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THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF BROMLEY BARNES

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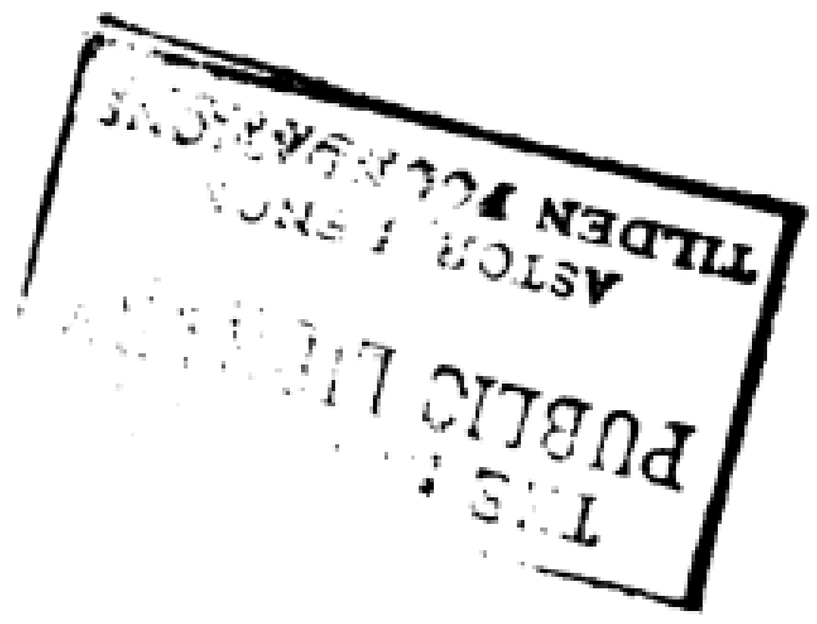

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"'I WANT YOU TO SAVE JACK!'"

(*See page 209*)

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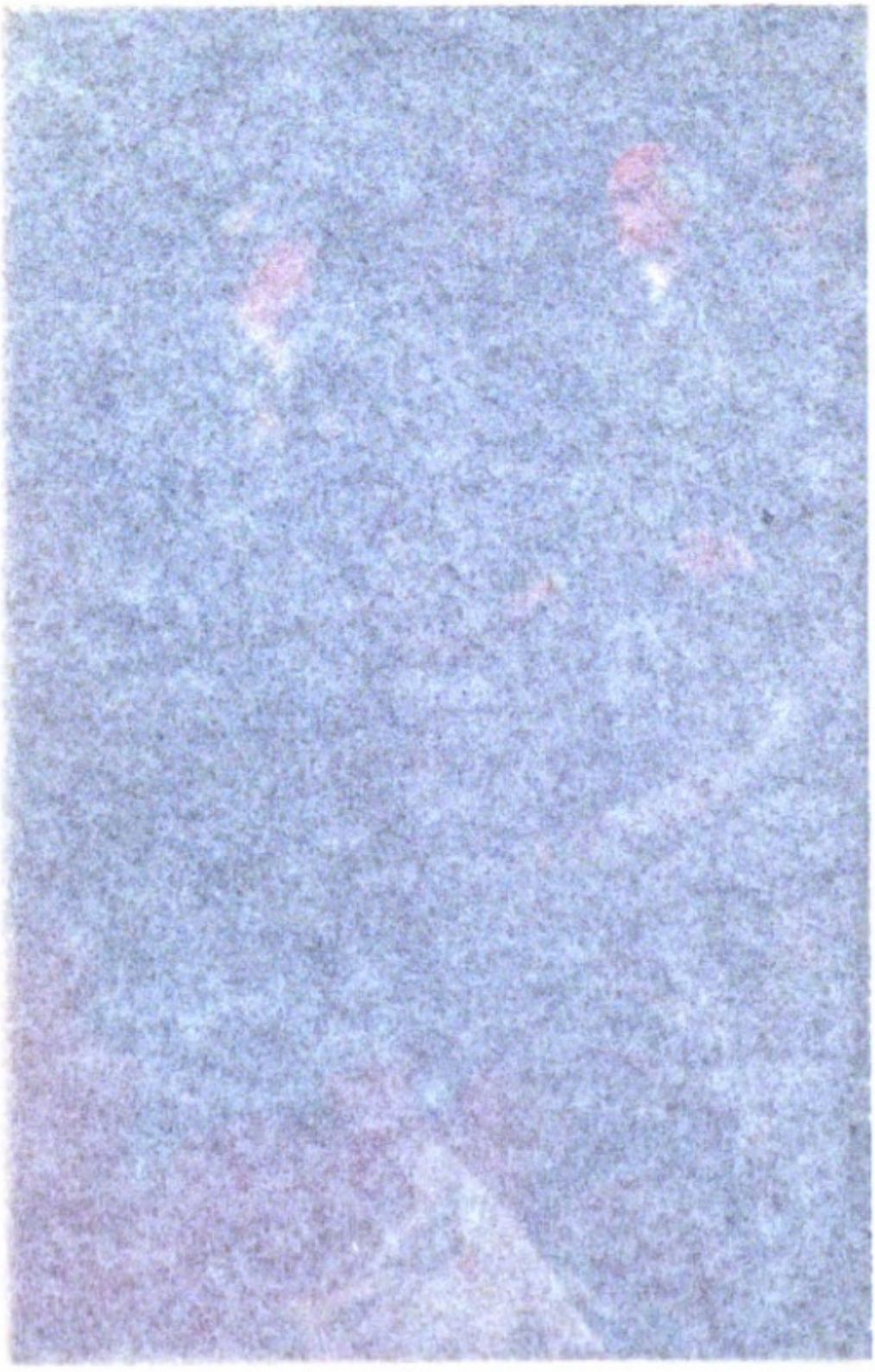

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The Strange Adventures of Bromley Barnes

BY

GEORGE BARTON

Author of

"The Mystery of the Red Flame," "The World's Greatest Military Spies and Secret Service Agents," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

CHARLES E. MEISTER

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First Impression, September, 1918

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TO

JOHN J. MAHONEY

AS THE MEMENTO OF

A TREASURED FRIENDSHIP

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THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF BROMLEY BARNES

I

ADVENTURE OF THE THIRTEENTH TREATY

BROMLEY BARNES pushed aside the window curtains of his cozy bachelor apartment in Washington and gazed upon the glistening dome of the Capitol. There was something majestic about the imposing pile of marble and steel. In the moonlight, on that cold frosty night, it seemed to acquire new beauty. It was the embodiment of the honor and the dignity of the nation, and as the veteran investigator looked upon its graceful proportions, surmounted by the

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goddess of liberty, his heart thrilled with a feeling of renewed pride and patriotic emotion.

Thirty years in the confidential employment of the United States Government had not dulled the man, or staled his infinite varity. He had left his mark upon the Secret Service, and he also made a great reputation as the Chief of the Special Agents of the Treasury Department. The private missions he performed for the State Department would have won for him medals of honor in any foreign country, but in the land of the free and the home of the brave it was all taken as a matter of course and he was content to go upon the retired list while he was still in the full enjoyment of his mental and physical faculties.

He was thinking of some of the things he had done for his country as he looked out at the splendid dome sparkling in the moonlight of this crisp January night, and he squared his sturdy shoulders as he reminded himself that he was still fit for service if the emergency should occur. The clattering of a poker caused him to turn and look into the room.

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But it was only Cornelius Clancy, his faithful assistant, stirring up the wood fire in the open grate. If it be said that Barnes was polished and persistent, it could be asserted with equal truth that Clancy was red-headed and hopeful. The two men complemented each other perfectly, and it was not surprising when Barnes resigned his position in the Secret Service that the loyal Clancy should quit too, in order to become his confidant, factotum and man of all work.

While the veteran's glance wandered from the dome of the Capitol to the shining asphalted pavements of the city, he was conscious of a sudden awakening of interest. A limousine, plum-colored and nobby in appearance, was swiftly and noiselessly making its way up the avenue leading to the St. Regis apartment house where the old investigator made his home. Bromley Barnes shoved the lace curtains farther to one side and strained his eyes in the effort to get a better view of the approaching vehicle. He looked at his watch. It was nearly midnight, and he gave a whistle of astonishment.

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"Calling me, sir?" asked Clancy, pausing in the act of directing a shower of sparks up the chimney.

"No,— but I'm seeing things."

"Seeing things?" echoed Cornelius, with a gesture of respectful curiosity.

"Yes, Brewster's down there in his plum-colored car, and I think he's coming to see me."

"What, the Secretary of State?"

"Certainly," answered the old man, haughtily, dropping the curtain and coming toward the center of the room; "it's not the first time the premier of the administration has visited my quarters, is it?"

"Oh, no," Clancy hastened to say with an apologetic air, "but the hour seemed to be so unusual."

Barnes nodded understandingly.

"You're right about that. The hour is unusual, and the business must be unusual. Brewster's not the man to go about paying social calls at midnight. He's been under a terrific strain lately, and if he had any spare time, he'd be resting. We're living in history-making times, my son, and I'll wager that that plum-colored limousine is telling a story

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as it comes up that hill. I wonder what it means?"

He did not have to wait long for an answer. In a few moments there was a tap at the door and two men entered. The first, tall, distinguished, fur-coated, and with a neatly trimmed Van Dyke beard, put out his hands and greeted the detective warmly but with a somber manner. He inclined his head in the direction of his companion.

"You know Senator Hance, Bromley?"

"I have that honor, Mr. Secretary," said Bromley, bowing.

He might have added that the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee loomed so large in the public eye at the time that none could very well help knowing him. The Senator was thin and hatchet-faced, wore the conventional string tie of the Southern statesman, and seemed much more at his ease than the distinguished member of the cabinet. While he and Barnes were passing conversational small change the Secretary of State was removing his fur coat with the air of one who is very much at

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home. The detective turned from the Senator and addressed Brewster:

"Mr. Secretary," he said, with his characteristic frankness, "you don't need to tell me that something of great importance has brought you here at this hour of the night."

Secretary Brewster gave Bromley Barnes a look of gratitude. It was the thanks of a busy man to one who understood him.

"You're right," he replied, with equal conciseness; "something has happened to-night which may affect the honor and dignity of the United States if it does not plunge the world into a war quite as horrible as the one which has devastated Europe."

Barnes gasped. He had not expected anything so sensational as this solemn statement from the head of the State Department.

"You say," he began hesitatingly, "that it may affect the United States and the world. Might I—"

"May is the word," was the deliberate interruption. "It is not too late to avert this calamity, and

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you are the one man in Washington with the wit and the courage to do it."

Barnes flushed to the roots of the iron-gray hair which formed a circle about his bald head. He was too old, and had too much experience with the world, to be carried away by mere idle flattery. He knew Secretary Brewster too well to feel that he would indulge in vain words at such a time. His emotions came from the sense of responsibility which the statement carried with it. He was the one man in Washington that could avert a world calamity. It was a fearful task to place on the shoulders of any human being. Would he be equal to it? The Secretary must have read his thoughts in his face.

"I know you've retired from the Government service, but will you undertake this business?"

It was more than a question. It was more than a plea. It was a challenge. It did not take the old man two seconds to decide. He said simply:

"I will!"

Secretary Brewster impulsively grasped him by one hand, and placing the other on his shoulder, and

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holding him off at arm's length, said admiringly:

"I knew you'd do it. I told Hance that before we reached here."

The two men made a memorable picture. Both had achieved prominence in their respective callings and each had rendered notable service. Secretary Brewster looked — well, he looked precisely as a Secretary of State would be expected to look. Bromley Barnes, on the other hand, looked like anything except a detective. His smooth-shaven face and his rosy cheeks belied his years, and his clear gray eyes seemed to sweep away evasion and subterfuge as if by magic. His dress was fastidious. From the opal in the red tie down to the carefully creased trousers everything betokened precision and attention to details.

Senator Hance, who had been watching the meeting between the diplomat and the detective as an observer might watch the actors at a play, now permitted his glance to roam about the room. He noted with an appraising eye the paintings, the works of art, and the bookcases filled with literary

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treasures, especially the rare first editions of "Robinson Crusoe" and the early American humorists. Presently he remarked, cynically:

"After you two gentlemen have finished admiring each other, you might get down to business."

The reminder brought an eager, if care-worn look into the tired eyes of the Secretary. He dropped into the nearest chair and began to address Barnes:

"The thing seems almost unbelievable, but I —"

He stopped short and looked at the stooping form of Cornelius Clancy, who was again stirring the blazing logs in the fireplace and sending showers of sparks up the chimney. Barnes caught the unspoken query.

