cheek who came to see Morse; no one could tell you anything about him?”

“No one, Mr. Trant; but yesterday Will’s landlady told me that a man has come to ask for Will every forenoon since he disappeared, and she thinks this may be the man with the scar, though she can’t be sure, for he kept the collar of his overcoat up about his face. She was to telephone me if he came again.”

“If he comes this morning,” Trant glanced quickly at his watch, “you and I, Rentland, might much better be waiting for him over there.”

The psychologist rose, putting the bent, twine-wound bit of wire carefully into his pocket; and a minute later the two men crossed the street to the house, already known to Rentland, where Morse had boarded. The landlady not only allowed them to wait in her little parlor, but waited with them until at the end of an hour she pointed with an eager gesture to a short man in a big ulster who turned sharply up the front steps.

“That’s him — see!” she exclaimed.

“That the man with the scar!” cried Rentland. “Well! I know him.”

He made for the door, caught at the ulster and pulled the little man into the house by main force.

“Well, Dickey!” the secret agent challenged, as the man faced him in startled recognition. “What are you doing in this case? Trant, this is Inspector Dickey, of the Customs Office,” he introduced the officer.

“I’m in the case on my own hook, if I know what case you’re talking about,” piped Dickey. “Morse, eh? and the American Commodities Company, eh?”

“Exactly,” said Rentland, brusquely. “What were you calling to see Landers for?”

“You know about that?” The little man looked up sharply. “Well, six weeks ago Landers came to me and told me he had something to sell; a secret system for beating the customs. But before we got to terms, he began losing his nerve a little; he got it back, however, and was going to tell me when, all at once, he disappeared, and two days later he was dead! That made it hotter for me; so I went after Morse. But Morse denied he knew anything. Then Morse disappeared, too.”

“So you got nothing at all out of them?” Rentland interposed.

“Nothing I could use. Landers, one time when he was getting up his nerve, showed me a piece of bent wire — with string around it — in his room, and began telling me something when Rowan called him, and then he shut up.”

“A bent wire!” Trant cried, eagerly. “Like this?” He took from his pocket the implement given him by Edith Rowan. “Morse had this in his room, the only thing in a locked drawer.”

“The same thing!” Dickey cried, seizing it. “So Morse had it, too, after he became checker at scale No. 3, where the cheating is, if anywhere. The very thing Landers started to explain to me, and how they cheated the customs with it. I say, we must have it now, Rentland! We need only go to the docks and watch them while they weigh, and see how they use it, and arrest them and then we have them at last, eh, old man?” he cried in triumph. “We have them at last!”

“You mean,” Trant cut in upon the customs man, “that you can convict and jail perhaps the checker, or a foreman, or maybe even a dock superintendent — as usual. But the men higher up — the big men who are really at the bottom of this business and the only ones worth getting — will you catch them?”

“We must take those we can get,” said Dickey sharply.

Trant laid his hand on the little officer’s arm. “I am a stranger to you,” he said, “but if you have followed some of the latest criminal cases in Illinois perhaps you know that, using the methods of modern practical psychology, I have been able to get results where old ways have failed. We are front to front now with perhaps the greatest problem of modern criminal catching, to catch, in cases involving a great corporation, not only the little men low down who perform the criminal acts, but the men higher up, who conceive, or connive at the criminal scheme. Rentland, I did not come here to convict merely a dock foreman; but if we are going to reach anyone higher than that, you must not let Inspector Dickey excite suspicion by prying into matters at the docks this afternoon!”

“But what else can we do?” said Rentland, doubtfully.

“Modern practical psychology gives a dozen possible ways for proving the knowledge of the man higher up in this corporation crime,” Trant answered, “and I am considering which is the most practicable. Only tell me,” he demanded suddenly; “Mr. Welter I have heard is one of the rich men of New York who make it a fad to give largely to universities and other institutions; can you tell me with what ones he may be most closely interested?”

“I have heard,” Rentland replied, “that he is one of the patrons of the Stuyvesant School of Science. It is probably the most fashionably patroned institution in

New York; and Welter's name, I know, figures with it in the newspapers."

"Nothing could be better!" Trant exclaimed. "Kuno Schmalz has his psychological laboratory there. I see my way now, Rentland; and you will hear from me early in the afternoon. But keep away from the docks!" He turned and left the astonished customs officers abruptly. Half an hour later the young psychologist sent in his card to Professor Schmalz in the laboratory of the Stuyvesant School of Science. The German, broad-faced, spectacled, beaming, himself came to the laboratory door.

"Is it Mr. Trant — the young, apt pupil of my old friend, Dr. Reiland?" he boomed, admiringly. "Ach! luck is good to Reiland! For twenty years I, too, have shown them in the laboratory how fear, guilt, every emotion causes in the body reactions which can be measured. But do they apply it? Pouf! No! it remains to them all impractical, academic, because I have only nincompoops in my classes!"

"Professor Schmalz," said Trant, following him into the laboratory, and glancing from one to another of the delicate instruments with keen interest, "tell me along what line you are now working."

"Ach! I have been for a year now experimenting with the plethysmograph and the pneumograph. I make a taste, I make a smell, or I make a noise to excite feeling in the subject; and I read by the plethysmograph that the volume of blood in the hand decreases under the emotions and that the pulse quickens; and by the pneumograph I read that the breathing is easier or quicker, depending on whether the emotions are pleasant or unpleasant. I have performed this year more than two thousand of those experiments."

"Good! I have a problem in which you can be of the very greatest use to me; and the plethysmograph and the pneumograph will serve my purpose as well as any other instrument in the laboratory. For no matter how hardened a man may be, no matter how impossible it may have become to detect his feelings in his face or bearing, he cannot prevent the volume of blood in his hand from decreasing, and his breathing from becoming different, under the influence of emotions of fear or guilt. By the way, professor, is Mr. Welter familiar with these experiments of yours?"

"What, he!" cried the stout German. "For why should I tell him about them? He

knows nothing. He has bought my time to instruct classes; he has not bought, py chiminey! everything — even the soul Gott gave me!”

“But he would be interested in them?”

“To be sure, he would be interested in them! He would bring in his automobile three or four other fat money-makers, and he would show me off before them. He would make his trained bear — that is me — dance!”

“Good!” cried Trant again, excitedly. “Professor Schmalz, would you be willing to give a little exhibition of the plethysmograph and pneumograph, this evening, if possible, and arrange for President Welter to attend it?”

The astute German cast on him a quick glance of interrogation. “Why not?” he said. “It makes nothing to me what purpose you will be carrying out; no, py chiminey! not if it costs me my position of trained bear; because I have confidence in my psychology that it will not make any innocent man suffer!”

“And you will have two or three scientists present to watch the experiments? And you will allow me to be there also and assist?”

“With great pleasure.”

“But, Professor Schmalz, you need not introduce me to Mr. Welter, who will think I am one of your assistants.”

“As you wish about that, pupil of my dear old friend.”

“Excellent!” Trant leaped to his feet. “Provided it is possible to arrange this with Mr. Welter, how soon can you let me know?”

“Ach! it is as good as arranged, I tell you. His vanity will arrange it if I assure the greatest publicity—”

“The more publicity the better.”

“Wait! It shall be fixed before you leave here.”

The professor led the way into his private study, telephoned to the president of the American Commodities Company, and made the appointment without

trouble.

A few minutes before eight o'clock that evening Trant again mounted rapidly the stone steps to the professor's laboratory. The professor and two others, who were bending over a table in the center of the room, turned at his entrance. President Welter had not yet arrived. The young psychologist acknowledged with pleasure the introduction to the two scientists with Schmalz. Both of them were known to him by name, and he had been following with interest a series of experiments which the elder, Dr. Annerly, had been reporting in a psychological journal. Then he turned at once to the apparatus on the table. He was still examining the instruments when the noise of a motor stopping at the door warned him of the arrival of President Welter's party. Then the laboratory door opened and the party appeared. They also were three in number; stout men, rather obtrusively dressed, in jovial spirits, with strong faces flushed now with the wine they had taken at dinner.

"Well, professor, what fireworks are you going to show us tonight?" asked Welter, patronizingly. "Schmalz," he explained to his companions, "is the chief ring master of this circus."

The bearded face of the German grew purple under Welter's jokingly overbearing manner; but he turned to the instruments and began to explain them. The Marey pneumograph, which the professor first took up, consists of a very thin flexible brass plate suspended by a cord around the neck of the person under examination, and fastened tightly against the chest by a cord circling the body. On the outer surface of this plate are two small, bent levers, connected at one end to the cord around the body of the subject, and at the other end to the surface of a small hollow drum fastened to the plate between the two. As the chest rises and falls in breathing, the levers press more and less upon the surface of the drum; and this varying pressure on the air inside the drum is transmitted from the drum through an air-tight tube to a little pencil which it drops and lifts. The pencil, as it rises and falls, touching always a sheet of smoked paper traveling over a cylinder on the recording device, traces a line whose rising strokes represent accurately the drawing of air into the chest and whose falling represents its expulsion.

It was clear to Trant that the professor's rapid explanation, though plain enough to the psychologists already familiar with the device, was only partly understood by the big men. It had not been explained to them that changes in the breathing

so slight as to be imperceptible to the eye would be recorded unmistakably by the moving pencil.

Professor Schmalz turned to the second instrument. This was a plethysmograph, designed to measure the increase or decrease of the size of one finger of a person under examination as the blood supply to that finger becomes greater or less. It consists primarily of a small cylinder so constructed that it can be fitted over the finger and made air-tight. Increase or decrease of the size of the finger then increases or decreases the air pressure inside the cylinder. These changes in the air pressure are transmitted through an air-tight tube to a delicate piston which moves a pencil and makes a line upon the record sheet just under that made by the pneumograph. The upward or downward trend of this line shows the increase or decrease of the blood supply, while the smaller vibrations up and down record the pulse beat in the finger.

There was still a third pencil touching the record sheet above the other two and wired electrically to a key like that of a telegraph instrument fastened to the table. When this key was in its normal position this pencil made simply a straight line upon the sheet; but instantly when the key was pressed down, the line broke downward also.

This third instrument was used merely to record on the sheet, by the change in the line, the point at which the object that aroused sensation or emotion was displayed to the person undergoing examination. The instant's silence which followed Schmalz's rapid explanation was broken by one of Welter's companions with the query:

"Well, what's the use of all this stuff, anyway?"

"Ach!" said Schmalz, bluntly, "it is interesting, curious! I will show you."

"Will one of you gentlemen," said Trant, quickly, "permit us to make use of him in the demonstration?"

"Try it, Jim," Welter laughed, noisily.

"Not I," said the other. "This is your circus."

"Yes, indeed it's mine. And I'm not afraid of it. Schmalz, do your worst!" He dropped laughing into the chair the professor set for him, and at Schmalz's

direction unbuttoned his vest. The professor hung the pneumograph around his neck and fastened it tightly about the big chest. He laid Welter's forearm in a rest suspended from the ceiling, and attached the cylinder to the second ringer of the plump hand. In the meantime Trant had quickly set the pencils to bear upon the record sheet and had started the cylinder on which the sheet traveled under them.

"You see, I have prepared for you." Schmalz lifted a napkin from a tray holding several little dishes. He took from one of these a bit of caviar and laid it upon Welter's tongue. At the same instant Trant pushed down the key. The pencils showed a slight commotion, and the spectators stared at this record sheet:

"Ah!" exclaimed Schmalz, "you do not like caviar."

"How do you know that?" demanded Welter. "The instruments show that at the unpleasant taste you breathe less freely — not so deep. Your finger, as under strong sensation or emotion, grows smaller, and your pulse beats more rapidly."

"By the Lord! Welter, what do you think of that?" cried one of his companions; "your finger gets smaller when you taste caviar!"

It was a joke to them. Boisterously laughing, they tried Welter with other food upon the tray; they lighted for him one of the black cigars of which he was most fond, and watched the trembling pencils write the record of his pleasure at the taste and smell. Through it all Trant waited, alert, watchful, biding the time to carry out his plan. It came when, having exhausted the articles at hand, they paused to find some other means to carry on the amusement. The young psychologist leaned forward suddenly.

"It is no great ordeal after all, is it, Mr. Welter?" he said. "Modern psychology does not put its subjects to torture like" — he halted, meaningly — "a prisoner in the *Elizabethan Age*!"

Dr. Annerly, bending over the record sheet, uttered a startled exclamation. Trant, glancing keenly at him, straightened triumphantly. But the young psychologist did not pause. He took quickly from his pocket a photograph, showing merely a heap of empty coffee sacks piled carelessly to a height of some two feet along the inner wall of a shed, and laid it in front of the subject. Welter's face did not alter; but again the pencils shuddered over the moving paper, and the watchers stared with astonishment. Rapidly removing the photograph, Trant substituted for it the bent wire given him by Miss Rowan. Then for the last time he swung to

the instrument, and as his eyes caught the wildly vibrating pencils, they flared with triumph.

President Welter rose abruptly, but not too hurriedly. “That’s about enough of this tomfoolery,” he said, with perfect self-possession. His jaw had imperceptibly squared to the watchful determination of the prize fighter driven into his corner.

His cheek still held the ruddy glow of health; but the wine flush had disappeared from it, and he was perfectly sober.

Trant tore the strip of paper from the instrument, and numbered the last three reactions I, 2, 3. This is the way the records looked:

“Amazing!” said Dr. Annerly. “Mr. Welter, I am curious to know what associations you have with that photograph and bent wire, the sight of which aroused in you such strong emotion.”

By immense self-control, the president of the American Commodities Company met his eyes fairly. “None,” he answered.

“Impossible! No psychologist, knowing how this record was taken, could look at it without feeling absolutely certain that the photograph and spring caused in you such excessive emotion that I am tempted to give it, without further words, the name of ‘intense fright!’ But if we have inadvertently surprised a secret, we have no desire to pry into it further. Is it not so, Mr. Trant?”

At the name President Welter whirled suddenly. “Trant! Is your name Trant?” he demanded. “Well, I’ve heard of you.” His eyes hardened. “A man like you goes just so far, and then — somebody stops him!”

“As they stopped Landers?” Trant inquired.

“Come, we’ve seen enough, I guess,” said President Welter, including for one instant in his now frankly menacing gaze both Trant and Professor Schmalz; he turned to the door, closely followed by his companions. And a moment later the quick explosions of his automobile were heard. At the sound, Trant seized suddenly a large envelope, dropped into it the photograph and wire he had just used, sealed, signed, and dated it, signed and dated also the record from the instruments, and hurriedly handed all to Dr. Annerly.

“Doctor, I trust this to you,” he cried, excitedly. “It will be best to have them attested by all three of you. If possible get the record photograph tonight, and distribute the photographs in safe places. Above all, do not let the record itself out of your hands until I come for it. It is important — extremely important! As for me, I have not a moment to lose!”

The young psychologist sped down the stone steps of the laboratory three at a time, ran at top speed to the nearest street corner, turned it and leaped into a waiting automobile. “The American Commodities Company’s docks in Brooklyn,” he shouted, “and never mind the speed limits!”

Rentland and the chauffeur, awaiting him in the machine, galvanized at his coming.

“Hot work?” the customs agent asked.

“It may be very hot; but we have the start of him,” Trant replied as the car shot ahead. “Welter himself is coming to the docks tonight, I think, by the look of him! He left just before me, but must drop his friends first. He suspects, now, that we know; but he cannot be aware that we know that they are unloading tonight. He probably counts on our waiting to catch them at the cheating tomorrow morning. So he’s going over tonight himself, if I size him up right, to order it stopped and remove all traces before we can prove anything. Is Dickey waiting?”

“When you give the word he is to take us in and catch them at it. If Welter himself comes, as you think, it will not change the plan?” Rentland replied.

“Not at all,” said Trant, “for I have him already. He will deny everything, of course, but it’s too late now!”

The big car, with unchecked speed, swung down Broadway, slowed after a twenty-minutes’ run to cross the Brooklyn Bridge, and, turning to the left, plunged once more at high speed into the narrower and less well-kept thoroughfares of the Brooklyn water front. Two minutes later it overtook a little electric coupe, bobbing excitedly down the sloping street. As they passed it, Trant caught sight of the illuminated number hanging at its rear, and shouted suddenly to the chauffeur, who brought the big motor to a stop a hundred feet beyond. The psychologist, leaping down, ran into the road before the little car.

“Miss Rowan,” he cried to its single occupant, as it came to a stop. “Why are you coming over here at this time tonight?”

“Oh, it’s you, Mr. Trant!” She opened the door, showing relief in the recognition. “Oh, I’m so worried. I’m on my way to see father; for a telegram just came to him from Boston; mother opened it, and told me to take it to him at once, as it was most important. She wouldn’t tell me what it was about, but it excited her a great deal. Oh, I’m so afraid it must be about Will and that was why she wouldn’t tell me.”

“From Boston?” Trant pressed quickly. Having her confidence, the girl nervously read the telegram aloud by the light of the coupe’s side lamps. It read:

Police have taken your friend out of our hands; look out for trouble. *Wilson.*

“Who is Wilson?” Trant demanded.

“I am not sure it is the man, but the captain of the *Elizabethan Age* is a friend of father’s named Wilson!”

“I can’t help you then, after all,” said Trant, springing back to his powerful car. He whispered a word to the chauffeur which sent it driving ahead through the drifts at double its former speed, leaving the little electric coupe far behind. Ten minutes later Rentland stopped the motor a block short of a great lighted doorway which suddenly showed in a length of dark, lowering buildings which lay beside the American Commodities Company’s Brooklyn docks.

“Now,” the secret agent volunteered, “it is up to me to find Dickey’s ladder!”

He guided Trant down a narrow, dark court which brought them face to face with a blank wall; against this wall a light ladder had been recently placed. Ascending it, they came into the dock inclosure. Descending again by a dozen rickety, disused steps, they reached a darker, covered teamway and hurried along it to the docks. Just short of the end of the open dock houses, where a string of arc lamps threw their white and flickering light upon the huge, black side of a moored steamer, Rentland turned into a little shed, and the two came suddenly upon Customs Officer Dickey.

“This one next to us,” the little man whispered, eagerly, to Trant, as he grasped his hand, “is the scale house where whatever is being done is done — No. 3.”

In and out of the yawning gangways of the steamer before them struggling lines of sweating men were wheeling trucks loaded with bales of tobacco. Trant looked first to the left, where the bales disappeared into the tobacco warehouse; then to the right, where, close at hand, each truck-load stopped momentarily on a scale platform in front of the low shed which bore the number Dickey indicated in a large white figure.

“Who’s that?” asked Trant, as a small figure, hardly five feet tall, cadaverous, beetle-browed, with cold, malignant, red-lidded eyes passed directly under the arc light nearest them.

“Rowan, the dock superintendent!” Dickey whispered.

“I knew he was small,” Trant returned with surprise, “but I thought surely he must have some fist to be the terror of these dock laborers.”

“Wait!” Rentland, behind them, motioned. A bloated, menacing figure had suddenly swung clear of the group of dock laborers — a roustabout, goaded to desperation, with a fist raised against his puny superior. But before the blow had fallen another fist, huge and black, struck the man over Rowan’s shoulder with a hammer. He fell, and the dock superintendent passed on without a backward glance, the giant negro who had struck the blow following in his footsteps like a dog.

“The black,” Rentland explained, “is Rowan’s bodyguard. He needs him.”

“I see,” Trant replied. “And for Miss Rowan’s sake I am glad it was that way,” he added, enigmatically.

Dickey had quietly opened a door on the opposite side of the shed; the three slipped quickly through it and stepped unobserved around the corner of the coffee warehouse to a long, dark, and narrow space. On one side of them was the rear wall of scale house No. 3, and on the other the engine room where Landers’s body had been found. The single window in the rear of No. 3 scale house had been whitewashed to prevent anyone from looking in from that side; but in spots the whitewash had fallen off in flakes. Trant put his eye to one of these clear spots in the glass and looked in.

The scale table, supported on heavy posts, extended across almost the whole front of the house, behind a low, wide window, which permitted those seated at

the table to see all that occurred on the docks. Toward the right end of the table sat the Government weigher; toward the left end, and separated from him by almost the whole length of the table, sat the company checker. They were the only persons in the scale house. Trant, after his first rapid survey of the scene, fixed his eye upon the man who had taken the place which Landers had held for three years, and Morse for a few days afterwards — the company checker. A truck-load of tobacco bales was wheeled on to the scales in front of the house.

“Watch his left knee,” Trant whispered quickly into Dickey’s ear at the pane beside him, as the balance was being made upon the beam before them. As he spoke, the Government weigher adjusted the balance and they saw the left leg of the company checker pressed hard against the post which protected the scale rod at his end. Both men in the scale house then read aloud the weight and each entered it in the book on the table in front of him. A second truckful was wheeled on to the scale; and again, just as the Government weigher fixed his balances, the company checker, so inconspicuously as to make the act undiscoverable by anyone not looking for that precise move, repeated the operation. With the next truck they saw it again. The psychologist turned to the others. Rentland, too, had been watching through the pane and nodded his satisfaction.

Immediately Trant dashed open the door of the scale house, and threw himself bodily upon the checker. The man resisted; they struggled. While the customs men protected him, Trant, wrenching something from the post beside the checker’s left knee, rose with a cry of triumph. Then the psychologist, warned by a cry from Rentland, leaped quickly to one side to avoid a blow from the giant negro. His quickness saved him; still the blow, glancing along his cheek, hurled him from his feet. He rose immediately, blood flowing from a superficial cut upon his forehead where it had struck the scale-house wall. He saw Rentland covering the negro with a revolver, and the two other customs men arresting, at pistol point, the malignant little dock superintendent, the checker, and the others who had crowded into the scale house.

“You see!” Trant exhibited to the customs officers a bit of bent wire, wound with string, precisely like that the girl had given him that morning and he had used in his test of Welter the hour before. “It was almost exactly as we knew it must be! This spring was stuck through a hole in the protecting post so that it prevented the balance beam from rising properly when bales were put on the platform. A little pressure just at that point takes many pounds from each bale weighed. The

checker had only to move his knee, in a way we would never have noticed if we were not watching for it, to work the scheme by which they have been cheating for ten years! But the rest of this affair," he glanced at the quickly collecting crowd, "can best be settled in the office."

He led the way, the customs men taking their prisoners at pistol point. As they entered the office, Rowan first, a girl's cry and the answering oath of her father told Trant that the dock superintendent's daughter had arrived. But she had been almost overtaken by another powerful car; for before Trant could speak with her the outer door of the office opened violently and President Welter, in an automobile coat and cap, entered.

"Ah! Mr. Welter, you got here quickly," said Trant, meeting calmly his outraged astonishment at the scene. "But a little too late."

"What is the matter here?" Welter governed his voice commandingly. "And what has brought you here, from your phrenology?" he demanded, contemptuously, of Trant.

"The hope of catching red-handed, as we have just caught them, your company checker and your dock superintendent defrauding the Government," Trant returned, "before you could get here to stop them and remove evidences."

"What raving idiocy is this?" Welter replied, still with excellent moderation. "I came here to sign some necessary papers - for ships clearing, and you —"

"I say we have caught your men red-handed," Trant repeated, "at the methods used, with your certain knowledge and under your direction, Mr. Welter, to steal systematically from the United States Government for — probably the last ten years. We have uncovered the means by which your company checker at scale No. 3, which, because of its position, probably weighs more cargoes than all the other scales together, has been lessening the apparent weights upon which you pay duties."

"Cheating here under my direction?" Welter now bellowed indignantly. "What are you talking about? Rowan, what is he talking about?" he demanded, boldly, of the dock superintendent; but the cadaverous little man was unable to brazen it out with him.

"You need not have looked at your dock superintendent just then, Mr. Welter, to

see if he would stand the racket when the trouble comes, for which you have been paying him enough on the side to keep him in electric motors and marble statuettes. And you cannot try now to disown this crime with the regular president-of-corporation excuse, Mr. Welter, that you never knew of it, that it was all done without your knowledge by a subordinate to make a showing in his department; and do not expect, either, to escape so easily your certain complicity in the murder of Landers, to prevent him from exposing your scheme and — since even the American Commodities Company scarcely dared to have two 'accidental deaths' of checkers in the same month — the shanghaiing of Morse later."

"My complicity in the death of Landers and the disappearance of Morse?" Welter roared.

"I said the murder of Landers," Trant corrected. "For when Rentland and Dickey tell tomorrow before the grand jury how Landers was about to disclose to the Customs Department the secret of the cheating in weights; how he was made afraid by Rowan, and later was about to tell anyway and was prevented only by a most sudden death, I think murder will be the word brought in the indictment. And I said shanghaiing of Morse, Mr. Welter. When we remembered this morning that Morse had disappeared the night the *Elizabethan Age* left your docks and you and Rowan were so intensely disgusted at its having had to put into Boston this morning instead of going on straight to Sumatra, we did not have to wait for the chance information this evening that Captain Wilson is a friend of Rowan's to deduce that the missing checker was put aboard, as confirmed by the Boston harbor police this afternoon, who searched the ship under our instructions." Trant paused a moment; again fixed the now trembling Welter with his eye, and continued: "I charge your certain complicity in these crimes, along with your certain part in the customs frauds," the psychologist repeated. "Undoubtedly, it was Rowan who put Morse out of the way upon the *Elizabethan Age*. Nevertheless, you knew that he was a prisoner upon that ship, a fact which was written down in indelible black and white by my tests of you at the Stuyvesant Institute two hours ago, when I merely mentioned to you 'a prisoner in the *Elizabethan Age*.'

"I do not charge that you, personally, were the one who murdered Landers; or even that Rowan himself did; whether his negro did, as I suspect, is a matter now for the courts to decide upon. But that you undoubtedly were aware that he was not killed accidentally in the engine room, but was killed the Wednesday night

before and his body hidden under the coffee bags, as I guessed from the fibers of coffee sacking on his clothes, was also registered as mercilessly by the psychological machines when I showed you merely the picture of a pile of coffee sacks.

“And last, Mr. Welter, you deny knowledge of the cheating which has been going on, and was at the bottom of the other crimes. Well, Welter,” the psychologist took from his pocket the bent, twine-wound wire, “here is the ‘innocent’ little thing which was the third means of causing you to register upon the machines such extreme and inexplicable emotion; or rather, Mr. Welter, it is the companion piece to that, for this is not the one I showed you, the one given to Morse to use, which, however, he refused to make use of; but it is the very wire I took tonight from the hole in the post where it bore against the balance beam to cheat the Government. When this is made public tomorrow, and with it is made public, too, and attested by the scientific men who witnessed them, the diagram and explanation of the tests of you two hours ago, do you think that you can deny longer that this was all with your knowledge and direction?”

The big, bull neck of the president swelled, and his hands clenched and reclenched as he stared with gleaming eyes into the face of the young man who thus challenged him.

“You are thinking now, I suppose, Mr. Welter,” Trant replied to his glare, “that such evidence as that directly against you cannot be got before a court. I am not so sure of that. But at least it can go before the public tomorrow morning in the papers, attested by the signatures of the scientific men who witnessed the test. It has been photographed by this time, and the photographic copies are distributed in safe places, to be produced with the original on the day when the Government brings criminal proceedings against you. If I had it here I would show you how complete, how merciless, is the evidence that you knew what was being done. I would show you how at the point marked *i* on the record your pulse and breathing quickened with alarm under my suggestion; how at the point marked *2* your anxiety and fear increased; and how at *3*, when the spring by which this cheating had been carried out was before your eyes, you betrayed yourself uncontrollably, unmistakably. How the volume of blood in your second finger suddenly diminished, as the current was thrown back upon your heart; how your pulse throbbed with terror; how, though unmoved to outward appearance, you caught your breath, and your laboring lungs struggled under the dread that your wrongdoing was discovered and you would be branded — as I trust you will

now be branded, Mr. Welter, when the evidence in this case and the testimony of those who witnessed my test are produced before a jury — a deliberate and scheming thief!”

“— — you!” The three words escaped from Welter’s puffed lips. He put out his arm to push aside the customs officer standing between him and the door. Dickey resisted.

“Let him go if he wants to!” Trant called to the officer. “He can neither escape nor hide. His money holds him under bond!”

The officer stepped aside, and Welter, without another word, went into the hall. But when his face was no longer visible to Trant, the hanging pouches under his eyes grew leaden gray, his fat lips fell apart loosely, his step shuffled; his mask had fallen!

“Besides, we need all the men we have, I think,” said Trant, turning back to the prisoners, “to get these to a safe place. Miss Rowan,” he turned then and put out his hand to steady the terrified and weeping girl, “I warned you that you had probably better not come here tonight. But since you have come and have had pain because of your stepfather’s wrongdoings, I am glad to be able to give you the additional assurance, beyond the fact, which you have heard, that your fianc was not murdered, but merely put away on board the *Elizabethan Age*; that he is safe and sound, except for a few bruises, and, moreover, we expect him here any moment now. The police were bringing him down from Boston on the train which arrives at ten.”

He went to the window and watched an instant, as Dickey and Rentland, having telephoned for a patrol, were waiting with their prisoners. Before the patrol wagon appeared, he saw the bobbing lanterns of a lurching cab that turned a corner a block away. As it stopped at the entrance, a police officer in plain clothes leaped out and helped after him a young man wrapped in an overcoat, with one arm in a sling, pale, and with bandaged head. The girl uttered a cry, and sped through the doorway. For a moment the psychologist stood watching the greeting of the lovers. He turned back then to the sullen prisoners.

“But it’s some advance, isn’t it, Rentland,” he asked, “not to have to try such poor devils alone; but, at last, with the man who makes the millions and pays them the pennies — the man higher up?”

VI

THE CHALCHIHUITL STONE

Tramp — tramp — tramp — tramp — tramp! For three nights and two days the footsteps had echoed through the great house almost ceaselessly.

The white-haired woman leaning on a cane, pausing again in the upper hall to listen to them, started, impulsively, for the tenth time that morning toward her son's door; but, recognizing once more her utter inability to counsel or to comfort, she wiped her tear-filled eyelids and limped painfully back to her own room. The aged negress, again passing the door, pressed convulsively together her bony hands, and sobbed pityingly; she had been the childhood nurse of this man whose footsteps had so echoed for hours as he paced bedroom, library, hall, museum, study — most frequently of all the little study — in his grief and turmoil of spirit.

Tramp — tramp — tramp — tramp!

She shuffled swiftly down the stairs to the big, luxurious morning room on the floor below, where a dark-eyed girl crouched on the couch listening to his footsteps beating overhead, and listening so strangely, without a sign of the grief of the mother or even the negro nurse, that she seemed rather studying her own absence of feeling with perplexity and doubt.

Tramp — tramp — tramp — tramp!

"Ain' yo' sorry for him, Miss Iris?" the negress said.

"Why, Ulame, I — I —" the girl seemed struggling to call up an emotion she did not feel. "I know I ought to feel sorry for him."

"An' the papers? Ain' yo' sorry, honey, dem papers is gone — buhned up; dem papers he thought so much of — all buhned by somebody?"

"The papers? — the papers, Ulame?" the girl exclaimed in bewilderment at herself. "Oh — oh, I know it must be terrible to him that they are gone; but I — I can't feel so sorry about them!"

