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THE MELWOOD MYSTERY

BY

JAMES HAY, JR.

Author of "The Man Who Forgot,"
"Mrs. Marden's Ordeal," and
"The Winning Clue."

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1920

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III

"THEY WILL ACCUSE ME"

MR. FELIX CONRAD had acquainted himself with all the details of the Melwood tragedy — that is to say, all the details published in four morning newspapers. Leaning far back in his desk chair now, he stared at the dark-paneled ceiling of his study. He devoted himself, with some difficulty, to calm and analytical thought.

How would this affair across the street affect him, Mr. Conrad, a gentleman wealthy from the manufacture of soap and a "figure" in the national capital's Society?

That he considered the crime as interesting only in so far as it might annoy him or provide him with an opportunity for self-exploitation, was in perfect accord with his mental habits. It was the Conrad method of dealing with life.

He wasted no time contemplating the two outstanding results of the crime: that Zimony Newman, still unconscious, was in the Emergency Hospital, close to death; and that Frederick Marcello, a frequenter of his house, had been arrested, charged with the assault. Circumstances

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IV

THE ACCUSATION

MR. JEFFERSON HASTINGS, of the bureau of investigation, Department of Justice, stood at Miss Zimony Newman's bedroom window and examined with critical eye the exterior of Felix Conrad's residence across the street. Completing that scrutiny, he went into the reception room and seated himself in a morris chair.

He was fifty-two years old and round-shouldered; and, since he wore "store clothes," the corners of his coat in front hung half-way to his knees, while the back of this garment "kicked up," too short to hide the bagginess of his trousers in, and at, every particular. This was a peculiarity of all of Mr. Hastings' clothes: they bagged and hung loosely and flapped and overlapped all over him.

It was, also, a peculiarity of his person. His cheeks even had the same tendency. They sagged, reaching a little below the lower jawbone.

In other words, Jefferson Hastings was a leisurely, fleshy, even-tempered gentleman, a

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