"That's Clancy. You probably remember that he's my right bower; my other self. I'd be helpless without him. You can talk as freely and as safely before him as you might to the priest in the confessional. He's never betrayed a trust, or run from an enemy. Go ahead with your story, Mr. Secretary."

Clancy's face was as red as his hair at this tribute,

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but it might have been the reflection of the blazing logs. While he was still bending over the fire, Secretary Brewster resumed:

"I'm going to let you into a big State secret, Barnes, and without any preliminary talk. We are just on the eve of completing a treaty for the purchase of the Pauline Islands. One copy of the treaty — the thirteenth copy of the treaty — has been lost, stolen or mislaid, and unless it is recovered at once the whole business will crumble into nothingness, and the United States will lose the greatest opportunity in its history."

"Lost — stolen!" murmured the investigator.

"Precisely," replied the Secretary. "You know these matters have to be negotiated in absolute secrecy. Otherwise, they would be impossible. I do not need to tell you that we have passed the period of isolation in this country. We even have colonial possessions, distasteful as that term may sound to many of us. We have been gradually acquiring one group of islands after another, until only one set of islands of any importance remained between this

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nation and the old world. I refer to the Pauline Islands. Their strategic importance cannot be overestimated. You know that the most important nations of Europe have combined under the designation of the European Alliance. They are very powerful, and they say that as long as this Alliance lasts there can never be another war in the Old World.

"Now," continued the Secretary, impressively, "the statesmen representing this new combination look with jealous eyes only upon the United States of America. If we get the Pauline Islands it will make us invincible. We can defy the world, but, as we have committed ourselves to a policy of peace, it means that the signing of this treaty and the unfurling of the Stars and Stripes over those islands means peace for the world, indefinitely."

"By George," ejaculated the detective, "but that's a big thing!"

"The biggest thing for humanity in the history of the world," asserted Brewster, "and for that reason we have been straining every nerve to bring it about. Sweden owns the islands. Sweden, in view of the

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enormous interests involved, is willing to sell us the islands. I prepared the treaty in collaboration with the Swedish minister. It has been approved by the king of that country, and the only thing that remains is to have it ratified by the Senate."

"Well, why don't you do it?"

"I'm coming to that," said Brewster, with a faint trace of irritation in his voice. "In order to get the thing in shape for action, thirteen copies of the treaty were typewritten by my confidential clerk. The President, the Swedish Minister, ten members of the Committee on Foreign Relations, and myself each had a copy."

"A pretty wide distribution," said Barnes, with a grim smile.

"Yes, but, under our form of government, it was necessary. However, I'm satisfied that each holder of the treaty regarded it as sacredly confidential. But, unfortunately, one copy of the treaty has been lost."

"Whose copy?"

"Mine!" confessed the Secretary, in a low voice.

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Barnes stiffened up at this announcement. His eyes were dancing with interest.

"Where did you lose it?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"When?"

"Within the last two hours."

The old man reached for a holder containing a supply of his inevitable supply of Pittsburgh stogies and passed them to his visitors. It was only after he had lit his own that he turned to Brewster and said:

"Mr. Secretary, it is necessary for you to tell me in detail just what has happened during the last two hours."

"Well," began the official, "I left the State Department a little before ten o'clock for the Capitol where I had arranged to meet the members of the Foreign Relations Committee. I made some minor changes in the verbiage of the treaty, and before leaving the office put the paper inside the black portfolio I use for carrying official papers. I went to the Capitol in the limousine you see outside, went into

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executive session with the members of the Senate Committee, and after securing their entire approval of the transaction placed the treaty in my portfolio again, got in the car and went home, but when I opened the portfolio to get the treaty it was gone!"

"Gone?"

"Yes, sir, gone as completely as if it had evaporated in the short ride from the Capitol to my home."

"Are you sure you put it in the portfolio?"

"Positive!"

"I can vouch for that," chimed in Senator Hance, "because I saw Mr. Brewster place it in the holder and then carefully fasten all of the straps."

"Was any one in the car with you?" asked Barnes of the Secretary.

"No, I was alone."

"Did the chauffeur open the door of the vehicle to let you in or out?"

"No, he never left his seat. Besides, I have perfect confidence in McLain. He has been with me for years."

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"Well," said Barnes, dryly, "I never have confidence in any one — when I'm called on to solve a mystery."

"But what do you make of this case?" asked Brewster impatiently.

"Nothing yet. You'll have to give me more details. Tell everything that happened while you were in the Committee room."

"The meeting was inside closed doors," began the Secretary, with a look of resignation, "and I stood behind a desk while I addressed the members. After it ended, each one of the members carefully put his copy of the treaty away and I did the same with mine —"

"Placing it in the portfolio," interrupted Barnes.

"Yes, placing it in the little black portfolio."

"Then what happened?"

"Then the doors were opened and the public was admitted — at least, a number of newspaper correspondents came in. There were probably eighteen or twenty persons, each eager to know what had taken place. Of course, we could tell them noth-

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ing. One young woman called my attention to the fact that I had dropped my handkerchief, but when I stepped down to pick it up, it wasn't mine at all."

"Could the treaty have been stolen then?" asked Barnes.

Secretary Brewster gave him a look of annoyance.

"My dear Bromley, it was on the desk in front of me, strapped and fastened, and the cleverest magician couldn't have unfastened a single strap in those two seconds."

"All right, but I'd like to take a look at the portfolio."

The Secretary had it with him, and Barnes was soon engaged in making a careful examination of the receptacle which had been made to hold State secrets. It was about eight inches by ten, made of black leather, and on the side of it were the initials in ornate silver, J. T. B. A bag of distinction, with an individuality of its own, and yet a serviceable portfolio. Barnes examined each strap and buckle and every square inch of the leather. It

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seemed as though his scrutiny would never end.

"How long have you had this?" he finally asked.

"Oh, for a long while."

"Do you use it much?"

"Almost constantly. For the last year it has been with me in all of my trips between my office and the White House and the Capitol!"

Barnes leaned back in his chair and thought and thought, and puffed his stogie until the room was filled with clouds of tobacco smoke. Presently he straightened up with a start, and said suddenly:

"Whom do you suspect?"

Secretary Brewster gave a nervous little laugh, and looked at Senator Hance.

"Surely, Barnes, that's a sweeping question. They say the city is full of spies, but it is not—"

"Well," interrupted the detective, "we'll put it in another form. Is there any country that would be particularly interested in preventing the consummation of this treaty?"

"Yes, any one of the countries represented in the new European Alliance."

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The bell in an adjoining steeple was heard tolling the hour of midnight. Senator Hance consulted his watch.

"Come on, Brewster," he said, "it's Friday morning."

"When was the treaty to be signed?" asked Barnes of the Secretary.

"At ten o'clock Saturday morning."

The detective made a hasty calculation.

"That's thirty-four hours from now. You may go ahead with the business, and I'll undertake to recover your thirteenth copy of the treaty before that time."

"And before any outsider has a chance to see it."

"Well, I'll do the best I can, and meanwhile it's understood that I'm to have the use of any of the Secret Service men I need?"

"Certainly. You understand why I do not want to use the ordinary facilities of the Government. The President does not know of this yet. I don't want to trouble him if I can help it. He has worries enough."

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Five minutes later the Secretary and the Senator were seated in the plum-colored car, speeding down the asphalted incline, and Barnes and Clancy stood facing one another in the cozy apartment. The whirr of the machine had scarcely died away when Barnes turned to his assistant.

"Clancy, go to bed and get a good night's sleep. You're going to have a busy day ahead of you."

"But what about yourself — don't you think you'd better retire?"

"No; I've got something to do."

And after the faithful one had gone to bed, and his snores were punctuating the silence of the night, Barnes sat at the window of his room with the curtain drawn, gazing out upon the dome of the Capitol, and thinking. A jar, filled with stogies was by his side, and at intervals he leaned over and mechanically picked up a fresh cigar and lit and smoked it. Barnes was more than a detective, active or retired. He was a patriot, and love of country burned in his breast. He was not the flag-waving, hip-hip-hurrah, spread-eagle, vociferous type of American, but

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rather the kind who thinks deeply and calmly, and believes that upon the success of the experiment made by the Fathers of the Republic depends the hope of the oppressed of all nations.

He thought of this during the long vigil of the night, and he felt that he would be willing to run any risk to preserve this Government in all of its integrity. The dome of the Capitol seemed to him to symbolize all that was best in the nation. It was a beacon of hope, a light house for the world. In the meantime he was thinking of the problem that faced him. Who had taken the treaty? Where was it? Why had they taken it? Where was it now? And how could it be recovered? Hundreds of reasons and solutions flashed through his mind. One impossibility after another was rejected, until finally, with a shout of joy, he jumped to his feet. He had a theory that covered the whole story, and would lead to the recovery of the thirteenth treaty — under certain contingencies.

He noticed that it was daylight. The first gray streaks of dawn were beginning to streak the noble

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outlines of the Capitol dome. He took that as a good augury, and the next moment his spirits were cheered still more by hearing the cheerful morning greetings of Clancy from the adjoining room. A bath and breakfast, and Barnes was ready for the big job. It really started the moment the detective picked up a business directory and began skimming through its pages. Presently he called to his assistant:

"Take these names and addresses, Clancy — and see that you get them right."

In quick succession he called off a list of firms in Washington, and then closed the directory with a bang. After that, he paced the floor for several minutes thinking and apparently forgetful of the presence of his lieutenant. When he halted, it was to get down on one knee and open the little safe in a corner of the apartment. He reached in and brought out a red-covered book, much thumb marked.

"The book of spies," commented Clancy, with a smile.

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"Yes," said the old man, looking up as if he had just recalled the presence of the red-haired one, "the man — or the woman — I want is in this book. I wonder if I can pick out the right one?"

"I — I hope so," was the fervent comment.

"The first thing we have to do is to make calls on the persons whose business addresses I have given you," said Barnes, meditatively, "and after that I'll decide whether to go after two of these spies, or whether to invoke the Secret Service and arrest all of the eighty-seven on suspicion."

"The eighty-seven?"

"Yes, that's precisely the number of names I have in this book."

"It's a big job."

"That's the least part of the difficulty. But I'm fearful of the drag net method. The very fish we want may slip through the meshes."

Barnes and Clancy divided the list of addresses they had obtained from the business directory, and after the old man had given his assistant explicit

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directions, they started out on what the investigator called his "canvass for a clew." It was a long and tiresome task, and it was late in the afternoon when they met again. Clancy was dejected. His red hair seemed lusterless, and for a wonder he appeared to have lost his hopefulness. But the face of the old man was shining like the morning sun. He clapped Clancy on the shoulder.

"There's nothing like meditation before investigation, my boy. I've found the first clew, and it fits into my midnight dream like a bit of marble in a mosaic."

"What are you going to do now?"

"I'm going for the two suspects whose names were in my book of spies. And you're going with me. I want your moral and physical support."

It was dusk when the two men entered the hallway of an apartment house in the northeastern section of Washington. Barnes pressed an electric button beneath a card on which was engraved the name of Mortimer Myers. A feminine voice came through the speaking tube a moment later, and in

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answer to his inquiry, informed him that the gentleman in question was not at home.

"Nevertheless," said the old man, with a significant glance at his assistant, "we're going to call on Mr. Mortimer Myers."

The house was not sufficiently modern to boast of an elevator, and they trudged laboriously up three flights of stairs. Barnes was puffing when he reached the landing, and he mentally resolved to begin physical exercise at the first opportunity. He tapped smartly on the first door in view, and it was opened a few inches by a pale-faced woman with frightened eyes.

"We're calling on Mr. Myers," began the old man genially, "we —"

Before he could say any more, the woman started to close the door.

"He's not in," she exclaimed.

But the old man placed a determined foot across the surbase and was in the room, followed by Clancy, before the scared-looking female had time to realize what was going on.

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"How — how dare you come in here?" she cried, trembling with fear and anger.

"Pardon the intrusion," replied Barnes, smoothly, "but our business is urgent. We must see Mr. Mortimer Myers."

"I told you," she said, with quivering lips, "that he was not at home."

While she was speaking, the detective was making a rapid survey of the room. It was plainly furnished with a walnut wardrobe in one corner. Something about that article of furniture attracted the attention of Barnes. He turned to Clancy with a smile.

"Have you anything that will serve as a target?"