"Yo' can't?" The negress stiffened with anger. "An' he tol' me, too, this mo'nin, now you won't marry him next Thursday lak' yo' promised — since — since yo'

foun’ dat little green stone! Why is dat — since yo’ foun’ dat little green stone?”

The sincere bewilderment deepened in the girl’s face. “I don’t know why, Ulame — I tell you truly,” she cried, miserably, “I don’t know any reason why that stone — that stone should change me so! Oh, I can’t understand it myself; but I know it is so. Ever since I’ve seen that stone I’ve known it would be wrong to marry him. But I don’t know why!”

“Den I do!” The old negress’s eyes blazed wildly. “It’s a’caze yo’ is voodoo! Yo is voodoo! An’ it’s all my faul’. Oh yas — yas it is!” She rocked. “For yo’se had the ma’k ever since yo’se been a chile; the ma’k of the debbil’s claw! But I nebber tole Marse Richard till too late. But hit’s so! Hit’s so! The debbil’s ma’k is on yo’ left shoulder, and the green stone is de cha’m dat is come to make yo’ break Marse Richard’s heart!”

“Ulame! Oh! Oh!” the girl cried.

“Ulame! Ulame!” a deeper, firm and controlled voice checked them both as the man, whose steps had sounded overhead the moment before, stood in the doorway.

He was a strikingly well-born, good-looking man of thirty-six, strongly set up, muscular, with the body of an athlete surmounted by the broad-browed head of a student. But his skin, indescribably bronzed by the tropic sun during many expeditions to Central America, showed now an underhue of sodden gray; and the thin, red veins which shot his keen, blue eyes, the tenseness of his well-shaped mouth, the pulse visibly beating in his temples, the slight trembling of the usually firm hands, all gave plain evidence of some active grief and long-continued strain; but at the same time bore witness to the self-control which held his emotion in check.

The negress, quieted and rebuked by his words, shuffled out as he entered; and the girl drew herself up quickly to a sitting posture, rearranging her hair with deft pats.

“You must not mind Ulame!” He crossed to her and held her hand steadyingly for an instant. “Or think that I shall ask you anything more except — you have not altered your decision, Iris?” he asked, gently.

The girl shook her head.

“Then I will not even ask that again, my — Iris,” he caught himself. “If you will give me the proper form for recalling our wedding invitations, I will send it at once to Chicago. As to the gifts that have been already received — will you be good enough also to look up the convention under these circumstances?” He caught his breath. “I thought I heard the door bell a moment ago, Iris. Was there some one for me?”

“Yes, Anna went to the door.” The girl motioned to a maid who for five minutes had been hovering about the hall, afraid to go to him with the card she held upon a silver tray.

“Ah! I was expecting him.” He took the card. “Where is he? In the library?”

“Yes, Dr. Pierce.”

He crushed the card in his hand, touched tenderly with his finger tips Iris’s pale cheek, and with the same regular step crossed the hall to the library. A compact figure rose energetically at his coming.

“Mr. Trant?” asked Pierce, carefully closing the door behind him and measuring with forced collectedness his visitor, who seemed slightly surprised. “I need not apologize to you for my note asking you to come to me here in Lake Forest this morning. I understand that with you it is a matter of business. But I thank you for your promptness. I have heard of you from a number of sources as a psychologist who has applied laboratory methods to the solution of — of mysteries — of crimes; not as a police detective, Mr. Trant, but as a — a —”

“Consultant,” the psychologist suggested.

“Yes; a consultant. And I badly need a consultant, Mr. Trant.” Pierce dropped into the nearest chair. “You must pardon me. I am not quite myself this morning. An event — or, rather events — occurred here last Wednesday afternoon which, though I have endeavored to keep my feeling under control, have affected me perhaps even more than I myself was aware; for I noticed your surprise at sight of me, which can only have been occasioned by some strangeness in my appearance which these events have caused.”

“I was surprised,” the psychologist admitted, “but only because I expected to see an older man. When I received your note last evening, Dr. Pierce, I, of course, made some inquiries in regard to you. I found you spoken of as one of the

greatest living authorities on Central American antiquities, especially the hieroglyphic writing on the Maya ruins in Yucatan; and as the expeditions connected with your name seemed to cover a period of nearly sixty years, I expected to find you a man of at least eighty."

"You have confused me with my father, who died in Izabal, Guatemala, in 1895. Our names and our line of work being the same, our reputations are often confused, especially as he never published the results of his work, but left that for me to do. I have not proved a worthy trustee of that bequest, Mr. Trant!" Pierce added, bitterly. He arose in agitation, and began again his mechanical pacing to and fro.

"The events of Wednesday had to do with this trust left you by your father?" the psychologist asked.

"They have destroyed, obliterated, blotted out that trust," Pierce replied. "All the fruits of my father's life work and my own, too, absolutely without purpose, meaning, excuse or explanation of any sort! And more than that — and this is the reason I have asked you to advise me, Mr. Trant, instead of putting the matter into the hands of the police — with even less apparent reason and without her being able to give an explanation of any sort, the events of last Wednesday have had such an effect upon my ward, Iris, to whom I was to be married next Thursday, that she is no longer able to think of marrying me. She clearly loves me no longer, though previous to Wednesday no one who knew us could have the slightest question of her affection for me; and indeed, though previously she had been the very spirit and soul of my work, now she seems no longer to care for its continuance in any way, or to be even sorry for the disaster to it."

He paused in painful agitation. "I must ask your pardon once more," he apologized. "Before you can comprehend any of this I must explain to you how it happened. My father began his study of the Maya hieroglyphics as long ago as 1851. He had had as a young man a very dear friend named James Clarke, who in 1848 took part in an expedition to Chiapas. On this expedition Clarke became separated from his companions, failed to rejoin them, and was never heard from again. It was in search of him that my father in 1850 first went to Central America; and failing to find Clarke, who was probably dead, he returned with a considerable collection of the Maya hieroglyphs, which had strongly excited his interest. Between 1851 and his death my father made no less than twelve different expeditions to Central America in search of more hieroglyphs; but in

that whole time he did not publish more than a half dozen short articles regarding his discoveries, reserving all for a book which he intended to be a monument to his labors. His passion for perfection prevented him from ever completing that book, and, on his deathbed, he intrusted its completion and publication to me. Two years ago I began preparing it for the stenographer, and last week I had the satisfaction of feeling that my work was nearly finished. The material consisted of a huge mass of papers. They contained chapters written by my father which I am incapable of rewriting; tracings and photographs of the inscriptions which can be duplicated only by years of labor; original documents which are irreplaceable; notes of which I have no other copies. They represented, as you yourself have just said, almost sixty years of continuous labor. Last Wednesday afternoon, while I was absent, the whole mass of these papers was taken from the cabinet where I kept them, and burned — or if not burned, they have completely vanished."

He stopped short in his walk, turned on Trant a face which had grown suddenly livid, and stretched out his hands.

"They were destroyed, Trant — destroyed! Mysteriously, inexplicably, purposelessly!" his helpless indignation burst from his constraint. "The destruction of papers such as these could not possibly have benefited anyone. They were without value or interest except to scientists; and as to envious or malicious enemies, I have not one, man or woman — least of all a woman!"

"'Least of all a woman?'" Trant repeated quickly. "Do you mean by that that you have reason to believe a woman did it?"

"Yes; a woman! They all heard her! But — I will tell you everything I can. Last Wednesday afternoon, as I said, I was in Chicago. The two maids who look after the front part of the house were also out; they are sisters and had gone to the funeral of a brother."

"Leaving what others in the house?" Trant interrupted the rapid current of his speech with a quick gesture.

"My mother, who has hip trouble and cannot go up or downstairs without help; my ward, Iris Pierce, who had gone to her room to take a nap and was so sound asleep upon her bed that when they went for her twenty minutes later she was aroused with difficulty; my old colored nurse, Ulame, whom you must have seen

pass through here a moment ago; and the cook, who was in the back part of the house. The gardener, who was the only other person anywhere about the place, had been busy in the conservatory, but about a quarter to three went to sweep a light snowfall from the walks. Fifteen minutes later my mother in her bedroom in the north wing heard the door bell; but no one went to the door."

"Why was that?"

"Besides my mother, who was helpless, and Iris who was in her room, only the cook and Ulame, as I have just said, were in the house, and each of them, expecting the other to answer, waited for a second ring. It is certain that neither went to the door."

"Then the bell did not ring again?"

"No; it rang only once. Yet almost immediately after the ringing the woman was inside the house; for my mother heard her voice distinctly and —"

"A moment, please!" Trant stopped him. "In case the person was not admitted at the front door, which I assume was locked, was there any other possibility?"

"One other. The door was locked; but, the day before, the catch of one of the French windows opening upon the porch had been bent so that it fastened insecurely. The woman could easily have entered that way."

"But the fact of the catch would not be evident from outside — it would be known only to some one familiar with the premises?"

"Yes."

"Now the voice your mother heard — it was a strange voice?"

"Yes; a very shrill, excited voice of a child or a woman — she could not be sure which — but entirely strange to her."

"Shrill and excited, as if arguing with some one else?"

"No; that was one remarkable part of it; she seemed rather talking to herself. Besides there was no other voice."

“But in spite of its excited character, your mother could be sure it was the voice of a stranger?” Trant pressed with greater precision.

“Yes. My mother has been confined to her room so much that her ability to tell a person’s identity by the sound of the voice or footsteps has been immensely developed. There could be no better evidence than hers that this was a strange voice and that it was in the south wing. She thought at first that it was the voice of a frightened child. Two or three loud screams were uttered by the same voice, and were repeated at intervals during all that followed. There was noise of thumping or pounding, which I believe to have been occasioned in opening the study door. Then, after a brief interval, came the noise of breaking glass, and, at the end of another short interval, a smell of burning.”

“The screams continued?”

“At intervals, as I have said. My mother, when the screams first reached her, hobbled to the electric bell which communicates from her room to the servants’ quarters and rang it excitedly. But it was several minutes before her ringing brought the cook up the back stairs.”

“But the screams were still going on?”

“Yes. Then they were joined in the upper hall by Ulame.”

“They still heard screams?”

“Yes; the three women crouched at the head of the stairs listening to them. Then Ulame ran to the rear window and called the gardener, who had almost finished sweeping the rear walks; and the cook, crossing the hall to the second floor of the south wing, aroused Iris, whom, as I said, she found so soundly asleep that she was awakened with difficulty. My mother and I have rooms in the north wing, Iris and Ulame in the south. Iris had heard nothing of the disturbance, and was amazed at their account of it. They were joined by the gardener, and the four who were able descended to the first floor together. The cook ran immediately to the front door, which, she found, remained closed and locked with its spring lock. The others went straight on into the south wing, where she at once followed them. They found the museum filled with an acrid haze of smoke, and the door of the study closed. They could still hear through the closed door the footsteps and movements of the woman in the study.”

“But no more screams?” asked Trant.

“No, only footsteps, which were plainly audible to all four. You can imagine, Trant, that with three excited women and the gardener, who is not a courageous man, several moments were wasted in listening to these sounds and in discussion. Then the gardener pushed open the door. The glass front of the cabinet in which my papers were kept had been broken, and a charred mass, still smoking, in the center of the composition floor of the study was all that we could find of the papers which represented my father’s and my own life work, Mr. Trant. The woman whose footsteps only the instant before had been heard in the study by Iris and the gardener besides the others, had completely disappeared, in spite of the fact that there was no possible place for a woman, or even a child, to conceal herself in the study, or to leave it except by the door which the others entered!”

“And they found no other marks or indications of the person’s presence except those you have mentioned?”

“No, Mr. Trant, they found — at that time — absolutely none,” Pierce replied, slowly. “But when I returned that night and myself was able to go over the room carefully with Iris, I found — this, Mr. Trant,” he thrust a hand into his pocket, and extended it with a solitary little egg-shaped stone gleaming upon his palm — “this, Mr. Trant,” he repeated, staring at the little, blazing crystal egg as though fascinated, “the mere sight of which cast such an extraordinary ‘spell’ upon my ward, Iris, that, after these two days, trying to puzzle it out sanely myself, I was unable to bear the strain of it a moment longer, and wrote you as I did last night, in the hope that you — if anyone — might be able to advise me.”

“So this is the little green stone!” Trant took it carefully from his client’s palm and examined it. “The little green stone of which the negress was speaking to Miss Iris when you came in! You remember the door was open!”

“Yes; that is the little green stone!” Pierce cried. “The chalchihuitl stone; the green turquoise of Mexico. The first sight of it struck Iris dumb and dull-eyed before me and started this strange, this baffling, inexplicable apathy toward me! Tell me, how can this be?”

“You would hardly have called even me in, I presume,” Trant questioned quietly, “if you thought it possible that this stone,” he handed it back, “told her who was

in the room and that it was a woman who could come between you and your ward?”

“Scarcely, Mr. Trant!” Pierce flushed. “You can dismiss that absolutely. I told you a moment ago, when trying to think who could have come to ruin my work, that I have no enemy — least of all a woman enemy. Nor have I a single woman intimate, even a friend, whom Iris could possibly think of in that way.”

“Will you take me, then, to the rooms where these things happened?” Trant rose abruptly.

“This is the way the woman must have come,” Pierce indicated as he pointed Trant into the hall and let him see the arrangement of the house before he led him on.

The young psychologist, from his exterior view of the place, had already gained some idea of the interior arrangement; but as he followed Pierce from the library down the main hall, he was impressed anew by the individuality of the rambling structure. The main body of the house, he saw, had evidently been built some forty or fifty years ago, before Lake Forest had become the most fashionable and wealthy suburb to the north of Chicago; but the wings had been added later, one apparently to keep pace with the coming of the more pretentious country homes about it, the other more particularly to provide place for exhibiting the owner’s immense collection of Central American curiosities.

So the wide entrance hall, running half-way through the house, divided at the center into the hallways of the two wings. At the entrance to the north wing, the main stairs sprang upward in the graceful sweep of southern Colonial architecture; while, opposite, the hall of the south wing was blocked part way down by a heavy wall with but one flat-topped opening.

“A fire wall, Mr. Trant, and automatic closing fire doors,” Pierce explained, as they passed through them. “This portion of the south wing, which we call the museum wing, is a late addition, absolutely fireproof.”

“It was from the top of the main stairs, if I have understood you correctly,” Trant glanced back as he passed through the doorway, “that the women heard the screams. But this stair,” he pointed to a narrow flight of steps which wound upward from a little anteroom beyond the flat-topped opening, “this is certainly not what you called the back stairs. Where does this lead?”

“To the second floor of the museum wing, Mr. Trant.”

“Ah! Where Miss Pierce, and,” he paused reflectively, “the colored nurse have their bedrooms.”

“Exactly.”

They crossed the anteroom and entered the museum. A ceiling higher in the museum than in any other part of the house gave space for high, leaded, clear-glass windows. Under them, ranged on pedestals or fastened to the wall were original carvings or plaster casts of the grotesque gods of the Maya mythology; death’s-heads symbolic of their cruel religion, and cabinets of stone and wooden implements and earthen vessels, though by far the greater number of the specimens were reproductions of hieroglyphic inscriptions, each separate glyph forming a whimsical square cartouche. But the quick glance of the psychologist passed all these almost without noting, and centered itself upon an object in the middle of the room. On a low pedestal stood one of the familiar Central American stones of sacrifice, with grooved channels to carry away the blood, and rounded top designed to bend backward the body of the human victim while the priest, with one quick cut, slew him; and before it, staring at this stone, as though no continuance of familiarity could make her unaffected by it, stood the slender, graceful, dark-haired, dark-skinned girl of whom the psychologist had caught just a glimpse through the door of the morning room when he entered.

“My ward, Miss Pierce, Mr. Trant,” Pierce introduced them as she turned. “Mr. Trant is here to make an investigation into the loss of my papers, Iris.”

“Oh!” said the girl, without interest, “then I’ll not interrupt you. I was only looking for Ulame. Mr. Trant,” she smiled brightly at the psychologist, “don’t you think this room is beautiful in the morning sunlight?”

“Come, Trant,” Pierce passed his hand across his forehead, as he gazed at the girl’s passionless face, “the study is at the other end of the museum.” But the psychologist, with his gray eyes narrowing with interest, his red hair rumpled by an energetic gesture, stood an instant observing her; and she flushed deeply.

“I know why it is you look at me in that way, Mr. Trant,” she said, simply. “I know, of course, that a woman has burned Richard’s papers, for I saw the ashes; besides I myself looked for the papers afterwards and could not find them. You are thinking that I believe there is something between Richard and the woman

who took this revenge because we were going to be married; but it is not so — I know Richard has never cared for any other woman than myself. There is something I do not understand. Why, loving Richard as I did, did I not care at all about the papers? Why, since I saw that little green stone, am I indifferent whether he loves me in that way or not? Why do I feel now that I cannot marry him? Has the stone bewitched me — the stone, the stone, Mr. Trant! It seems crazy to think such a thing, though I know no other reason; and if I said so, no one — least of all you, Mr. Trant, a man of science — would believe me!"

"On the contrary, Miss Pierce, you will find that I will be the first, not the last, to recognize that the stone could exercise upon you precisely the influence you have described!"

"What is that? What is that?" Pierce exclaimed in surprise.

"I would rather see the study, if you please, Dr. Pierce," Trant bowed kindly to the girl as he turned to his client, "before being more explicit."

"Very well," Pierce pushed open the door and entered, clearly more puzzled by Trant's reply than before. The study was long and narrow, running across the whole end of the south wing; and, like the museum, had plain burlap-covered walls without curve or recess of any sort; and like the museum, also, it was lighted by high, leaded windows above the cases and shelves. The single door was the one through which they had entered; and the furniture consisted only of a desk and table, two chairs, and — along the walls — cabinets and cases of drawers and pigeonholes whose fronts carried labels denoting their contents. To furnish protection from dust, the cabinets all were provided with sliding glass doors, locking with a key. The floor of the study was of the same fireproof composition as that of the museum, and a black smudge near its center still showed where the papers had been burned. The room had neither fireplace nor closet.

"There is surely no hiding place for anyone here, and we must put that out of the question," the young psychologist commented when his eye had taken in these details.

Then he stepped directly to the cabinet against the end wall, whose broken glass showed that it was the one in which the papers had been kept, and laid his hand upon the sliding door. It slipped backward and forward in its grooves easily.

“The door is unlocked,” he said, with slight surprise. “It certainly was not unlocked at the time the glass was broken to get at the papers?”

“No,” Pierce answered, “for before leaving for Chicago that Wednesday, I carefully locked all the cabinets and put the key in the drawer of my desk where it is always kept. But that is not the least surprising part of this affair, Mr. Trant. For when Iris and the servants entered the room, the cabinet had been unlocked and the key lay on the floor in front of it. I can account for it only by the supposition that the woman, having first broken the glass in order to get at the papers, afterwards happened upon the key and unlocked the cabinet in order to avoid repeatedly reaching through the jagged edges of the glass.”

“And did she also break off this brass knob which was used in sliding the door back and forth, or had that been done previously?” inquired the psychologist.

“It was done at the same time, in attempting to open the door before the glass was broken, I suppose.”

Trant picked up the brass knob, which had been laid on the top of the cabinet, and examined it attentively. It had been secured by a thin bolt through the frame of the door, and in coming loose, the threads of the bolt, which still remained perfectly straight, had been stripped off, letting the nut fall inside the cabinet.

“This is most peculiar,” he commented — “and interesting.” Suddenly his eyes flashed comprehension. “Dr. Pierce, I am afraid your explanation does not account for the condition of the cabinet.” He swung about, minutely inspecting the room anew, and with a sharp and comprehensive glance measuring the height of the windows.

“You were certainly correct in saying that no child or woman could escape from this room in any other way than by the door, Dr. Pierce,” he exclaimed. “But could not a man — a man more tall and lithe and active than either you or I — make his escape through one of those windows and drop to the walk below without harm?”

“A man, Trant? Yes; of course, that is possible,” Pierce agreed, impatiently. “But why consider the possibility of a man’s escape, when there was no question among those who heard the cries that they came from a woman or a child!”

“The screams came from a woman,” Trant replied. “But not necessarily the

footsteps that were heard from the other side of the door. No, Dr. Pierce; the condition of this room indicates without any question or doubt that not one, but two persons were present here when these events occurred — one so familiar with these premises as to know where the key to the cabinets was to be found in your desk; the other so unfamiliar with them as not even to know that the doors of the cabinets were sliding, not swinging doors, since it was in attempting to pull the door outward like a swinging door that the knob was broken off, as is shown by the condition of the bolt which would otherwise have been bent. And the person whose footsteps were heard was a man, for only a man could have escaped through the window, as that person unquestionably must have done."

"But I do not see how you help things by adding a man's presence here to the other," Pierce protested. "It simply complicates matters, since it furnishes us no solution as to how the woman escaped!"

But the psychologist, without heeding him, dropped into a chair beside the table, rested his chin upon his hands, and his eyes grew filmy with the concentration of thought.

"She may have been helped through the window by the man," he said, finally, "but it is not probable. We have no proof that the woman was in the study when the footsteps were heard, for the screams had stopped; and we have unquestionable proof that this tight-fitting door was opened after the papers had been fired, if, as you told me, when Miss Pierce and the others reached the museum they found it filled with smoke. Now, Dr. Pierce," he looked up sharply, "when you first spoke to me of the loss of these papers, you said they had been 'burned or vanished.' Why did you say vanished? Had you any reason for supposing they had not been burned?"

"No real reason," Pierce answered after a moment's hesitation. "The papers, which I had divided by subjects into tentative chapters, were put together with wire clips, each chapter separately, and I found no wire clips among the ashes. But it was likely the papers would not burn readily without taking the clips off. After taking off the clips, she — they," he corrected himself — "may very well have carried them away. It is too improbable to believe that they brought with them other papers, with the plan of burning them and giving the appearance of having destroyed the real ones."

"That would certainly be too improbable a supposition," Trant agreed, and again

became deeply thoughtful. “A remarkable, a startlingly interesting case!” he raised his eyes to his client’s, but hardly as though speaking to him. “It presents a problem with which modern scientific psychology — and that alone — could possibly be competent to deal.

“I saw, of course, Dr. Pierce, that I surprised you when a moment ago I assured your ward that I — as a psychologist — would be the first to believe that the chalchihuitl stone could exercise over her the mysterious influence you all have noted. But I am so confident of the fact that this stone could influence her, and I am so sure that its influence is the key to this case, that I want to ask you what you know about the chalchihuitl stone; what beliefs, superstitions, or charms, however fantastic, are popularly connected with the green turquoise. It is a Mexican stone, you said; and you, if anyone, must know about it.”

“As an archaeologist, I have long been familiar with the chalchihuitl stone, of course,” Pierce replied, gazing at his young adviser with uneasiness and perplexity, “as the ceremonial marriage stone of the ancient Aztecs and some still existing tribes of Central America. By them it is, I know, frequently used in religious rites, bearing a particularly important part, for instance, in the wedding ceremony. Though its exact significance and association is not known, I am safe in assuring you that it is a stone with which many savage superstitions and spells are to be connected.”

He smiled, deprecatingly; but Trant met his eyes seriously.

“Thank you! Can you tell me, then, whether any peculiarity in your ward has been noted previous to this, which could not be accounted for?”

“No; none — ever!” Pierce affirmed confidently, “though her experience in Central America previous to her coming under our care must certainly have been most unusual, and would account for some peculiarity — if she had any.”

“In Central America, Dr. Pierce?” Trant repeated eagerly.

“Yes,” Pierce hesitated, dubiously; “perhaps I ought to tell you, Mr. Trant, how Iris came to be a member of our family. On the last expedition which my father made to Central America, and on which I accompanied him as a young man of eighteen, an Indian near Copan, Honduras, told us of a wonderful white child whom he had seen living among an isolated Indian tribe in the mountains. We were interested, and went out of our way to visit the tribe. We found there,

exactly as he had described, a little white girl about six years old as near as we could guess. She spoke the dialect of the Indians, but two or three English words which the sight of us brought from her, made us believe that she was of English birth. My father wanted to take her with us, but the Indians angrily refused to allow it.

“The little girl, however, had taken a fancy to me, and when we were ready to leave she announced her intention of going along. For some reason which I was unable to fathom, the Indians regarded her with a superstitious veneration, and though plainly unwilling to let her go, they were afraid to interfere with her wishes. My father intended to adopt her, but he died before the expedition returned. I brought the child home with me, and under my mother’s care she has been educated. The name Iris Pierce was given her by my mother.”

“You say the Indians regarded her with veneration?” Trant exclaimed, with an oddly intent glance at the sculptured effigies of the monsterlike gods which stood on the cases all about. “Dr. Pierce, were you exact in saying a moment ago that your ward, since she has been in your care, has exhibited no peculiarities? Was the nurse, Ulame, mistaken in what I overheard her saying, that Miss Pierce has on her shoulder the mark,” his voice steadied soberly, “of the devil’s claw?”

“Has she the ‘mark of the devil’s claw’?” Pierce frowned with vexation. “You mean, has she an anaesthetic spot on her shoulder through which at times she feels no sensation? Yes, she has; but I scarcely thought you cared to hear about ‘devil’s claws.’”

Ulame also told me,” Pierce continued, “that the existence of this spot denotes in the possessor, not only a susceptibility to ‘controls’ and ‘spells,’ but also occult powers of clairvoyance. She even suggested that my ward could, if she would, tell me who was in the room and burned my papers. Do you follow her beliefs so much farther?”

“I follow not the negress, but modern scientific psychologists, Dr. Pierce,” Trant replied, bluntly, “in the belief, the knowledge, that the existence of the anaesthetic spot called the ‘devil’s claw’ shows in its possessor a condition which, under peculiar circumstances, may become what is popularly called clairvoyant.

“Dr. Pierce, an instant ago you spoke — as an archaeologist — of the exploded

belief in witchcraft; but please do not forget that that belief was at one time widespread, almost universal. You speak now — as an educated man — with equal contempt of clairvoyance; but a half-hour's ride down Madison or Halsted Street, with an eye open to the signs in the second-story windows, will show you how widespread to-day is the belief in clairvoyance, since so many persons gain a living by it. If you ask me whether I believe in witchcraft and clairvoyance, I will tell you I do not believe one atom in any infernal power of one person over another; and so far as anyone's being able to read the future or reveal in the past matters which they have had no natural means of knowing, I do not believe in clairvoyance. But if you or I believed that any widespread popular conception such as witchcraft once was and clairvoyance is today, can exist without having somewhere a basis of fact, we should be holding a belief even more ridiculous than the negro's credulity!

"I am certain that no explanation of what happened in this house last Wednesday and since can be formed, except by recognizing in it one of those comparatively rare authentic cases from which the popular belief in witchcraft and clairvoyance has sprung; and I would rest the solution of this case on the ability of your ward, under the proper circumstances, to tell us who was in this room last Wednesday, and what the influence is that has been so strangely exercised over her by the chalchihuitl stone!"

The psychologist, after the last word, stood with sparkling eyes, and lips pressed together in a straight, defiant line.

"Iris tell! Iris!" Pierce excitedly exclaimed, when the door opened behind him, and his ward entered.

"Here is the form you asked me for, Richard," she said, handing her guardian a paper, and without showing the least curiosity as to what was going on between the two men, she went out again.

Pierce's eyes followed her with strange uneasiness and perplexity; then fell to the paper she had given him.

"It is the notice of the indefinite postponement of our wedding, Trant," he explained. "I must send it to the Chicago papers this afternoon, unless — unless —" he halted, dubiously. "Unless the 'spell' on Miss Pierce can be broken by the means I have just spoken of?" Trant smiled slightly as he finished the sentence

for him. “If I am not greatly mistaken, Dr. Pierce, your wedding will still take place. But as to this notice of its postponement, tell me, how long before last Wednesday, when this thing happened, was the earliest announcement of the wedding made in the papers?”

“I should say two weeks,” Pierce replied in surprise.

“Do you happen to know, Dr. Pierce — you are, of course, well known in Central America — whether the announcement was copied in papers circulating there?”

“Yes; I have heard from several friends in Central America who had seen the news in Spanish papers.”

“Excellent! Then it is most essential that the notice of this postponement be made at once. If you will allow me, I will take it with me to Chicago this afternoon; and if it meets the eye of the person I hope, then I trust soon to be able to introduce to you your last Wednesday’s visitor.”

“Without — Iris?” Pierce asked nervously.

“Believe me, I will do everything in my power to spare Miss Pierce the experience you seem so unwilling she should undergo. But if it proves to be the only means of solving this case, you must trust me to the extent of letting me make the attempt.” He glanced at his watch. “I can catch a train for Chicago in fifteen minutes, and it will be the quickest way to get this notice in the papers. I will let you hear from me again as soon as necessary. I can find my own way out.”

He turned sharply to the door, and, as Pierce made no effort to detain him, he left the study.

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The surprising news of the sudden “indefinite postponement” of the romantic wedding of Dr. Pierce the Central American archeologist, to the ward whom he had brought from Honduras as a child, was made in the last editions of the Chicago evening papers which reached Lake Forest that night; and it was repeated with fuller comments in both the morning and afternoon papers of the next day. But to Pierce’s increasing anxiety he heard nothing from Trant until the

second morning, and then it was merely a telephone message asking him to be at home at three o'clock that afternoon and to see that Miss Pierce was at home also, but to prevent her from seeing or hearing any visitors who might call at that hour. At ten minutes to three, Pierce himself, watching nervously at the window, saw the young psychologist approaching the house in company with two strangers, and himself admitted them.

"Dr. Pierce, let me introduce Inspector Walker of the Chicago Police," Trant, when they had been admitted to the library, motioned to the larger of his companions, a well-proportioned giant, who wore his black serge suit with an awkwardness that showed a greater familiarity with blue broadcloth and brass buttons. "This other gentleman," he turned to the very tall, slender, long-nosed man, with an abnormally narrow head and face, coal black hair and sallow skin, whom Trant and the officer had half held between them, "calls himself Don Canonigo Penol, though I do not know whether that is his real name. He speaks English, and I believe he knows more than anyone else about what went on in your study last Wednesday." A momentary flash of white teeth under Penol's mustache, which was neither a smile nor a greeting, met Pierce's look of inquiry, and he cast uneasy glances to right and left out of his small crafty eyes. "But as Penol, from the moment of his arrest, has flatly refused to make any statement regarding the loss of your papers or the chalchihuitl stone which has so strangely influenced your ward," Trant continued, "we have been obliged to bring him here in hope of getting at the truth through the means I mentioned to you day before yesterday."

"The means you mentioned day before yesterday?" echoed Pierce, as he spun round and faced Trant with keen apprehension; and it was plain to the psychologist from the gray pallor and nervous trembling of the man that his anxiety and uncertainty had not been lessened, but rather increased by their former conversation. "You refer, I presume, to your plan to gain facts from her through — through clairvoyance!"

"I saw Mr. Trant pick the murderer in the Bronson case," Inspector Walker intervened confidently, "in a way no police officer had ever heard of; and I've followed him since. And if he says he can get an explanation here by clairvoyance, I believe him!" The quiet faith of the huge officer brought Pierce to a halt.

"For the sake of her happiness and your own, Dr. Pierce," Trant urged.

“Oh, I don’t know — I don’t know!” Pierce pressed his hands to his temples in indecision. “I confess this matter is outside my comprehension. I have spoken again to the persons who recommended me to you, and they, like Inspector Walker, have only repeated that I can have absolute confidence in you!”

“It is now three o’clock,” Trant began, brusquely.

“Five minutes after,” said the Inspector.

“Five minutes makes no difference. But it is absolutely necessary, Dr. Pierce, that if we are to make this test we begin it at once; and I can scarcely undertake it without your consent. It requires that the general look of the rooms and the direction of the sunlight should be the same as at three o’clock last Wednesday afternoon. Dr. Pierce, will you bring your ward to me in the study?”

He turned to his client with quiet confidence as though all were settled. “Inspector Walker and Penol will remain here — the Inspector already knows what I require of him. I noticed a clock Saturday over the desk in the study and heard it strike the hour; you have no objection to my turning it back ten or fifteen minutes, Pierce? And before you go, let me have the chalchihuitl stone!”

For a moment Pierce, with his hands still pressed against his temples, stood looking at Trant in perplexity and doubt; then, with sudden resolution, he handed him the chalchihuitl stone and went to get his ward. A few minutes later he led her into the study where the psychologist was awaiting them alone. Pierce’s first glance was at the clock, which he saw had been turned back by Trant to mark five minutes to three.

“Good afternoon, Miss Pierce,” Trant set a chair for her, with its back to the clock, as she acknowledged his salutation; then continued, conversationally: “You spoke the other day of the morning sunlight in these rooms, but I have been thinking, that the afternoon sunlight, as it gets near three o’clock, is even more beautiful. One can hardly imagine anything occurring here which would be distasteful or unpleasant, or shocking —”

The girl’s eyes filled with a vague uneasiness, and turned toward Pierce, who, not knowing what to expect, leaned against the table watching her with strained anxiety; and at sight of him the half formed uneasiness of her gaze vanished. Trant rose sharply, and took Pierce by the arm.

“You must not look at her so, Dr. Pierce,” he commanded, tensely, “or you will defeat my purpose. It will be better if she does not even see you. Sit down at your desk behind her.”

When Pierce had seated himself at the desk, convulsively grasping the arms of his chair, Trant glanced at the clock, which now marked two minutes of three, and hastily returned to the girl. He took from his pocket the chalchihuitl stone which Pierce had given him, and at sight of it the girl drew back with sudden uneasiness and apprehension.

“I know you have seen this stone before, Miss Pierce,” Trant said, significantly, “for you and Dr. Pierce found it. But had you never seen it before then? Think! Its color and shape are so unique that I believe one who had seen it could never forget it. It is so peculiar that it would not surprise me to know that it has a very special significance! And it has! For it is the chalchihuitl stone. It is found in Central America and Mexico; the Aztecs used it in celebrating marriage — in Central America, where there are Indians and Spaniards; tall, slender, long-nosed Spaniards, with coal black hair and sallow skins and tiny black mustaches — Central America, where all those sculptured gods and strange inscriptions are found, which the papers were about that were destroyed one afternoon here in this study!”

As he spoke the clock struck three; and at the sound the girl uttered a gasp of uncontrollable terror, then poised herself, listening expectantly. Almost with the last stroke of the clock the door bell rang, and the girl shrunk suddenly together.

“Tall, dark, slender Spaniards,” Trant continued; but stopped, for the girl was not heeding him. White and tense, she was listening to footsteps which were approaching the study door along the floor of the museum. The door opened suddenly, and Don Canonigo Penol, pushed from behind by the stern inspector of police, appeared on the threshold.

The girl’s head had fallen back, her eyes had turned upward so that she seemed to be looking at the ceiling, but they were blank and sightless; she lay, rather than sat, upon the chair, her clenched hands close against her sides, her whole attitude one of stony rigidity.

“Iris! Iris!” cried Pierce in agony.

“It is no use to call,” the psychologist’s outstretched hand prevented Pierce from

throwing himself on his knees beside the girl, “she cannot hear you. She can hear no one unless they speak of the chalchihuitl stone and Central America, and, I hope, the events which went forward in this house last Wednesday. The chalchihuitl stone! The chalchihuitl stone! She hears that, doesn’t she?”

A full half minute passed while the psychologist, anxiously bending over the rigid body, waited for an answer. Then, as though by intense effort, the stony lips parted and the answer came, “Yes!” Pierce fell back with a cry of amazement; the inspector of police straightened, astonished; the stolid face of Don Canonigo Penol was convulsed all at once with a living terror and he slipped from the policeman’s hold and fell, rather than seated himself, in a chair.

“Who is it that is speaking?” asked Trant in the same steady tone.

“Isabella Clarke,” the voice was clearer, but high-pitched and entirely different from Iris’s. The psychologist started with surprise.

“How old is Isabella?” he asked after a moment.

“She is young — a little girl — a child!” the voice was stronger still.

“Does Isabella know of Iris Pierce?”

“Yes.”

“Can she see Iris last Wednesday afternoon at three o’clock?”

“Yes.”

“What is she doing?”

“She is in the library. She went upstairs to take a nap, but she could not sleep and came down to get a book.”

A long cry from some distant part of the house — a shriek which set vibrating the tense nerves of all in the little study — suddenly startled them. Trant turned sharply toward the door; the others, petrified in their places, followed the direction of his look. Through the open door of the study and the arched opening of the anteroom, the foot of the main stairs was discernible; and, painfully and excitedly descending them, was a white-haired woman leaning on a cane and on

the other side supported by the trembling negress.

“Richard, Richard!” she screamed, “that woman is in the house — in the study! I heard her voice — the voice of the woman who burned your papers!”

“It is my mother!” Pierce, suddenly coming to himself, turned with staring eyes on Trant and darted from the study. He returned an instant later and closed the door behind him.

“Trant,” he faltered, “my mother says that the voice that she — that we all — have just heard is the voice of the woman who was in the study Wednesday.”

The psychologist impatiently stopped the excited man with a gesture. “You still see Iris?”

“Yes,” the answer came, after a considerable pause.

“She has not left the library? Tell us what she is doing.”

“She turns toward the clock, which is striking three. The door bell rings. Both the maids are out, so Iris lays down her book and goes to the door. At the door is a tall, dark man, all alone. He is a Spaniard from the mountains in Honduras, and his name is Canonigo Penol.”

An indrawing of his breath, sharp almost as a whistle, brought the gaze of all upon Penol; but the eyes of the Spaniard, starting in superstitious terror from his livid face, saw only the girl.

“Penol is not known to Iris, but he has come to see her. She is surprised. She leads him to the library. His manner makes her uneasy,” the voice, now uninterrupted by Trant’s questions, went on with great rapidity. “He asks her if she remembers that she lived among Indians. Iris remembers that. He asks if she remembers that before that she lived with white men — an American and some Spaniards — who were near and dear to her. Iris cannot remember. He asks if she remembers him — Penol. His speech frightens her. He says: ‘Once an American went to Central America with an expedition, and got lost from his companions. He crossed rivers; he was in woods, jungles, mountains; he was near dying. A Spaniard found him. The Spaniard was poor — poor. He had a daughter.

“‘The American, whose name was James Clarke, loved the daughter and married her. He did not want ever to go back to the United States; he was mad — mad with love, and mad about the ancient carved statues of Central America, the temples and inscriptions. He would sit all day in front of an inscription making marks on a paper, and afterwards he would tear the paper up. They had a daughter. Canonigo repeats many times that they were very poor. They had only one white servant and a hundred Indians. Sickness in the mountains killed the old Spaniard. In another year sickness killed the wife also. Now the American was all alone with his baby daughter and one white servant and the Indians. Then sickness also took hold of him. He was troubled about his daughter; he trusted no one; he would drag himself in the night in spite of his sickness to see that no one had done harm to her.

“‘The American was dying. He proposed to the young Spaniard many things; finally he proposed that he marry the little girl. There was no priest, and the American was mad; mad about ancient times and dead, vanished peoples, and more mad because he was dying; and he married them after the old custom of the Aztecs, with the chachihuitl stone and a bird feather, while they sat on a woven mat with the corners of their garments tied together — the young Spaniard and the little girl, who was four years old. Afterwards her father died, and that night the Spaniard all alone buried him: and when toward morning he came back he found only a few Indians too old to travel. The others, frightened of the mad dead man, had gone, taking the little girl with them.’”

“What does Iris do when she hears that?” asked Trant.

“It begins to revive memories in Iris,” the voice answered quickly; “but she says bravely, ‘What is that to me? Why do you tell me about it?’ ‘Because,’ says Canonigo Penol, ‘I have the chalchihuitl stone which bears witness to this marriage!’ And as he holds it to her and it flashes in the sun, just as it did when they held it before her when her clothes were tied to his on the mat, she remembers and knows that it is so; and that she is married to this man! By the flash of the chalchihuitl stone in the sun she remembers and she knows that the rest is true!”

“And then?” Trant pressed.

“She is filled with horror. She shrinks from Canonigo. She puts her hands to her face, because she loved Dr. Pierce with her whole heart —”

“O God!” cried Pierce.

“She cries out that it is not so, though she knows it is the truth. She dashes the stone from his hand and pushes Canonigo from her. He is unable to find the stone; and seeing the sculptured gods and the inscriptions about the room, he thinks it is these by which Dr. Pierce is able to hold her against him. So now he says that he will destroy these pictures and he will have her. Iris screams. She runs from Canonigo to the study. She shuts the door upon him, as he follows. She sets a chair against it. Canonigo is pushing to get in. But she gets the key to the cabinet from the desk and opens the cabinet.

“She takes out the papers, but there is no place to hide them before he enters. So she opens the drawer, but it is full of worthless papers. She takes out enough of the old papers to make room for the others, which she puts in the bottom of the drawer underneath the rest. The old papers she puts into the cabinet above, closing the cabinet; but she had no time to lock it. Canonigo has pushed the door open. He has found the stone and tries to show it to her again; but again she dashes it from his hand. He rushes straight to the cabinet, for he has seen from the tree where the papers are kept. The cabinet is unlocked, but he tries to pull the door to him. He pulls off the knob. Then he smashes the glass with his foot; he begins burning the worthless papers. So Iris has done all she can and runs from him to her room. She is exhausted, fainting. She falls upon the bed —”

The voice stopped suddenly. Pierce had sprung to her with a cry, and putting his arms about her for support, spoke to her again and again. But she neither moved nor spoke to his entreaties, and seemed entirely insensible when he touched her. He leaped up, facing Trant in hostile demand, but still kept one arm about her.

“What is this you have done to her now?” he cried. “And what is this you have made her say?”

But the psychologist now was not watching either the girl or his client. His eyes were fixed upon the face of Canonigo Penol, shot with red veins and livid spots of overpowering terror.

“So, Don Canonigo Penol,” Trant addressed him, “that was the way of it? But, man, you could scarcely have been enough in love with a girl four years old to take this long and expensive trip for her nineteen years later. Was there property then, which belonged to her that you wanted to get?”

Canonigo Penol heard the question, though he did not look at his questioner. His eyes, starting from his head, could still see only the stony face of the girl who, thus unconsciously, under the guidance of the psychologist, had accused him in a manner which filled him with superstitious terror. Palpitating, convulsed with fright, with loose lips shaking and knees which would not bear his weight, he slipped from his chair and crawled and groveled on the floor before her.

“Oh, speak not — speak not again!” he shrieked. “I will tell all! I lied; the old Spaniard was not poor — he was rich! But she can have all! I abandon all claim! Only let me go from here — let me leave her!”

“First we will see exactly what damage you have done,” Trant answered. “Dr. Pierce,” he turned collectedly to his client, “you have just heard the true account of last Wednesday afternoon.”

“You want me to believe that she let him in — she was here and did that?” Pierce cried. “You think that was all real and — true!”

“Look in the drawer she indicated, and see if she was able, indeed, to save the papers as she said.”

Mechanically and many times looking back at Trant’s compelling face, Pierce went to the cabinet, stooped and, pulling out the drawer, tossed aside a mass of scattering papers on the top and rose with a bundle of manuscripts held together with wire clips. He stared at them almost stupidly, then, coming to himself, sorted them through rapidly and with amazement.

“They are all here!” he cried, astounded. “They are intact. But what — what trick is this, Mr. Trant?”

“Wait!” Trant motioned him sharply to be silent. “She is about to awake! Inspector, she must not find you here, or this other,” and seizing Penol by one arm, while the inspector seized the other, he pushed him from the room, and closed the study door upon them both. Then he turned to the girl, whose more regular breathing and lessening rigidity had warned him that she was coming to herself.

Gently, peacefully, as those of a child wakening from sleep, her eyes opened; and with no knowledge of all that in the last half hour had so shaken those who listened in the little study, with no realization even that an interval of time had

passed, she replied to the first remark that Trant had made to her when she entered the room:

“Yes, indeed, Mr. Trant, the afternoon sun is beautiful; but I like these rooms better in the morning.”

“You will not mind, Miss Pierce,” Trant answered gently, without heeding Pierce’s gasp of surprise, and hiding him from the girl’s sight with his body, as he saw Dr. Pierce could not restrain his emotion, “if I ask you to leave us for a little while. I have something to talk over with your guardian.”

She rose, and with a bright smile left them.

“Trant! Trant!” cried Pierce.

“You will understand better, Dr. Pierce,” said the psychologist, “if I explain this to you from its beginning with the fact of the ‘devil’s claw,’ which was where I myself began this investigation.

“You remember that I overheard Ulame, the negro nurse, speak of this characteristic of Miss Pierce. You, like most educated people to-day, regarded it simply as an anaesthetic spot — curious, but without extraordinary significance. I, as a psychologist, recognized it at once as an evidence, first pointed out by the French scientist, Charcot, of a somewhat unusual and peculiar nervous disposition in your ward, Miss Iris.

“The anaesthetic spot is among the most important of several physical evidences of mental peculiarity which, in popular opinion, marked out its possessors through all ages as ‘different’ from other people. In some ages and countries they have been executed as witches; in others, they have been deified as saints; they have been regarded as prophets, pythonesses, sibyls, ‘clairvoyants.’ For in some respects their mental life is more acute than that of the mass of mankind, in others it is sometimes duller; and they are known to scientists as ‘hystericals.’

“Now, when you gave me your account, Dr. Pierce, of what had happened here last Wednesday, it was evident to me at once that, if any of the persons in the house had admitted the visitor who rang the bell — and this seemed highly probable because the bell rang only once, and would have been rung again if the visitor had not been admitted — the door could only have been opened by Miss Iris. For we have evidence that neither the cook nor Ulame answered the bell;

and moreover, all of those in the house, except Miss Iris, had stood together at the top of the stairs and listened to the screams from below.

“Following you into the study, then, I found plain evidence, as I pointed out to you at the time, that two persons had been there, one a man; one perfectly familiar with the premises, the other wholly unfamiliar with them. I had also evidence, from the smoke in the museum, that the study door had been open after the papers were lighted, and I saw that whoever came out of the study could have gone up the anteroom stairs to the second floor of the south wing, but could not have passed out through the main hall without being seen by those listening at the top of the stairway. All these physical facts, therefore, if uncontradicted by stronger evidence, made it an almost inevitable conclusion that Miss Iris had been in the study.”

“Yes, yes!” Pierce agreed, impatiently, “if you arrange them in that order!”

“In contradiction of this conclusion,” Trant went on rapidly, “I had three important pieces of evidence. First, the statement of your mother that the voice she heard was that of a strange woman; second, the fact that Miss Iris had gone to her room to take a nap and had been found asleep there on the bed by Ulame; third, that your ward herself denied with evident honesty and perfect frankness that she had been present, or knew anything at all of what had gone on in the study. I admit that without the evidence of the anaesthetic spot — or even with it, if it had not been for the chalchihuitl stone — I should have considered this contradictory evidence far stronger than the other.

“But the immense and obvious influence on Miss Iris of the chalchihuitl stone, when you found it together — an influence which she could not account for, but which nevertheless was sufficient to make her refuse to marry you — kept me on the right track. For it made me certain that the stone must have been connected with some intense emotional experience undergone by your ward, the details of which she no longer remembered.”

“No longer remembered!” exclaimed Pierce, incredulously.

“When it had happened only the day before!”

“Ah!” Trant checked him quickly. “You are doing just what I told you a moment ago the anaesthetic spot had warned me against; you are judging Miss Iris as though she were like everybody else! I, as a psychologist, knew that having the

mental disposition that the anaesthetic spot indicated, any such intense emotion, any such tragedy in her life as the one I imagined, was connected with the chalchihuitl stone, might be at once forgotten; as you see it was, for when Ulame aroused her only a few moments later she no longer remembered any part of it.

“You look incredulous, Dr. Pierce! I am not telling you anything that is not well authenticated, and a familiar fact to men of science. If you want corroboration, I can only advise you to trace my statement through the works on psychology in any well-furnished library, where you will find it confirmed by hundreds of specific instances. With a mental disposition like Miss Iris’s, an emotion so intense as that she suffered divides itself off from the rest of her consciousness. It is so overpowering that it cannot connect itself with her daily life; ordinary sights and sounds cannot call it back to memory. It can be awakened only by some extraordinary means such as those I used when, as far as I was able, I reproduced for her benefit just now here in your study all the sights and sounds of last Wednesday afternoon that preceded and attended her interview with Canonigo Penol.”

“It seems impossible, Mr. Trant,” Pierce pressed his hands to his eyes dazedly. “But I have seen it with my own eyes!”

“The sudden sleep into which she had fallen before Ulame aroused her, and the fact that the voice your mother heard seemed to her a strange one,” Trant continued, “added strength to my conclusion, for both were only additional evidences of the effect of an intense emotion on a disposition such as Miss Iris’s. Now, what was this emotional experience so closely connected with the chalchihuitl stone that the sight of the stone was able to recall it, with a dulling feeling of fear and apathy to her emotions, without being in itself able to bring recollection to her conscious mind, I could only conjecture.

“But after learning from you that while a child she had lived among Central American Indians, and discovering that the chalchihuitl stone was a ceremonial stone of savage religious rites — particularly the marriage rite — I could not help but note the remarkable coincidence that the man who brought the chalchihuitl stone appeared precisely at the time he would have come if he had learned from newspapers in Central America of the girl’s intended marriage. As the most probable reason for his coming, considering the other circumstances, was to prevent the wedding, I thought the easiest way to lay hands upon him and establish his identity was to publish at once the notice that the wedding had been

postponed, which, if he saw it, would make him confident he had accomplished his object and draw him here again. Draw him it did, last night, into the arms of Walker and myself, with a Lake Forest officer along to make the arrest legal."

"I see! I see! Go on!" Pierce urged intently.

"But though I caught him," Trant continued, "I could not gain the really important facts from him by questioning, as I was totally unaware of the particulars which concerned Miss Iris's — or rather Isabella Clarke's — parentage and self-exiled father. But I knew that, by throwing her into the true 'trance' which you have just witnessed — a hysterical condition known as monoideic somnambulism to psychologists — she would be forced to recall and tell us in detail of the experiences which she had passed through in that condition, precisely as the persons possessed of the 'devil's claw' who were burned and tortured as witches in the Middle Ages had the ability sometimes to go into trances where they knew and told of things which they were not conscious of in their ordinary state; precisely as certain clairvoyants to-day are often able to tell correctly certain things of which they could seem to have no natural knowledge.

"As for Miss Iris, there is now no reason for apprehension. Ordinarily, in case conditions might arise which would remind her so strongly of the events that took place here last Wednesday, she would be thrown automatically into the condition she was in this afternoon when she gave us her narrative. She would then repeat all the particulars rapidly aloud, as you have heard her give them; or she would act them out dramatically, going through all the motions of her flight from Penol, and her attempt to save your papers. And each reminder being made more easy by the one before, these 'trances' as you call them, would become more and more frequent.

"But knowing now, as you do, all the particulars of what happened, you have only to recount them to her, repeating them time after time if necessary, until she normally remembers them and you have drawn the two parts of her consciousness back again into one. She will then, except to the psychologist, be the same as other people, and will show no more peculiarity in the rest of her life than she had already shown in that part of it she has passed in your household. My work here, I think, is done," the psychologist rose abruptly, and after grasping the hand which Pierce eagerly and thankfully stretched out to him, he preceded him through the doorway.

In the high-ceilinged museum, which blazed red with the light of the setting sun, they came upon Iris, standing again in absorbed contemplation of the sacrificial stone. She turned and smiled pleasantly at them, with no sign of curiosity; but Pierce, as he passed, bent gently and kissed her lips.

VII

THE EMPTY CARTRIDGES

Stephen Sheppard, big game shot and all-around sportsman, lay tensely on his side in bed, watching for the sun to rise out of Lake Michigan. When the first crest of that yellow rim would push clear of the grim, gray horizon stretching its great, empty half circle about the Chicago shore, he was going to make a decision — a decision for the life or for the death of a young man; and as he personally had always cared for that man more than for any other man so much younger, and as his niece, who was the chief person left in the world that Sheppard loved, also cared for the man so much that she would surely marry him if he were left alive, Sheppard was not at all anxious for that day to begin.

The gray on the horizon, which had been becoming alarmingly pale the last few moments as he stared at it, now undeniably was spread with purple and pink from behind the water's edge. Decide he must, he knew, within a very few minutes or the rising sun would find him as faltering in his mind as he was the night before when he had given himself till daybreak to form his decision. The sportsman shut his teeth determinedly. No matter how fruitless the hours of darkness when he had matched mercy with vengeance; no matter how hopeless he had found it during the earlier moments of that slow December dawn to say whether he would recognize that his young friend had merely taken the law into his own hands and done bare justice, and therefore the past could be left buried, or whether he must return retribution upon that young man and bring back all that hidden and forgotten past — all was no matter; he must decide now within five minutes. For it was a sportsman's compact he had made with himself to rise with the sun and act one way or the other, and he kept compacts with himself as obstinately and as unflinchingly as a man must who has lived decently a long life alone, without any employment or outside discipline.

Now the great, crimson aurora shooting up into the sky warned him that day was close upon him; now the semi-circle of gray waters was bisected by a broad and blood red pathway; now white darts at the aurora's center foretold the coming of the sun. He swung his feet out of bed and sat up — a stalwart, rosy, obstinate old man, his thick, white, wiry hair touseled in his indecision — and, reaching over swiftly, snatched up a loose coin which lay with his watch and keys upon the table beside his bed.

"I'll give him equal chances anyway," he satisfied himself as he sat on the edge

of the bed with the coin in his hands. “Tails, he goes free, but heads, he — hangs!”

Then waiting for the first direct gleam of the sun to give him his signal, he spun it and put his bare foot upon it as it twirled upon the floor.

“Heads!” He removed his foot and looked at it without stooping. He pushed his feet into the slippers beside his bed, threw his dressing-gown over his shoulders, went directly to the telephone and called up the North Side Police Station.

“I want you to arrest Jim Tyler — James Tyler at the Alden Club at once!” he commanded abruptly. “Yes; that’s it. What charge? What do I care what charge you arrest him on — auto speeding — anything you want — only get him!” The old sportsman spoke with even sharper brevity than usual. “Look him up and I’ll come with my charges against him soon enough. See here; do you know who this is, speaking? This is Steve Sheppard. Ask your Captain Crowley whether I have to swear to a warrant at this time in the morning to have a man arrested. All right!

“That starts it!” he recognized grimly to himself, as he slammed down the receiver. The opposition at the police station had given the needed drive to his determination. “Now I’ll follow it through. Beginning with that fellow — Trant,” he recollected, as he found upon his desk the memorandum which he had made the night before, in case he should decide this way.

“Mr. Trant; you got my note of last night?” he said, a little less sharply, after he had called the number noted as Trant’s room address at his club. “I am Stephen Sheppard — brother of the late Neal Sheppard. I have a criminal case and — as I wrote you I might — I want your help at once. If you leave your rooms immediately, I will call for you at your office before eight; I want you to meet a train with me at eight-thirty. Very well!”

He rang for his man, then, to order his motor and to tell him to bring coffee and rolls to his room, which he gulped down while he dressed. Fifteen minutes later he jumped onto the front seat of his car, displacing the chauffeur, and himself drove the car rapidly down town.

A crisp, sharp breeze blew in upon them from the lake, scattering dry, rare flakes of snow. It was a clear, perfect day for the first of December in Chicago. But Stephen Sheppard was oblivious to it. In the northern woods beyond the Canada

boundary line the breeze would be sharper and cleaner that day and smell less of the streets and — it was the very height of his hunting season for big game in those woods! Up there he would still have been shooting, but as the papers had put it, “the woods had taken their toll” again this year, and his brother’s life had been part of that toll.

“Neal Sheppard’s Body Found in the Woods!” He read the headlines in the paper which the boy thrust into his face, and he slowed the car at the Rush Street bridge. “Victim of Stray Shot Being Brought to Chicago.” Well! That was the way it was known! Stephen Sheppard released his brake, with a jerk; crossed the bridge and, eight minutes later, brought up the car with a sharper shock before the First National Bank Building.

He had never met the man he had come to see — had heard of him only through startling successes in the psychological detection of crime with which this comparative youth, fresh from the laboratory of a university and using methods new to the criminals and their pursuers alike, had startled the public and the wiser heads of the police. But finding the door to Trant’s office on the twelfth floor standing open, and the psychologist himself taking off his things, Sheppard first stared over the stocky, red-haired youth, and then clicked his tongue with satisfaction.

“It’s lucky you’re early, Mr. Trant,” he approved bluffly. “There is short enough time as it is, before we meet the train.” He had glanced at the clock as he spoke, and pulled off his gloves without ceremony. “You look like what I expected — what I’d heard you were. Now — you know me?”

“By reputation, at least, Mr. Sheppard,” Trant replied. “There has been enough in the papers these last two weeks, and as you spoke of yourself over the telephone just now as the brother of the late Neal Sheppard, I suppose this morning’s report is correct. That is, your brother has finally been found in the woods — dead?”

“So you’ve been following it, have you?”

“Only in the papers. I saw, of course, that Mr. Neal Sheppard was missing from your hunting party in Northern Ontario two weeks ago,” Trant replied. “I saw that you had been unable to find him and had given him up for drowned in one of the lakes or dead in the woods, and therefore you had come home the first of the week to tell his daughter. Then this morning I saw Mr. Chapin and your

guide, whom you had left to keep up the search, had reported they found him — killed, apparently, by a stray shot."

"I see. I told Chapin to give that out till he saw me, no matter how he found him." Sheppard tossed his fur cap upon Trant's flat-topped desk before him and slapped his heavy gloves, one after the other, beside it.

"You mean that you have private information that your brother was not shot accidentally?" Trant leaned over his desk intently.

"Exactly. But I've not come to mince matters with you, Trant. He was murdered, man, — murdered!"

"Murdered? I understand then!" Trant straightened back.

"No, you don't," his client contradicted bluntly. "I haven't come to ask you to find the murderer for me. I named him to the police and ordered his arrest before I called you this morning. He is Jim Tyler; and, as I know he was at his club, they must have him by this time. There's mighty little psychology in this case, Trant. But if I'm going to hang young Jim, I'm going to hang him quick — for it's not a pleasant job; and I have called for you merely to hear the proofs that Chapin and the Indian are bringing — they've sent word only that it is murder, as I suspected — so that when we put those proofs into the hands of the state's attorney, they can finish Jim quick — and be done with it!"

"Tyler?" Trant leaned quickly toward his client again, not trying now to conceal his surprise. "Young Tyler, your shooting-mate and your partner in the new Sheppard-Tyler Gun Company?"

"Yes, Tyler," the other returned brusquely, but rising as he spoke, and turning his back upon the pretext of closing the transom. "My shooting-mate for the last three years and I guess he's rather more than my partner in the gun company; for, to tell the truth, it was for him I put up the money to start the business. And there are more reasons than that for making me want to let him go — though he shot my brother. But those reasons — I decided this morning — are not enough this late in the day! So I decided also to hold back nothing — to keep back nothing of what's behind this crime, whoever it hurts! I said I haven't come to mince matters with you, Trant. Well — I shan't!"

He turned back from the transom, and glanced once more swiftly at the clock.

“I shall be very glad to go over the evidence for you, Mr. Sheppard,” Trant acquiesced, following the older man’s glance; “and as you have come here half an hour before we need start to meet the train —”

“Just so,” the other interrupted bluntly. “I am here to tell you as much as I am able before we meet the others. That’s why I asked you if you knew me. So now — exactly how much do you know about me, Trant?”

“I know you are a wealthy man — a large holder of real estate, the papers say, which has advanced greatly in value; and I know — this is from the papers too — that you belong to a coterie of men who have grown up with the city, — old settlers of thirty years’ standing.”

“Quite right. Neal and I came here broke — without a cent, to pick up what we could in Chicago after the fire. And we made our fortunes then, easy — or easily, as I’ve learned to say now,” he smiled to himself grimly, “by buying up lots about the city when they were cheap and everybody scared and selling them for a song, and we had only to hold them until they made us rich. I am now a rich old bachelor, Trant, hunting in season and trap-shooting out, and setting up Jim Tyler in the gun business between times. The worst that was said about Neal was his drinking and bad temper; for Leigh, his daughter, goes as well as anybody else in her circle; and even young Jim Tyler has the run of a dozen clubs. That’s all good, respectable and satisfactory, isn’t it? And is that all you know?”

“That’s all,” replied Trant curtly.

“Never heard of Sheppard’s White Palace, did you? Don’t know that when you speak to one of those old boys of thirty years ago — the coterie, you called them — about Mr. Stephen Sheppard, the thought that comes into his head is, ‘Oh! you mean Steve Sheppard, the gambler!’ Thirty years ago, more or less, we were making our money to buy those lots in a liquor palace and gambling hell — Neal and I and Jim Tyler’s father — old Jim.”

“There were more than just Neal and old Tyler and me, though,” he burst on, pacing the length of the rug beside Trant’s desk and not looking at his consultant at all. “There were the Findlays besides — Enoch, who was up in the woods with us, he gets his picture in the paper every six months or so for paying a thousand dollars for a thousand-year-old cent piece; and Enoch’s brother, and

Chapin, whom we're going to meet in a few minutes. We ran a square game — as square as any; understand that! But we had every other devilment that comes even to a square gambling house in a wide open town — fights, suicide, and — murder."

He broke off, meeting Trant's quick and questioning glance for a fraction of an instant with a steely glitter of his gray-green eyes.

"Sure — murder!" he repeated with rougher defiance. "Men shot themselves and, a good deal oftener, shot each other in our house or somewhere else, on account of what went on there. But we got things passed up a deal easier in those days, and we seldom bothered ourselves about a little shooting till — well, the habit spread to us. I mean, one night one of us — Len Findlay it was — was shot under conditions that made it certain that one of us other five — Tyler, or Chapin, or Enoch Findlay, his brother, or Neal, or I, must have shot him. You see, a pleasant thing to drop into our happy family! Made it certain only to us, of course; we got it passed up as a suicide with the police. And that wasn't all; for as soon afterward as it was safe to have another 'suicide,' old Jim Tyler was shot; and this time we knew it was either Enoch Findlay or — I told you I wouldn't mince matters — or Neal. That broke up the game and the partnership —"

"Wait, wait!" Trant interrupted. "Do you mean me to understand that your brother shot Tyler?"