The young man looked at his chief curiously. He wondered if he was taking leave of his senses. But, nevertheless, he pulled an envelope from his pocket.

"Will this do?"

"Yes, it's just the thing. Now pin it on that wardrobe over there."

Clancy followed instructions.

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The old man retreated to the far end of the room and produced a small revolver from his hip pocket. The woman advanced toward him with an agonized look on her face.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to try a little experiment; I'm going to try and hit the bull's eye."

She gave a shriek.

"Don't shoot; for God's sake, don't shoot!"

At the same moment the door of the wardrobe was shoved open, and a man emerged, looking sheepish and much disheveled. Bromley Barnes pocketed his pistol and smiled ironically at the unmasked one.

"I'm sorry that it was necessary to call you from your retirement, but my business would not wait."

Mr. Mortimer Myers gave a silly laugh.

"I — I didn't want to see any visitors. What do you want?"

Barnes looked at him intently and spoke with great deliberation.

"I want the portfolio you picked up in the rooms

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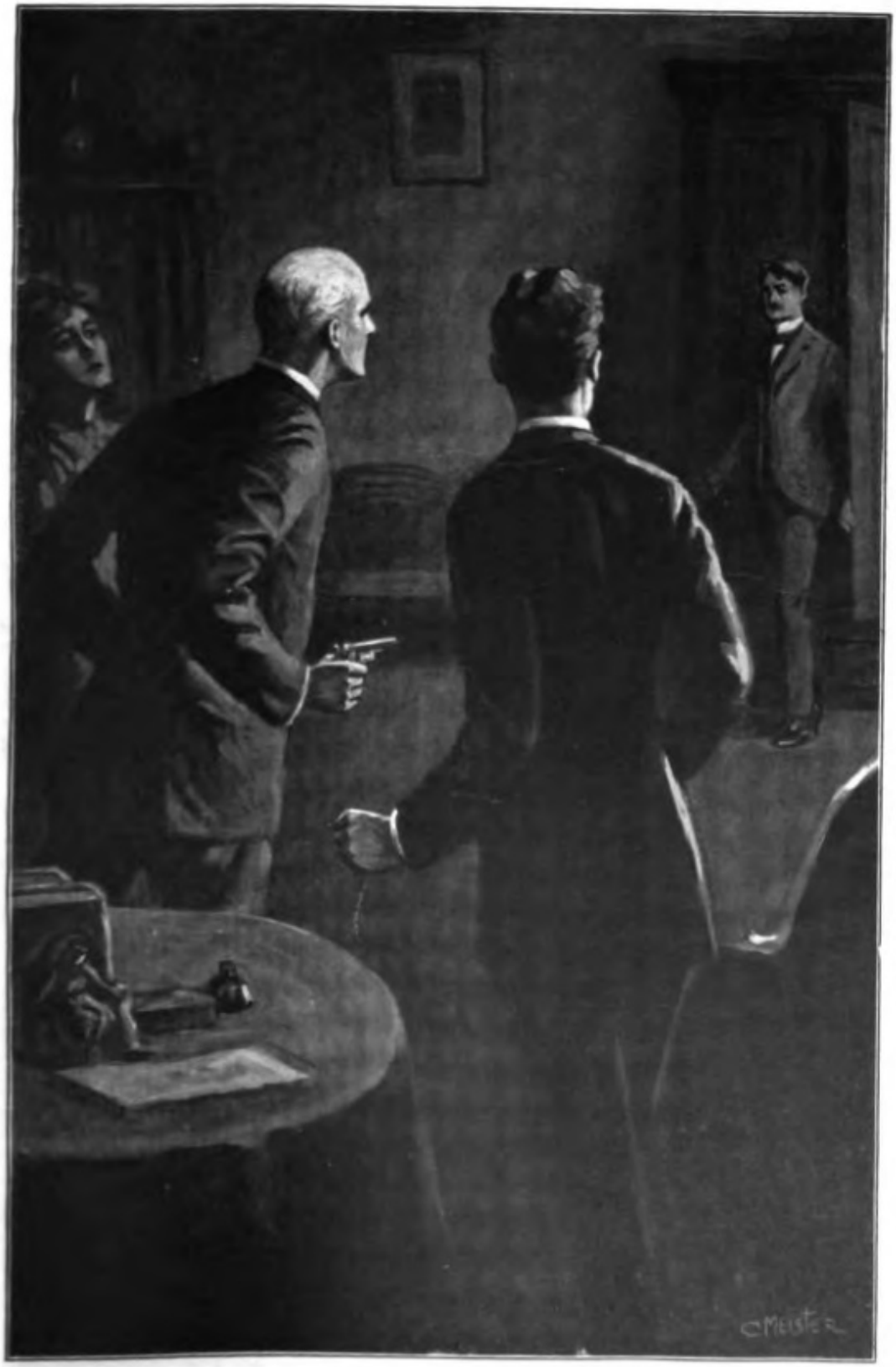

"THE DOOR OF THE WARDROBE WAS SHOVED OPEN AND A MAN EMERGED"

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of the Committee on Foreign Relations yesterday afternoon."

The man went pale beneath his dark skin. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue, and after a moment, said:

"I — I don't know what you are talking about."

"Oh, yes, you do. I want that portfolio, and I want it right away."

Mr. Mortimer Myers was gradually regaining his self-possession. When he spoke again, it was in a more defiant tone:

"I haven't got the article you speak about, and I haven't been near the rooms of the Committee on Foreign Relations. I can account for every minute of yesterday."

"Ah!" said the old man, significantly, "an alibi!"

"Yes," retorted the other, raising his voice, "an alibi, if you want to call it that. And now, I'd like to know what you mean by breaking into my rooms in this way. A man's home is his castle and —"

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"Yes," was the purring response, "even a wardrobe may be a man's castle — sometimes."

Barnes was moving about the room with seeming aimlessness, but as the suspect dropped his eyes the detective reached over to a table, and furtively picking up a white blotter, slipped it in his pocket.

"I'll not bandy words with you, sir!" exclaimed Myers.

"All right," said Barnes, with an air of resignation and implied defeat, "if you won't help us we'll have to say good day."

He left the room with Clancy, and as soon as they reached the sidewalk they started in the direction of Barnes' quarters near the Capitol. Not a word passed between them until they were safely in the cozy apartments. It was then that Clancy ventured to say:

"I thought you had two suspected spies on your list. This one and another."

"Yes," admitted Barnes, absently, "Myers and a woman, but as the woman happened to be in the

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room with him it won't be necessary to make a special call on her."

"And yet you left both of them without getting any results."

The investigator smiled benignly.

"They'll be watched day and night — I've arranged for that. And as for results, let's take a look at this blotter.'

As he spoke, he drew the little square of absorbing paper from his pocket. It had evidently been freshly used. The ink marks on it were meaningless at first, but presently, with the aid of a magnifying glass, they deciphered the following:

drapsaG
ot uoy ees
prahs net

It must have taken at least thirty minutes to bring out all of the faint lines on the blotter, but finally Barnes turned to his assistant with a smile and had him hold the blotter in front of the mirror. What they beheld from the reflection was faithfully trans-

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mitted to paper, and when the missing links were supplied, it said:

"Gaspard:
Will see you at ten sharp to-night."

"My boy," said the old man, triumphantly, "all that we have to do from now until the end of the chapter is to watch and wait."

"Not here?"

"Oh, not here. The scene of our activities will be transferred to another part of the town. In the meanwhile, let me see that blue book."

The veteran investigator carefully studied the list of the names and addresses of the foreign diplomats residing in the city of Washington. Barnes knitted his brows. The volume evidently did not give him the information he desired. But presently he turned to the back of the book and there he found some written memoranda in the copper-plate hand of Cornelius Clancy, and a few newspaper clippings in the form of "futures." The red-headed and hopeful one had kept the directory of diplomats up to

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date. The very last insertion told of the arrival in the country of Baron Gaspard, who was to represent the new European Alliance at Washington. He had visited the Capital to lease a home, was now in New York, and was expected to return to Washington that evening.

Five minutes later Barnes and Clancy were in a taxicab speeding in the direction of Georgetown.

The mansion selected by Baron Gaspard was one of the finest in the national Capital. He was to present his credentials to the Secretary of State at high noon on the following day, and to be received by the President immediately thereafter. His fame was international, and it was quite appropriate that his official home should be in keeping with the importance of his official standing. To-night there seemed to be unusual activity about the neighborhood of the new embassy. More than one vehicle with the coat-of-arms of a foreign nation drove up, and as it paused in the graveled roadway a liveried footman with a high silk hat, a long blue coat and brass buttons, hastened to open the doors of the car-

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riage and escort the visitors to the vestibule of the mansion.

At precisely ten o'clock a hired taxicab made its way creaking and groaning to the front of the Baron's home, and when it stopped who should alight but Mr. Mortimer Myers. He drew his loose raglan overcoat about his body protectingly, and peered around with the air of a man who is fearful and ill at ease. But while he hesitated, the tall-hatted and brass-buttoned footman came down the pathway and saluted him in military, if not diplomatic, style. He leaned over and whispered to the dark-skinned one:

"The Baron wants to see you alone — follow me to the lodge."

Mortimer breathed a sigh of relief, and immediately trailed after the liveried one. The lodge was a one-story stone building at the other entrance to the embassy grounds. A single light was burning in the structure, and the two men could see a bulky form within. The footman opened the door and Mortimer entered. To his surprise, the uniformed

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one followed him and locked the door from the inside. The spy thought this strange, but he stepped forward with the intention of speaking to Baron Gaspard — and gazed into the muzzle of a revolver in the hands of Bromley Barnes.

"Trapped!" he gasped, and glanced in the direction of the embassy butler who had led him into the cage. But the high hat and the blue coat had already been discarded, and he saw only the freckled face, the dancing blue eyes, and the red head of Cornelius Clancy.

"Now," he heard the stern voice of the old investigator saying, "I'll have that portfolio!"

Slowly and with trembling fingers he unbuttoned his overcoat and from within its folds he produced a black leather portfolio on the outside of which, in ornate silver, were the initials "J. T. B."

"Secretary Brewster's bag!" gasped the astonished Clancy.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before Barnes grabbed the portfolio and opening it, brought out the thirteenth copy of the great treaty. The

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next minute he pushed the door ajar and whistled softly. Two Secret Service men appeared and accepted the prisoner.

"If he dares to make an outcry," said Barnes, sternly, "shoot him on the spot."

While they were going off with Mr. Mortimer Myers, the faithful Clancy was staring at the black leather portfolio like a man in a trance. Barnes laughed at the young man's amazement.

"It's a perfect imitation of the original, son," he said. "The minute Secretary Brewster told me his story, I knew he had been flim-flammed by the old trick of the bank sneak thieves. A customer is counting his money at a side desk. The crook comes along, and dropping a note on the floor, tells the victim he has lost some of his money, and while he stoops down to pick it up the sneak gets off with the roll."

"But when Secretary Brewster arose, his portfolio was still there."

Barnes smiled.

"Not *his* portfolio but one that is an exact dupli-

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cate. The only flaw was that it was new while Brewster's, as you will note, was partly worn from constant use. I detected that much in my rooms, and when I went to one of the leather shops and found that Mr. Mortimer Myers had ordered a portfolio with the initials 'J. T. B.' on it I knew that that part of the case was complete."

"How did you know Myers was in the wardrobe in his room?"

"He gave himself away — the end of his coat was sticking out of the edge of the door."

"And the woman —"

"Is his accomplice who did the trick with the handkerchief at the Capitol."

"Chief," said Clancy, after a moment of hesitation, "you got the treaty all right, but you can't prove anything on Baron Gaspard. You didn't let the thing go far enough."

"I let it go as far as I dare — my contract was to keep that treaty out of foreign hands. But you're right about one thing, Clancy. The job isn't quite finished. A conspiracy is like a weed — it's

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got to be torn up by the roots. After you've given that butler's rig back to your Tipperary friend, go to my rooms and you'll see the climax of this little drama."

As they parted, Barnes went directly to the door of the embassy and asked for Baron Gaspard. The diplomat, a florid-faced man with a waxed mustache and a goatee, appeared in a few moments and demanded brusquely:

"What do you want?"

"Baron," said Barnes, in a low voice, "Mr. Mortimer Myers finds it impossible to reach here and wishes you to accompany me to a rendezvous he has selected."

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"But that is out of the question — he must come to me."

"But it is a physical impossibility. He bids me say that you will never forgive yourself if you do not respond. I have a conveyance here. It will not take many minutes."