"I mean you to understand just what I said," the old man's straight lips closed tightly under his short white mustache; "for I've seen too much trouble come out of just words to be careless with them. Either Enoch or Neal shot Jim; I don't know which."

"In retaliation, because he thought Tyler had shot Len Findlay?"

"Perhaps; but I never thought so, and I don't think so now," Sheppard returned decisively. "For old Jim Tyler was the least up to that sort of thing of any of us — a tongue-tied, inoffensive old fellow — and he was dealer in our games; but outside of that Jim didn't have nerve enough to handle his own money. But for some reason Neal seemed sure it was old Jim who had shot Len, and he made Enoch Findlay believe it, too. So, no matter who actually fired the bullet, it was Neal. Well, it was up to me to look after old Jim's widow and his boy. That was

necessary; for after Jim was dead, I found a funny thing. He had taken his share with the rest of us in the profits of the game; and the rest of us were getting rich by that time — for we weren't any of us gamblers; not in the way of playing it back into the game, that is; but though I had always supposed that Jim was buying his land like the rest — and his widow told me so, too — I found nothing when he was dead!"

"But you implied just now," Trant put in again quickly, "that Tyler might have had someone else investing for him. Did you look into that at the time?"

"Yes; I asked them all, but no one knew anything. But we're coming to that," the old man answered impatiently. "I wanted you to see how it was that I began to look after young Jim and take an interest in him and do things for him till — till he became what he was to me. Neal never liked my looking after the boy from the first; we quarreled about it time and again, and especially after young Jim began growing up and Neal's girl was growing up, too; and a year or so ago, when he began seeing that Leigh was caring for young Jim more than for anyone else, in spite of what he said, Neal hated the boy worse. He forbade him his house; and he did a good many other things against him, and the reason for all of it even I couldn't make out until this last hunt."

The old sportsman stood still now, picked up his fur cap and thoughtfully began drawing on his big gloves.

"We had gone up this year, as of course you know from the papers, into the Ontario reserve, just north of the Temagami region, for deer and moose. The season is good there, but short, closing the middle of November. Then we were going to cross into Quebec where the season stays till January. Young Jim Tyler wasn't with us, for this hunt was a sort of exclusive fixture just for the old ones, Neal and I, Findlay and Chapin. But this time, the second day in camp, young Jim Tyler comes running in upon us — or rather, in on me, for I was the only one in camp that day, laid up with a bad ankle. He had his gun with him, one of our new Sheppard-Tylers which we were all trying out for the first time this year. But he hadn't followed us for moose. He'd come to see Neal. For the people that had bought his father's old house had been tearing it down to make room for a business building, and they'd found some papers between the floors which they'd given to young Jim, and that was what sent him after us, hot after Neal. He showed them to me; and I understood.

“You see, the only real objection that Neal had been able to keep against young Jim was that he was a pauper — penniless but for me. And these papers Jim had were notes and memorandum which showed why Jim was a pauper and who had made him that, and how Neal himself had got the better half of old Jim’s best properties. For the papers were private notes and memoranda of money that old Jim Tyler had given Neal to invest in land for him; among them a paper in Neal’s writing acknowledging old Jim’s half interest in Neal’s best lots. Then there were some personal memorandum of Tyler’s stuck with these, part of which we couldn’t make out, except that it had to do with the shooting of Len Findlay; but the rest was clear — showed clear that, just before he was shot, old Jim Tyler had become afraid of Neal and was trying to make him convert his papers into regular titles and take his things out of Neal’s hands.

“I saw, of course, that young Jim must know everything then; so the only thing I could do was to stop him from hunting up Neal that morning and in that mood with a gun in his hand. But he laughed at me; said I ought to know he hadn’t come to kill Leigh’s father, but only to force a different understanding then and there; and his gun might come in handy — but he would keep his head as well as his gun. But he didn’t. For though he didn’t find Neal then, he came across Findlay and Chapin and blurted it all out to them, so that they stayed with him till he promised to go home, which he didn’t do either; for one of our Indians, coming up the trail early next morning with supplies, met him only half a dozen miles from camp. Jim said he’d laid up over night because of the snowstorm, but didn’t come back to camp because he didn’t want to see Neal after the promise he’d made. And there had been a big snow that night. Chapin and Findlay didn’t get in till all hours because of it; Chapin about eleven, Findlay not till near two, dead beat out from tramping through the new snow; and Neal — he never got in at all.

“I stayed four days after that looking for Neal; but we couldn’t find him. Then I left Chapin with the Indians to keep on searching, while I came down, more to see Jim, you understand, than to break the news to Leigh. Jim admitted he’d stayed near camp till the next morning but denied he’d even seen Neal, and denied it so strongly that he fooled me into giving him the benefit of the doubt until last night; and then Chapin wired me they had found Neal’s body, and to meet them with a detective, as they have plain evidence against young Jim that he murdered my brother!”

The old man stopped suddenly, and his eyes shifted from Trant to the clock.

“That’s all,” he concluded abruptly. “Not much psychology in that, is there? My car is waiting down stairs.”

He pulled the fur cap down upon his ears, and Trant had time only to throw on his coat and catch his client in the hall, as Sheppard walked toward the elevators. The chauffeur, at sight of them, opened the limousine body of the car, and Sheppard got in with Trant, leaving the man this time to guide the car through the streets.

“There’s where the Palace stood; Neal owns the lot still, and has made two re-buildings on it,” he motioned toward a towering office structure as the car slowed at the Clark Street crossing. Then, as they stopped a moment later at the Polk Street Station, he laid a muscular hand upon the door, drove it open and sprang out, leaving Trant inside. The clock in the tower showed just half past eight, and he hurried into the train shed. Ten minutes later he reappeared, leading a plump, almost roly-poly man, with a round face, fiery red from exposure to the weather, who was buttoned from chin to shoe tops in an ulster and wore a fur cap like his own. Behind them with noiseless, woodland tread glided a full-blooded Indian, in corduroy trousers and coat blotched with many forest stains, carrying carefully a long leather gun-case and cartridge belt.

“This is Chapin, Trant,” Sheppard introduced them, having evidently spoken briefly of the psychologist to Chapin in the station; “and McLain,” he motioned toward the Indian.

He stepped after them into the limousine, and as the car jerked and halted through the crowded city streets back toward his home, he lifted his eyes to the round-faced man opposite him.

“Where was it, Chapin?” he asked abruptly.

“In Bowton’s mining shack, Steve.”

“What! what!”

“You say the body was found in a miner’s cabin, Mr. Chapin,” the psychologist broke in, in crisp tones. “Do you mean the miners live in the cabin and carried him in there after he was shot?”

“No, it is an abandoned mine, Mr. Trant. He was in the deserted cabin when shot

down — shot like a dog, Steve!”

“For God’s sake, let’s drop this till we get to the house!” Sheppard burst out suddenly, and Trant fell back, still keenly observant and attentive, while the big car swept swiftly through the less crowded streets. Only twice Sheppard leaned forward, with forced calmness and laconic comment, to point out some sight to the Indian; and once he nodded absently when, passing a meat shop with deer hung beside its doors, the Indian — finding this the first object on which he dared to comment — remarked that the skins were being badly torn. Then the motor stopped before twin, stately, gray-stone houses facing the lake, where a single broad flight of steps led to two entrance doors which bore ornate door plates, one the name of Stephen, the other Neal, Sheppard.

Sheppard led the way through the hall into a wide, high trophy and smoking-room which occupied a bay of the first floor back of the dining-room, and himself shut the door firmly, after Chapin and Trant and the Indian, still carefully carrying the gun-case, had entered.

“Now tell me,” he commanded Chapin and the Indian equally, “exactly how you found him.”

“Neal had plainly taken refuge in the cabin from the snowstorm, Steve,” Chapin replied almost compassionately. “He was in his stocking feet, and his shooting-coat and cartridge-belt still lay on the straw in one of the bunks where he had been sleeping. The man, it seems clear, entered through the outer door of the mess cabin, which opens into the bunkroom through a door at its other end. Neal heard him, we suppose, and picking up his shoes and gun, went to see who it was; and the man, standing near the outer door, shot him down as he came through the other — four shots, Steve; two missed.”

“Four shots, and in the cabin!” Sheppard turned to the Indian almost in appeal; but at McLain’s nod his square chin set firmly. “You were right in telegraphing me it was murder!”

“Two hit — one here; one here,” the Indian touched his right shoulder and then the center of his forehead.

“How do you know the man who shot him stood by the outer door?” Trant interrupted.

“McLain found the shells ejected from his rifle,” Chapin answered; and the Indian took from his pocket five cartridges — four empty, one still loaded. “Man shooting kill with four shots and throw last from magazine there beside it,” he explained. “Not have need it. I find on floor with empty shells.”

“I see.” Sheppard took the shells and examined them tensely. He went to his drawer and took out a single fresh cartridge and compared it carefully with the empty shells and the unfired cartridge the Indian had found with them, before he handed them, still more tensely, to Trant. “They are all Sheppard-Tyler’s, Trant, which we were just trying out for the first time ourselves. No one else had them, no one else could possibly have them, besides ourselves, but Jim! But the gun-case, Chapin,” he turned toward the burden the Indian had carried. “Why have you brought that?”

“It’s just Neal’s gun that we found in his hand, Steve,” Chapin replied sympathetically, “and his cartridge-belt that was in the bunk.” The Indian unstrapped the case and took out the gun. Then he took from another pocket a single empty shell, this time, and four full ones, three of which he put into the magazine of the rifle, and extended it to Chapin.

“Neal had time to try twice for Ji — for the other fellow, Steve,” Chapin explained, “for he wasn’t killed till the fourth shot. But Neal’s first shell,” he pointed to the pierced primer of the cartridge he had taken from the Indian, “missed fire, you see; and he was hit so hard before he could shoot the other,” he handed over the shell, “that it must have gone wild. Its recoil threw the next cartridge in place all right, as McLain has it now,” he handed over the gun, “but Neal couldn’t ever pull the trigger on it then.”

“I see.” Sheppard’s teeth clenched tight again, as he examined the faulty cartridge his brother had tried to shoot, the empty shell, and the three cartridges left intact in the rifle. He handed them after the others to Trant. And for an instant more his green-gray eyes, growing steadily colder and more merciless, watched the silent young psychologist as he weighed again and again and sorted over, without comment, the shells that had slain Neal Sheppard; and weighed again in his fingers the one the murderer had not needed to use. Then Trant turned suddenly to the cartridge-belt the Indian held, and taking out one shell compared it with the others.

“They are different?” he said inquiringly.

“Only that these are full metal-patched bullets, like the one I showed you from the drawer, while those in Neal’s belt are soft-nosed,” Sheppard answered immediately. “We had both kinds in camp, for we were making the first real trial of the new gun; but we used only the soft-nosed in hunting. They are Sheppard-Tyler’s, Trant — all of them; and that is the one important thing and enough of itself to settle the murderer!”

“But can you understand, Mr. Sheppard, even if the man who shot the four shells found he didn’t need the fifth,” — the young psychologist held up the single, unshot shell which the Indian had found near the door — “why he should throw it there? And more particularly I can’t make out why —” He checked himself and swung from his client to the Indian as the perplexity which had filled his face when he first handled the shells gave way to the quick flush of energetic action.

“Suppose this were the mess-room of the cabin, McLain,” he gestured to the trophy-room, as he shot out his question; “can you show me how it was arranged and what you found there?”

“Yes, yes;” the Indian turned to the end wall and pointed, “there the door to outside; on floor near it, four empty shells, one full one.” He stalked to a corner at the opposite end. “Here door to bunkroom. Here,” he stopped and touched his fingers to the floor, “Neal Sheppard’s shoes where he drop them. Here,” he rose and touched the wall in two spots about the height of a man’s head above the floor, “bullet hole, and bullet hole, when he miss.”

“What! what!” cried Trant, “two bullet holes above the shoes?”

“Yes; so.”

“And the body — that lay near the shoes?”

“Oh, no; the body here!” the Indian moved along the end wall almost to the other corner. “One shell beside it that miss fire, one empty shell. Neal Sheppard’s matchbox — that empty, too — on floor. Around body burned matches.”

“Burned matches around the body?” Trant echoed in still greater excitement.

“Yes; and on body.”

“On it?”

“Yes; man, after he shot, go to him and burn matches — I think — to see him dead.”

“Then they must have shot in the dark!” Trant’s excited face flushed red with sudden and complete comprehension. “Of course, dolt that I was! With these shells in my hand, I should have guessed it! That is as plain a reason for this peculiar distribution of the shells as it is for the matches which, as the Indian says, the man must have taken from your brother’s matchbox to look at him and make sure he was dead.” He had whirled to face his client. “It was all shot in the dark.”

“Shot in the dark!” Sheppard echoed. He seemed to have caught none of the spirit of his young adviser’s new comprehension; but, merely echoing his words, had turned from him and stared steadily out of the window to the street; and as he stared, thinking of his brother shot down in darkness by an unseen enemy, his eyes, cold and merciless before, began to glow madly with his slow but — once aroused — obstinate and pitiless anger.

“Mr. Trant;” he turned back suddenly, “I do not deny that when I called for you this morning, instead of getting a detective from the city police as Chapin expected, it was not to hang Jim Tyler, as I pretended, but with a determination to give him every chance that was coming to him after I had to go against him. But he gave Neal none — none! — and it’s no matter what Neal did to his father; I’m keeping you here now to help me hang him! And Chapin! when I ordered Tyler’s arrest, I told the police I’d prefer charges against him this morning, but he seems impatient. He’s coming here with Captain Crowley from the station now,” he continued with short, sharp distinctness. “So let him in, Chapin — I don’t care to trust myself at the door — Jim’s come for it, and — I’ll let him have it!”

“You mean you are going to charge him with murder now, before that officer, Mr. Sheppard?” Trant moved quickly before his client, as Chapin obediently went toward the door. “Don’t,” he warned tersely.

“Don’t? Why?”

“The first bullet in your brother’s gun that failed — the other three — the one which the other fellow did not even try to shoot,” Trant enumerated almost

breathlessly, as he heard the front door open. “Do they mean nothing to you?”

And putting between his strong even teeth the cartridge with its primer pierced which had failed in Neal Sheppard’s gun, he tore out the bullet with a single wrench and held the shell down. “See! it was empty, Mr. Sheppard! That was the first one in your brother’s gun! That was why it didn’t go off! And this — the last one the other man had, the one he didn’t even try to shoot,” Trant jerked out the bullet from it too with another wrench of his teeth — “was empty as well. See! And the other man knew it; that was why he didn’t even try to shoot it, but ejected it on the floor as it was!”

“How did you guess that? And how did you know that the other cartridge, the one Jim — the other fellow — didn’t even try to fire — wasn’t loaded, too?” Sheppard now checked short in surprise, stupefied and amazed, gazed, with the other white-haired man and the Indian, at the empty shells.

But Trant went on swiftly: “Are Sheppard-Tyler shells so poorly loaded, Mr. Sheppard, that two out of ten of them are bad? And not only two, but this — and this — and this,” at each word he dropped on the table another shell, “the three left in your brother’s rifle. For these others are bad — unloaded, too! So that even if he had been able to pull the trigger on them, they would have failed like the first; and I know that for the same reason that I know about the first ones. Five out of ten shells of Sheppard-Tyler loading ‘accidentally’ with no powder in them. That is too much for you — for anyone — to believe, Mr. Sheppard! And that was why I said to you a moment ago, as I say again, don’t charge that young man out there with murder!”

“You mean,” Sheppard gasped, “that Jim did not kill Neal?”

“I didn’t say that,” Trant returned sharply. “But your brother was not shot down in cold-blooded murder; I’m sure of that! Whether Jim Tyler, or another, shot him, I can not yet say; but I hope soon to prove. For there were only four men in the woods who had Sheppard-Tyler guns; and he must have been shot either by Tyler, or Findlay, or Chapin, or — to open all the possibilities — by yourself, Mr. Sheppard!” the psychologist continued boldly.

“Who? Me?” roared Chapin in fiery indignation. “What — what’s that you’re saying?” The old sportsman stood staring at his young adviser, half in outrage, half in astonishment.

Then, staring at the startling display of the empty shells — whose meaning was as yet as incomprehensible to him as the means by which the psychologist had so suddenly detected them — and dazed by Trant's sudden and equally incomprehensible defense of young Tyler after he had detected them, he weakened. "I — I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean, Mr. Trant!" he said helplessly; then, irritated by his own weakness, he turned testily toward the door: "I wonder what is keeping them out there?"

"Mr. Trant says," Chapin burst out angrily, "that either you or I is as likely to have shot Neal as young Jim! But Mr. Trant is crazy; we'll have young Jim in here and prove it!" and he threw open the door.

But it was not young Tyler, but a girl, tall and blond, with a lithe, straight figure almost like a boy's, but with her fine, clear-cut features deadly pale, and with her gray eyes — straight and frank, like Sheppard's, but much deeper and softer — full of grief and terror, who stood first in the doorway.

"Leigh! So it was you keeping them out there! Leigh," her uncle's voice trembled as he spoke to the girl, "what are you doing here?"

"No; what are you doing, uncle?" the girl asked in clear, fearless tones. "Or rather, I mean, what have Mr. Chapin and this guide and this — this gentleman," she looked toward Trant and the gun Sheppard had handed him, "come here for this morning? And why have they brought Jim here — this way?" She moved aside a little, as though to let Trant see behind her the set and firm, but also very pale, features of young Tyler and the coarser face of the red-haired police officer. "I know," she continued, as her uncle still stood speechless, "that it must have something to do with my father; for Jim could not deny it. But what — what is it," she appealed again, with the terror gleaming in her eyes which told, even to Trant, that she must half suspect, "that brings you all here this way this morning, and Jim too?"

"Run over home again, my dear," the uncle stooped and kissed her clumsily. "Run back home now, for you can't come in."

"Yes; you'll go back home now, won't you, Leigh?" Tyler touched her hand.

"Perhaps you had better let Miss Sheppard in for a moment first, Mr. Tyler," Trant suggested. "For, in regard to what she seems to fear, I have only encouragement for her."

“You mean you —” Tyler’s pale, defiant lips parted impulsively, but he quickly checked himself.

“I am not afraid to ask it, Jim,” the girl this time sought his fingers with her own. “Do you mean you — are not here to try to connect Jim with the — disappearance of my father?”

“No, Miss Sheppard,” Trant replied steadily, while the eyes of the two older men were fixed upon him scarcely less intently than the girl’s; “and I have asked you to come in a moment, because I feel safe in assuring you that Mr. Tyler can not have been connected with the disappearance of your father in the way they have made you fear. And more than that, it is quite possible that within a few moments I will be able to prove that he is clear of any connection with it whatever — quite possible, Miss Sheppard. That was all I wanted to tell you.”

“Who are you?” the girl cried. “And can you make my uncle believe that, too? Do you think I haven’t known, uncle, what you thought when Jim went up there after you and — father was lost? I know that what you suspect is impossible; but,” she turned to Trant again, “can you make my uncle believe that, too?”

“Your uncle, though he seemed to forget the fact a moment ago, has retained me precisely to clear Mr. Tyler from the circumstantial evidence that seemed so conclusive against him,” said Trant, with a warning glance at the amazed Sheppard, “and I strongly hope that I will be able to do so.”

“Oh, I did not understand! I will wait upstairs, then,” the girl turned from Trant to Sheppard in bewilderment, touched Tyler’s arm as she brushed by him in the door, and left them.

“Thank you for your intention in making it easier for her — whoever you are — even if you have to take it back later,” Tyler said grimly to the psychologist. “But since Crowley has told me,” he turned now to Sheppard, “that it was you who ordered him to arrest me at the club this morning, I suppose, now that Leigh is gone, that means that you have found your brother shot as he deserved and as you expected and — you think I did it!”

“Morning, Mr. Sheppard,” the red-haired police captain nodded. “Morning, Mr. Trant; giving us some more of the psycho-palmistry? Considerable water’s gone past the mill since you put an electric battery on Caylis, the Bronson murderer, and proved him guilty just as we were getting ready to send Kanlan up for the

crime. As for this young man," he motioned with his thumb toward Tyler, "I took him in because Mr. Sheppard asked it; but as Mr. Sheppard didn't make any charge against him, and this Tyler wanted to come up here, I brought him on myself, not hearing from Mr. Sheppard. I suppose now it's Mr. Neal Sheppard's death, after seeing the morning papers and hearing the young lady."

"Just so, Captain Crowley," said Trant brusquely, "but we'll let Mr. Sheppard make his charge or not make it, just as he sees fit, after we get through with the little test we're going to carry out. And I am greatly mistaken, if, after we are through, he will bring any such charge as you have suggested. But come in, Captain; I am glad that you are here. The test I am going to make may seem so trivial to these gentlemen that I am glad to have a practical man like yourself here who has seen more in such a test as the one I am going to make now, than can appear on the surface."

"'More than appears on the surface' is the word, Mr. Trant," the captain cried impulsively. "Mr. Sheppard, it's myself has told you about Mr. Trant before; and I'll back anything he does to the limit, since I see him catch the Bronson murderer, as I just told you, by a one-cell battery that would not ring a door bell."

"I shall ask you to bear that in mind, if you will, Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Chapin," the psychologist smiled slightly as he looked about the room, and then crossed over to the mantel and took from it five of the six small stone steins with silver tops which stood there. "Particularly as I have not here even the regular apparatus for the test, but must rather improvise. If I had you in my offices or in the psychological laboratory fitted with that regular apparatus I could prove in an instant which of you, if any, was the one who shot these four cartridges to kill Neal Sheppard, and discarded this fifth," he touched again the shells on the table. "But, as I said, I hope we can manage here."

"Which of us?" Chapin echoed. "So you're going to try me, too?" He raised a plump fist and shook it angrily under Trant's nose. "You think I did it?"

"I didn't say so, Mr. Chapin," Trant replied pacificatingly. "I said there were excellent chances that Mr. Tyler was not the one who did the shooting; so if that is so, it must have been done by one of the other men who carried Sheppard-Tyler rifles. I thought of you merely as one of those; and as the test I am about to try upon Mr. Tyler would be as simple and efficient a test to determine your

connection — or lack of connection — with this shooting, I shall ask you to take it after Mr. Tyler, if necessary."

He raised the tops of the steins, as he spoke, peered into them to see they were empty; then put into his pocket the good shell which he had taken from the belt the Indian had given him, and picked up the five little covered cups again.

"As I have a stop second hand to my watch, Mr. Sheppard," he continued," all I need now is some shot — ordinary bird shot, or small shot of any size."

"Shot?" Sheppard stared at the steins crazily, but catching Captain Crowley's equally uncomprehending but admiringly confident eyes, he nodded, "of course. You will find all the shot you can want in the gun cabinet in the corner."

Trant crossed to the cabinet and opened the drawer. He returned in less than a minute, as they stood exchanging curious glances, and placed five steins in a row on the table before him.

"Please take up the middle one now, Mr. Tyler," he requested, as he took out his watch. "Thank you. Now the one to the right of it; and tell me, is it the same weight as the other, or heavier, or lighter?"

"The same weight or lighter — perhaps a little lighter," Tyler answered readily. "But what of it? What is this?" he asked curiously.

"Take up the middle stein again." Trant, disregarding his question, glanced at the time interval on his watch; "the first stein you picked up, Mr. Tyler; and then take up the remaining three in any order, and tell me, as quickly as you can, whether they seem the same weight, lighter or heavier to you. Thank you," he acknowledged noncommittally again, as Tyler acquiesced, his wonder at so extraordinary a test increasing.

The psychologist glanced over the list of answers he had noted on a slip of paper with the time taken for each. Then he gathered up the five steins without comment and redistributed them on the table.

"It looks bright for you, Mr. Tyler," he commented calmly; "but I will ask you to go over the steins again; "and a second, and then a third time, he made Tyler take up all five steins in turn and tell him whether each seemed the same weight, lighter or heavier than the first he handled.

“What’s all this tomfoolery with steins got to do with who shot Neal Sheppard?” Chapin blurted out contemptuously. But when he turned for concurrence to Stephen Sheppard, he found the old sportsman’s anxious gaze again fixed on the intent face of the police captain who once before, by his own admission, had seen Trant pick a murderer by incomprehensible work, and his own contempt as well gave place to apprehensive wonder at what might lurk behind this apparently childish experiment.

“You ask what this means, Mr. Chapin?” Trant looked up as he finished his notes. “It has made me certain that Mr. Tyler, at least, is guiltless of the crime of which he has been suspected. As to who shot Neal Sheppard, if you will kindly take up those steins just as you have seen him do, perhaps I can tell you.”

For the fraction of an instant Chapin halted; then, as under direct gaze of the psychologist, he reached out to pick up the first stein in the test, whose very seeming triviality made it the more incomprehensible to him, the sweat broke out on the backs of his hands; but he answered stoutly:

“That’s heavier; the same; this lighter; and this the same again.”

And again: “The same; heavier; lighter; the same! Now, what’s the answer?”

“That my feeling which you forced upon me to make me choose you — I admit it — for the role you were so willing to assign to Tyler, Mr. Chapin, would probably have made me waste valuable time, if I had not been able to correct it, scientifically, as easily as I confirmed my other feeling in Tyler’s favor. For there can be no question now that you had no more to do with the shooting of Neal Sheppard than he had. I must make still another test to determine the man who fired these shots.”

“You mean you want to try me?” Sheppard demanded, uneasy and astounded.

“I would rather test the other man first, Mr. Sheppard; the fourth man who was in the woods with you,” Trant corrected calmly.

“Findlay?”

The psychologist, as he looked around, saw in the faces of Sheppard, Chapin, and young Tyler alike, indignant astonishment.

“You don’t know Findlay, Mr. Trant,” Sheppard said roughly, losing confidence again in spite of Crowley; “or you would understand that he is the last man among us who could be suspected. Enoch is a regular hermit — what they call a ‘recluse’! Only once a year are we able to get him to tear himself away from his musty old house and his collections of coins, and then only for old sake’s sake, to go to the north woods with us. Your crazy test with the steins has led you a long way off the track if you think it’s Findlay.”

“It has led me inevitably to the conclusion that, if it was one of you four men, it was either Findlay or yourself, Mr. Sheppard,” Trant asserted firmly. “You yourself know best whether it is necessary to test him.”

Sheppard stared at the obstinate young psychologist for a full minute. “At least,” he said finally with the same roughness, “we can keep young Jim still in custody.” He looked at the police officer, who nodded. Then he went to the house telephone on the wall, spoke shortly into it, and turned:

“I’ll take you to Findlay, Trant. I’ve called the motor.”

Five minutes later the little party in the trophy-room broke up — Tyler, under the watch of Captain Crowley, going to the police station, but as yet without charge against him; Chapin going about his own business; Trant and his client speeding swiftly down the boulevard in the big motor.

“You want to stop at your office, I suppose,” Sheppard asked, “for you haven’t brought the steins you used in your test with us?”

“Yes — but no,” Trant suddenly recollected; “you have mentioned once or twice that Findlay is a collector of coins — a numismatist.”

“The craziest in Chicago.”

“Then if you’ll drop me for a minute at Swift and Walton’s curio shop in Randolph Street that will be enough.”

Sheppard glanced at his young adviser wonderingly; and looked more wonderingly still when Trant came out from the curio shop jingling a handful of silver coins, which he showed quietly.

“They’re silver florins of one of the early Swiss states,” he exclaimed;

“borrowed of Swift and Walton, by means of a deposit, and guaranteed to make a collector sit up and take notice. They’ll get me an interview with Mr. Findlay, I hope, without the need of an introduction. So if you will point out the house to me and let me out a block or so from it, I will go in first.”

“And what do you want me to do?” asked Sheppard, startled.

“Come in a few minutes later; meet him as you would naturally. Your brother’s body has been found; tell him about it. You suspect young Tyler; tell him that also. Maybe he can help you. You need not recognize me until I see I want you; but my work, I trust, will be done before you get there.”

“Enoch Findlay help me?” queried Sheppard in perplexity. “You mean help me to trace Neal’s murderer. But it is you who said because, against all reason, you suspect Enoch, Mr. Trant, that we have come here! For there’s the house,” he pointed. And Trant, not making any answer, leaped out as the car was slowing, and left him.

The big old Michigan avenue dwelling, Trant saw at a glance, was in disrepair; but from inattention, the psychologist guessed, not from lack of money. The maid who opened the door was a slattern. The hall, with its mingled aroma of dust and cooking, spoke eloquently of the indifference of the house’s chief occupant; and the musty front room, with its coin cases and curios, was as unlike the great light and airy “den” where Stephen Sheppard hung his guns and skins and antlers, as the man whom Trant rose to greet was unlike his friend, the hale and ruddy old sportsman.

As Trant looked over this man, whose great height — six feet four or five inches — was reduced at least three inches by the studious stoop of his shoulders; as he took note of his worn and careless clothing and his feet forced into bulging slippers; as he saw the parchment skin, and met the eyes, so light in color that the iris could scarcely be detected from the whites, like the unpainted eyes of a statue, he appreciated the surprise that Findlay’s former partners, Sheppard and Chapin, had experienced at the suggestion that this might be the murderer.

“I shall ask only a little of your time, Mr. Findlay,” Trant put his hand into his pocket for his coins, as though the proffered hand of the other had been extended for them. “I have come to ask your estimate, as an expert, upon a few coins which I have recently picked up. I have been informed that you can better advise

me as to their value than any other collector in Chicago. My coins seem to be of the early Swiss states."

"Early Swiss coins are almost as rare as Swiss ships in the present day, sir." Findlay took the round bits of silver with the collector's intense absorption, which made him forget that he had not even asked his visitor's name. "And these are exceptionally rare and interesting pieces. I have never seen but one other of these which I am fortunate enough to possess. They are all the same, I see," he sifted them swiftly one after the other into his palm. "But — what's this — what's this?" he cried with sudden disappointment as he took the top ones up separately for more individual examination. "I hope you have not paid too great a price for these." He went to one of his cases and, opening it, took out an exact duplicate of Trant's coin. "For see!" he weighed the two accurately in his fingers; "this first one of yours compares most favorably with this specimen of mine, which is unquestionably genuine. But this — this — this and this; ah, yes; and this, too" — he sorted over the others swiftly and picked out five —"are certainly lighter and I'm afraid they are counterfeit. But where are my scales?"

"Lighter?" Trant repeated, in apparent bewilderment.

"The correct coin, you see," the collector replied, tossing his own silver pieces into his scales, "should be over 400 grains — almost an ounce. But these," he placed the ten pieces one after the other on the balance, too absorbed to notice the ringing of the door bell, "the five I feared for, are quite light — twenty grains at least, you see?" He reweighed them once more, carefully.

"That is certainly most interesting." Trant grimly looked up at the expert as though trying to deny a disappointment. "But it is quite worth having the five coins light, to witness the facility with which an expert like yourself can pick them out, unerringly, without fail — barely twenty grains difference in four hundred."

He looked up, still betraying only astonishment. But Findlay's face, after the first flush of his collector's absorption, had suddenly grown less cordial.

"I did not get your name, sir," he started; then turned, at the opening of the door behind him, to face Stephen Sheppard.

"Findlay!" the sportsman cried, scarcely waiting for the servant who had admitted him to vanish, and not appearing to notice Trant at all. "They've found

Neal's body! In Bowton's mining shack — murdered, Enoch, murdered! We'll have young Jim Tyler up for it! Unless," he hesitated, and looked at Trant, and added, as though the compelling glance of the psychologist constrained him to it, "unless you know something that will help him, Enoch!"

"Hush, Steve! Hush!" the coin collector fell back upon the chair, beside his desk, with an anxious glance at the psychologist. "I have a man here." He gathered himself together. "And what is it possible that I could tell to save young Jim?"

"You might tell why, Mr. Findlay," Trant said sharply, nerving himself for the coming struggle, "for I know already how you shot Neal Sheppard yourself!"

But no struggle came.

"What — you?" Findlay burst from his pale lips; then caught the recognition of this stranger in Sheppard's face and fell back — trapped.

He clasped his hands convulsively together and stretched them out before him on the desk. In his cheek something beat and beat with ceaseless pulse.

"Murdered, Steve?" the latent fire seemed fanned in Findlay at last. "But first" — he seemed to check something short on his lips — "who are you? And why," he turned to Trant, "why did you come to me with those coins? I mean — how much do you know?"

"I am retained by Mr. Sheppard in this case," Trant replied, "and only turned coin collector to prove how you picked out those shells with which you shot Neal Sheppard. And I know enough more to know that you could not have murdered him in any right sense, and enough to assure you that, if you tell how you shot him to save young Tyler, you can count on me for competent confirmation that it was not murder."

But the tall, gaunt man, bent in his chair, seemed scarcely to hear the psychologist's words or even to be conscious, longer, of his presence. When he lifted his eyes, they gave no sign as they swept by Trant's figure. Findlay saw only his old partner and friend.

"But you shot him, Enoch? How and why?"

"How?" the Adam's apple worked in Findlay's throat, and the words seemed

wrenched from his lips as though their weight were a burden too heavy for him longer to bear. “How, Steve? I shot him as he shot Len, my brother, thirty years ago!”

“Then it was Neal that shot Len and — and started the murder among us?” the old sportsman in his turn sought tremblingly for a seat. “For all these years I have known in my heart that it was done by Neal; but, Enoch, you didn’t shoot him now because he shot Len — thirty years ago!”

“No, not because he shot Len; but because he made me kill — made me murder old Jim Tyler for it! Now do you understand? Neal shot Len, my brother; and for that, perhaps I should not have shot Neal when, at last, I found it out thirty years later. But for that murder he did himself, he made me murder poor old Jim Tyler, my best friend! So I shot him as he made me shoot Jim Tyler. It was both or none! Neal would be alive to-day, if Jim was!”

“Neal shot Len and made you shoot old Jim Tyler for it?”

“Yes; I shot him, Steve! I shot old Jim — old Jim, who was the truest friend to me of you all! I shot old Jim, whose bed I’d shared — and for these thirty years old Jim has never left me. There are men like that, Steve, who do a thing in haste, and then can’t forget. For I’m one of them. I was no kind of a man for a murderer, Steve; I was no man for the business we were in. Len led me — led me where I ought never to have gone, for I hadn’t nerve like he and you and Neal had! Then Len was shot, and Neal came to me and told me old Jim had done it. I was wild, Steve — wild, for I’d had a difference with Jim and I knew Jim had had a difference with Len — over me. So I believed it! But I had no gun. I never carried one, you know. Neal gave me one and told me to go and shoot him, or Jim’d shoot me, too. And I shot old Jim — shot him in the back; that’s the kind of man I was — no nerve. I couldn’t face him when I did it. But I’ve faced him often enough since, God knows! By night and by day; by foul weather or by fair weather; for old Jim and I have got up and gone to bed together ever since — thirty years. And it’s made me what I am — you see, I never had the nerve. I told you!”

“But Neal, Enoch? How did you come to shoot Neal two weeks ago — how did all that make you?” Sheppard urged excitedly.

“I’m telling you! Those two weeks ago — two weeks ago to-day, young Jim

came up into the woods red hot; for he had the papers he showed you showing Neal had cheated him out of money. He met Chapin and me, too, and told us and showed us the papers. There was one paper there that didn't mean anything to young Jim or to you or to Chapin, or to anyone else that didn't know old Jim intimately — old Jim had his own way of putting things — but it meant a lot to me. For all these years I've been telling you about — all these years I've been carrying old Jim with me, getting up and lying down with him, and whenever he came to me, I'd been saying to him, ' I know, Jim, I killed you; but it was justice; you killed my brother! But that paper made me know different. It made me know it wasn't old Jim that killed Len, Steve; it was Neal — and Jim knew it; and that was why Neal set me on Jim and made me kill him; because Jim knew it! That was like Neal, wasn't it, Steve? Never do anything straight, Neal wouldn't, when he could do it crooked! He wanted to get rid of old Jim — he owed him money and was afraid of him now, for Jim knew he'd killed Len — and he saw a safe way to make me do it. So then at last I knew why old Jim had never left me, but had been following me all these years — always with me; and I never let on to Chapin. I just went to look for Neal. 'This time,' said I to myself, 'it's justice!' And — I found him sitting on a log, with his gun behind him, a little drunk — for he always carried a flask with him, you know — and whistling. I couldn't face him any more than I could Jim, and I came up behind him. Three times I took a bead on Neal's back, and three times I couldn't pull the trigger — for he never stopped whistling, and I knew if I shot him then I'd hear that whistling all my life — and the third time he turned and saw me. He must have seen the whole thing on my face; I can't keep anything. But he had nerve, Neal did. 'Oh,' he says, 'it's Enoch Findlay, the murderer, shooting in the back as usual.' 'I'm what you made me,' says I, 'but you'll never make any difference to another man!' 'Give me a chance,' says Neal. 'Don't shoot me sitting!' Neal had nerve, I tell you — I never had any; but that time for once in my life, I got it. 'Get up,' says I, 'and take your gun; you'll have as fair a chance as I will.' But that wasn't quite true. I never had Neal's nerve — I didn't have it even then. But I've always been a better shot than him; I've never drunk; and he hasn't been steady for years. So I knew I still had the advantage; and Neal knew it, too; but he doesn't let on.

"'Thank you, Enoch,' he says. 'Now I'll kill you, of course; but while I'm doing it, maybe you'll hit me — no knowing; and I don't care to have a soft-nose bullet mushroom inside of me. Besides, wouldn't you rather have a clean hole — you've seen what the soft-noses do to the deer!' 'It's all we've got,' says I; but I guess he had me on that then. For I had seen the game hit by soft-nose bullets;

and if I had to have him around with a bullet hole in him after I'd killed him, I wanted a clean bullet hole anyway — not the other kind. 'Have you got the other kind?' I said. 'I'll go to camp and get some,' he answered. I don't know what was in me; I had my nerve that day — for the first and only time in my life. I guess it was that, Steve, and it was a new feeling and I wanted to enjoy it. I knew there was some devilment in what he said; but I wanted to give him every chance — yes, I enjoyed giving the chance for more crookedness to him before I finished him; for I knew I was going to finish him then.

"'All right,' I said, 'I'll wait for you in the clearing by Bowton's mining shack'; for I saw in his eyes that he was afraid not to come back to me; and I watched him go, and went over to Bowton's and sat down with my back against the shanty, so he couldn't come up and shoot me from behind, and waited. It was dark and cloudy; he was gone four hours, and before he got back it began to snow. It got so that you couldn't see ten feet in that blizzard; but I sat outside in the snow till Neal came back; then we went into the shack together and agreed to wait till it was over — no man on earth could have done any shooting in that storm then, and we knew we couldn't get back to camp till it was over. We sat there in the shack, and looked at each other. Night came, and we were still looking; only now we couldn't see each other any longer, but sat waiting to hear the other moving — only neither of us moved. Then we did — slowly and carefully. Sometimes I sat in one place, sometimes in another, for I didn't want him to know just where I was for fear he'd shoot. But he was afraid to shoot first; for if he missed, I'd see him by the flash and get him, sure. It kept on snowing. Once Neal said, 'We'll settle this thing in the morning.' 'All right,' says I — but moved again, for I thought he would surely shoot then.

"I kept wondering when my nerve would go, but it stayed by me, and I tell you I enjoyed it; he moved more often than I did. For the first time in my life I wasn't afraid of Neal Sheppard; and he was afraid of me. He laid down in one of the bunks and I could hear him turning from side to side; but he didn't dare to sleep any, and I didn't either. Then he said, 'This is hell, ain't it!' 'If it is,' I said, 'it's a taste of what you're going to get after!' After I'd shot him, I meant. Then he said, 'I want to sleep, and I can't sleep while you're living; let's settle this thing now!'

"'In the dark?' I asked. 'Not if I can find a light,' he says, and I promised not to shoot him while he lit a match — I had none. He lit one and looked for a piece of candle, but couldn't find any. Then I said, 'If you want to do it in the dark, I'm

agreeable’; for I’d been thinking that maybe it was only because of the dark, now, that I had my nerve, and maybe when daylight came and I could see him, I might be afraid of him. So we agreed to it.

“He felt for me in the dark, and held out five shells. We’d agreed in the afternoon to fight at fifty paces with five shells each — steel-patched bullets — and shoot till one killed. So he counted out five in his hand and offered them to me, keeping the other five for himself. I felt the five he gave me. They were full metal-patched, all right; the kind for men to fight with; they’d either kill or make a clean wound. But something about him — and I knew I had to be looking for devilment — made me suspicious of him. ‘What are your five,’ I said at a venture; ‘soft-nose? Are you going to use sporting lead on me?’ ‘They’re the same as yours,’ he said; but I got more suspicious. ‘Let’s trade, then,’ I said. ‘Feel the steel on them, then,’ he handed me one. I felt; and it was metal-patched, all right; but then I knew what was the bottom of his whole objection to the bullets; his shell was heavier than mine. Mine were lighter; they were unloaded; I mean they had no powder. He knew the powder we use was so little compared to the weight of the case and bullet it could easily pass all right; no one could spot the difference — no one, except one trained like me; and I was sure he never thought I could. It all flashed across me ten times quicker than that as soon as I felt his cartridges; but I said nothing. I told you I had my nerve that night. For the same second my plan flashed to me, too; my plan to turn his own trick against him and not let him know! So I gave him back his shell; let him think it was all right; but I knocked all ten, his and mine, on the floor.

“Then we had to get down and look for them on the floor. I knew I could pick out the good from the bad easy; but he — well, whenever I found a light one, I left it; but when I found a heavy one, I kept it. I got four good ones so easy and quick that he never guessed I was picking them; he was fumbling — I could almost feel him sweat — trying to be sure he was getting good shells. He got one, by accident, before I found it; so I had to take one bad one; but I knew he had four bad, though he himself couldn’t know anything about that. Then we loaded the guns, and went out into the big room of the cabin, and backed away from each other.

“I backed as quick as I could, but he went slower. I did that so I could hear his footsteps, and I listened and knew just about where he was. We didn’t either one of us want to fire first, for the other one would see his flash and fire at it. But after I had waited as long as I could and knew that he hadn’t moved because I

heard no footsteps, I fired twice — as fast as I could pull the trigger — where I heard him last; and from just the opposite corner from where I last heard him, I heard the click of his rifle — the hammer falling on one of his bad shells, or it might have been the last for me. I didn't see how he could have got there without my knowing it; but I didn't stop to think of that. I just swung and gave it to him quick — two shots again, but not so quick but that — between them his hammer struck his good shell and the bullet banged through the wall behind me. But then I gave him my fourth shot — straight; for his hammer didn't even click again. Besides, I heard him fall. I waited a long time to see if he moved; but he didn't. I threw the bad cartridge out of my gun, and went over and felt for him. I got the matchbox and lit matches and saw he was dead; and I saw, too, how he had got in that corner without me hearing. He was in his stockings; he had taken off his shoes and sneaked from the corner where I first shot for him, so he would have killed me if I hadn't seen to it that he had the bad shells he fixed for me. It struck a sort of a shiver to me to see that — to see him tricky and fighting foul to the end. But that was like Neal, wasn't it, Steve? That was like him, clear to the last, looking for any unfair advantage he could take? That's how and why I killed Neal, Steve — and this time it was justice, Steve! For Neal had it coming! Steve, Steve! didn't Neal have it coming?"

He stretched out his hands to his old friend, the brother of the man he had killed, in pitiable appeal; and as the other rose, with his face working with indecision and emotion, Trant saw that the question he had asked and the answer that was to be given were for those two alone, and he went out and left them. The psychologist waited at the top of the high stone entrance steps for several minutes before Sheppard joined him and stood drinking in great breaths of the cold December air as though by its freshness to restore his nervous balance.

"I do not know what your decision is, Mr. Sheppard," said the younger man finally, "as to what will be done in the matter. I may tell you that the case had already given me independent confirmation of Mr. Findlay's remarkable statement in the important last particulars. So it will be no surprise to me, and I shall not mention it, if I am never called on by you to bear witness to the very full confession we have just heard."

"Confession?" Sheppard started. "Findlay does not regard it a confession, Mr. Trant, but as his defense; and I — I rather think that during the last few minutes I have been looking at it in that light." He led the way toward the automobile, and as they stepped into it, he continued: "You have proved completely, Mr. Trant,

all the assertions you made at my house this morning, but I am still guessing how the means you used could have made you think of Findlay as the man who killed Neal — the one whom I would have least suspected."

"You know already," Trant answered, "what led me to the conclusion that your brother was killed in the dark; and that it was certainly not a murder, but a duel, or, at least, some sort of a formal fight between two men, had occurred to me with compelling suggestiveness as soon as the Indian showed to me the intact shells — all with full metal-patched bullets, though these were not carried by you for game and no other such shells were found in your brother's belt. And not only were the intact shells with steel-patched bullets, but the shots fired were also steel-patched bullets, as the Indian noticed from their holes through the logs. So here were two men with five metal-patched shells apiece firing at each other.

"It still more strongly suggested some sort of a duel to me," the psychologist continued, "when they told us the singularly curious fact that two of the bullets had pierced the wall directly above the place where your brother's shoes stood. This could reasonably be explained if I held my suspicion that the men had fought a duel in the dark — shooting by sound; but I could not even guess at any other explanation which was not entirely fantastic. And when I discovered immediately afterwards that, of the ten special shells which these men seemed to have chosen to fire at each other, five had been unloaded, it made the fact final to me; for it was utterly absurd to suppose that of the ten shells to be shot under such circumstances, five — just one half — would have been without powder by accident. But I am free to confess," Trant continued frankly, "that I did not even guess at the true explanation of that — for I have accepted Mr. Findlay's statement as correct. I had accounted for it by supposing that, in this duel, the men more consciously chose their cartridges and that the duel was a sort of repeating rifle adaptation of two men dueling with one loaded and one unloaded pistol. In the essential fact, however, I was correct and that was that the men did choose the shells; so, granting that, it was perfectly plain that one of the men had been able to clearly discriminate between the loaded and the unloaded shells, and the other had not. For not only did the one have four good shells to the other's one — in itself an almost convincing figure — but the man with four did not even try to shoot his bad shell, while it appeared that the other had tried to shoot his bad one first. Now as there was not the slightest difference to the eye between the bad and good shells and — that which made it final — the duel was fought in the dark, the discrimination which one man had and your brother did not, could only have been an ability for fine discrimination in weight."

“I see!” Comprehension dawned curiously upon Sheppard’s face.

“For the bullet and the case of those special shells of yours, Mr. Sheppard,” the psychologist continued rapidly, “were so heavy — weighing together over three hundred grains, as I weighed them at your gun cabinet — and the smokeless powder you were trying was of such exceptional power that you had barely twenty grains in a cartridge; so the difference in weight between one of those full shells and an empty one was scarcely one-fifteenth — an extremely difficult difference for one without special deftness to detect in such delicate weights. It was entirely indistinguishable to you; and also apparently so to Mr. Chapin, though I was not at first convinced whether it was really so or not. However, as I have trained myself in laboratory work to fine differences — a man may work up to discriminations as fine as one-fortieth — I was able to make out this essential difference at once.

“This reduced my case to a single and extremely elementary consideration: could young Tyler have picked out those shells in the dark and shot Neal Sheppard with them. If he could, then I could take up the circumstantial evidence against him, which certainly seemed strong. But if he could not, then I had merely to test the other men who carried Sheppard-Tyler rifles and were gone from camp the night your brother was shot, as well as young Tyler — though that circumstance seemed to have been forgotten in the case against Tyler.”

“I see!” Sheppard cried again. “So that was what you were doing with the steins and shot! But how could you tell that from the steins?”

“I was making a test, as you understand now, Mr. Sheppard,” Trant explained, “to determine whether or not Tyler — and after him, Mr. Chapin — could have distinguished easily between a loaded shell weighing something over 320 grains and one without the 20 odd grains of smokeless powder; that is, to find if either could discriminate differences of no more than one-fifteenth in such a small weight. To test for this in the laboratory and with the proper series of experiment weights, I should have a number of rubber blocks of precisely the same size and appearance, but graded in weight from 300 grains to something over 320 grains. If I had the subject take up the 300 grain weight and then the others in succession, asking him to call them heavier or lighter or the same weight, and then made him go over all the weights again in a different order, I could have as accurately proved his sense of weight discrimination as an oculist can prove the

power of sight of the eyes, and with as little possibility of anyone fooling me. But I could not arrange a proper series of experiment weights of only 300 grains without a great deal of trouble; and it was not necessary for me to do so. For under the operation of a well-known psychological principle called Weber's Law, I knew that the same ratio of discrimination between weights holds pretty nearly constant for each individual, whether the experiment is made with grains, or ounces, or pounds. In other words, if a person's 'threshold of difference' — as his power of weight discrimination is called — is only one-tenth in grains, it is the same in drams or ounces; and if he can not accurately determine whether one stein weighs one-fifteenth more than another, neither can he pick out the heavier shell if the difference is only one-fifteenth. So I merely had to take five of your steins, fill the one I used as a standard with shot till it weighed about six ounces, or 100 drams. The other steins I weighted to 105, 107, 108, no drams respectively; and by mixing them up and timing both Tyler's and Chapin's answers so as to be sure they were answering their honest, first impressions of the weights of the steins and were not trying to trick me, I found that neither could consistently tell whether the steins that weighed one-twentieth, one-fifteenth or even the steins which weighed one-twelfth more were heavier, lighter or the same as the standard stein; and it was only when they got the one which weighed no drams and was one-tenth heavier that they were always right. So I knew."

"I see! I see!" Sheppard cried eagerly. "Then the coins you took to Findlay were —"

"Weights to try him in precisely the same sense," Trant continued. "Only they approximated much more closely the weights of the bullets and had, indeed, even finer differences in weight. Five were genuine old florins weighing 400 grains, while the other five were light twenty grains or only one-twentieth; yet Findlay picked them out at once from the others, as soon as he compared them, without a moment's hesitation."

"Simple as you make it out now, young man," Sheppard said to his young adviser admiringly, "it was a wonderful bit of work. And whether or not it would have proved that you were needed to save Tyler's life, you have certainly saved me from making the most serious criminal charge against him; and you have spared him and my niece from starting their lives together under the shame and shadow of the public knowledge of my brother's past. I am going now, of course, to see that Jim is freed and that even the suspicion that my brother was not killed

accidentally in the woods, gets no further than Captain Crowley. I can see to that! And you, Mr. Trant —”

“I have retained the privilege, fortunately, Mr. Sheppard,” Trant interrupted, “since I am unofficial, of judging for myself when justice has been done. And I told you that the story we have just heard satisfied me as the truth. My office is in the next block. You will leave me there?”

VIII

THE AXTON LETTERS

The sounds in her dressing-room had waked her just before five. Ethel Waldron could still see, when she closed her eyes, every single, sharp detail of her room as it was that instant she sprang up in bed, with the cry that had given the alarm, and switched on the electric light. Instantly the man had shut the door; but as she sat, strained, staring at it to reopen, the hands and dial of her clock standing on the mantel beside the door, had fixed themselves upon her retina like the painted dial of a jeweler's dummy. It could have been barely five, therefore, when Howard Axton, after his first swift rush in her defense had found the window which had been forced open; had picked up the queer Turkish dagger which he found broken on the sill, and, crying to the girl not to call the police, as it was surely "the same man" — the same man, he meant, who had so inexplicably followed him around the world — had rushed to his room for extra cartridges for his revolver and run out into the cold sleet of the March morning.

So it was now an hour or more since Howard had run after the man, revolver in hand; and he had not reappeared or telephoned or sent any word at all of his safety. And however much Howard's life in wild lands had accustomed him to seek redress outside the law, hers still held the city-bred impulse to appeal to the police. She turned from her nervous pacing at the window and seized the telephone from its hook; but at the sound of the operator's voice she remembered again Howard's injunction that the man, whenever he appeared, was to be left solely to him, and dropped the receiver without answering. But she resented fiercely the advantage he held over her which must oblige her, she knew, to obey him. He had told her frankly — threatened her, indeed — that if there was the slightest publicity given to his homecoming to marry her, or any further notoriety made of the attending circumstances, he would surely leave her.

At the rehearsal of this threat she straightened and threw the superfluous dressing gown from her shoulders with a proud, defiant gesture. She was a straight, almost tall girl, with the figure of a more youthful Diana and with features as fair and flawless as any younger Hera, and in addition a great depth of blue in very direct eyes and a crowning glory of thick, golden hair. She was barely twenty-two. And she was not used to having any man show a sense of advantage over her, much less threaten her, as Howard had done. So, in that impulse of defiance, she was reaching again for the telephone she had just dropped, when she saw through the fog outside the window the man she was

waiting for — a tall, alert figure hastening toward the house.

She ran downstairs rapidly and herself opened the door to him, a fresh flush of defiance flooding over her. Whether she resented it because this man, whom she did not love but must marry, could appear more the assured and perfect gentleman without collar, or scarf, and with his clothes and boots spattered with mud and rain, than any of her other friends could ever appear; or whether it was merely the confident, insolent smile of his full lips behind his small, close-clipped mustache, she could not tell. At any rate she motioned him into the library without speaking; but when they were alone and she had closed the door, she burst upon him.

“Well, Howard? Well? Well, Howard?” breathlessly.

“Then you have not sent any word to the police, Ethel?”

“I was about to — the moment you came. But — I have not — yet,” she had to confess.

“Or to that —” he checked the epithet that was on his lips — ” your friend Caryl?”

She flushed, and shook her head.

He drew his revolver, “broke” it, ejecting the cartridges carelessly upon the table, and threw himself wearily into a chair. “I’m glad to see you understand that this has not been the sort of affair for anyone else to interfere in!”

“Has been, you mean;” the girl’s face went white; “you — you caught him this time and — and killed him, Howard?”

“Killed him, Ethel?” the man laughed, but observed her more carefully. “Of course I haven’t killed him — or even caught him. But I’ve made myself sure, at last, that he’s the same fellow that’s been trying to make a fool of me all this year — that’s been after me, as I wrote you. And if you remember my letters, even you — I mean even a girl brought up in a city ought to see how it’s a matter of honor with me now to settle with him alone!”

“If he is merely trying to ‘make a fool of you,’ as you say — yes, Howard,” the girl returned hotly. “But from what you yourself have told me of him, you know

he must be keeping after you for some serious reason! Yes; you know it! I can see it! You can't deny it!"

"Ethel — what do you mean by that?"

"I mean that, if you do not think that the man who has been following you from Calcutta to Cape Town, to Chicago, means more than a joke for you to settle for yourself; anyway, I know that the man who has now twice gone through the things in my room, is something for me to go to the police about!"

"And have the papers flaring the family scandal again?" the man returned. "I admit, Ethel," he conceded, carefully calculating the sharpness of his second sting before he delivered it, "that if you or I could call in the police without setting the whole pack of papers upon us again, I'd be glad to do it, if only to please you. But I told you, before I came back, that if there was to be any more airing of the family affairs at all, I could not come; so if you want to press the point now, of course I can leave you," he gave the very slightest but most suggestive glance about the rich, luxurious furnishings of the great room, "in possession."

"You know I can't let you do that!" the girl flushed scarlet. "But neither can you prevent me from making the private inquiry I spoke of for myself! "She went to the side of the room and, in his plain hearing, took down the telephone and called a number without having to look it up.

"Mr. Caryl, please," she said. "Oh, Henry, is it you? You can take me to your — Mr. Trant, wasn't that the name — as soon as you can now… . Yes; I want you to come here. I will have my brougham. Immediately!" And still without another word or even a glance at Axton, she brushed by him and ran up the stairs to her room.

He had made no effort to prevent her telephoning; and she wondered at it, even as, in the same impetus of reckless anger, she swept up the scattered letters and papers on her writing desk, and put on her things to go out. But on her way downstairs she stopped suddenly. The curl of his cigarette smoke through the open library door showed that he was waiting just inside it. He meant to speak to her before she went out. Perhaps he was even glad to have Caryl come in order that he might speak his say in the presence of both of them. Suddenly his tobacco's sharp, distinctive odor sickened her. She turned about, ran upstairs

again and fled, almost headlong, down the rear stairs and out the servants' door to the alley.

The dull, gray fog, which was thickening as the morning advanced, veiled her and made her unrecognizable except at a very few feet; but at the end of the alley, she shrank instinctively from the glance of the men passing until she made out a hurrying form of a man taller even than Axton and much broader. She sprang toward it with a shiver of relief as she saw Henry Caryl's light hair and recognized his even, open features.

"Ethel!" he caught her, gasping his surprise. "You here? Why—"

"Don't go to the house!" She led him the opposite way. "There is a cab stand at the corner. Get one there and take me — take me to this Mr. Trant. I will tell you everything. The man came again last night. Auntie is sick in bed from it. Howard still says it is his affair and will do nothing. I had to come to you."

Caryl steadied her against a house-wall an instant; ran to the corner for a cab and, returning with it, half lifted her into it.

Forty minutes later he led her into Trant's reception-room in the First National Bank Building; and recognizing the abrupt, decisive tones of the psychologist in conversation in the inner office, Caryl went to the door and knocked sharply.

"I beg your pardon, but — can you possibly postpone what you are doing, Mr. Trant?" he questioned quickly as the door opened and he faced the sturdy and energetic form of the red-haired young psychologist who, in six months, had made himself admittedly the chief consultant in Chicago on criminal cases. "My name is Caryl. Henry Howell introduced me to you last week at the club. But I am not presuming upon that for this interruption. I and — my friend need your help badly, Mr. Trant, and immediately. I mean, if we can not speak with you now, we may be interrupted — unpleasantly."

Caryl had moved, as he spoke, to hide the girl behind him from the sight of the man in the inner office, who, Caryl had seen, was a police officer. Trant noted this and also that Caryl had carefully refrained from mentioning the girl's name.

"I can postpone this present business, Mr. Caryl," the psychologist replied quietly. He closed the door, but reopened it almost instantly. His official visitor had left through the entrance directly into the hall; the two young clients came

into the inner room.

“This is Mr. Trant, Ethel,” Caryl spoke to the girl a little nervously as she took a seat. “And, Mr. Trant, this is Miss Waldron. I have brought her to tell you of a mysterious man who has been pursuing Howard Axton about the world, and who, since Axton came home to her house two weeks ago, has been threatening her.”

“Axton — Axton!” the psychologist repeated the name which Caryl had spoken, as if assured that Trant must recognize it. “Ah! Of course, Howard Axton is the son!” he frankly admitted his clearing recollection and his comprehension of how the face of the girl had seemed familiar. “Then you,” he addressed her directly, “are Miss Waldron, of Drexel Boulevard?”

“Yes; I am that Miss Waldron, Mr. Trant,” the girl replied, flushing red to her lips, but raising her head proudly and meeting his eyes directly. “The stepdaughter — the daughter of the second wife of Mr. Nimrod Axton. It was my mother, Mr. Trant, who was the cause of Mrs. Anna Axton getting a divorce and the complete custody of her son from Mr. Axton twenty years ago. It was my mother who, just before Mr. Nimrod Axton’s death last year, required that, in the will, the son — the first Mrs. Axton was then dead — should be cut off absolutely and entirely, without a cent, and that Mr. Axton’s entire estate be put in trust for her — my mother. So, since you doubtless remember the reopening of all this again six months ago when my mother, too, died, I am now the sole heir and legatee of the Axton properties of upwards of sixty millions, they tell me. Yes; I am that Miss Waldron, Mr. Trant!”

“I recall the accounts, but only vaguely — from the death of Mr. Axton and, later, of the second Mrs. Axton, your mother, Miss Waldron,” Trant replied, quietly, “though I remember the comment upon the disposition of the estate both times. It was from the pictures published of you and the accompanying comment in the papers only a week or two ago that I recognized you. I mean, of course, the recent comments upon the son, Mr. Howard Axton, whom you have mentioned, who has come home at last to contest the will.”

“You do Miss Waldron an injustice — all the papers have been doing her a great injustice, Mr. Trant, Caryl corrected quickly. “Mr. Axton has not come to contest the will.”

“No?”

“No. Miss Waldron has had him come home, at her own several times repeated request, so that she may turn over to him, as completely as possible, the whole of his father’s estate! If you can recall, in any detail, the provisions of Mr. Axton’s will, you will appreciate, I believe, why we have preferred to let the other impression go uncorrected. For the second Mrs. Axton so carefully and completely cut off all possibility of any of the property being transferred in any form to the son, that Miss Waldron, when she went to a lawyer to see how she could transfer it to Howard Axton, as soon as she had come into the estate, found that her mother’s lawyers had provided against every possibility except that of the heir marrying the disinherited son. So she sent for him, offering to establish him into his estate, even at that cost.”

“You mean that you offered to marry him?” Trant questioned the girl directly again. “And he has come to gain his estate in that way?”

“Yes, Mr. Trant; but you must be fair to Mr. Axton also,” the girl replied. “When I first wrote him, almost a year ago, he refused point blank to consider such an offer. In spite of my repeated letters it was not till six weeks ago, after a shipwreck in which he lost his friend who had been traveling with him for some years, that he would consent even to come home. Even now I — I remain the one urging the marriage.”

The psychologist looked at the girl keenly and questioningly.

“I need scarcely say how little urging he would need, entirely apart from the property,” Caryl flushed, “if he were not gentleman enough to appreciate — partly, at least — Miss Waldron’s position. I — her friends, I mean, Mr. Trant — have admitted that he appeared at first well enough in every way to permit the possibility of her marrying him if she considers that her duty. But now, this mystery has come up about the man who has been following him — the man who appeared again only this morning in Miss Waldron’s room and went through her papers —”

“And Mr. Axton cannot account for it?” the psychologist helped him.

“Axton won’t tell her or anybody else who the man is or why he follows him. On the contrary, he has opposed in every possible way every inquiry or search made for the man, except such as he chooses to make for himself. Only this morning

he made a threat against Miss Waldron if she attempted to summon the police and ‘take the man out of his hands’; and it is because I am sure that he will follow us here to prevent her consulting you — when he finds that she has come here — that I asked you to see us at once.”

“Leave the details of his appearance this morning to the last then,” Trant requested abruptly, “and tell me where you first heard of this man following Mr. Axton, and how? How, for instance, do you know he was following him, if Mr. Axton is so reticent about the affair?”