The detective spoke with great earnestness, and

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pointed to the taxicab which still waited in front of the embassy. After a slight hesitation, the Baron shrugged his shoulders — and agreed. In fifteen minutes they were in the bachelor apartments of Bromley Barnes. The rooms appeared to be vacant. The diplomat looked about him and exclaimed impatiently:

"Come, come, my man, I'm in a hurry."

"You understand what he was to hand you, I suppose. A very, very important document."

The representative of the European Alliance, in his eagerness, was taken off his guard.

"Yes," he cried irritably, "the treaty — the copy of the Pauline treaty!"

Barnes bowed.

"The gentleman that has that document is here."

As he spoke, he drew aside the curtain of the adjoining room and Baron Gaspard was confronted by John T. Brewster, the American Secretary of State.

The Baron turned as white as a sheet, and when he spoke it was in a husky voice:

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"I — I have made a great blunder!"

"Yes, Baron," was the cheerful reply, "and in diplomacy a blunder is worse than a crime."

On the evening of the day of these stirring events, the newspapers carried two stories of sensational importance. The first told of the consummation of the great treaty involving the purchase of the Pauline Islands, and the second announced that Baron Gaspard, prince of diplomats, who had come to represent the European Alliance in Washington, would not even present his credentials, but would return home on the first available steamship. One rumor said that the Baron had been personally affronted by the Secretary of State, and another that he was *persona non grata* to the American Government. But, however that may be, the Pauline-American treaty was hailed everywhere as a wonderful triumph of statesmanship, while the Gaspard-Brewster affair remained one of the world's greatest diplomatic mysteries.

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II

ADVENTURE OF THE BOLTED DOOR

THE day of days had arrived — the day when Hugh Helverson was to give a private view of the marvelous contrivance which was to end the submarine peril. The old inventor had spent a month of trying days and sleepless nights in the workshop of his modest cottage on the Woodley Road, and this morning all of official Washington was on the tip-toe of expectation.

Bromley Barnes was one of the select few who were to get the first glimpse of the submarine destroyer. He rose early, and as he looked out of the window and saw the sun gilding the dome of the Capitol he took it as a good omen — as a sign that the product of Hugh Helverson's brain would furnish the United States with the instrument that was to insure the freedom of the seas.

He dressed carefully for the occasion, and when

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he finished, his appearance was irreproachable. The carefully creased trousers, the gray spats, the gold-handled cane, and the opal in the green tie made him look very unlike a detective. Indeed, he seemed more like one of the diplomats, statesmen and scientists whom he expected to meet at the home of the inventor.

The Helverson cottage stood back a short distance from the road. It had a stone foundation, but the superstructure was of wood, painted green and white. An addition, in the rear, contained the workshop where the inventor had been toiling so unremittingly. But it is a long lane that has no turning, and his day of triumph had arrived — that day when he might say he had done for his country that which seemed beyond the skill and imagination of anyone else.

Barnes was accompanied by Cornelius Clancy, and when they arrived at the house they were surprised to find a group of distinguished looking men walking about the porch in a disconsolate manner. The house itself was tightly closed — doors, win-

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dows and every possible means of entrance and exit seemed hermetically sealed. It was after ten o'clock, which was the hour fixed for the official view of the great invention. The moment Barnes reached the place, a young man hurried down the graveled path to meet him. It was Captain Mayne, a naval officer, who had been detailed for duty as a special assistant to the Secretary of the Navy.

"I'm glad you're here, Barnes!" he exclaimed. "I don't know what to make of this business. No one seems to be in the house, and we were expressly bidden to be here at ten o'clock."

"Maybe Helverson's overslept himself. You know these inventors take queer turns. They're not normal."

He tried to speak cheerfully, but he had grave misgivings. He realized, probably better than anyone else, the dangers that surrounded Hugh Helverson while he was at work on the much-talked-about destroyer.

"We had no right to leave him here alone," retorted Captain Mayne.

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"Alone?" echoed Barnes.

"Sure — he made it a condition that he was not to be disturbed. He had an assistant, Conan Williams, but even Williams was only permitted in the workshop during the daytime."

"I understood that his daughter and a Japanese servant lived in the house with him."

The naval attache shook his head.

"That's not exactly correct. Hilda Helverson is the pride and joy of his life, but she was not permitted to stay in the house. She has apartments near the Capitol. She came to see him each day, but never stayed very long and he was always impatient to get back to his work."

"But the Japanese servant?"

"He came and prepared Helverson's meals and then went about his business."

"So the old man was all alone here last night?"

"You have said it."

At this point in the dialogue, one of the officials on the porch came down and joined the two men. He was angry at the delay.

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"See here," he shouted, "won't somebody do something — and at once?"

Without replying, Bromley Barnes hurried up the pathway to the door. He tried it but without result. He pushed the electric button.

There was a tense silence.

After a few moments, he pounded vigorously on the panels of the door with his fist. But the only response was the echoes of his blows. Captain Mayne smiled sadly.

"We've tried that already. You may hammer until doomsday without getting a reply."

The old investigator's face became very grave. He thought for a moment, and then made his decision. He turned to the group around him.

"Gentlemen," he said, "unusual conditions call for unusual methods. I'm going to take the responsibility of breaking into this house. It may be a mistake. But if so, I'm willing to shoulder the blame. Come on, Clancy, and you, too, Mayne. Now, altogether!"

The three men lined up in front of the closed

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door. Some one sang out "one-two-three" and then simultaneously three bodies were hurled against the frame work. There was a rumbling sound and the straining of the hinges, but the door remained intact. For the second time the performance was repeated with the same result. They paused long enough to get their breath and then made a third drive. This time there was the crash of splitting wood, the creaking of iron work, and the door fell inward with a thud. The three men hastened into the room, followed by the others. They found themselves in a sparsely furnished living apartment, but they had only proceeded a few feet when they drew back shrinkingly. Barnes, in the lead, detected something on the floor. He leaned over and gave a gasp of horror.

And no wonder, for lying there at full length, was the body of Hugh Helverson!

The detective dropped to his knees and made a hurried inspection of the helpless body. He felt the hands and placed his ear against the broad chest.

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"MADE A HURRIED INSPECTION OF THE HELPLESS BODY"

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When he looked up, his face was very grave, and when he spoke it was in a low, reverent tone.

"His race is run," he murmured, "he is dead!"

Involuntarily the men lifted their hats and stood there looking down at the cold and stiffened form with something like awe in their faces. One man had sufficient presence of mind to hurry for a physician, but when the doctor came, a few minutes later, it was only to pronounce the aged inventor "quite dead." A careful examination of the body disclosed the fact that Helverson had been shot through the heart. The prostrate form lay on a large rug near the entrance of the hallway, and a tiny pool showed where the life blood of the gifted man had trickled from the wound in his breast. Barnes had know him well in life, but at this supreme moment all of his professional instincts came to the surface. Force of habit was strong and he found himself giving orders that nothing in the house should be disturbed, and sending a messenger to summon the coroner to the house of death.

After the room had been cleared he began his in-

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vestigation. The furniture was in order and there was no evidence of a struggle. Automatically three questions came into his mind. Was it an accident? Could it have been suicide? Was it murder? He knew that Helverson had been shot. He was certain that the single shot had gone through the inventor's heart. Death must have been instantaneous. But at the outset he was confronted with a puzzling circumstance. The weapon with which the deed had been committed could not be found. He searched every nook and corner of the room and he could not find a gun or pistol of any kind.

He opened the two large windows of the living room — opened them with difficulty for they were barred and bolted, and the rust on the bolts proved that they had been closed for some time. Then he went to the rear of the house and he discovered that it was almost hermetically sealed. He visited the rooms on the upper floors and found that everything there was tightly closed. There was no opening on the roof through which anyone could have come or gone. The trap leading to the roof was bolted from

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the inside. After a while Barnes came down stairs again and seated himself in a large arm chair and tried to think in a coherent way. He remembered that the front door had been bolted. He examined the shattered door to make sure of the fact, and then the astonishing thing presented itself to his partly dazed intelligence.

Hugh Helverson had been shot and killed in a house that was barred and bolted from cellar to roof.

The thing was positively uncanny. If the front door had been merely deadlocked, it would have explained everything. But how was it possible for a man to kill the inventor and then escape without leaving some signs of his exit? The question was too much, even for this man who had spent the greater part of his life in solving crimes that seemed to be unsolvable. The coroner came while he was trying to make the unreasonable facts seem reasonable. The official happened to be a physician as well as a coroner, and after a brief examination of the remains he said that, in his opinion, death had en-

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sued six or eight hours before. The body was cold, and it was safe to say that the poor man had been killed shortly after midnight.

By this time Hilda Helverson had arrived, and when she beheld the dead form of her father she broke down and would have fainted if it had not been for the prompt application of smelling salts. While this was going on, Conan Williams, the assistant of the inventor, came into the room, and when he realized the meaning of the scene acted like a man who was bereft of his senses. He recovered quickly and then gave his attention to the distracted girl. It was a trying time for all, but Barnes did not fail to notice the tenderness with which Williams treated Hilda Helverson. It was not the ordinary sympathy with which one treats a fellow creature who is in trouble. It was more than this, and the detective was not surprised when he learned later that the two young persons were engaged to be married. He was given to understand that it was a secret engagement, and but for the unfortunate tragedy might not have been made pub-

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lic for some time. But death breaks down all artificial barriers, and Williams, with much manliness, said the time had come when he should act as a protector to the girl who had been so unexpectedly deprived of her natural guardian.

After they had gone, Barnes made a second tour of the house. The Japanese servant, Sarto Joseph, had arrived and he assisted the detective in his search of the place. There was absolutely nothing in the upper part of the house to throw any light on the mystery, and Barnes came to the conclusion that the solution, if there were any solution, would have to be found in the living room. It was almost devoid of ornament, just the sort of room that might have been expected to appeal to a man of the temperament of such a man as Hugh Helverson. Over the old-fashioned fireplace was a large oil painting of the father of the dead inventor. It might not have passed muster as a work of art, but it was a striking piece of work just the same. A pair of keen eyes seemed to peer out at the spectator. The Japanese servant said that Helverson was fond of

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gazing at this picture and had more than once declared that he got the inspiration for his work by looking at it. The eyes, he declared, followed one about the room. Sarto shivered as he gave the detective this bit of information. Barnes tried the experiment, and then assured the frightened servant there was nothing supernatural about the business. It was merely an optical delusion which he had often found in other pictures.

At this point Captain Mayne came hurrying into the house, followed by another naval officer.

"See here, Barnes," he cried, "in the excitement we forgot all about the invention. The Secretary couldn't get here but he told me to find out about it."

The veteran investigator smiled sadly.

"I haven't forgotten it by any means, only I felt that we had more pressing business to attend to at first."

Even while he spoke, he was walking in the direction of the room in the rear of the house. The door was locked, as he had expected. He walked back

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to the prostrate body on the floor of the living room, and gently searching the pockets of the dead man, found a bunch of keys. Instinctively he recognized the key of which he was in search. Once again he made for the rear apartment and this time succeeded in getting within. Captain Mayne followed him, and the first thing the two men noticed was a covered object resting on a long table. The detective threw off the covering and exposed a curious looking model — whale shaped and with a sharp point at the bow. The naval officer examined it with feverish haste. Presently he gave a loud exclamation, an exclamation of mingled joy and amazement:

"He's got it! He's got it!

Barnes looked at him sharply.

"What are you talking about?" he asked, grabbing the young man and peering into his face.

"About this invention!" Mayne cried. "It's the thing that we have sought in vain for years. It's precisely the thing needed by the Government, and never more than at this particular minute. It's

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perfect in every particular. I'll stake my reputation as a man and a sailor on the assertion that this contrivance is going to revolutionize naval warfare."

"Do you think it has been tampered with in any way?" asked Barnes.

Captain Mayne made a second examination of the queer looking object on the table, and when he had concluded, said:

"No — it's in perfect order."

The detective gave a sigh.

"I'm glad for the sake of the Government," he said, "but I'm sorry on another account, and that is that it makes the death of Helverson more of a mystery than ever. The quickest way of solving a crime is to find the motive. Get the motive, and it will not take long to get the man. If I could feel that the spies of some other Government were interested in the death of Helverson or the destruction of his invention, I'd have something to work on. But you've taken that from me."

Captain Mayne's rosy cheeks took on an added hue. He scratched his head and said presently:

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"It's just possible that a cast might have been made from this model. But I doubt it, and, in any event, why should they have left the patent uninjured, and at the disposal of the United States?"