“That is one of the strange things about it, Mr. Trant “— the girl took from her bosom the bundle of letters she had taken from her room — “he used to write to amuse me with him, as you can see here. I told you I wrote Mr. Axton about a year ago to come home and he refused to consider it. But afterwards he always wrote in reply to my letters in the half-serious, friendly way you shall see. These four letters I brought you are almost entirely taken up with his adventures with the mysterious man. He wrote on typewriter, as you see” — she handed them over — “because on his travels he used to correspond regularly for some of the London syndicates.”

“London?”

“Yes; the first Mrs. Axton took Howard to England with her when he was scarcely seven, immediately after she got her divorce. He grew up there and abroad. This is his first return to America. I have arranged those letters, Mr. Trant,” she added as the psychologist was opening them for examination now, “in the order they came.”

I will read them that way then,” Trant said, and he glanced over the contents of the first hastily; it was postmarked at Cairo, Egypt, some ten months before. He then re-read more carefully this part of it:

But a strange and startling incident has happened since my last letter to you, Miss Waldron, which bothers me considerably. We are, as you will see by the letter paper, at Shepheard’s Hotel in Cairo, but could not, after our usual custom, get communicating rooms. It was after midnight, and the million noises of this babel-town had finally died into a hot and breathless stillness. I had been writing letters, and when through I put out the lights to get rid of their heat, lighted instead the small night lamp I carry with me, and still partly dressed

threw myself upon the bed, without, however, any idea of going to sleep before undressing. As I lay there I heard distinctly soft footsteps come down the corridor on which my room opens and stop apparently in front of the door. They were not, I judged, the footsteps of a European, for the walker was either barefooted or wore soft sandals. I turned my head toward the door, expecting a knock, but none followed. Neither did the door open, though I had not yet locked it. I was on the point of rising to see what was wanted, when it occurred to me that it was probably not at my door that the steps had stopped but at the door directly opposite, across the corridor. Without doubt my opposite neighbor had merely returned to his room and his footsteps had ceased to reach my ears when he entered and closed his door behind him. I dozed off. But half an hour later, as nearly as I can estimate it, I awoke and was thinking of the necessity for getting undressed and into bed, when a slight — a very slight rustling noise attracted my attention. I listened intently to locate the direction of the sound and determine whether it was inside the room or out of it, and then heard in connection with it a slighter and more regular sound which could be nothing else than breathing. Some living creature, Miss Waldron, was in my room. The sounds came from the direction of the table by the window. I turned my head as silently as I was able, and was aware that a man was holding a sheet of paper under the light of the lamp. He was at the table going through the papers in my writing desk. But the very slight noise I had made in turning on the bed had warned him. He rose, with a hissing intake of the breath, his feet pattered softly and swiftly across the floor, my door creaked under his hand, and he was gone before I could jump from the bed and intercept him. I ran out into the hallway, but it was empty. I listened, but could hear no movement in any of the rooms near me. I went back and examined the writing desk, but found nothing missing; and it was plain nothing had been touched except some of my letters from you. But, before finally going to bed, you may well believe, I locked my door carefully; and in the morning I reported the matter to the hotel office. The only description I could give of the intruder was that he had certainly worn a turban, and one even larger it seemed to me than ordinary. The hotel attendants had seen no one coming from or entering my corridor that night who answered this description. The turban and the absence of European shoes, of course, determined him to have been an Egyptian, Turk or Arab. But what Egyptian, Turk or Arab could have entered my room with any other object than robbery — which was certainly not the aim of my intruder, for the valuables in the writing desk were untouched. That same afternoon, it is true, I had had an altercation amounting almost to a quarrel with a Bedouin Arab on my way back from Heliopolis; but if this were he, why should he have taken revenge on my writing desk instead of on me? And

what reason on earth can any follower of the Prophet have had for examining with such particular attention my letters from you? It was so decidedly a strange thing that I have taken all this space to tell it to you — one of the strangest sort of things I've had in all my knocking about; and Lawler can make no more of it than I."

"Who is this Lawler who was with Mr. Axton then?" Trant looked up interestedly from the last page of the letter.

"I only know he was a friend Howard made in London — an interesting man who had traveled a great deal, particularly in America. Howard was lonely after his mother's death; and as Mr. Lawler was about his age, they struck up a friendship and traveled together."

"An English younger son, perhaps?"

"I don't know anything else except that he had been in the English army — in the Royal Sussex regiment — but was forced to give up his commission on account of charges that he had cheated at cards. Howard always held that the charges were false; but that was why he wanted to travel."

"You know of no other trouble which this Lawler had?"

"No, none."

"Then where is he now?"

"Dead."

"Dead?" Trant's face fell.

"Yes; he was the friend I spoke of that was lost — drowned in the wreck of the Gladstone just before Howard started home."

Trant picked up the next letter, which was dated and postmarked at Calcutta.

"Miss Waldron, I have seen him again," he read. "Who, you ask? My Moslem friend with a taste for your correspondence. You see, I can again joke about it; but really it was only last night and I am still in a perfect funk. It was the same man — I'll swear it — shoeless and turbaned and enjoying the pleasant pursuit

of going through my writing desk for your letters. Did he follow us down the Red Sea, across the Indian Ocean — over three thousand miles of ocean travel? I can imagine no other explanation — for I would take oath to his identity — the very same man I saw at Cairo, but now here in this Great Eastern Hotel at Calcutta, where we have two rooms at the end of the most noisome corridor that ever caged the sounds and odors of a babbling East Indian population, and where the doors have no locks. I had the end of a trunk against my door, notwithstanding the fact that an Indian servant I have hired was sleeping in the corridor outside across the doorway, but it booted nothing; for Lawler in the next room had neglected to fasten his door in any way, trusting to his servant, who occupied a like strategic position outside the threshold, and the door between our two rooms was open. I had been asleep in spite of everything — in spite of the snores and stertorous breathing of a floorful of sleeping humans, for the partitions between the rooms do not come within several feet of the ceiling; in spite of the distant bellowing of a sacred bull, and the nearer howl of a very far from sacred dog, and a jingling of elephant bells which were set off intermittently somewhere close at hand whenever some living thing in their neighborhood — animal or human — shifted its position. I was awakened — at least I believe it was this which awakened me — by a creaking of the floor boards in my room, and, with what seemed a causeless, but was certainly one of the most oppressive feelings of chilling terror I have ever experienced, I started upright in my bed. He was there, again at my writing desk, and rustling the papers. For an instant I remained motionless; and in that instant, alarmed by the slight sound I had made, he fled noiselessly, pattered through the door between the rooms and loudly slammed it shut, slammed Lawler's outer door behind him, and had gone. I crashed the door open, ran across the creaking floor of the other room — where Lawler, awakened by the slamming of the doors, had whisked out of bed — and opened the door into the corridor. Lawler's servant, aroused, but still dazed with sleep, blubbered that he had seen no one, though the man must have stepped over his very body. A dozen other servants, sleeping before their masters' doors in the corridor, had awakened likewise, but cried out shrilly that they had seen no one. Lawler, too, though the noise of the man's passage had brought him out of bed, had not seen him. When I examined my writing desk I found, as before at Cairo, that nothing had been taken. The literary delight of looking over your letters seems to be all that draws him — of course, I am joking; for there must be a real reason. What it is that he is searching for, why it is that he follows me, for he has never intruded on anyone else so far as I can learn, I would like to know — I would like to know — I would like to know! The native servants asked in awe-struck whispers whether I noticed if his feet were

turned backwards; for it seems they believe that to be one of the characteristics of a ghost. But the man was flesh and blood — I am sure of it; and I am bound that if he comes again I will learn his object, for I sleep now with my pistol under my pillow, and next time — I shall shoot!"

Trant, as he finished the last words, looked up suddenly at Miss Waldron, as though about to ask a question or make some comment, but checked himself, and hastily laying aside this letter he picked up the next one, which bore a Cape Town date line:

"My affair with my mysterious visitor came almost to a conclusion last night, for except for a careless mistake of my own I should have bagged him. Isn't it mystifying, bewildering — yes, and a little terrifying — he made his appearance here last night in Cape Town, thousands of miles away from the two other places I had encountered him; and he seemed to have no more difficulty in entering the house of a Cape Town correspondent, Mr. Arthur Emsley, where we are guests, than he had before in entering public hotels, and when discovered he disappeared as mysteriously as ever. This time, however, he took some precautions. He had moved my night lamp so that, with his body in shadow, he could still see the contents of my desk; but I could hear his shoulders rubbing on the wall and located him exactly. I slipped my hand noiselessly for my revolver, but it was gone. The slight noise I made in searching for it alarmed him, and he ran. I rushed out into the hall after him. Mr. Emsley and Lawler, awakened by the breaking of the glass, had come out of their rooms. They had not seen him, and though we searched the house he had disappeared as inexplicably as the two other times. But I have learned one thing: It is not a turban he wears, it is his coat, which he takes off and wraps around his head to hide his face. An odd disguise; and the possession of a coat of that sort makes it probable he is a European. I know of only two Europeans who have been in Cairo, Calcutta and Cape Town at the same time we were — both travelers like ourselves; a guttural young German named Schultz, a freight agent for the Nord Deutscher Lloyd, and a nasal American named Walcott, who travels for the Seric Medicine Co. of New York. I shall keep an eye on both of them. For, in my mind at least, this affair has come to be a personal and bitter contest between the unknown and myself. I am determined not only to know who this man is and what is the object of his visits, but to settle with him the score which I now have against him. I shall shoot him next time he comes as mercilessly as I would a rabid dog; and I should have shot him this time except for my own careless mistake through which I had let my revolver slip to the floor, where I found it. By the bye, we sail for home — that is,

England — next week on the steamer Gladstone, but, I am sorry to say, without my English servant, Beasley. Poor Beasley, since these mysterious occurrences, has been bitten with superstitious terror; the man is in a perfect fright, thinks I am haunted, and does not dare to embark on the same ship with me, for he believes that the Gladstone will never reach England in safety if I am aboard. I shall discharge him, of course, but furnish him with his transportation home and leave him to follow at his leisure if he sees fit."

"This is the first time I have heard of another man in their party who might possibly be the masquerader, Miss Waldron; "Trant swung suddenly in his revolving chair to face the girl again. "Mr. Axton speaks of him as his English servant — I suppose, from that, he left England with Mr. Axton."

"Yes, Mr. Trant."

"And therefore was present, though not mentioned, at Cairo, Calcutta and Cape Town?"

"Yes, Mr. Trant; but he was dismissed at that time by Mr. Axton and is now, and also was, at the mysterious man's next appearance, in the Charing Cross Hospital in London. He had his leg broken by a cab; and one of the doctors there wrote Mr. Axton two days ago telling him of Beasley's need of assistance. It could not have been Beasley."

"And there was no one else with Mr. Axton, except his friend Lawler who, you say, was drowned in a wreck?"

"No one else but Mr. Lawler, Mr. Trant; and Howard himself saw him dead and identified him, as you will see in that last letter."

Trant opened the envelope and took out the enclosure interestedly; but as he unfolded the first page, a printed sheet dropped out. He spread it upon his desk — a page from the London *Illustrated News* showing four portraits with the caption, "Sole survivors of the illfated British steamer Gladstone, wrecked off Cape Blanco, January 24," the first portrait bearing the name of Howard Axton and showing the determined, distinctly handsome features and the full lips and deep-set eyes of the man whom the girl had defied that morning.

"This is a good portrait?" Trant asked abruptly.

“Very good, indeed,” the girl answered, “though it was taken almost immediately after the wreck for the *News*. I have the photograph from which it was made at home. I had asked him for a picture of himself in my last previous letter, as my mother had destroyed every picture, even the early pictures, of him and his mother.”

Trant turned to the last letter.

“Wrecked, Miss Waldron. Poor Beasley’s prophecy of disaster has come only too true, and I suppose he is already congratulating himself that he was ‘warned’ by my mysterious visitor and so escaped the fate that so many have suffered, including poor Lawler. Of course you will have seen all about it in the staring headlines of some newspaper long before this reaches you. I am glad that when found I was at once identified, though still unconscious, and my name listed first among the very few survivors, so that you were spared the anxiety of waiting for news of me. Only four of us left out of that whole shipload! I had final proof this morning of poor Lawler’s death by the finding of his body.

“I was hardly out of bed when a mangy little man — a German trader — came to tell me that more bodies had been found, and, as I have been called upon in every instance to aid in identification, I set out with him down the beach at once. It was almost impossible to realize that this blue and silver ocean glimmering under the blazing sun was the same white-frothing terror that had swallowed up all my companions of three days before. The greater part of the bodies found that morning had been already carried up the beach. Among those remaining on the sand the first we came upon was that of Lawler. It lay upon its side at the entrance of a ragged sandy cove, half buried in the sand, which here was white as leprosy. His ears, the sockets of his eyes, and every interstice of his clothing were filled with this white and leprous sand by the washing of the waves; his pockets bulged and were distended with it.”

“What! What!” Trant clutched the letter from the desk in excitement and stared at it with eyes flashing with interest.

“It is a horrible picture, Mr. Trant,” the girl shuddered.

“Horrible — yes, certainly,” the psychologist assented tensely; “but I was not thinking of the horror,” he checked himself.

“Of what, then?” asked Caryl pointedly.

But the psychologist had already returned to the letter in his hand, the remainder of which he read with intent and ever-increasing interest:

“Of course I identified him at once. His face was calm and showed no evidence of his last bitter struggle, and I am glad his look was thus peaceful. Poor Lawler! If the first part of his life was not all it should have been — as indeed he frankly told me — he atoned for all in his last hour; for undoubtedly, Miss Waldron, Lawler gave his life for mine.

“I suppose the story of the wreck is already all known to you, for our one telegraph wire that binds this isolated town to the outside world has been laboring for three days under a load of messages. You know then that eighteen hours out of St. Vincent fire was discovered among the cargo, that the captain, confident at first that the fire would be got under control, kept on his course, only drawing in somewhat toward the African shore in case of emergency. But a very heavy sea rising, prevented the fire-fighters from doing efficient work among the cargo and in the storm and darkness the Gladstone struck several miles to the north of Cape Blanco on a hidden reef at a distance of over a mile from the shore.

“On the night it occurred I awakened with so strong a sense of something being wrong that I rose, partly dressed myself, and went out into the cabin, where I found a white-faced steward going from door to door arousing the passengers. Heavy smoke was billowing up the main companionway in the light of the cabin lamps, and the pitching and reeling of the vessel showed that the sea had greatly increased. I returned and awoke Lawler, and we went out on deck. The sea was a smother of startling whiteness through which the Gladstone was staggering at the full power of her engines. No flame as yet was anywhere visible, but huge volumes of smoke were bursting from every opening in the fore part of the vessel. The passengers, in a pale and terrified group, were kept together on the after deck as far as possible from the fire. Now and then some pallid, staring man or woman would break through the guard and rush back to the cabin in search of a missing loved one or valuables. Lawler and I determined that one of us must return to the stateroom for our money, and Lawler successfully made the attempt. He returned in ten minutes with my money and papers and two life preservers. But when I tried to put on my life preserver I found it to be old and in such a condition as made it useless. Lawler then took off the preserver that he himself had on, declaring himself to be a much better swimmer than I — which I knew to be the case — and forced me to wear it. This life preserver was all that

brought me safely ashore, and the lack of it was, I believe, the reason for Lawler's death. Within ten minutes afterward the flames burst through the forward deck — a red and awful banner which the fierce wind flattened into a fan-shaped sheet of fire against the night — and the Gladstone struck with terrific force, throwing everything and everybody flat upon the deck. The bow was raised high upon the reef, while the stern with its maddened living freight began to sink rapidly into the swirl of foaming waters. The first two boats were overfilled at once in a wild rush, and one was stove immediately against the steamer's side and sank, while the other was badly damaged and made only about fifty yards' progress before it went down also. The remaining boats all were lowered from the starboard davits, and got away in safety; but only to capsize or be stove upon the reef. Lawler and I found places in the last boat — the captain's. At the last moment, just as we were putting off, the fiery maw of the Gladstone vomited out the scorched and half-blinded second engineer and a single stoker, whom we took in with difficulty. There was but one woman in our boat — a fragile, illiterate Dutchwoman from the neighborhood of Johannesburg — who had in her arms a baby. How strange that of our boatload those who alone survived should be the Dutchwoman, but without her baby; the engineer and stoker, whom the fire had already partly disabled, and myself, a very indifferent swimmer — while the strongest among us all perished! Of what happened after leaving the ship I have only the most indistinct recollection. I recall the swamping of our boat, and cruel white waters that rushed out of the night to engulf us; I recall a blind and painful struggle against a power infinitely greater than my own — a struggle which seemed interminable; for, as a matter of fact, I must have been in the water fully four hours and the impact of the waves alone beat my flesh almost to a jelly; and I recall the coming of daylight, and occasional glimpses of a shore which seemed to project itself suddenly above the sea and then at once to sink away and be swallowed by it. I was found unconscious on the sands — I have not the faintest idea how I got there — and I was identified before coming to myself (it may please you to know this) by several of your letters which were found in my pocket. At present, with my three rescued companions — whose names even I probably never should have known if the Gladstone had reached England safely — I am a most enthralling center of interest to the white, black and parti-colored inhabitants of this region; and I am writing this letter on an antiquated typewriter belonging to the smallest, thinnest, baldest little American that ever left his own dooryard to become a missionary."

Trant tossed aside the last page and, with eyes flashing with a deep, glowing fire,

he glanced across intensely to the girl watching him; and his hands clenched on the table, in the constraint of his eagerness.

“Why— what is it, Mr. Trant?” the girl cried.

“This is so taken up with the wreck and the death of Lawler,” the psychologist touched the last letter, “that there is hardly any more mention of the mysterious man. But you said, since Mr. Axton has come home, he has twice appeared and in your room, Miss Waldron. Please give me the details.”

“Of his first appearance — or visit, I should say, since no one really saw him, Mr. Trant,” the girl replied, still watching the psychologist with wonder, “I can’t tell you much, I’m afraid. When Mr. Ax-ton first came home, I asked him about this mysterious friend; and he put me off with a laugh and merely said he hadn’t seen much of him since he last wrote. But even then I could see he wasn’t so easy as he seemed. And it was only two days after that — or nights, for it was about one o’clock in the morning — that I was wakened by some sound which seemed to come from my dressing-room. I turned on the light in my room and rang the servant’s bell. The butler came almost at once and, as he is not a courageous man, roused Mr. Axton before opening the door to my dressing-room. They found no one there and nothing taken or even disturbed except my letters in my writing desk, Mr. Trant. My aunt, who has been taking care of me since my mother died, was aroused and came with the servants. She thought I must have imagined everything; but I discovered and showed Mr. Axton that it was his letters to me that had appeared to be the ones the man was searching for. I found that two of them had been taken and every other typewritten letter in my desk — and only those — had been opened in an apparent search for more of his letters. I could see that this excited him exceedingly, though he tried to conceal it from me; and immediately afterwards he found that a window on the first floor had been forced, so some man had come in, as I said.”

“Then last night.”

“It was early this morning, Mr. Trant, but still very dark — a little before five o’clock. It was so damp, you know, that I had not opened the window in my bedroom, which is close to the bed; but had opened the windows of my dressing-room, and so left the door between open. It had been closed and locked before. So when I awoke, I could see directly into my dressing-room.”

“Clearly?”

“Of course not at all clearly. But my writing-desk is directly opposite my bedroom door; and in a sort of silhouette against my shaded desk light, which he was using, I could see his figure — a very vague, monstrous looking figure, Mr. Trant. Its lower part seemed plain enough; but the upper part was a formless blotch. I confess at first that enough of my girl’s fear for ghosts came to me to make me see him as a headless man, until I remembered how Howard had seen and described him — with a coat wrapped round his head. As soon as I was sure of this, I pressed the bell-button again and this time screamed, too, and switched on my light. But he slammed the door between us and escaped. He went through another window he had forced on the lower floor with a queer sort of dagger-knife which he had broken and left on the sill. And as soon as Howard saw this, he knew it was the same man, for it was then he ordered me not to interfere. He made off after him, and when he came back, he told me he was sure it was the same man.”

“This time, too, the man at your desk seemed rummaging for your correspondence with Mr. Axton?”

“It seemed so, Mr. Trant.”

“But his letters were all merely personal — like these letters you have given me?”

“Yes.”

“Amazing!” Trant leaped to his feet, with eyes flashing now with unrestrained fire, and took two or three rapid turns up and down the office. “If I am to believe the obvious inference from these letters, Miss Waldron — coupled with what you have told me — I have not yet come across a case, an attempt at crime more careful, more cold-blooded and, withall, more surprising!”

“A crime — an attempt at crime, Mr. Trant?” cried the white and startled girl. “So there was cause for my belief that something serious underlay these mysterious appearances?”

“Cause?” Trant swung to face her. “Yes, Miss Waldron — criminal cause, a crime so skillfully carried on, so assisted by unexpected circumstance that you — that the very people against whom it is aimed have not so much as suspected

its existence."

"Then you think Howard honestly believes the man still means nothing?"

"The man never meant 'nothing,' Miss Waldron; but it was only at first the plot was aimed against Howard Axton," Trant replied. "Now it is aimed solely at you!"

The girl grew paler.

"How can you say that so surely, Mr. Trant?" Caryl demanded, "without investigation?"

"These letters are quite enough evidence for what I say, Mr. Caryl," Trant returned. "Would you have come to me unless you had known that my training in the methods of psychology enabled me to see causes and motives in such a case as this which others, untrained, can not see?

"You have nothing more to tell me which might be of assistance?" he faced the girl again, but turned back at once to Caryl. "Let me tell you then, Mr. Caryl, that I am about to make a very thorough investigation of this for you. Meanwhile, I repeat: a definite, daring crime was planned first, I believe, against Howard Axton and Miss Waldron; but now — I am practically certain — it is aimed against Miss Waldron alone. But there cannot be in it the slightest danger of intentional personal hurt to her. So neither of you need be uneasy while I am taking time to obtain full proof—"

"But, Mr. Trant," the girl interrupted, "are you not going to tell me — you must tell me — what the criminal secret is that these letters have revealed to you?"

"You must wait, Miss Waldron," the psychologist answered kindly, with his hand on the doorknob, as though anxious for the interview to end. "What I could tell you now would only terrify you and leave you perplexed how to act while you were waiting to hear from me. No; leave the letters, if you will, and the page from the *Illustrated News*," he said suddenly, as the girl began gathering up her papers. "There is only one thing more. You said you expected an interruption here from Howard Axton, Mr. Caryl. Is there still a good chance of his coming here or — must I go to see him?"

"Miss Waldron telephoned to me, in his presence, to take her to see you.

Afterwards she left the house without his knowledge. As soon as he finds she has gone, he will look up your address, and I think you may expect him."

"Very good. Then I must set to work at once!" He shook hands with both of them hurriedly and almost forcing them out his door, closed it behind them, and strode back to his desk. He picked up immediately the second of the four letters which the girl had given him, read it through again, and crossed the corridor to the opposite office, which was that of a public stenographer.

"Make a careful copy of that," he directed, "and bring it to me as soon as it is finished."

A quarter of an hour later, when the copy had been brought him, he compared it carefully with the original. He put the copy in a drawer of the desk and was apparently waiting with the four originals before him when he heard a knock on his door and, opening it, found that his visitor was again young Caryl.

"Miss Waldron did not wish to return home at once; she has gone to see a friend. So I came back," he explained, "thinking you might make a fuller statement of your suspicions to me than you would in Miss Waldron's presence."

"Fuller in what respect, Mr. Caryl?"

The young man reddened.

"I must tell you — though you already may have guessed — that before Miss Waldron inherited the estate and came to believe it her duty to do as she has done, there had been an — understanding between us, Mr. Trant. She still has no friend to look to as she looks to me. So, if you mean that you have discovered through those letters — though God knows how you can have done it — anything in Axton which shows him unfit to marry her, you must tell me!"

"As far as Axton's past goes," Trant replied, "his letters show him a man of high type — moral, if I may make a guess, above the average. There is a most pleasing frankness about him. As to making any further explanation than I have done — but good Lord! what's that?"

The door of the office had been dashed loudly open, and its still trembling frame was filled by a tall, very angry young man in automobile costume, whose highly colored, aristocratic looking features Trant recognized immediately from the

print in the page of the *Illustrated London News*.

“Ah, Mr. Caryl here too? — the village busybody!” the newcomer sneered, with a slight accent which showed his English education. “You are insufferably mixing yourself in my affairs,” he continued, as Caryl, with an effort, controlled himself and made no answer. “Keep out of them! That is my advice — take it! Does a woman have to order you off the premises before you can understand that you are not wanted? As for you,” he swung toward Trant, “you are Trant, I suppose!”

“Yes, that is my name, Mr. Axton,” replied the psychologist, leaning against his desk.

The other advanced a step and raised a threatening finger. “Then that advice is meant for you, too. I want no police, no detectives, no outsider of any sort interfering in this matter. Make no mistake; it will be the worse for anyone who pushes himself in! I came here at once to take the case out of your hands, as soon as I found Miss Waldron had come here. This is strictly my affair — keep out of it!”

“You mean, Mr. Axton, that you prefer to investigate it personally?” the psychologist inquired.

“Exactly — investigate and punish!”

“But you cannot blame Miss Waldron for feeling great anxiety even on your account, as your personal risk in making such an investigation will be so immensely greater than anyone’s else would be.”

“My risk?”

“Certainly; you may be simply playing into the hand of your strange visitor, by pursuing him unaided. Any other’s risk, — mine, for instance, if I were to take up the matter — would be comparatively slight, beginning perhaps by questioning the nightwatchmen and stableboys in the neighborhood with a view to learning what became of the man after he left the house; and besides, such risks are a part of my business.”

Axton halted. “I had not thought of it in that light,” he said reflectively.

“You are too courageous — foolishly courageous, Mr. Axton.”

“Do you mind if I sit down? Thank you. You think, Mr. Trant, that an investigation such as you suggest, would satisfy Miss Waldron — make her easier in her mind, I mean? “

“I think so, certainly.”

“And it would not necessarily entail calling in the police? You must appreciate how I shrink from publicity — another story concerning the Axton family exploited in the daily papers!”

“I had no intention of consulting the police, or of calling them in, at least until I was ready to make the arrest.”

“I must confess, Mr. Trant,” said Axton easily, “that I find you a very different man from what I had expected. I imagined an uneducated, somewhat brutal, perhaps talkative fellow; but I find you, if I may say so, a gentleman. Yes, I am tempted to let you continue your investigation — on the lines you have suggested.”

“I shall ask your help.”

“I will help you as much as is in my power.”

“Then let me begin, Mr. Axton, with a question — pardon me if I open a window, for the room is rather warm — I want to know whether you can supplement these letters, which so far are the only real evidence against the man, by any further description of him,” and Trant, who had thrown open the window beside him, undisturbed by the roar that filled the office from the traffic-laden street below, took the letters from his pocket and opened them one by one, clumsily, upon the desk.

“I am afraid I cannot add anything to them, Mr. Trant.”

“We must get on then with what we have here,” the psychologist hitched his chair near to the window to get a better light on the paper in his hand, and his cuff knocked one of the other letters off the desk onto the windowsill. He turned, hastily but clumsily, and touched, but could not grasp it before it slipped from the sill out into the air. He sprang to his feet with an exclamation of dismay, and

dashed from the room. Axton and Caryl, rushing to the window, watched the paper, driven by a strong breeze, flutter down the street until lost to sight among wagons; and a minute later saw Trant appear below them, bareheaded and excited, darting in and out among vehicles at the spot where the paper had disappeared; but it had been carried away upon some muddy wagon-wheel or reduced to tatters, for he returned after fifteen minutes' search disheartened, vexed and empty handed.

"It was the letter describing the second visit," he exclaimed disgustedly as he opened the door. "It was most essential, for it contained the most minute description of the man of all. I do not see how I can manage well, now, without it."

"Why should you?" Caryl said in surprise at the evident stupidity of the psychologist. "Surely, Mr. Axton, if he can not add any other details, can at least repeat those he had already given."

"Of course!" Trant recollected. "If you would be so good, Mr. Axton, I will have a stenographer take down the statement to give you the least trouble."

"I will gladly do that," Axton agreed; and, when the psychologist had summoned the stenographer, he dictated without hesitation the following letter:

"The second time that I saw the man was at Calcutta, in the Great Eastern Hotel. He was the same man I had seen at Cairo — shoeless and turbaned; at least I believed then that it was a turban, but I saw later, at Cape Town, that it was his short brown coat wrapped round his head and tied by the sleeves under his chin. We had at the Great Eastern two whitewashed communicating rooms opening off a narrow, dirty corridor, along whose whitewashed walls at a height of some two feet from the floor ran a greasy smudge gathered from the heads and shoulders of the dark-skinned, white-robed native servants who spent the nights sleeping or sitting in front of their masters' doors. Though Lawler and I each had a servant also outside his door, I dragged a trunk against mine after closing it — a useless precaution, as it proved, as Lawler put no trunk against his — and though I see now that I must have been moved by some foresight of danger, I went to sleep afterward quite peacefully. I awakened somewhat later in a cold and shuddering fright, oppressed by the sense of some presence in my room — started up in bed and looked about. My trunk was still against the door as I had left it; and besides this, I saw at first only the furniture of the room, which stood

as when I had gone to sleep — two rather heavy and much scratched mahogany English chairs, a mahogany dresser with swinging mirror, and the spindle-legged, four-post canopy bed on which I lay. But presently, I saw more. He was there — a dark shadow against the whitewashed wall beside the flat-topped window marked his position, as he crouched beside my writing desk and held the papers in a bar of white moonlight to look at them. For an instant, the sight held me motionless, and suddenly becoming aware that he was seen, he leaped to his feet — a short, broad-shouldered, bulky man — sped across the blue and white straw matting into Lawler's room and drove the door to behind him. I followed, forcing the door open with my shoulder, saw Lawler just leaping out of bed in his pajamas, and tore open Lawler's corridor door, through which the man had vanished. He was not in the corridor, though I inspected it carefully, and Lawler, though he had been awakened by the man's passage, had not seen him. Lawler's servant, pretty well dazed with sleep, told me in blank and open-mouthed amazement at my question, that he had not seen him pass; and the other white-draped Hindoos, gathering about me from the doors in front of which they had been asleep, made the same statement. None of these Hindoos resembled in the least the man I had seen, for I looked them over carefully one by one with this in mind. When I made a light in my room in order to examine it thoroughly, I found nothing had been touched except the writing desk, and even from that nothing had been taken, although the papers had been disturbed. The whole affair was as mysterious and inexplicable as the man's first appearance had been, or as his subsequent appearance proved; for though I carefully questioned the hotel employes in the morning I could not learn that any such man had entered or gone out from the hotel."

"That is very satisfactory indeed;" Trant's gratification was evident in his tone, as Axton finished. "It will quite take the place of the letter that was lost. There is only one thing more — so far as I know now — in which you may be of present help to me, Mr. Axton. Besides your friend Lawler, who was drowned in the wreck of the Gladstone, and the man Beasley — who, Miss Waldron tells me, is in a London hospital — there were only two men in Cape Town with you who had been in Cairo and Calcutta at the same time you were. You do not happen to know what has become of that German freight agent, Schultz?"

"I have not the least idea, Mr. Trant."

"Or Walcott, the American patent medicine man?"

“I know no more of him than of the other. Whether either of them is in Chicago now, is precisely what I would like to know myself, Mr. Trant; and I hope you will be able to find out for me.”

“I will do my best to locate them. By the way, Mr. Axton, you have no objection to my setting a watch over your family home, provided I employ a man who has no connection with the police?”

“With that condition I think it would be a very good idea,” Axton assented. He waited to see whether Trant had anything more to ask him; then, with a look of partially veiled hostility at Caryl, he went out. The other followed, but stopped at the door.

“We — that is, Miss Waldron — will hear from you, Mr. Trant?” he asked with sudden distrust — “I mean, you will report to her, as well as to Mr. Axton?”

“Certainly ; but I hardly expect to have anything for you for two or three days.”

The psychologist smiled, as he shut the door behind Caryl. He dropped into the chair at his desk and wrote rapidly a series of telegrams, which he addressed to the chiefs of police of a dozen foreign and American cities. Then, more slowly, he wrote a message to the Seric Medicine Company, of New York, and another to the Nord Deutscher Lloyd.

The first two days, of the three Trant had specified to Caryl, passed with no other event than the installing of a burly watchman at the Axton home. On the third night this watchman reported to Miss Waldron that he had seen and driven off, without being able to catch, a man who was trying to force a lower window; and the next morning — within half an hour of the arrival of the Overland Limited from San Francisco — Trant called up the Axton home on the telephone with the news that he thought he had at last positive proof of the mysterious man’s identity. At least, he had with him a man whom he wanted Mr. Axton to see. Axton replied that he would be very glad to see the man, if Trant would make an appointment. In three quarters of an hour at the Axton home, Trant answered; and forty minutes later, having first telephoned young Caryl, Trant with his watchman, escorting a stranger who was broad-shouldered, weasel-eyed, of peculiarly alert and guarded manner, reached the Axton doorstep. Caryl had so perfectly timed his arrival, under Trant’s instructions, that he joined them before the bell was answered.

Trant and Caryl, leaving the stranger under guard of the watchman in the hall, found Miss Waldron and Axton in the morning-room.

“Ah! Mr. Caryl again?” said Axton sneeringly. “Caryl was certainly not the man you wanted me to see, Trant!”

“The man is outside,” the psychologist replied. “But before bringing him in for identification I thought it best to prepare Miss Waldron, and perhaps even more particularly you, Mr. Axton, for the surprise he is likely to occasion.”

“A surprise?” Axton scowled questioningly. “Who is the fellow? — or rather, if that is what you have come to find out from me, where did you get him, Trant?”

“That is the explanation I wish to make,” Trant replied, with his hand still upon the knob of the door, which he had pushed shut behind him. “You will recall, Mr. Axton, that there were but four men whom we know to have been in Cairo, Calcutta, and Cape Town at the same time you were. These were Lawler, your servant Beasley, the German Schultz, and the American Walcott. Through the Seric Medicine Company I have positively located Walcott; he is now in Australia. The Nord Deutscher Lloyd has given me equally positive assurance regarding Schultz. Schultz is now in Bremen. Miss Waldron has accounted for Beasley, and the Charing Cross Hospital corroborates her; Beasley is in London. There remains, therefore, the inevitable conclusion that either there was some other man following Mr. Axton — some man whom Mr. Axton did not see — or else that the man who so pried into Mr. Axton’s correspondence abroad and into your letters, Miss Waldron, this last week here in Chicago, was — Lawler; and this I believe to have been the case.”

“Lawler?” the girl and Caryl echoed in amazement, while Axton stared at the psychologist with increasing surprise and wonder. “Lawler?”

“Oh! I see,” Axton all at once smiled contemptuously. “You believe in ghosts, Trant — you think it is Lawler’s ghost that Miss Waldron saw!”

“I did not say Lawler’s ghost,” Trant replied a little testily. “I said Lawler’s self, in flesh and blood. I am trying to make it plain to you,” Trant took from his pocket the letters the girl had given him four days before and indicated the one describing the wreck, “that I believe the man whose death you so minutely and carefully describe here in this letter as Lawler, was not Lawler at all!”

“You mean to say that I didn’t know Lawler?” Axton laughed loudly — “Lawler, who had been my companion in sixteen thousand miles of travel?”

Trant turned as though to reopen the door into the hall; then paused once more and kindly faced the girl.

“I know, Miss Waldron,” he said, “that you have believed that Mr. Lawler has been dead these six weeks; and it is only because I am so certain that the man who is to be identified here now will prove to be that same Lawler that I have thought best to let you know in advance.”

He threw open the door, and stood back to allow the Irish watchman to enter, preceded by the weasel-faced stranger. Then he closed the door quickly behind him, locked it, put the key in his pocket, and spun swiftly to see the effect of the stranger upon Axton. That young man’s face, despite his effort to control it, flushed and paled, flushed and went white again; but neither to Caryl nor the girl did it look at all like the face of one who saw a dead friend alive again.

“I do not know him!” Axton’s eyes glanced quickly, furtively about. “I have never seen him before! Why have you brought him here? This is not Lawler!”

“No; he is not Lawler,” Trant agreed; and at his signal the Irishman left his place and went to stand behind Axton. “But you know him, do you not? You have seen him before! Surely I need not recall to you this special officer Burns of the San Francisco detective bureau! That is right; you had better keep hold of him, Sullivan; and now, Burns, who is this man? Do you know him? Can you tell us who he is?”

“Do I know him?” the detective laughed. “Can I tell you who he is? Well, rather! That is Lord George Albany, who got into Claude Shelton’s boy in San Francisco for $30,000 in a card game; that is Mr. Arthur Wilmering, who came within a hair of turning the same trick on young Stuyvesant in New York; that — first and last — is Mr. George Lawler himself, who makes a specialty of cards and rich men’s sons!”

“Lawler? George Lawler?” Caryl and the girl gasped again.

“But why, in this affair, he used his own name,” the detective continued, “is more than I can see; for surely he shouldn’t have minded another change.”

“He met Mr. Howard Axton in London,” Trant suggested, “where there was still a chance that the card cheating in the Sussex guards was not forgotten, and he might at any moment meet someone who recalled his face. It was safer to tell Axton all about it, and protest innocence.”

“Howard Axton?” the girl echoed, recovering herself at the name. “Why, Mr. Trant; if this is Mr. Lawler, as this man says and you believe, then where is Mr. Axton — oh, where is Howard Axton?”

“I am afraid, Miss Waldron,” the psychologist replied, “that Mr. Howard Axton was undoubtedly lost in the wreck of the Gladstone. It may even have been the finding of Howard Axton’s body that this man described in that last letter.”

“Howard Axton drowned! Then this man —”

“Mr. George Lawler’s specialty being rich men’s sons,” said the psychologist, “I suppose he joined company with Howard Axton because he was the son of Nimrod Axton. Possibly he did not know at first that Howard had been disinherited, and he may not have found it out until the second Mrs. Axton’s death, when the estate came to Miss Waldron, and she created a situation which at least promised an opportunity. It was in seeking this opportunity, Miss Waldron, among the intimate family affairs revealed in your letters to Howard Axton that Lawler was three times seen by Axton in his room, as described in the first three letters that you showed to me. That was it, was it not, Lawler?”

The prisoner — for the attitude of Sullivan and Burns left no doubt now that he was a prisoner — made no answer.

“You mean, Mr. Trant,” the eyes of the horrified girl turned from Lawler as though even the sight of him shamed her, “that if Howard Axton had not been drowned, this — this man would have come anyway?”

“I cannot say what Lawler’s intentions were if the wreck had not occurred,” the psychologist replied. “For you remember that I told you that this attempted crime has been most wonderfully assisted by circumstances. Lawler, cast ashore from the wreck of the Gladstone, found himself — if the fourth of these letters is to be believed — identified as Howard Axton, even before he had regained consciousness, by your stolen letters to Howard which he had in his pocket. From that time on he did not have to lift a finger, beyond the mere identification of a body — possibly Howard Axton’s — as his own. Howard had left America

so young that identification here was impossible unless you had a portrait; and Lawler undoubtedly had learned from your letters that you had no picture of Howard. His own picture, published in the News over Howard's name, when it escaped identification as Lawler, showed him that the game was safe and prepared you to accept him as Howard without question. He had not even the necessity of counterfeiting Howard's writing, as Howard had the correspondent's habit of using a typewriter. Only two possible dangers threatened him. First, was the chance that, if brought in contact with the police, he might be recognized. You can understand, Miss Waldron, by his threats to prevent your consulting them, how anxious he was to avoid this. And second, that there might be something in Howard Axton's letters to you which, if unknown to him, might lead him to compromise and betray himself in his relations with you. His sole mistake was that, when he attempted to search your desk for these letters, he clumsily adopted once more the same disguise that had proved so perplexing to Howard Axton. For he could have done nothing that would have been more terrifying to you. It quite nullified the effect of the window he had fixed to prove by the man's means of exit and entrance that he was not a member of the household. It sent you, in spite of his objections and threats, to consult me; and, most important of all, it connected these visits at once with the former ones described in Howard's letters, so that you brought the letters to me — when, of course, the nature of the crime, though not the identity of the criminal, was at once plain to me."

"I see it was plain; but was it merely from these letters — these typewritten letters, Mr. Trant?" cried Caryl incredulously.

"From those alone, Mr. Caryl," the psychologist smiled slightly, "through a most elementary, primer fact of psychology. Perhaps you would like to know, Lawler," Trant turned, still smiling, to the prisoner, "just wherein you failed. And, as you will probably never have another chance such as the one just past for putting the information to practical use — even if you were not, as Mr. Burns tells me, likely to retire for a number of years from active life — I am willing to tell you."

The prisoner turned on Trant his face — now grown livid — with an expression of almost superstitious questioning.

"Did you ever happen to go to a light opera with Howard Axton, Mr. Lawler," asked Trant, "and find after the performance that you remembered all the stage-settings of the piece but could not recall a tune — you know you cannot recall a

tune, Lawler — while Axton, perhaps, could whistle all the tunes but could not remember a costume or a scene? Psychologists call that difference between you and Howard Axton a difference in ‘memory types.’ In an almost masterly manner you imitated the style, the tricks and turns of expression of Howard Axton in your letter to Miss Waldron describing the wreck — not quite so well in the statement you dictated in my office. But you could not imitate the primary difference of Howard Axton’s mind from yours. That was where you failed.

“The change in the personality of the letter writer might easily have passed unnoticed, as it passed Miss Waldron, had not the letters fallen into the hands of one who, like myself, is interested in the manifestations of mind. For different minds are so constituted that inevitably their processes run more easily along certain channels than along others. Some minds have a preference, so to speak, for a particular type of impression; they remember a sight that they have seen, they forget the sound that went with it; or they remember the sound and forget the sight. There are minds which are almost wholly ear-minds or eye-minds. In minds of the visual, or eye, type, all thoughts and memories and imaginations will consist of ideas of sight; if of the auditory type, the impressions of sound predominate and obscure the others. “The first three letters you handed me, Miss Waldron,” the psychologist turned again to the girl, “were those really written by Howard Axton. As I read through them I knew that I was dealing with what psychologists call an auditory mind. When, in ordinary memory, he recalled an event he remembered best its sounds. But I had not finished the first page of the fourth letter when I came upon the description of the body lying on the sand — a visual memory so clear and so distinct, so perfect even to the pockets distended with sand, that it startled and amazed me — for it was the first distinct visual memory I had found. As I read on I became certain that the man who had written the first three letters — who described a German as guttural and remembered the American as nasal — could never have written the fourth. Would that first man — the man who recalled even the sound of his midnight visitor’s shoulders when they rubbed against the wall — fail to remember in his recollection of the shipwreck the roaring wind and roaring sea, the screams of men and women, the crackling of the fire? They would have been his clearest recollection. But the man who wrote the fourth letter recalled most clearly that the sea was white and frothy, the men were pallid and staring!”

“I see! I see!” Caryl and the girl cried as, at the psychologist’s bidding, they scanned together the letters he spread before them.

“The subterfuge by which I destroyed the second letter of the set, after first making a copy of it —”

“You did it on purpose? What an idiot I was!” exclaimed Caryl.

“Was merely to obviate the possibility of mistake,” Trant continued, without heeding the interruption. “The statement this man dictated, as it was given in terms of ‘sight,’ assured me that he was not Axton. When, by means of the telegraph, I had accounted for the present whereabouts of three of the four men he might possibly be, it became plain that he must be Lawler. And finding that Lawler was badly wanted in San Francisco, I asked Mr. Burns to come on and identify him.

“And the stationing of the watchman here was a blind also, as well as his report of the man who last night tried to force the window?” Caryl exclaimed.

Trant nodded. He was watching the complete dissolution of the swindler’s effrontery. Trant had appreciated that Lawler had let him speak on uninterrupted as though, after the psychologist had shown his hand, he held in reserve cards to beat it. But his attempt to sneer and scoff and contemn was so weak, when the psychologist was through, that Ethel Waldron — almost as though to spare him — arose and motioned to Trant to tell her, whatever else he wished, in the next room.

Trant followed her a moment obediently; but at the door he seemed to recollect himself.

“I think there is nothing else now, Miss Waldron,” he said, “except that I believe I can spare you the reopening of your family affairs here. Burns tells me there is more than enough against him in California to keep Mr. Lawler there for some good time. I will go with him, now,” and he stood aside for Caryl to go, in his place, into the next room.

IX

THE ELEVENTH HOUR

On the third Sunday in March the thermometer dropped suddenly in Chicago a little after ten in the evening. A roaring storm of mingled rain and snow, driven by a riotous wind — wild even for the Great Lakes in winter — changed suddenly to sleet, which lay in liquid slush upon the walks. At twenty minutes past the hour, sleet and slush had both begun to freeze. Mr. Luther Trant, hastening on foot back to his rooms at his club from north of the river where he had been taking tea, observed — casually, as he observed many things — that the soft mess underfoot had coated with tough, rubbery ice, through which the heels of his shoes crunched at every step while his toes left almost no mark.

But he noted this then only as a hindrance to his haste. He had been taking the day “off” away from both his office and his club; but fifteen minutes before, he had called up the club for the first time that day and had learned that a woman — a wildly terrified and anxious woman — had been inquiring for him at intervals during the day over the telephone, and that a special delivery letter from the same source had been awaiting him since six o’clock. The psychologist, suddenly stricken with a sense of guilt and dereliction, had not waited for a cab.

As he hurried down Michigan Avenue now, he was considering how affairs had changed with him in the last six months. Then he had been a callow assistant in a psychological laboratory. The very professor whom he had served had smiled amusedly, almost derisively, when he had declared his belief in his own powers to apply the necromancy of the new psychology to the detection of crime. But the delicate instruments of the laboratory — the chronoscopes, kymographs, plethysmographs, which made visible and recorded unerringly, unfalteringly, the most secret emotions of the heart and the hidden workings of the brain; the experimental investigations of Freud and Jung, of the German and French scientists, of Munsterberg and others in America — had fired him with the belief in them and in himself. In the face of misunderstanding and derision, he had tried to trace the criminal, not by the world-old method of the marks he had left on things, but by the evidences which the crime had left on the mind of the criminal himself. And so well had he succeeded that now he could not leave his club even on a Sunday, without disappointing somewhere, in the great-pulsating city, an appeal to him for help in trouble. But as he turned at the corner into the entrance of the club, he put aside this thought and faced the doorman.

“Has she called again?”

“The last time, sir, was at nine o’clock. She wanted to know if you had received the note, and said you were to have it as soon as you came in.”

The man handed it out — a plain, coarse envelope, with the red two-cent and the blue special delivery stamp stuck askew above an uneven line of great, unsteady characters addressing the envelope to Trant at the club. Within it, ten lines spread this wild appeal across the paper:

“If Mr. Trant will do — for some one unknown to him — the greatest possible service — to save perhaps a life — a life! I beg him to come to Ashland Avenue between seven and nine o’clock tonight! Eleven! For God’s sake come — between seven and nine! Later will be too late. Eleven! I tell you it may be worse than useless to come after eleven! So for God’s sake — if you are human — help me! You will be expected.

“W. Newberry.”

The psychologist glanced at his watch swiftly. It was already twenty-five minutes to eleven! Besides the panic expressed by the writing itself, the broken sentences, the reiterated appeal, most of all the strange and disconnected recurrence three times in the few short lines of the word *eleven* — which plainly pointed to that hour as the last at which help might avail — the characters themselves, which were the same as those on the envelope, confirmed the psychologist’s first impression that the note was written by a man, a young man, too, despite the havoc that fear and nervelessness had played with him.

“You’re sure it was a woman’s voice on the phone?” he asked quickly.

“Yes, sir; and she seemed a lady.”

Trant hastily picked up the telephone on the desk; “Hello! Is this the West End Police Station? This is Mr. Trant. Can you send a plain-clothes man and a patrolman at once to Ashland Avenue? … No; I don’t know what the trouble is, but I understand it is a matter of life and death; that’s why I want to have help at hand if I need it. Let me know who you are sending.”

He stood impatiently tapping one heel against the other, while he waited for the matter to be adjusted at the police station, then swung back to receive the name

of the detective: “Yes… . You are sending Detective Siler? Because he knows the house? … Oh, there has been trouble there before? … I see… . Tell him to hurry. I will try and get there myself before eleven.”

He dashed the receiver back on to the hook, caught his coat collar close again and ran swiftly to claim a taxicab which was just bringing another member up to the club.

The streets were all but empty; and into the stiffening ice the chains on the tires of the driving wheels bit sharply; so it still lacked ten minutes of the hour, as Trant assured himself by another quick glance at his watch, when the chauffeur checked the motor short before the given number on Ashland Avenue, and the psychologist jumped out.

The vacant street, and the one dim light on the first floor of the old house, told Trant the police had not yet arrived.

The porticoed front and the battered fountain with cupids, which rose obscurely from the ice-crusted sod of the narrow lawn at its side, showed an attempt at fashion. In the rear, as well as Trant could see it in the indistinct glare of the street lamps, the building seemed to fall away into a single rambling story.

As the psychologist rang the bell and was admitted, he saw at once that he had not been mistaken in believing that the cab which had passed his motor only an instant before had come from the same house; for the mild-eyed, white-haired little man, who opened the door almost before the bell had stopped ringing, had not yet taken off his overcoat. Behind him, in the dim light of a shaded lamp, an equally placid, white-haired little woman was laying off her wraps; and their gentle faces were so completely at variance with the wild terror of the note that Trant now held between his fingers in his pocket, that he hesitated before he asked his question:

“Is W. Newberry here?”

“I am the Reverend Wesley Newberry,” the little man answered. “I am no longer in the active service of the Lord; but if it is a case of immediate necessity and I can be of use —”

“No, no!” Trant checked him. “I have not come to ask your service as a minister, Mr. Newberry. I am Luther Trant. But I see I must explain,” the psychologist

continued, at first nonplused by the little man's stare of perplexity, which showed no recognition of the name, and then flushing with the sudden suspicion that followed. "Tonight when I returned to my club at half-past ten, I was informed that a woman — apparently in great anxiety — had been trying to catch me all day; and had finally referred me to this special delivery letter which was delivered for me at six o'clock." Trant extended it to the staring little minister. "Of course, I can see now that both telephone calls and note may have been a hoax; but — in Heaven's name! What is the matter, Mr. Newberry?"

The two old people had taken the note between them. Now the little woman, her wraps only half removed, had dropped, shaking and pale, into the nearest chair. The little man had lost his placidity and was shuddering in uncontrolled fear. He seemed to shrink away; but stiffened bravely.

"A hoax? I fear not, Mr. Trant!" The man gathered himself together. "This note is not from me; but it is, I must not deceive myself, undoubtedly from our son Walter — Walter Newberry. This writing, though broken beyond anything I have seen from him in his worst dissipations is undoubtedly his. Yet Walter is not here, Mr. Trant! I mean — I mean, he should not be here! There have been reasons — we have not seen or heard of Walter for two months. He can not be here now — surely he can not be here now, unless — unless — my wife and I went to a friend's this evening; this is as though the writer had known we were going out! We left at half-past six and have only just returned. Oh, it is impossible that Walter could, have come here! But Martha, we have not seen Adele!" The livid terror grew stronger on his rosy, simple face as he turned to his wife. "We have not seen Adele, Martha, since we came in! And this gentleman tells us that a woman in great trouble was sending for him. If Walter had been here — be strong, Martha; be strong! But come — let us look together!"

He had turned, with no further word of explanation, and pattered excitedly to the stairs, followed by his wife and Trant.

"Adele! Adele!" the old man cried anxiously, knocking at the door nearest the head of the stairs; and when he received no answer, he flung the door open.

"Dreadful! Dreadful!" he wrung his hands, while his wife sank weakly down upon the upper step, as she saw the room was empty. "There is something very wrong here, Mr. Trant! This is the bedroom of my daughter-in-law, Walter's wife. She should be here, at this hour! My son and his wife are separated and do

not live together. My son, who has been unprincipled and uncontrollable from his childhood up, made a climax to his career of dissipation two months ago by threatening the life of his wife because she refused — because she found it impossible to live longer with him. It was a most painful affair; the police were even called in. We forbade Walter the house. So if she called to you because he was threatening her again, and he returned here tonight to carry out his threat, then Adele — Adele was indeed in danger!"

"But why should *he* have written me that note?" Trant returned crisply. "However — if we believe the note at all — there is surely now no time to lose, Mr. Newberry. We must search the entire house at once and make sure, at least, that Mrs. Walter Newberry is not in some other part of it!"

"You are right — quite right!" the little man pattered rapidly from door to door, throwing the rooms open to the impatient scrutiny of the psychologist; and while they were still engaged in this search upon the upper floor, a tall clock on the landing of the stairs struck eleven!

So strongly had the warning of the note impressed Trant that, at the signal of the hour, he stopped short; the others, seeing him, stopped too, and stared at him with blanched faces, while all three apprehensively strained their ears for some sound which might mark the note's fulfillment. And scarcely had the last deep stroke of the hour ceased to resound in the hall, when suddenly, sharply, and without other warning, a revolver shot rang out, followed so swiftly by three others that the four reports rang almost as one through the silent house. The little woman screamed and seized her husband's arm. His hand, in turn, hung upon Trant. The psychologist, turning his head to be surer of the direction of the sound, for an instant more stared indecisively; for though the shots were plainly inside the house, the echoes made it impossible to locate them exactly. But almost immediately a fifth shot, seeming louder and more distinct in its separateness, startled them again. "It is in the billiard room!" the wife shrieked, with a woman's quicker location of indoor sounds.

The little minister ran to seize the lamp, as Trant turned toward the rear of the house. The woman started with them; but at that instant the doorbell rang furiously; and the woman stopped in trembling confusion. The psychologist pushed her husband on, however; and taking the lamp from the elder man's shaking hand, he now led Newberry into the one-story addition which formed the back part of the house. Here he found that the L shaped passage into which

they ran, opened at one end apparently on to a side porch. Newberry, now taking the lead, hurried down the other branch of the passage past a door which was plainly that of a kitchen, came to another further down the passage, tried it, and recoiled in fresh bewilderment to find it locked.

“It is never locked — never! Something dreadful must have been happening in here!” he wrung his hands again weakly.

“We must break it down then!” Trant drew the little man aside, and, bracing himself against the opposite wall, threw his shoulder against it once — twice, and even a third time, ineffectually, till a uniformed patrolman, and another man in plain clothes, coming after them with Mrs. Newberry, added their weight to Trant’s, and the door crashed open.

A blast of air from the outside storm instantly blew out both the lamp in Trant’s hand and another which had been burning in the room. The woman screamed and threw herself toward some object on the floor which the flare of the failing lights had momentarily revealed; but her husband caught in the darkness at her wrist and drew her to him. Siler and the patrolman, swearing softly, felt for matches and tried vainly in the draft to relight the lamp which Trant had thrust upon the table; for the psychologist had dashed to the window which was letting in the outside storm, stared out, then closed it and returned to light the lamp, which belonged in the room, as the plain-clothes man now lit the other.

This room which Mrs. Newberry had called the billiard room, he saw then, was now used only for storage purposes and was littered with the old rubbish which accumulates in every house; but the arrangement of the discarded furniture showed plainly the room had recently been fitted for occupancy as well as its means allowed. That the occupant had taken care to conceal himself, heavy sheets of brown paper pasted over the panes of all the windows — including that which Trant had found open — testified; that the occupant had been well tended, a full tray of food — practically untouched — and the stubs of at least a hundred cigarettes flung in the fireplace, made plain. These things Trant appreciated only after the first swift glance which showed him a huddled figure with its head half under a musty lounge which stood furthest from the window. It was not the body of a woman, but that of a man not yet thirty, whose rather handsome face was marred by deep lines of dissipation. The mother’s shuddering cry of recognition had showed that this was Walter Newberry.

Trant knelt beside the officers working over the body; the blood had been flowing from a bullet wound in the temple, but it had ceased to flow. A small, silver-mounted automatic revolver, such as had been recently widely advertised for the protection of women, lay on the floor close by, with the shells which had been ejected as it was fired. The psychologist straightened.

“We have come too late,” he said simply to the father. “It was necessary, as he foresaw, to get here before eleven, if we were to help him; for he is dead. And now — “he checked himself, as the little woman clutched her husband and buried her face in his sleeve, and the little man stared up at him with a chalky face — “it will be better for you to wait somewhere else till we are through here.”

“In the name of mercy, Mr. Trant!” Newberry cried miserably, as the psychologist picked up a lamp and lighted the two old people into the hall, “what is this terrible thing that has happened here? What is it — oh, what is it, Mr. Trant? And where — where is Adele?”

“I am here, father; I am here!” a new voice broke clearly and calmly through the confusion, and the light of Trant’s lamp fell on a slight but stately girl advancing down the hallway. “And you,” she said as composedly to the psychologist, though Trant could see now that her self-possession was belied by the nervous picking of her fingers at her dress and her paleness, which grew greater as she met his eyes, “are Mr. Trant — and you came too late!”

“You are — Mrs. Walter Newberry?” Trant returned. “You were the one who was calling me up this morning and this afternoon?”

“Yes,” she said. “I was his wife. So he is dead!”

She took no heed of the quick glance Trant flashed to assure himself that she spoke in this way before she could have seen the body from her place in the hall; and she turned calmly still to the old man who was clinging to her crying nervously now, “Adele! Adele! Adele!”

“Yes, dear father and dear mother!” she began compassionately. “Walter came back — “she broke off suddenly; and Trant saw her grow pale as death with staring eyes fixed over his shoulder on Siler, who had come to the doorway. “You — you brought the police, Mr. Trant! I — I thought you had nothing to do with the police!”

“Never mind that,” the plain-clothes man checked Trant’s answer. “You were saying your husband came home, Mrs. Newberry — then what?”

“Then — but that is all I know; I know nothing whatever about it.”

“Your shoes and skirt are wet, Mrs. Newberry,” the plain-clothes man pointed significantly.

“I — I heard the shots!” she caught herself up with admirable self-control. “That was all. I ran over to the neighbors’ for help; but I could get no one.”

“Then you’ll have a chance to make your statement later,” Siler answered in a business-like way. “Just now you’d better look after your father and mother.”

He took the lamp from Trant and held it to light them down the hall, then turned swiftly to the patrolman: “She is going upstairs with them; watch the front stairs and see that she does not go out. If she comes down the back stairs we can see her.”

As the patrolman went out, the plain-clothes man turned back into the room, leaving the door ajar so that the rear stairs were visible. “These husband and wife cases, Mr. Trant,” he said easily. “You think — and the man thinks, too — the woman will stand everything; and she does — till he does one more thing too much, and, all of a sudden, she lets him have it!”

“Don’t you think it’s a bit premature,” the psychologist suggested, “to assume that she killed him?”

“Didn’t you see how she shut up when she saw me?” Siler’s eyes met Trant’s with a flash of opposition. “That was because she recognized me and knew that, having been here last time there was trouble, I knew that he had been threatening her. It’s a cinch! Regular minister’s son, he was; the old man’s a missionary, you know; spent his life till two years ago trying to turn Chinese heathens into Christians. And this Walter — our station blotter’d be black with his doings; only, ever since he made China too hot to hold him and the old man brought him back here, everything’s been hushed up on the old man’s account. But I happen to have been here before; and all winter I’ve known there’d be a killing if he ever came back. Hell! I tell you it was a relief to me to see it was him on the floor when that door went down. There are no powder marks, you see,” the officer led Trant’s eyes back to the wound in the head of the form beside the

lounge. “He could not have shot himself. He was shot from further off than he could reach. Besides, it’s on the left side.”

“Yes; I saw,” Trant replied.

“And that little automatic gun,” the officer stooped now and picked up the pistol that lay on the floor be side the body, “is hers. I saw it the last time I was called in here.”

“But how could he have known — if she shot him — that she was going to kill him just at eleven?” Trant objected, pulling from his pocket the note, which old Mr. Newberry had returned to him, and handing it to Siler. “He sent that to me; at least, the father says it is in his handwriting.”

“You mean,” Siler’s eyes rose slowly from the paper, “that she must have told him what she was going to do — premeditated murder?”

“I mean that the first fact which we have — and which certainly seems to me wholly incompatible with anything which you have suggested so far — is that Walter Newberry foresaw his own death and set the hour of its accomplishment; and that his wife — it is plain at least to me — when she telephoned so often for me to-day, was trying to help him to escape from it. Now what are the other facts?” Trant went on rapidly, paying no attention to the obstinate glance in the eyes of the officer. “I distinctly heard five shots — four together and then, after a second or so, one. You heard five?”

“Yes.”

“And five shots,” the psychologist’s quick glances had been taking in the finer details of the room, “are accounted for by the bullet holes — one through the lower pane of the window I found open, which shows it was down and closed during the shooting, as there is no break in the upper half; one on the plaster there to the side; one under the moulding there four feet to the right; and one more, in the plaster almost as far to the left. The one that killed him makes five.”

“Exactly!” Siler followed Trant’s indication triumphantly, “the fifth in his head! The first four went off in their struggle; and then she got away and, with the fifth, shot him.”

“But the shells,” Trant continued; “for that sort of revolver ejects the shells as

they are fired — and I see only four. Where is the fifth?"

"You're trying to fog this thing all up, Mr. Trant."

"No; I'm trying to clear it. How could anyone have left the room after the firing of the last shot? No one could have gone through the door and not been seen by us in the hall; besides the door was bolted on the inside," Trant pointed to the two bolts. "No one could have left except by the window — this window which was open when we came in, but which must have been closed when one, at least, of the shots was being fired. You remember I went at once to it and looked out, but saw nothing."

Trant re-crossed the room swiftly and threw the window open, intently re-examining it. On the outside it was barred with a heavy grating, but he saw that the key to the grating was in the lock.

"Bring the lamp," he said to the plain-clothes man; and as Siler screened the flame against the wind — "Ah!" he continued, "look at the ice cracked from it there — it must have been swung open. He must have gone out this way!"

"He?" Siler repeated.

The plain-clothes man had squeezed past Trant, as the grating swung back, and lamp in hand had let himself easily down to the ice-covered walk below the window, and was holding his light, shielded, just above the ground. "It was she," he cried triumphantly — "the woman, as I told you! Look at her marks here!" He showed by the flickering light the double, sharp little semi-circles of a woman's high heels cut into the ice; and, as Trant dropped down beside him, the police detective followed the sharp little heel marks to the side door of the house, where they turned and led into the kitchen entry.