"That's so," admitted Barnes, "but there's a possibility that they might have been frightened off before they completed their program."

The detective and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy walked up and down the room while they talked. Mayne was making his tenth turn about the apartment when he suddenly halted.

"Say," he cried, "have you thought of Sarto?"

"What — the Jap?"

"The very same. He knows more than his prayers, and if I were you I'd give him the third degree."

Barnes was thoughtful.

"No," he said, after a while, "I won't give him the third degree. If he's as shrewd as you say, he'll beat us at that game. But I'll have him watched day and night."

Hugh Helverson was buried with all of the official

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honors that it was possible for a grateful nation to bestow. His invention ever afterwards bore his name and it was conceded to be the most important gift that had been made to civilization in a decade. Both before and after the funeral, Barnes was busily engaged upon the case, but at the end of the seventh day he was almost ready to confess defeat. This was a most unusual attitude for the old man, but he confessed that the case was a most unusual one. That a man should be shot and killed in a house that was closed and bolted, and that not a single clew to the manner of his death be found was mystifying indeed.

The thing was so uncanny that it began to get on the nerves of the veteran. But it was at this stage of the game that he became more determined than ever.

"The most improbable things are the most probable — after they've been solved," was the epigram he hurled at Captain Mayne one afternoon.

The young naval officer looked at the detective meditatively. He was interested in the search —

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deeply interested, and the excitement of the chase was beginning to get into his veins. They were in the apartment of Bromley Barnes at the time, and the youthful Assistant Secretary of the Navy suddenly felt a desire to personally solve the mystery.

"You said in the beginning," he remarked, "that it was absolutely necessary to find the motive for a crime before you could discover the criminal."

Barnes puffed lazily at a cigar and watched the smoke curl about his head.

"I think I made some remark to that effect," he conceded.

"Well, why not apply that theory in this case? And if you do, how would you start?"

"By finding out all I could about Helv
his fads, his purposes in life, and so on."

"Very good," conceded Captain Mayne, "that's settled. How would you take the first step in that direction?"

The old investigator, without answering reached up to his bookshelf, and pulled down a red-covered volume of "Who's Who in America" and quickly

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turned to the H's. He soon found what he wanted in the following compact biographical notice:

"Helverson, Hugh, Inventor. Born in Stockholm, Sweden, July 22, 1850. Came to the United States with parents at the age of five. Educated by private tutors and at Harvard University. Afterwards studied chemistry and engineering. Spent ten years in the laboratory of Thomas A. Edison, near East Orange. Invented device for preventing explosions in coal mines; attachment for increasing the speed of submarines; burglar alarm for household purposes; improvement for hydro-airplanes and twenty other labor-saving and safety devices now in common use. Clubs, none. Author 'Our National Coast Defense System' and 'The Future of Electricity.' Address, 1895 Georgetown Road, Washington, D. C."

He handed the open book to his young friend, and pointing to the brief sketch, said:

"I've read that six times already. It probably contains the key to the puzzle. Maybe you can find it. So far, it has eluded me."

Captain Mayne read the paragraph carefully and then returned the book to its place.

"That tells me nothing at all," he said, decisively,

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" but I have a theory of my own that I would like to test."

" What is it? "

" It concerns Conan Williams, the assistant to Hugh Helverson. I've learned some things about that young man, and I'd like to cross-examine him in your presence. And I want to do it in the room where the body of the old man was found."

Barnes chuckled.

" The old theory of the scene of the murder, eh? It's too late to compel him to place his hand on the dead body of the victim."

The tone of the detective displeased the young man.

" It's easy enough to laugh at me," he retorted, " but I don't see that you have accomplished much. What I want to know is whether I have your permission to go ahead."

" You certainly have. I'll help you, too, because your little experiment may throw some light on the situation."

So it came about that a queer little group gathered

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in the little cottage on the following afternoon. There were Barnes, Cornelius Clancy, Captain Mayne, Sarto Joseph, the Japanese valet of the dead inventor, Hilda Helverson, and Conan Williams. They were all keyed up to a high pitch, and as they seated themselves in the living-room there was a sense of expectancy that filled the darkened apartment. Williams was nervous and ill at ease, and his pale face seemed whiter than ever in contrast with his coal black hair and his blazing, black eyes. Captain Mayne, toying with a pencil, turned to the young man with an air of carelessness:

"Mr. Williams," he said, "I believe that you were associated with Hugh Helverson in most of his inventive work?"

"I was," came the quiet reply.

"I'm told that you were especially interested in the submarine destroyer which was his final, if not, his greatest work?"

"No one knows how intensely interested I was in that particular bit of work."

"You helped him with it — a little bit?"

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"I helped him with it a great deal," came the passionate retort, with emphasis on the last two words.

The unexpected display of feeling caused every eye to turn on the white-faced young man. Captain Mayne, still toying with his pencil, gave a smile of satisfaction.

"It's just as I thought," he murmured.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you were jealous of Hugh Helverson's growing fame."

"It's a lie!" shouted Williams. "But," he added in a lower tone, "I'll admit that I have never been given credit for the part I had in many of his inventions. The world applauded him. I was unnoticed. No one paid any more attention to me than they did to the chair in his workshop, or the hammer in his hand."

"Oh, Conan," murmured Hilda Helverson, "please don't talk in that dreadful way."

A twitch of pain distorted his white face. He turned to her appealingly.

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"Hilda," he begged, "you know I'm telling the truth."

Love and distress were mingled in the glance she gave him.

"I know what you did," she replied, quietly, with emphasis on the personal pronoun, "but father was too absorbed in his work to pay any attention to the instruments he used — human or inanimate."

During this little aside, Bromley Barnes, sitting behind the others, kept his eye rested upon the inventor's assistant. Captain Mayne, immensely pleased with his cross-examination, resumed the attack.

"We'll pass the question of jealousy and rivalry," he said, "and come to something more important. Mr. Williams, do you recall a conversation you had with Hugh Helverson on the night before he was killed?"

A wave of color rushed over the pale face of Conan Williams. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue. He spoke in a low voice:

"I do."

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"Isn't it a fact that you had a quarrel with him and that you threatened him?"

The silence that followed the question was oppressive. Every eye was on the young man. Every ear waited with expectancy. It seemed a full minute before the answer came. The two words were literally torn from the victim:

"It is," he said.

A feeling of horror oppressed every one in the little room. Hilda Helverson was weeping silently, and the others were breathing heavily. Captain Mayne arose as if he could no longer contain himself. Williams followed his example. The young naval officer pointed his finger at the witness.

"One more question," he said. "Isn't it a fact that you were lurking in the shadow of this house on that last fatal night — lurking behind the trees when Hugh Helverson came into that doorway for the last time?"

A cry of anguish came from the lips of Hilda Helverson.

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"Oh, this is cruel!" she exclaimed, "this is too terrible! You must not go on with it!"

Strangely enough, Conan Williams suddenly became the most self-possessed person in the room. His face was as white as chalk and his lips were compressed, but he faced the ordeal with calmness and courage. Captain Mayne was excited and so were the others, but the waves of emotion beat about the suspected man without disturbing him. The cross-examiner spoke shrilly:

"I'm sorry for you, Miss Helverson," he said, "but I must have an answer from Mr. Williams."

But Williams stood there as still as a statue, and as though he had lost his hearing.

"I insist upon a reply," shouted Mayne; "were you lurking in the grounds when Hugh Helverson came into the house? Answer me yes, or no?"

"Yes," replied Williams.

A shocked silence fell upon the group. It was broken by a despairing wail from Hilda Helverson.

"Tell them everything, Conan. If you love me, tell the whole story."

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"I have nothing more to say," was the dogged response.

"Tell us what you were doing there," commanded Mayne, and as he spoke, he stamped his foot on the floor with anger and determination.

His heavy boot came down with such force that it shook the pictures on the wall. The oil painting of the father of Hugh Helverson, which hung over the fireplace, sagged and assumed a crooked position. It gave the venerable one a rakish appearance. One eye was discolored. He seemed to be leering at the little company, and to be enjoying their discomfiture. Barnes noticed it and, with his ever-present sense of the artistic, went over to straighten it. He spent some time examining the picture and the frame. As he stood there he heard Williams announcing for the third time:

"I have nothing more to say."

"If you refuse to explain this matter to us you may be forced to explain it in a court of law."

Hilda Helverson gave a scream.

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"Oh, Conan," she cried, "please tell everything."

Williams looked about him haughtily. He glanced at Mayne.

"Am I to understand that I am accused of murdering Hugh Helverson?"

The captain was about to speak when Bromley Barnes stepped forward.

"I've been playing second fiddle for you young folks," he said quietly, "but I think it's time for me to take charge of the performance."

They all looked at him inquiringly, and he proceeded:

"Captain Mayne has been making an experiment here, and it has not been entirely successful —"

"But," interrupted that person hotly, "you haven't given me time to finish. If you will kindly stand aside for a few minutes I think we'll be able to clear up this mystery."

"I don't think so," replied the old man, not unkindly. "Now, I want to make a proposition to you. I've learned something to-day and I want to

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make a little experiment of my own. I want you all to come here at midnight and I'll undertake to reproduce the events of that eventful night. In a word, I hope — with the kind assistance of Mr. Williams — to show you exactly how Hugh Helverson was killed."

Conan Williams looked at the detective with distended eyes.

"What — what do you mean?" he faltered.

The old investigator placed his hand on the shoulder of the young man.

"My friend," he said, "I take it that you are anxious to clear up this mystery."

"Why — yes."

"Then do as I tell you, and I promise that the whole business will be perfectly understandable before the dawn of another day."

Williams looked miserable. Nevertheless, he nodded his head in assent. Hilda Helverson, her fair face clouded with grief, took his arm as a means of showing the love she had for him. They left the house with Bromley Barnes and Captain Mayne

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bringing up the rear. The officer spoke to the detective.

"But Williams — will he be here?"

Barnes smiled.

"I pledge you my word that he will be here at the appointed time."

Just as the party reached the end of the graveled walk, Williams turned and addressed them:

"I hope," he said, brokenly, "that you won't misunderstand my outburst. I — I loved Hugh Helverson, and I think he was the greatest genius of his time. He deserves and is entitled to all of the credit for this submarine device. It is his and his alone. I helped, but I have sense enough to realize that his was the guiding mind. But I have led a life of self-effacement and — and I guess his death must have gotten on my nerves."

Then he turned abruptly, and giving his arm to Hilda Helverson, marched away.

It was a few minutes before midnight when a ghostly looking procession filed up the graveled path leading to the door of the cottage on Woodley Road.

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Bromley Barnes, immaculately attired, was in the lead, and directly behind him was Cornelius Clancy, keenly alive to the possibilities of an adventure. Hilda Helverson, dressed in deep black, and with her countenance showing traces of grief and anxiety, was followed by Sarto Joseph and Captain Mayne. The young naval officer had the air of a man who is oppressed with a sense of responsibility. He said nothing, but at intervals the flicker of a smile about the lips indicated that he was attending the performance from a sense of his regard for Bromley Barnes and that he looked upon the whole business with unfeigned skepticism.

The party made its way into the hallway, and the detective skillfully guided each person along the far side of the entrance and to a chair that had been previously placed in the living room. When they had all taken their places in this manner, the investigator locked the front door. There was a dim light in the room, but by peering about, it was possible to distinguish objects. For instance, all present could discern the oil painting of the father of Hugh Hel-

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verson which hung in its accustomed place over the fireplace. Even in the semi-darkness the eyes of that counterfeit presentment seemed to glare out with a force and distinctness which had been characteristic of the dead inventor. Also, the dull light cast its rays upon the large rug which covered the entrance to the room, two or three feet from the doorway.

Barnes busied himself in examining the shutters, and in making final preparations for his experiment. When he had finished, he turned to the others and said:

"I have endeavored to place this house in precisely the condition it was on the night when Hugh Helverson entered and met his fate. I have been particular to see that every door in the rear has been bolted and every window locked. The front door, of course, is deadlocked, and may be opened from the outside with a latch key. If you gentlemen desire to investigate these things for yourself, you are at liberty to do so."

There was silence after this, and then the voice

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of Captain Mayne could be heard as he said in a tone of irony:

"Go ahead, Barnes. We are sure that you have nothing concealed up your sleeves. But I wish you would hurry the show for I have important business to look after."

"The show — as you call it — will begin as the clock strikes the hour of midnight. A gentleman of my acquaintance has consented to impersonate Hugh Helverson, and will endeavor to repeat what we suppose were his movements on that fatal night."

A hush fell over the assemblage — a hush that cast a sort of awe over all present. A sob came from the lips of Hilda Helverson. It was a hysterical cry and gave a faint notion of the strain under which she was laboring. The quiet, the semi-darkness and the nervousness of the participants gave the affair the appearance of a spiritualistic seance. The ticking of the clock on the mantel was the only sound to relieve the tenseness of the moment. Suddenly a cry burst forth from Captain Mayne:

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"Hold on there, Barnes — there's something missing."

"What do you mean?" asked the investigator.

"I mean that Conan Williams is not here. He's the most important one of all. To give this performance without Williams is like presenting "Hamlet" without the Dane. Besides, you promised me that he would be here. I suppose it's all right, but it looks mighty queer. If he couldn't stand the strain —"

"It is all right," assured the detective; "I said that Williams would be here, and he will be. Just be patient."

After this outburst, all became quiet again. The seconds passed by with leaden-like slowness. Even in the gloom it was plain that the thing was getting on the nerves of the participants. Just when it had reached the breakable point, the clock in a near-by steeple struck the hour of midnight. Before the last stroke pealed forth the little time piece on the mantel rang out twelve times. As it ceased the silence, by contrast, seemed more tense.

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Suddenly a sound of footsteps on the porch attracted attention. There was a scratching around the keyhole, and the next moment they knew that the door was being opened. Through the gloom they saw the figure of a man with his hat drawn down over his eyes. He turned and closed the door and carefully bolted it. Then he advanced with deliberation. As his face was turned to the inside, they recognized the newcomer as Conan Williams. He stepped upon the large rug and the moment he did so there was a loud explosion, accompanied by a cloud of smoke, and they saw that he had been struck upon the breast, just in the region of the heart, by a black object.

Barnes and Clancy turned up the lights and every one else leaped forward. Williams stood there uninjured, gazing at the picture of the father of Hugh Helverson. The gaze of all present followed his and they saw a little stream of smoke issuing from one of the eyes in the picture. The detective rushed forward and raised the rug and they saw a tiny wire in the floor that led to the wall and from thence back

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of the picture above the mantel piece. Before any one could speak, Barnes exclaimed:

"Now, gentlemen, you may all look upon the solution of the mystery of the bolted door!"

While he spoke he removed the portrait, and behind it, with the smoke still curling toward the ceiling, they beheld a pistol carefully balanced so that its muzzle must have been directly behind the left eye of the picture.

Barnes briefly told them how the whole thing had been contrived. The inventor, fearful that some one might enter the house in his absence and steal the secret of the submarine destroyer, had constructed a device which meant death to the one that stepped upon the rug. It was ingenuity almost supernatural.

"Unfortunately," concluded the old investigator, "Hugh Helverson was the victim of his own contrivance. Filled with the thought that his great invention had at last been completed, he came here forgetful of the trap he had set to catch the one that might try to pilfer his idea."

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"But Williams's quarrel with Helverson," interjected Mayne, "what about that? And why was he lurking about the house?"

"That quarrel came about because Helverson refused to agree to his marriage with his daughter," replied Barnes, quietly, "and he came here on the fateful night to renew his request for the girl's hand. But at the last moment, his heart failed him and he left without speaking to Helverson. There was really no reason why he should not have told you this, but he is young and chivalrous, and he felt that it would not be fair to Miss Hilda to reveal the unfortunate domestic episode."

It was a saddened, but satisfied, group that left the little cottage shortly after midnight. Hilda Helverson was weeping silently, her grief over the death of her father strangely mingled with the joy over the acquittal of the man she loved. Captain Mayne tried to forget his chagrin over his admiration for the cleverness of the detective.

"You said 'find the motive and you will find the man,'" he remarked to Barnes, with just a trace

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of complaining in his voice, "but I don't exactly see the connection in this case."

"The connection is perfect," said the veteran, "and it came to me when I read the biography of Helverson in the copy of 'Who's Who.' When I read there that he was the inventor of a contrivance to catch burglars I got my first clew — a clew that became perfectly clear when I discovered that one of the eyes of the portrait had been shot away. It was a trifle, but upon such trifles have hinged the solution of many of the world's strangest mysteries."

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III

ADVENTURE OF THE SCRAP OF PAPER

BROMLEY BARNES and Admiral Hawksby sat on either side of a flat-topped desk in the Navy Department, talking in low, earnest tones. The grizzled face of the old sea fighter looked sterner than usual, while the attentive, earnest countenance of the veteran investigator indicated that he fully appreciated the importance of the communication which was being made to him. The purport of it was simple enough, and sufficiently alarming to call for prompt action. The secrets of the Department were being peddled to the enemy. Orders, that were presumably known to only three persons in Washington, were finding their way to hostile quarters with a rapidity and a certainty that was almost uncanny.

"We've got to locate the leak, Barnes," said the admiral, emphasizing the remark with a resounding

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blow on the desk with his closed fist, "or I'll feel like handing in my resignation."

An incredulous laugh came from the bald-headed man with the fringe of iron-gray hair which encircled his head with a halo-like effect.

"Resign," he retorted; "that sounds like retreat, and I didn't think that word had any place in the vocabulary of the man who ran the blockade —"

"Never mind that," hastily interrupted Hawksby, who feared the usual eulogy for the gallant action which had won him a gold medal and the thanks of Congress; "you know what I mean. I feel so impotent in this underhand business that I scarcely know what to do. If it was an out-and-out, face-to-face fight, I'd know just how to act. I'm depending on you to get to the bottom of the thing. Will you help me?"

"Yes," was the prompt reply, "but you've got to help me first. Now, you say the last message that was intercepted related to the movements of the Asiatic fleet. Please let me see a copy of the order."

The admiral pressed a button on the desk, and in

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a few moments a young man, with coal black hair and brown skin, entered the room.

"Lee," said the sailor, "get me the order book. I think you will find it in the copying press."

As the Admiral sat stroking his mustache and imperial, Barnes looked at him curiously

"Who is that man?" he asked.

"That chap — oh, that's a West Indian who acts as a sort of personal servant to me."

"Do you mean to say that he has access to the copy book and is given the run of the place?"

Hawksby drew himself up stiffly.

"I don't know what you mean by the 'run of the place'— and, besides, the orders are in code and would be Greek to him or any other man except to myself and the Secretary of the Navy."

Presently the messenger returned, and for the next ten minutes the two men were deeply engrossed in the intricacies of the naval code and the details of how the orders had been transmitted. Barnes asked a hundred and one questions and finally departed with the intimation that he might return and ask

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some more before he started in on his difficult task.

"It all depends upon circumstances," he said, "and, in the meantime, I'm going to take a long walk to get the cobwebs out of my head."

He went to his apartments near the Capitol first, and gave some general orders to his assistant and general factotum. He consulted a number of maps and then he started out on one of the long strolls which had made him as familiar with the streets of the National Capital as the famous Caliph was with the equally celebrated city of Bagdad.

No member of the Cabinet, and not one of the foreign diplomats at Washington could have been more fastidious in his dress than this investigator who had come from his retirement to assist his Government during a critical stage in its history. The frock coat, the carefully creased trousers, the gray spats, the opal in his green tie, and the tightly rolled silk umbrella which took the place of a walking stick, were all just as they should be — or at least, just as Barnes felt they should be. He walked up one street and down another, thinking all the

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while of the problem that had been given into his care. A stranger, noting the cold gray eyes and the quizzical smile, would have thought him a man without a care in the world. He must have been walking for an hour when his steps led him into that section of the city known as Farragut Circle. He noticed, in a casual way, that an automobile was standing in front of one of the houses. And then an incident, seemingly insignificant in itself, roused all of his thinking faculties.

The driver of the car had taken the cover from a sandwich. Instead of tossing it aside he carefully rolled the oiled paper into a little ball and threw it on the sidewalk. At the same moment a nattily dressed man with a waxed mustache and a pink carnation in the buttonhole of his stylish coat, came down the steps of the house and picked up the discarded bit of paper. He looked up and down the street in a nervous manner, as if to make sure that he was not observed, and then turning briskly, reëntered the house. The incident did not take a minute, but to the watching Barnes it was like a

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drama itself. Instantly the driver of the car put his foot on the lever of the machine and it whizzed away. But in that brief time the detective had obtained the number of the machine and a mental picture of the chauffeur. He noted the number and location of the house, and then, with his quizzical smile broadening, hastened to his own apartment.

On the morning after the incident of the oiled paper, a new janitor appeared at the apartment house on Farragut Circle. He wore a blouse and overalls and seemed to fit into the scheme of the place much better than the house itself did with the richer and more pretentious dwellings with which it was surrounded. The new tyrant of the place was most industrious and showed a desire to please that was truly amazing upon the part of a modern janitor. His round face and bald head were smudged with soot and dirt, and his features were all but recognizable. But even the evidence of praiseworthy toil could not change the cold, gray eyes and the quizzical smile which were a part of the personality of Bromley Barnes. He made friends with every-

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body — especially the women and children — and he had the run of the house, which was to be expected in one who was presumably charged with its destinies.

In twenty-four hours the new janitor was familiar with the place and its occupants. No matter how unkempt he might seem himself, he showed a real desire to keep the house tidy. Residents were delighted to find a man who was willing to carry off the contents of their waste paper baskets and trash cans, and they were united in designating him as "a jewel" of a janitor. On the evening of the second day the new man sat in his quarters in the basement of the house smoking a corn-cob pipe and looking the picture of contentment. But later that night, when most of the guests were sleeping the sleep of the just, the janitor had pulled down the blinds of his own modest apartment and was restlessly pawing over scraps of paper that had been found in the waste baskets.

For more than an hour he worked there, with a patience and a persistence beyond all praise. At the

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end of that time he began to show signs of weariness. But just when he seemed ready to quit, he gave a cry of delight. He had found a little scrap of oiled paper, twisted and rolled into a tiny ball. Slowly and carefully he unrolled it and spread it out on the little wooden table. It contained several typewritten lines which the old man found some difficulty in deciphering. But the hardest task has its end and finally he was able to read these significant words:

> "Gunboats *Philadelphia* and *Newark* have been ordered to join the Asiatic fleet. 200 jackies have been assigned to special duty in this connection. Ammunition in large quantities is to be shipped. More details in the next twenty-four hours."

Bromley Barnes gave a sigh of relief. He picked up the little scrap of paper reverently and placed it in his wallet. Then, with that quizzical smile hovering about his lips, he undressed and went to bed to enjoy a well-earned night's rest.

Things in the apartment house moved along in their accustomed grooves for some days. The man with the waxed mustache and pink carnation did not

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appear to have any occupation, yet for a man without regular employment he seemed to be amazingly busy. Percival Roberts, for by that name he was addressed, had a room near the top of the house — an attic room that by no means corresponded with his careful dress and fastidious manners. He suggested a person who spends much time at the barber's, and regarded the manicuring of his nails as a sort of religious rite. Such a one was not likely to bestow much attention on a mere janitor, and when the bald-headed man with the cold gray eyes and the quizzical smile passed him on the stairs, Roberts did not even deign to throw a glance in his direction. There were many things that the wax-mustached person was not, but there was one thing he was — or thought he was — and that was a lady killer.

One morning he was coming out of the house when he passed a young woman with a singularly attractive face. She had taken an apartment on the third floor back and Mr. Percival Roberts made it his business to find out all about her. Gossip flows quite as freely in the modern apartment house as it

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formerly did in the less pretentious boarding house, and by putting this and that together, the young man learned a number of things. First, she was Miss Marie Johnson, and she had come from the far West for the purpose of attending an art school in Washington. Secondly, she had been quite as much taken with Mr. Percival Roberts as he had been with her. That was a hopeful beginning, and before long he had managed to make her acquaintance, and even offered to escort her to the institution where she proposed to take up the study of art. But she smilingly declined this on the ground that it was not wise to mix business with pleasure.

In less than a week, however, the acquaintance had prospered to such an extent that Miss Johnson accepted an invitation to accompany Mr. Roberts to the theater, and after that he pressed his suit with much ardor. She did not precisely repulse him, but she tried to make him understand that she had a serious purpose in life, and that she did not propose to be diverted from the plan which had brought her

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to the National Capital. She let him know that she admired men with a purpose in life, and gently intimated that his indolent existence did not promise well for the woman who would consent to be his wife. The bald-headed man with the fringe of gray hair, and the cold gray eyes and the quizzical smile noticed the growing intimacy between the pair, and he merely shrugged his shoulders as much as to say that in the matter of love he could not be regarded as a competent authority. But Percival Roberts felt that when it came to the tender passion he was in his element, and he plainly was flattered at the evident impression he had made upon the studious young woman.