"Premature, was I — eh?" Siler triumphed laconically. "We are used to these cases, Mr. Trant; we know what to expect in 'em."

Trant stood for an instant studying the sheet of ice. In this sheltered spot, freezing had not progressed so fast as in the open streets. Here, as an hour before on Michigan Avenue, he saw that his heels and those of the police officer at every step cut through the crust, while their toes left no mark. But except for the marks they themselves had made and the crescent stamp of the woman's high heels leading in sharp, clear outline from the window to the side steps of the

house, there were no other imprints. Then he followed the detective into the side door of the house. In the passage they met the patrolman. “She came down stairs just now,” said that officer briskly, “and went in here.”

Siler laid his hand on the door of the little sitting-room the patrolman indicated, but turned to speak a terse command to the man over his shoulder: “Go back to that room and see that things are kept as they are. Look for the fifth shell. We got four; find the other!”

Then, with a warning glance at Trant, he pushed the door open.

The girl faced the two calmly as they entered; but the whiteness of her lips showed Trant, with swift appreciation, that she could bear no more and was reaching the end of her restraint.

“You’ve had a little while to think this over, Mrs. Newberry,” the plain-clothes man said, not unkindly, “and I guess you’ve seen it’s best to make a clean breast of it. Mr. Walter Newberry has been in that room quite a while — the room shows it — though his father and mother seem not to have known about it.”

“He” — she hesitated, then answered suddenly and collectively, “he had been there six days.”

“You started to tell us about it,” Trant helped her. “You said ‘Walter came home’ — but, what brought him here? Did he come to see you?”

“No;” the girl’s pale cheeks suddenly burned blood red and went white again, as she made her decision. “It was fear — deadly fear that drove him here; but I do not know of what.”

“You are going to tell us all you know, are you not, Mrs. Newberry?” the psychologist urged quietly — “how he came here; and particularly how both he and you could so foresee his death that you summoned me as you did!”

“Yes; yes — I will tell you,” the girl clenched and unclenched her hands, as she gathered herself together. “Six nights ago, Monday night, Mr. Trant, Walter came here. It was after midnight, and he did not ring the bell, but waked me by throwing pieces of ice and frozen sod against my window. I saw at once that something was the matter with him; so I went down and talked to him through the closed door — the side door here; for I was afraid at first to let him in, in

spite of his promises not to hurt me. He told me his very life was in danger — and he had no other place to go; and he must hide here — hide; and I must not let anyone — even his mother or father — know he had come back; that I was the only one he could trust! So — he was my husband — and I let him in!

“I started to run from him, when I had opened the door; for I was afraid — afraid; but he ran at once into the old billiard-room — the store room there — and tried the locks of the door and the window gratings,” the sensitive voice ran on rapidly, “and then threw himself all sweating cold on the lounge there, and went to sleep in a stupor. I thought at first it was another frenzy from whiskey or — or opium. And I stayed there. But just at morning when he woke up, I saw it wasn’t that — but it was fear — fear — fear, such as I’d never seen before. He rolled off the couch and half hid under it till I’d pasted brown paper over the window panes — there were no curtains. But he wouldn’t tell me what he was afraid of.

“He got so much worse as the days went by that he couldn’t sleep at all; he walked the floor all the time and he smoked continually, so that nearly every day I had to slip out and get him cigarettes. He got more and more afraid of every noise outside and of every little sound within; and it made him so much worse when I told him I had to tell someone else — even his mother — that I didn’t dare to. He said other people were sure to find out that he was there, then, and they would kill him — kill him! He was always worst at eleven — eleven o’clock at night; and he dreaded especially eleven o’clock Sunday night — though I couldn’t find out what or why!

“I gave him my pistol — the one — the one you saw on the floor in there. It was Friday then; and he had been getting worse and worse all the time. Eleven o’clock every night I managed to be with him; and no one found us out. I was glad I gave him the pistol until this — until this morning. I never thought till then that he might use it to kill himself; but this morning — Sunday morning, when I came to him, he was talking about it — denying it; but I saw it was in his mind! ‘I shan’t shoot myself!’ I heard him saying over and over again, when I came to the door. ‘They can’t make me shoot myself! I shan’t! I shan’t!’ — over and over, like that. And when he had let me in and I saw him, then I knew — I knew he meant to do it! He asked me if it wasn’t Sunday; and went whiter when I told him it was! So then I told him he had to trust someone now; this couldn’t go on; and I spoke to him about Mr. Trant; and he said he’d try him; and he wrote the letter I mailed you — special delivery — so you could come when his

father and mother were out — but he never once let go my pistol; he was wild — wild with fear. Every time I could get away to the telephone, I tried to get Mr. Trant; and the last time I got back — it was awful! It was hardly ten, but he was walking up and down with my pistol in his hand, whispering strange things over and over to himself, saying most of anything, ‘No one can make me do it! No one can make me do it — even when it’s eleven — even when it’s eleven!’ — and staring — staring at his watch which he’d taken out and laid on the table; staring and staring so — so that I knew I must get someone before eleven — and at last I was running next door for help — for anyone — for anything — when — when I heard the shots — I heard the shots!”

She sank forward and buried her face in her hands; rent by tearless sobs. Her fingers, white from the pressure, made long marks on her cheeks, showing livid even in the pallor of her face. But Siler pursed his lips toward Trant, and laid his hand upon her arm, sternly.

“Steady, steady, Mrs. Newberry!” the plain-clothes man warned. “You can not do that now! You say you were with your husband a moment before the shooting, but you were not in the room when he was killed?”

“Yes; yes!” the woman cried.

“You went out the door the last time? “

“The door? Yes; yes; of course the door! Why not the door?”

“Because, Mrs. Newberry,” the detective replied impressively, “just at, or a moment after, the time of the shooting, a woman left that room by the window — unlocked the grating and went out the window. We have seen her marks. And you were that woman, Mrs. Newberry!”

The girl gasped and her eyes wavered to Trant; but seeing no help there now, she recovered herself quickly.

“Of course! Why, of course!” she cried. “The last time I went out, I did go out the window! It was to get the neighbors — didn’t I tell you? So I went out the window!”

“Yes; we know you went out the window, Mrs. Newberry,” Siler responded mercilessly. “But we know, too, you did not even start for the neighbors. We

have traced your tracks on the ice straight to the side door and into the house! Now, Mrs. Newberry, you've tried to make us believe that your husband killed himself. But that won't do! Isn't it a little too strange, if you left by the window while your husband was still alive, that he let the window stay open and the grating unlocked? Yes; it's altogether too strange. You left him dead; and what we want to know — and I'm asking you straight out — is how you did it?"

"How I did it?" the girl repeated mechanically; then with sharp agony and starting eyes: "How *I* did it! Oh, no, no, I did not do it! I was there — I have not told all the truth! But when I saw you," her horrified gaze resting on Siler, "and remembered you had been here before when he — he threatened me, my only thought was to hide for his sake and for theirs," she indicated the room above, where she had taken her husband's parents, "that he had tried to carry out his threat. For before he killed himself, he tried to kill me! That's how he fired those first four shots. He tried to kill me first!"

"Well, we're getting nearer to it," Siler approved.

"Yes; now I have told you all!" the girl cried. "Oh, I have now — I have! The last time he let me in, it was almost eleven — eleven! He had my pistol in his hand, waiting — waiting! And at last he cried out it was eleven; and he raised the pistol and shot straight at me — with the face — the face of a demon with fear. It was no use to try to speak to him, or to get away; I fell on my knees before him, just as he shot at me again and again — aiming straight, not at my eyes, but at my hair; and he shot again! But again he missed me; and his face — his face was so terrible that — that I covered my own face as he aimed at me again, staring always at my hair. And that time, when he shot, I heard him fall and saw — saw that he had shot himself and he was dead!"

Then I heard your footsteps coming to the door; and I saw for the first time that Walter had opened the window before I came in. And — all without thinking of anything except that if I was found there everybody would know he'd tried to kill me, I took up the key of the grating from the table where he had laid it, and went out!"

"I can't force you to confess, if you will not, Mrs. Newberry," Siler said meaningly, "though no jury, after they learned how he had threatened you, would convict you if you pleaded self-defense. We know he didn't kill himself; for he couldn't have fired that shot! And the case is complete, I think," the detective

shot a finally triumphant glance at Trant, “unless Mr. Trant wants to ask you something more.”

“I do!” Trant quietly spoke for the first time. “I want to ask Mrs. Newberry — since she did not actually see her husband fire the last shot that killed him — whether she was directly facing him as she knelt. It is most essential to know whether or not her head was turned to one side.”

“Why, what do you mean, Mr. Trant?” the girl looked up wonderingly; for his tone seemed to promise he was coming to her defense.

“Suppose he might have shot himself before her, as she says — what’s the difference whether she heard him with her head straight or her head turned?” the police detective demanded sneeringly.

“A fundamental difference in this case, Siler,” Trant replied, “if taken in connection with that other most important factor of all — that Walter Newberry foretold the hour of his own death. But answer me, Mrs. Newberry — if you can be certain.”

“I — certainly I can never forget how I crouched there with every muscle strained. I was directly facing him,” the girl answered.

“That is very important!” The psychologist took a rapid turn or two up and down the room. “Now you told us that your husband, during the days he was shut up in that room, talked to himself almost continuously. Toward the end, you say, he repeated over and over again such sentences as ‘No one can make me do it!’ Can you remember any others?”

“I couldn’t make much out of anything else, Mr. Trant,” the girl replied, after thinking an instant. “He seemed to have hallucinations so much of the time.”

“Hallucinations?”

“Yes; he seemed to think I was singing to him — as I used to sing to him, you know, when we were first married — and he would catch hold of me and say, ‘Don’t — don’t — don’t sing!’ Or at other times he would clutch me and tell me to sing low — sing low!”

“Anything else?”

“Nothing else even so sensible as that,” the girl responded. “Many things he said made me think he had lost his mind. He would often stare at me in an absorbed way, looking me over from head to foot, and say, ‘Look here; if anyone asks you — anyone at all — whether your mother had large or small feet, say small — never admit she had large feet, or you’ll never get in. Do you understand?’”

“What?” The psychologist stood for several moments in deep thought; then his eyes flashed suddenly with excitement. “What!” he cried again, clutching the chair-back as he leaned toward her. “He said that to you when he was absorbed?”

“A dozen times at least, Mr. Trant,” the girl replied, staring at him in startled wonder.

“Remarkable! Yes; this is extraordinary!” Trant strode up and down excitedly. “Nobody could have hoped for so fortunate a confirmation of the evidence in this remarkable case. We knew that Walter Newberry foresaw his own death; now we actually get from him himself, the key — the possibly complete explanation of his danger —”

“Explanation!” shouted the police detective. “I’ve heard no explanation! You’re throwing an impressive bluff, Mr. Trant; but I’ve heard nothing yet to make me doubt that Newberry met his death at the hands of his wife; and I’ll arrest her for his murder!”

“I can’t prevent your arresting Mrs. Newberry,” Trant swung to look the police officer between the eyes hotly. “But I can tell you — if you care to hear it — how Walter Newberry died! He was not shot by his wife; he did not die by his own hand, as she believes and has told you. The fifth shot — you have not found the fifth shell yet, Siler; and you will not find it, for it was not fired either by Walter Newberry or his wife. As she knelt, blinding her eyes as she faced her husband, Mrs. Newberry could not know whether the fifth shot sounded in front or behind her. If her head was not turned to one side, as she says it was not, then — and this is a simple psychological fact, Siler, though it seems to be unknown to you — it would be impossible for her to distinguish between sounds directly ahead and directly behind. It was not at her — at her hair — that her husband fired the four shots whose empty shells we found, but over her head at the window directly behind her. And it was through this just opened window that the fifth shot came and killed him — the shot at eleven o’clock — which he had foreseen and dreaded!”

“You must think I’m easy, Mr. Trant,” said the police officer derisively. “You can’t clear her by dragging into this business some third person who never existed. For there were no marks, and marks would have been left by anybody who came to the window!”

“Marks!” Trant echoed. “If you mean marks on the windowsill and floor, I cannot show you any. But the murderer did leave, of course, one mark which in the end will probably prove final, even to you, Siler. The shell of the fifth shot is missing because he carried it away in his revolver. But the bullet — it will be a most remarkable coincidence, Siler, if you find that the bullet which killed young Newberry was the same as the four we know were shot from his wife’s little automatic revolver!”

“But the ice — the ice under the window!” shouted the detective. “You saw for yourself how her heels and ours cut through the crust; and you saw that there were no other heel marks, as there must have been if anyone had stood outside the window to look through it, or to fire through it, as you say!”

“When you have reached the point, Siler,” said Trant, more quietly, “where you can think of some class of men who would have left no heel marks but who could have produced the effect on young Newberry’s mind which his wife has described, you will have gone far toward the discovery of the real murderer of Walter Newberry. In the meantime, I have clews enough; and I hope to find help, which cannot be given me by the city police, to enable me to bring the murderer to justice. I will ask you, Mrs. Newberry,” he glanced toward the girl, “to let me have a photograph of your husband, or” — he hesitated, unable to tell from her manner whether she had heard him — “I will stop on my way out to ask his photograph from his father.”

He glanced once more from the detective to the pale girl, who, since she received notice of her arrest, had stood as though cut from marble, with small hands tightly clenched and blind eyes fixed on vacancy; then he left them.

The next morning’s papers, which carried startling headlines of the murder of Walter Newberry, brought Police Detective Siler a feeling of satisfaction with his own work. The detective, it is true, had been made a little doubtful of his own assumptions by Trant’s confident suggestion of a third person as the murderer. But he was reassured by the newspaper accounts, though they contained merely an elaboration of his own theory of an attack by the missionary’s dissipated son

on his wife and her shooting him in self-defense, which Siler had successfully impressed not only on the police but on the reporters as well.

Even the discovery on the second morning that the bullet which had now been taken from young Newberry's body was of .38 calibre and, as Trant had predicted, not at all similar to the steel .32 calibre bullets shot by the little automatic pistol which had belonged to young Mrs. Newberry, did not disturb the police officer's self-confidence, though it obviously weakened the case against the wife. And when, on the day following, Siler received orders to report at an hour when he was not ordinarily on duty at the West End Police Station, where Mrs. Newberry was still held under arrest, he pushed open, with an air of importance, the door of the captain's room, to which the sharp nod of the desk sergeant had directed him.

The detective's first glance showed him the room's three occupants — the huge figure of Division Inspector of Police Walker, lolling in the chair before the captain's desk; a slight, dark man — unknown to Siler — near the window; and Luther Trant at the end of the room busy arranging a somewhat complicated apparatus.

Trant, with a short nod of greeting, at once called Siler to his aid.

With the detective's half-suspicious, half -respectful assistance, the psychologist stretched across the end of the room a white sheet about ten feet long, three feet high, and divided into ten rectangles by nine vertical lines. Opposite this, and upon a table about ten feet away, he set up a small electrical contrivance, consisting of two magnets and wire coils supporting a small, round mirror about an inch in diameter and so delicately set upon an axis that it turned at the slightest current coming to the coils below it. In front of this little mirror Trant placed a shaded electric lamp in such a position that its light was reflected from the mirror upon the sheet at the end of the room. Then he put down a carbon plate and a zinc plate at the edge of the table; set a single cell battery under the table; connected the battery with the coils controlling the mirror, and connected them also with the zinc and carbon plates.

"I suppose," Siler burst out finally with growing curiosity which even the presence of the inspector could not restrain, "I haven't got any business to ask what all this machinery is for?"

“I was about to explain,” Trant answered.

The psychologist rested his hands lightly on the plates upon the table; and, as he did so, a slight and, in fact, imperceptible current passed through him from the battery; but it was enough to slightly move the light reflected upon the screen.

“This apparatus,” the psychologist continued, as he saw even Walker stare strangely at this result, “is the newest electric psychometer — or ‘the soul machine,’ as it is already becoming popularly known. It is made after the models of Dr. Peterson, of Columbia University, and of the Swiss psychologist Jung, of Zurich, and is probably the most delicate and efficient instrument there is for detecting and registering human emotion — such as anxiety, fear, and the sense of guilt. Like the galvanometer which you saw me use to catch Caylis, the Bronson murderer, in the first case where I worked with the police, Inspector Walker,” the psychologist turned to his tall friend, “this psychometer — which is really an improved and much more spectacular galvanometer — is already in use by physicians to get the truth from patients when they don’t want to tell it. No man can control the automatic reflexes which this apparatus was particularly designed to register when the subject is examined with his hands merely resting upon these two plates! As you see,” he placed his hands in the test position again, “these are arranged so that the very slight current passing through my arms — so slight that I can not feel it at all — moves that mirror and swings the reflected light upon the screen according to the amount of current coming through me. As you see now, the light stays almost steady in the center of the screen, because the amount of current coming through me is very slight, as I am not under any stress or emotion of any sort. But if I were confronted suddenly with an object to arouse fear — if, for instance, it reminded me of a crime I was trying to conceal — I might be able to control every other evidence of my fright, but I could not control the involuntary sweating of my glands and the automatic changes in the blood pressure which allow the electric current to flow more freely through me. The light would then register immediately the amount of my emotion by the distance it swung along the screen. But I will give you a much more perfect demonstration of the instrument,” the psychologist concluded, while all three examined it with varying degrees of interest and respect, “during the next half hour while I am making the test that I have planned to determine the murderer of Walter Newberry.”

“You mean,” cried Siler, “you are going to test the woman? “

“I might have thought it necessary to test Mrs. Newberry,” Trant answered, “if the evidence at the house of the presence of a third person who was the murderer had not been so plain as to make any test of her useless.”

“Then you — you still stick to that?” Siler demanded derisively.

“Thanks to Mr. Ferris, who is a special agent of the United States government,” Trant motioned to the slight, dark man who was the fourth member of the party, “I have been able to fix upon four men, one of whom, I feel absolutely certain, shot and killed young Newberry through the window of the billiard-room that night. Inspector Walker has had all four arrested and brought here. Mr. Ferris’s experience and thorough knowledge enabled me to lay my hands on them much more easily than I had feared, though I was able to go to him with information which would have made their detection almost certain sooner or later.”

“You mean information you got at the house?” asked Siler, less derisively, as he caught the attentive attitude of the inspector.

“Just so, Siler; and it was as much at your disposal as mine,” Trant replied. “It seemed to mean nothing to you that Walter Newberry knew the hour at which he was to die — which made it seem more like an execution than a murder; or that in his terror he raved that ‘he would not do it — that they could not make him do it’ — plainly meaning commit suicide. Perhaps you don’t know that it is an Oriental custom, under certain conditions, to allow a man who has been sentenced to death, the alternative of carrying out the decree upon himself before a certain day and hour that has been decided upon. But certainly his ravings, as told us by his wife, ought to have given you a clew, if you had heard only that sentence which she believed an injunction not to sing loudly, but which was in reality a name — Sing lo!”

“Then — it was a Chinaman!” cried Siler, astounded.

“It could hardly have been any other sort of man, Siler. For there is no other to whom it could be commended as a matter of such vital importance whether his mother had small feet or large, as was shown in the other sentence Mrs. Newberry repeated to us. But to a Chinaman that fact is of prime importance; for it indicates whether he is of low birth, when his mother would have had large feet, or of high, in which case his women of the last generation would have had their feet bound and made artificially smaller. It was that sentence that sent me to

Mr. Ferris."

"I see — I see!" exclaimed the crest-fallen detective. "But if it was a Chinaman, then, even with that thing," he pointed to the instrument Trant had just finished arranging, "you'll never get the truth out of him. You can't get anything out of a Chinaman! Inspector Walker will tell you that!"

"I know, Siler," Trant answered, "that it is absolutely hopeless to expect a confession from a Chinaman; they are so accustomed to control the obvious signs of fear, guilt, the slightest trace or hint of emotion, even under the most rigid examination, that it had come to be regarded as a characteristic of the race. But the new psychology does not deal with those obvious signs; it deals with the involuntary reactions in the blood and glands which are common to all men alike — even to Chinamen! We have in here," the psychologist looked to the door of an inner room, "the four Chinamen — Wong Bo, Billy Lee, Sing Lo, and Sin Chung Ming.

"My first test is to see which of them — if any — were acquainted with Walter Newberry; and next who, if any of them, knew where he lived. For this purpose I have brought here Newberry's photograph and a view of his father's house, which I had taken yesterday." He stooped to one of his suit-cases, and took out first a dozen photographs of young men, among them Newberry's; and about twenty views of different houses, among which he mixed the one of the Newberry house. "If you are ready, inspector, I will go ahead with the test."

The psychologist threw open the door of the inner room, showing the four Celestials in a stolid group, and summoned first Wong Bo, who spoke English.

Trant, pushing a chair to the table, ordered the Oriental to sit down and place his hands upon the plates at the table's edge before him. The Chinaman obeyed passively, as if expecting some sort of torture. Immediately the light moved to the center of the screen, where it had moved when Trant was touching the plates, then kept on toward the next line beyond. But as Wong Bo's first suspicious excitement — which the movement of the light betrayed — subsided as he felt nothing, the light returned to the center of the screen.

"You know why you have been brought here, Wong Bo? "Trant demanded of the Chinaman.

"No," the Chinaman answered shortly, the light moving six inches as he did so.

“You know no reason at all why you should be brought here?”

“No,” the Chinaman answered calmly again, while the light moved about six inches. Trant waited till it returned to its normal position in the center of the screen.

“Do you know an American named Paul Tobin, Wong Bo?”

“No,” the Chinaman answered. This time the light remained stationary.

“Nor one named Ralph Murray?”

“No.” Still the light stayed stationary.

“Hugh Larkin, Wong Bo?”

“No.” Calmly again, and with the light quiet in the center of the screen.

“Walter Newberry?” the psychologist asked in precisely the same tone as he had put the preceding question.

“No,” the Chinaman answered laconically again; but before he answered and almost before the name was off Trant’s lips, the light — which had stayed almost still at the recital of the other names — jumped quickly to one side across the screen, crossed the first division line and moved on toward the second and stayed there. It had moved over a foot! But the face of the Oriental was as quiet, patient, and impassive as before. The psychologist made no comment; but waited for the light slowly to return to its normal position. Then he took up his pile of portrait photographs.

“You say you do not know any of these men, Wong Bo,” Trant said quietly, but with the effect of sending the light swinging half the distance again, “You may know them, but not by name, so I want you to look at these pictures.” Trant showed him the first. “Do you know that man, Wong Bo?”

“No,” the Chinaman answered patiently. Trant glanced quickly to see that the light stayed steady; then showed him four more pictures of young men, getting the same answer and precisely the same effect. He showed the sixth picture — the photograph of Walter Newberry.

“You know him?” Trant asked precisely in the same tone as the others.

“No,” Wong Bo answered with precisely the same patient impassiveness. Not a muscle of his face changed nor an eyelash quivered; but as soon as Trant had displayed this picture and the Chinaman’s eyes fell upon it, the light on the screen again jumped a space and settled near the second line to the left! Trant put aside the portraits and took up the pictures of the houses. He waited again till the light slowly resumed its central position on the screen.

“You have never gone to this house, Wong Bo?” he showed a large, stone mansion, not at all like the Newberry’s.

“No,” the Chinaman replied, impassive as ever. The light remained steady.

“Nor to this — or this — or this?” Trant showed three more with the same result. “Nor this?” he displayed now a rear view of the Newberry house.

“No,” quietly again; but, as when Newberry’s name was mentioned and his picture shown, the light swung swiftly to one side and stood trembling, again a foot and a half to the left of its normal position when shown the other pictures!

“That will do for the present,” Trant dismissed Wong Bo. “Send him back to his cell, away from the others,” he said to Walker, with flashing eyes. “We will try the rest — in turn!”

And rapidly, and with precisely the same questions and test he examined Billy Lee and Sing Lo. Each man made precisely the same denials and in the same manner as Wong Bo, but to the increasing wonder and surprise of Walker and the utter astonishment of Siler, for each man the light stayed steady when they were asked if they knew the other Americans named; while for each the light swung suddenly wide and trembling when Walter Newberry’s name was mentioned and when his picture was shown. And for Sing Lo also — precisely as for Wong Bo — the light wavered suddenly and swung, quivering, a foot and a half to the left when they were shown the Newberry home.

“Bring in Sin Chung Ming!” the psychologist commanded with subdued fire shining in his eyes; but he hid all signs of excitement himself, as the government agent handed the last Oriental over to him. Trant set the yellow hands over the plates and started his questions in the same quiet tone as before. For the first two questions the light moved three times, as it had done with the others — and as

even Ferris and Siler now seemed to be expecting it to move — only this time it seemed even to the police officers to swing a little wider. And at Walter Newberry's name, for the first time in any of the tests, it crossed the second dividing line at the first impulse; moved toward the third and stayed there.

Even Siler now waited with bated breath, as Trant took up his pile of pictures; and, as he came to the picture of the murdered man and the house where he had lived, for the second and third time in that single test the light — stationary when Sin Chung Ming glanced at the other photographs — trembled across the screen to the third dividing line. For the others it had moved hardly eighteen inches, but when Sin Chung Ming saw the pictured face of the murdered man it had swung almost three feet.

"Inspector Walker," Trant drew the giant officer aside, "this is the man, I think, for the final test. You will carry it out as I arranged with you?"

"Sin Chung Ming," the psychologist turned back to the Chinaman swiftly, as the inspector, without comment, left the room, "you have been watching the little light, have you not? You saw it move? It moved when you lied, Sin Chung Ming! It will always move when you lie. It moved when you said you did not know Walter Newberry; it moved when you saw his picture, and pretended not to know it; it moved when you saw the picture of his house, which you said you did not know! Look how it is moving now, as you grow afraid that you have betrayed your secret to us now, Sin Chung Ming — as you have and will," Trant pointed to the swinging light in triumph.

A low knock sounded on the door; but Trant, watching the light now slowly returning to its normal place, waited an instant more. Then he himself rapped gently on the table. The door to the next room — directly opposite the Chinaman's eyes — swung slowly open; and through it they could see the scene which Trant and the inspector had prepared. In the middle of the floor knelt young Mrs. Newberry, her back toward them, her hands pressed against her face; and six feet beyond a man stood, facing her. Ferris and Siler looked in astonishment at Trant, for there was no meaning in this scene to them at first. Then Siler remembered suddenly, and Ferris guessed, that such must have been the scene in the billiard room that night at the Newberry's; thus it must have been seen by the man who fired through the window at young Newberry that night — and to him, but to that man only — it would bring a shock of terror. And appreciating this, they stared swiftly, first at the Chinaman's passionless and

immobile face; then at the light upon the screen and saw it leap across bar after bar. And, as the Chinaman saw it, and knew that it was betraying him, it leaped and leaped again; swung wider and wider; until at last the impassiveness of the Celestial's attitude was for an instant broken, and Sin Chung Ming snatched his hands from the metal plates.

"I had guessed that anyway, Sin Chung Ming," Trant swiftly closed the door, as Walker returned to the room, "for your feeling at sound of Walter Newberry's name and the sight of his picture was so much deeper than any of the rest. So, it was you that fired the shot, after watching the house with Sing Lo and Wong Bo, as their fright when they saw the picture of the house showed, while Billy Lee was not needed at the house that night and has never seen it, though he knew what was to be done. That is all I need of you now, Sin Chung Ming; for I have learned what I wanted to know."

As the fourth of the Chinamen was led away to his cell, Trant turned back to Inspector Walker and Siler.

"I must acknowledge my debt to Mr. Ferris," he said with a glance toward the man of whom he spoke, "for help in solving this case, without which I could not have brought it to a conclusion without giving much more time to the investigation. Mr. Ferris, as you already know, Inspector Walker, as special agent for the Government, has for years been engaged in the enforcement of the Chinese exclusion laws. The sentence repeated to us by Mrs. Newberry, in which her husband, delirious with fright, seemed warning some one that to acknowledge that his mother had large feet would prevent him from 'getting in,' seemed to me to establish a connection between young Newberry's terror and an evasion of the exclusion laws. I went at once to Mr. Ferris to test this idea, and he recognized its application at once.

"As the exclusion laws against all but a very small class of Chinese are being more strictly enforced than ever before, there has been a large and increasing traffic among the Chinese in bogus papers to procure entry into this country of Chinese belonging to the excluded classes. And in addition to being supplied with forged official papers for entry, as Ferris can tell you, the applicants of the classes excluded are supplied with regular 'coaching papers' so that they can correctly answer the questions asked them at San Francisco or Seattle. The injunction to 'say your mother had small feet' was recognized at once by Ferris as one of the instructions of the 'coaching paper' to get a laborer entered as a

man of the merchant class.

“Mr. Ferris and I together investigated the career of Walter Newberry after his return from China, where he had spent nearly the whole of his life, and we were able to establish, as we expected we might, a connection between him and the Sing Lo Trading Company — a Chinese company which Mr. Ferris had long suspected of dealing in fraudulent admission papers, though he had never been able to bring home to them any proof. We found, also, that young Newberry had spent and gambled away much more money in the last few months than he had legitimately received. And we were able to make certain that this money had come to him through the Sing Lo Company, though obviously not for such uses. As it is not an uncommon thing for Chinese engaged in the fraudulent bringing in of their countrymen to confide part of the business to unprincipled Americans — especially as all papers have to be vised by American consuls and disputes settled in American courts — we became certain that young Newberry had been serving the Sing Lo Company in this capacity. It was plain that he had diverted a large amount of money from the ends for which the members of the Sing Lo Company had intended it to be used and his actions as described by his wife, made it equally certain that he had been sentenced by the members of the Company to death, and given the Oriental alternative of committing suicide before eleven o’clock on Sunday night, or else the company would take the carrying out of the sentence into their own hands. Now whether it will be possible to convict all four of the Chinamen we had here for complicity in his murder, or whether Sin Chung Ming, who fired the shot will be the only one tried, I do not know. But the others, in any case, will be turned over to Mr. Ferris for prosecution for their evasions of the exclusion laws.”

“Exclusion laws!” exclaimed the giant inspector — “Mr. Ferris can look after his exclusion laws if he wants. What we want, Trant, is to convict these men for the murder of Walter Newberry; and knowing what we do now, we will get a confession out of them some way!”

“I doubt whether, under the circumstances, any force could be brought to bear that would extort any formal confession from these Chinamen,” the Government agent shook his head. “They would lose their ‘face’ and with it all reputation among their countrymen.”

But at this instant the door of the room was dashed open and the flushed face of the desk sergeant appeared before them.

“Inspector!” he cried sharply, “the chink’s dead! The last one, Sin Chung Ming, choked himself as soon as he was alone in his cell!”

The inspector turned to Trant who looked to Ferris, first, in his surprise.

“What? Ah — I see!” the immigration officer comprehended after an instant. “He considered what we found from him here confession enough — especially since he implicated the others with him — so that his ‘face’ was lost. To him, it was unpardonable weakness to let us find what we did. I think, then, Mr. Trant,” he concluded quietly, “that you can safely consider your case proved. His suicide is the surest proof that this Chinaman considered that he had confessed.”

The End

(e-text prepared by Joe Harvat)