It was on the evening of the fifth day that Percival found himself in the cozy sitting room of Marie Johnson, making his first formal call. He found it very pleasant there. The apartment, furnished with exquisite taste, made an appropriate setting for the girl. She was not "beautiful" in the usually accepted sense of that much-abused word. But she was undeniably fascinating. He took in every de-

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tail of the picture — and it satisfied him. Her coal black hair, parted in the middle, and glowing with life and vitality, her dark, gray eyes, full of spirit and intelligence, and the masterful manner — always feminine — in which she carried herself, convinced Percival that here at last was the one girl in the world for him. They talked of indifferent topics for some time, and finally the young man, taking her shapely hand in his, began to declare his passion. She did not withdraw her hand, neither did she show any inclination to encourage his words. There was just the right degree of modesty mixed with friendliness.

"My dear," he began, "you have my happiness in your keeping. Marie, I want to ask —"

But at this point there was a terrific hooting of an automobile horn just outside the apartment house. To the surprise of Marie, the ardent wooer dropped her hand, and rising, walked over to the window. One look was sufficient, for turning to her, he exclaimed:

"Pardon me, I'll be back in a moment."

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Before Marie realized what was going on, he had grabbed his hat and hurried from the room. She did not betray any emotion, disappointment or otherwise, but she evidently possessed the curiosity of her sex, because she went to the window and, raising the sash, looked below. It was worth while, for a curious performance was being enacted. An automobile had halted in front of the house. The driver had just finished taking the covering from a sandwich. Instead of tossing the oiled paper to one side, he rolled it into a small ball and then threw it, with great deliberation, over on the sidewalk. At the same moment, Mr. Percival Roberts, descending the steps of the house, reached over and picked up the discarded paper. The automobile, with a farewell honk-honk, dashed away, while Roberts, with simulated indifference, reëntered the house.

Marie closed the window and sat down and awaited the return of the young man. Five minutes and then ten passed, and still he did not come back. Presently, with a look of determination on her face, she left the room and ascended the staircase in the

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direction of his apartment. It did not take long to reach the entrance to his attic room. The door, fortunately, was slightly ajar, and without the slightest compunction Marie pushed it open and entered.

Roberts was not there. The room was empty. She glanced about hastily and noted the bareness of its furnishings. There was a small cot in a corner of the attic, but it seemed out of place because the room was fitted up more like an office than a place of habitation. A roll-top desk was against the wall and it was open, showing a mass of papers in much confusion as though the owner had left in a hurry. What did it all mean? Where had Percival Roberts gone? What was his occupation, and what was the meaning of his sudden agitation? Presently Marie noticed a light screen that shut off one corner of the attic. She had gone too far to retreat, and walking over, she moved the obstruction. She gave a gasp because she saw revealed a flight of steps, leading to a trap door that looked out on the roof. Slowly and cautiously she began to climb the ladder and

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continued until her head emerged into the outside air.

"Zip-zip-zip" came from nearby, followed by a spluttering sound. She looked in that direction, and saw Roberts, his face white and concentrated, working at an instrument. Like a flash, the truth dawned on her. It was a wireless telegraph outfit and he was the operator. Summoning all her strength, she climbed on to the roof and stood there, supporting herself by holding on to the edge of the trap door. At that moment he looked up and saw her standing there like an accusing spirit. His face went white and his voice trembled:

"What are you doing here?"

The color had vanished from her countenance too, and her eyes danced with excitement. Nevertheless, she managed to speak composedly:

"That is the very question I was going to ask you. What are you doing up here like a thief in the night?"

He had evidently finished with his telegraphing, because he threw a cover over the outfit and ad-

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vanced toward her in a threatening way. Her words had cut him like a whip, and he approached her shakily. Bewildered rage and childish fright seemed to be struggling for the mastery. He grabbed her by the wrist, and when he spoke again, it was in a thick, husky voice:

"What do you mean by spying on me — what do you mean by creeping up that ladder — what are you doing here, anyhow?"

She gave a long-drawn breath before she replied. Her hand, holding the edge of the trap door, trembled in spite of her effort to be composed, but presently she spoke in a voice that had a note of pathos in it.

"Don't — don't you think that you are the one to explain? You leave me without a word of warning, and when I come to find you, I find you out on the roof, acting — acting like a criminal."

He pulled himself together. The look of half-dazed fury left his face. He loosened his hold on her wrist and spoke in low, tender tones:

"Forgive me, Marie. I — I lost control of my-

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self. You scared me for a moment. I'm sorry. Say that you'll forgive me for my nasty outbreak."

She looked up at him with humid eyes. She seemed to be seeing him through a mist. But this passed quickly and she said:

"That's very well, but it doesn't explain anything."

He placed her arm about her waist, and began to assist her gently down the rude ladder. He closed the trap door, and presently they stood facing one another in that attic room. The seconds seemed like minutes, and when he spoke it was in a slow voice, as though the words were being dragged from his reluctant lips:

"Marie, I'm going to tell you what I would not tell another living soul. But — but you are entitled to know it. You have often asked me to tell you my occupation. You wondered what I did for — for a living. I'll tell you. I'm engaged in secret service work."

He had locked the door before he began to speak, and she stood there now with her delicate fingers

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nervously handling the knob. She seemed to be quivering with terror. Then she raised a white hand and pointed it at him in a shaky manner.

"You — you mean to say that you are a spy?"

His face reddened. That look of bewildered rage returned for a second, and then he said doggedly:

"You can put it that way if you want to do so."

She stood for a moment, swaying with fright. Her voice was very low, and it quivered:

"And in the face of this, you have dared to make love to me — you pretended to care for me."

He rushed over to where she stood and threw his arms about her in frantic fashion.

"Oh, Marie, can't you see that I have been doing it for you — can't you see that I have been trying to earn the reward that will make us independent? I care for you more than anything in the world. If you care for me, nothing else matters. Say that I am forgiven. Say that you will be my wife."

Her face hardened at that, and she spoke with determination, with that air of decisiveness which he had admired in her so much.

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"If you care for me as much as you say, you will tell me everything. Tell me the truth. You must keep nothing from me. You were working against the United States, against your own country. Isn't that a fact?"

"Don't put it that way. I'll tell you everything. I have been representing another nation. You speak of my country. What does that mean? I owe nothing to the country. It has not even given me the chance of making a decent living. And patriotism! What is that? Merely a word. The work I have been doing will give me the means to keep you in comfort. We can go away and live in comfort for the rest of our lives."

"But a traitor," she murmured, "to be married to a traitor!"

"Please don't talk like that," he implored, "and think only that I am doing it for you. The thing we do for love cannot be wrong. And, Marie, I love you so much."

She melted at that and looked at him in a way that seemed to say that she might forgive the of-

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fense for the sake of the love. He grasped at his opportunity as a drowning man grasps at a straw. He led her to a chair and then began to fumble among the papers on his desk. Presently he secured a number of them in a package and he waved them in front of her dark gray eyes.

"Look!" he exclaimed, "these few pieces of paper carry with them the power to give us wealth and happiness for the rest of our lives. Promise me that you will say nothing of what you have seen. In a few days all will be well, and then we may go away and be happy with each other. You want to be happy, don't you?"

"Yes," she said softly, "I want to be happy."

"Ah," he shouted gayly, "I was sure that you were a sensible woman; I realized that from the start!"

She looked very tired standing there. There were dark circles under her lustrous eyes, and her chin seemed to quiver from weariness and excitement. She looked at him appealingly.

"Now," she said in a half whisper, "if you will

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unlock the door, I will go to my own room. I need rest."

He moved as if to comply with her request, but at that instant there came a sharp, peremptory knock on the panel of the door. He opened it quickly, and a smallish man, with coal black hair and brown skin, confronted him. The visitor was agitated and he spoke hurriedly:

"We have been discovered. They know about the wireless. The police are likely to be here at any moment. Get away!"

As he uttered the last word, the black-haired, brown-skinned man turned and ran down the stairway. Marie had heard all, and she looked the picture of fright and terror. Roberts' eyes had narrowed as he received the message, but when he noted the fear in her eyes he put his arms around her in a comforting way.

"It's all right, little girl. We have reached the end of the chapter, but we won't go away empty handed."

He hastened to the desk and picked up a small

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packet of papers. He fondled them as one might a favorite child. He looked up with cupidity and triumph in his face.

"They've discovered the wireless, but it's too late to prevent the damage. I've got enough here to shake the whole Department of State, not to speak of the Navy. And there's a fortune in it for us. And don't be frightened. I'll take care of you."

He moved toward her, and with a smothered cry she clung to his shoulders. He saw that she was white about the lips, and he could feel that she was trembling. As they stood thus a gust of wind swept beneath the closed door and rustled a bit of paper on the floor. She gave a cry of terror and he let out an oath.

"I'm like a skittish horse," he said, half apologetically, "but it will be all right. We'll have to make a quick get-away. I'll call a taxicab and we'll shoot off to the Union Station." He looked at his watch. "We've just got time to catch the southern train. Before they know it, we'll be at El Paso,

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and then, once across the border and on Mexican soil, I'll defy the whole bunch to get me."

He was tossing articles of clothing into a grip by this time, and then he paused for a moment to say to Marie:

"You'd better go to your room and get a few things together. We'll only have a few minutes. Hurry. I'll have the cab by the time you're ready."

The girl seemed to be more composed by this time. She looked at him with a glance of endearment.

"Percival," she said softly — and the first mention of his given name from her lips thrilled him — "I'll try to be useful. I'll call the cab."

He was delighted beyond measure by her acceptance of the situation. He stooped down and kissed her on the lips. That one act seemed to change the whole character of the enterprise. Instead of a fugitive from justice, he felt like a man about to enter on his honeymoon.

"Do so," he murmured in return, "and by the time it is here I will be all ready for you."

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During the next few minutes there were scenes of feverish activity in that apartment house on Farragut Circle. Percival Roberts lived in a Heaven of his own creating. He pictured himself and his beloved in a far-away land enjoying the fruits of his "hard work." But in the midst of his day dreaming he roused himself to the actualities. If the police were on the way he did not have much time to spare. He finished his preparations in record time, and started down stairs to meet Marie. To his satisfaction, the door of her room was open and he saw her standing there, attired for a journey, and looking as neat and as pretty as anything he had seen in a long while. He gave a sigh of joy. His cup of happiness was full indeed.

She was fastening her gloves as he entered the room, and she gave him a smile that thrilled him. Quite evidently her scruples had vanished and she was going to imitate him by making the most of her life. He felt flattered, and as he tried to put his thought into words she interrupted him to say prettily, and with just a shade of deference:

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"Percival, the cab is at the door now — and we'd better not lose any time."

"Very well, my dear," he replied, "we'll make tracks." But in spite of his hurry he paused to admire her costume. She was dressed like a bride — that is to say, in the traveling costume usually affected by the newly wedded. And added to this was a stylish coat that came almost to her shoe tops. As he gazed at this garment it seemed to give him an inspiration.

"Marie," he said, "have you a pocket on the inside of that coat?"

She had and she displayed it with the pride with which members of the gentler sex usually exhibit their articles of clothing. Percival looked the satisfaction he felt. He drew the package of papers from his own pocket and handed them to her.

"I want you to put them in your inside pocket," he suggested, "and then I'll know they are in no danger of being lost."

She complied with this request, smilingly, and as she buttoned her coat carefully he surveyed her for

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the fifth time with intense pride and an undisguised sense of ownership.

"Before you took those papers," he cried, banteringly, "I thought you were the loveliest girl in the world. Now, you're that and more. You are the most valuable. You're worth your weight in gold. Those papers are worth millions to the enemy and they mean wealth and comfort for us. I'm sure you'll guard them — especially if anything should happen to me."

She gently boxed his ears.

"Don't talk like a pessimist," she cried; "it's not a bit like you — and, besides, there's a machine out there tooting away for dear life."

Two minutes later they were seated in the taxicab to the relief of the driver who grumbled something about having to wait all day for people that didn't know the value of time. That seemed to amuse Percival, who grimaced at the fellow behind his back and whispered to Marie that time at that moment was the most important thing in his life. He looked at his watch and said to the girl:

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"We've got twenty minutes, and I think it would be wise to make a circuit instead of going directly to the station. Then, if by chance we should be followed, we can throw them off the scent."

She laughed gayly.

"You're the most cautious man I ever met. They'll never catch you napping. But do just as you please, my dear."

Accordingly he gave direction to the green-goggled chauffeur, who resolutely kept his back to his passengers as if still resenting the indignity of having to wait. But he nodded that he understood his orders, especially the one which directed him to let his two passengers off about a square from the Union Station.

"That may keep them from knowing that we actually went to the station," he whispered with a sagacious look at the girl.

The drive took them beyond the White House, and then past the Army and Navy Building and the Treasury Department. The driver kept mumbling to himself as though he were questioning the sanity

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of any one driving about the city at random while the automatic clock was registering a fare that might appal any one except a bride and groom. As they passed the Navy Building a little man was seen entering a conveyance.

"That's Admiral Hawksby," explained Roberts to his companion; "he's going home now after what he calls a 'hard day's work.' He'll be the sorest man in Washington when he hears of my escape. But it serves him right, the arrogant old ass. He thinks he knows it all, and he doesn't know anything."

For five minutes after that the man and the girl simply sat and admired each other. It was a real mutual admiration society, with only two members. Marie Johnson certainly looked attractive. Her coal black hair, parted in the middle, contrasted with the coquettishness of her face, and her dark gray eyes sparkled in the half gloom of the cab. Percival complacently stroked his mustache and leaning toward her, said tenderly:

"I'll mark this day down as the luckiest day of

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my life — the day you insured my happiness. And if I only thought you fully reciprocated my feelings —"

"I do," she interrupted, "I do — and as soon as I can get one I'm going to put a red mark around the date on the calendar."

They both laughed at this conceit, and after that there was a blissful silence. It was broken by the voice of the girl, speaking seriously and with a certain pathos:

"You've been very frank with me, Percival. There is something I should tell you."

He interrupted her with a loyalty that astonished even himself. He had not thought he was capable of such high flights.

"Never mind about your past, Marie — I don't want to hear a word."

"Oh, it isn't anything terrible," she retorted with feminine inconsistency; "I simply wanted you to know that before I came to this city I was an actress. Do you mind?"

Roberts laughed heartily.

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"Mind? Well, I should say not. I should say it was a sort of distinction. And I'll bet my bottom dollar you were a mighty clever actress."

"Well," she said reflectively, "I know I wasn't dismissed for incompetence."

By this time the outlines of the Union Station began to loom in sight. Percival looked ahead and prepared to alight as soon as the cab drove up to the curb. On and on they went until they were within a block of their destination. The spy uttered an exclamation of impatience and called to the driver:

"Hey, out there — didn't I tell you to stop before we got to the station?"

But the taxi went right ahead as though nothing had been said. The young man half arose in his seat. Marie turned to him with a look of alarm.

"What's the trouble? You mustn't do that while the machine is in motion."

Roberts fell back into his seat with a muttered oath.

"It's that infernal driver. He's so stupid that he doesn't know enough to do as I tell him. Well,

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I guess we'll have to go into the station after all."

But, strangely enough, the taxicab did not go into the regular driveway of the station. Instead, it circled around the building and paused in front of the entrance to a small room. The driver jumped from his seat and opened the door. Percival Roberts alighted first, and then assisted Marie to the ground. He turned to give the driver a piece of his mind for his stupidity, but that personage, with unlooked for insolence, gave him a push and sent him into the little room. Percival was furious and he doubled up his fist menacingly. As he did so he noticed a figure in the half-darkened room. It gave him a start — and no wonder, for it was Admiral Hawksby, stroking his mustache and imperial, and with deep satisfaction depicted on his grizzled face.

Roberts was scared, but he kept his self-possession. The presence of the old sea fighter might be merely a coincidence. He turned around to the driver of the taxicab, and as he did so the stupid one tossed

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away his glazed cap and took off his green goggles. The spy looked at the other man with half-dazed fury.

He was staring into the face of Bromley Barnes — special investigator of the United States Government.

Bewilderment filled his mind. Then gradually he rallied. He looked around the room. The Admiral and the detective were looking at him curiously. Presently his eyes fell upon Marie Johnson. She stood by a table in the center of the room, and she seemed to be trembling like a leaf. Her head was buried in the folds of her coat and her breast heaved convulsively. He remembered that the incriminating papers were in the inside pocket of her coat. In that instant his resolution was formed.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, fingering the pink carnation in his coat, and with that nonchalant smile which he could assume so quickly, "what is the meaning of this?"

Barnes grinned at him amiably.

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"We wanted to be sociable — we couldn't bear to see you go off without saying good-by. We've already got Lee Hallman and the code man."

Roberts smiled in return, but his brain was working furiously. He looked again in the direction of Marie. She seemed to be trying to control her emotions. At any moment she might break down. He must anticipate anything she might say. In those seconds of thought any affection he might have felt for her vanished into thin air. He felt a new emotion — and yet it was not new. It was as old as the everlasting hills. It was the impulse of self-preservation. He was willing to sacrifice anything and any one to save himself. He moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue, and steadying himself, said slowly:

"Well, gentlemen, you've anticipated me a little bit, but still I think I can claim credit for helping my country."

The detective looked at him in a puzzled way. When he spoke it was brusquely:

"What in thunder are you talking about?"

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In reply to this question, Percival pointed an accusing finger in the direction of Marie.

"Simply this. I have arrested that woman as a spy and I now desire to transfer her to your custody. I still have some evidence to get, but I will appear against her in the morning."

The woman, who had been standing, sank into a chair, as if in total collapse. She buried her face in her hands and refused to look up.

Bromley Barnes gazed at the man with a curious smile hovering about his lips. He spoke in a voice of authority:

"Young man, it is one thing to accuse and another to prove. Where is the proof of what you say?"

Percival Roberts took a turn up and down the room before replying. He was considering the dramatic effect of what he was about to say. Then he pointed his hand at the girl for the second time and exclaimed loudly:

"Search her and you will find a number of messages that have been intercepted from the Navy Department. They are in the inside pocket of her

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coat. I saw her put them there, and I am willing to so testify in a court of law!"

Something like a sob was heard to come from the woman with the bowed head and then the murmur in a muffled voice:

"Oh, Percival, how could you?"

Several speechless seconds passed. A dramatic tableau was being enacted in the little room. Admiral Hawksby broke the silence with one brusque sentence:

"Well, Barnes, why don't you search the woman?"

The cold gray eyes of the investigator softened just a little bit, and the quizzical smile became more pronounced, but he went over to Marie and commanded her to arise. She did so and he unbuttoned her coat, and took out the packet of letters from the inside pocket. As he read them his eyes widened and he emitted a low, significant whistle.

"Are these all of the papers?" he asked the girl.

"Yes," was the reply with downcast eyes, "all that I know anything about."

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Percival Roberts had been watching her intently, and her manner seemed to reassure him, for turning to Barnes, he exclaimed:

"You see, I've told the truth, and now if you'll excuse me for the present, I'll appear at your office the first thing in the morning."

Barnes looked at him with a sort of contempt, and then producing a whistle, blew it softly. Two officers rushed into the room, and the next thing Roberts knew he was on the floor of the patrol wagon. He managed to regain his feet just as the Admiral, the Detective and the Girl came out of the railroad station. He turned to one of the officers and pointed in the direction of the trio.

"Who —" he spluttered, "who is that woman going down the street?"

The policeman shaded his eyes with one hand in order to get a better view of the girl, and then replied, in the most matter-of-fact way:

"That? That's Miss Johnson — the smartest little woman in the United States Secret Service."

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IV

ADVENTURE OF THE STOLEN MESSAGE

BROMLEY BARNES cackled with delight. He sat before the blazing logs in his cozy quarters overlooking the dome of the Capitol, and fondled a very, very old book. It was a copy of the first edition of "Robinson Crusoe," published April 25, 1719, and was in three parts, the third part containing "The Serious Reflections," wherein the author uses Crusoe as his mouthpiece to express his sentiments on morals and religion. The venerable investigator smoothed the cover of the volume as though it were a living thing.

"I tell you, Clancy," he exclaimed, "the time is coming when I'll have the greatest known collection of old and rare editions of 'Robinson Crusoe.'"

"I guess you're right, sir."

"Guess — there's no guessing about it. Already

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I've collected two hundred separate editions of that one work."

"But what's the use," said Cornelius, rubbing his red head, "of having two hundred editions of the same book? Why not get one good edition and be done —"

"Ah," interrupted the old man, "you haven't the heart of a true collector. If you had, you'd know the joy of suddenly coming across a volume for which you'd searched for years. You haven't the heart of the simon-pure collector."

"No," admitted Con, with great directness and simplicity, "I've just got the heart of a simon-pure Irishman."

The ringing of the telephone bell interrupted the dialogue. Barnes answered it and when he hung up the receiver, his face was grave and thoughtful. Evidently something more important than "Robinson Crusoe" was on his mind.

"It's from the White House," he said. "His secretary intimates that the President would like to have me call and see him."

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Clancy's eyes sparkled.

"That's a command, isn't it?"

Barnes laughed.

"You're right, and I'm going to take it in that spirit."

The President was exceedingly busy, and the fact that he set aside ten minutes of his time for an interview with the detective proved the importance of the call. He knew Barnes, and he made no apology for the fact that he had sent for him instead of the usual Secret Service men. He said that the great war and the critical situation which the United States was forced to face had made it necessary for him to send various special messages to Congress. On two separate occasions these messages, or rather the contents of the messages, were known to outside persons before they were read in Congress. The information and advice they contained had been used as the basis of stock market speculation. This had created a national scandal which could not be tolerated. The Chief Executive gave the old investigator a detailed description of his method of

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preparing the State papers, and concluded by saying:

"I am so anxious to get at the bottom of this thing, and so eager for an impartial inquiry that I have determined not to make it through any of the ordinary Government channels. I desire a thorough and independent investigation, and have concluded that you are the best man in the country for that purpose."

Barnes bowed.

"Mr. President, I appreciate the compliment and trust that I may prove worthy of your confidence."

The head of the greatest nation on earth looked at the detective intently, and there was a glint of determination in the gray eyes.

"Do your duty," he said, "and let no guilty man escape!"

The President turned his attention to pressing affairs of State, and Barnes was placed in the care of his private secretary. That young man, eager, loyal and bubbling over with the energy and enthusiasm

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of youth, was even more anxious to solve the mystery than was his chief.

"My relations with the President are of such a confidential nature," he explained, "that many persons would only be too glad to place the responsibility of the leak at my door."

"When did the last leak occur?"

"With the sending of the Venezuelan message — we learned afterwards that it was known in Wall Street before it was read in Congress."

"When did you first see the message?"

"When I read it in the newspapers."

Bromley Barnes looked at the young man in surprise.

"Didn't you assist the President in preparing the document for Congress?"

Wheatley shook his head and smiled happily.

"I am glad to say that I had nothing to do with it in any manner, shape or form. Neither did any member of the Cabinet. The President was the only living person that had any knowledge of what it contained."

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"But how was it written — surely some stenographer was employed in its transcribing."

Once again the young man shook his head.

"It may not be known to the general public, but the President is an expert stenographer and typewriter, and he prepared and wrote the paper without assistance of any kind."

"Where did he do the work?"

"In a little apartment in the executive department. Come here and I'll let you see it for yourself."

The detective accompanied the private secretary to a small room which formed part of the Presidential suite. It was not much more than an entry way between two of the offices, but with the two doors closed, it insured complete privacy. In a corner was a typewriting machine in one of those tables which can be closed and used as a cover for the instrument. There was a book case on one side of the wall, filled with the usual works of reference. A filing cabinet, a waste paper basket, an arm chair, a couch and two ordinary cane-seated chairs com-

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prised the furnishing of the apartment. The chubby-faced secretary gave an eloquent wave of his arm.

"Democratic simplicity all around you — doesn't look much like a place for the hatching of plots, eh?"

"No," said Barnes, looking about him with alert, eager eyes, "but is the general public permitted in this room?"

"Well," replied the others, "that depends upon what you call the general public. Callers on the President pass through this room constantly. Senators, Representatives, heads of delegations, administrators of the various departments, and sometimes those who wish to return home and say they had the distinction of shaking hands with the Chief Executive of the Republic."

"H'm," murmured the detective, "I should say that you kept open house."

Wheatley smiled.

"You must understand," he protested, "that when the President is working in here no one is

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