

# The IRON CLAW by ARTHUR STRINGER

(This serial story is being shown in motion pictures every Wednesday and Thursday at Colonial theatre. Read it in the Observer and see it at the Colonial Theatre.)

### SYNOPSIS.

On Windward Island Palidori intrigues Mrs. Golden into an appearance of evil which causes Golden to capture and torture the Italian by branding his face and crushing his hand. Palidori opens the dyke gates and floods the island and in the general rush to escape the flood kidnaps Golden's six-year-old daughter Margory. Twelve years later in New York a masked One calling himself "The Hammer of God" rescues an eighteen-year-old girl from the cadet Casavanti, to whom Jules Legar had delivered her, and takes her to the home of Enoch Golden, millionaire, whence she is recaptured by Legar. Legar and Stein are discovered by Manley, Golden's secretary, setting fire to Golden's buildings, but escape.

### THIRD EPISODE

#### THE COGNAC CASK

"Bring that woman in here!" commanded Enoch Golden as he flung open his library door. He stepped inside, the next moment, as the figure in black, pinioned close between young Manley and Wilson, the butler, was piloted into the shadowy room. "Sit down!" he barked out at the silent and motionless figure with the heavy black veil still draping its face. "Manley, is there any chance of this woman being armed?" Golden suddenly asked of his secretary. "She's not armed, sir," was young Manley's quiet reply, "though it took a tussle before Wilson and I could get hold of her." "Well," Golden said to the veiled figure in the chair, "what brought you spying and lurking about my home?" That was a question which the woman apparently chose to leave unanswered. "Do you intend to answer?" demanded the millionaire. "Or must I have you put out of this house without a hearing?" "That seems to be a habit of which time has not deprived you," was the quiet-toned reply. It was not the muffled sting in those words, nor the calm bitterness with which they were spoken, but more the voice itself, with its ghostly reminder of other days, that brought Golden up short. "Who are you?" he repeated when he saw that he and the veiled woman were alone in the room. "And why are you here?" "You will misjudge that," answered the woman as she threw back the heavy folds of her veil, "as much as you misjudged my actions of twenty years ago!" "Why are you here?" repeated Golden, with unconsciously hardening voice. "It was love for my daughter!" The pugnacity went out of the grim face bent over the desk top. "What do you know about—about your daughter?" he demanded, not meeting her gaze. "I know that she is in danger, in terrible danger." "That means you know where she is, where she could be found?" was Golden's quick inquiry. "That is the one thing that made me brave enough, or cowardly enough,

ably holds in her hand the key of all your future happiness?" "The key to my happiness is no longer in that woman's hands," announced Golden. Yet a tremulous note in his great voice sent a wave of pity surging through the younger man, whose arm went out to the stooping shoulder so close to him. And that unexpectedly intimate touch, apparently, was too much for the already unnerved man at the desk, for with a gesture oddly poignant he lifted his hand and pressed it against his closed eyes, as though in an effort to shut away actualities which were too dark to be endured. Manley, as he did so, slipped a hand in under the lapel of the older man's coat, lifted a wallet lightly from its pocket, and stood upright again. Then, with a shrug that was almost one of pity as he looked down at the still silent millionaire, he turned away and slipped out of the room. The departing woman had already passed through the street door before he could overtake her. She stopped wonderingly at his call to her. "Mr. Golden, madam, seems to have changed his mind. Here are a few hundred dollars from him, which may be of material assistance to you in this matter you spoke of." Manley, who had taken the roll of bills from the wallet, was quite solemn-faced as he handed the money to the equally solemn-faced woman. Yet the shadow of a smile played about his lips as he watched the austere figure in black disappear from sight. Then he turned back to the library. There he found Golden pacing back and forth, padding grotesquely about from pocket to pocket. "Manley, my wallet's gone!" was the financier's cry. "Was there any money in it?" inquired the secretary. "What do you suppose I'd keep in it?" was the impatient demand. "Talcum powder? Of course there was money in it—over four hundred dollars in greenbacks!" Manley shook his head in mock sorrow. "This, sir, looks like very grave carelessness!" "It looks like very grave thievery to me," snapped the older man. The emissary in oak. Midway between that portion of New York harbor, known as the Upper bay, and the open reaches of the sea that wash up the sands of Manhattan beach, lies a district that might be fittingly denominated as No Man's land. One of the least savory habitations adorning that fringe of a city's fotsam was the ruinous boathouse of a certain Oyster Joe. And Oyster Joe, the river pirate, looked the part. The unsteadiness of his still muscular limbs, the looseness of his swollen lips, the unkemptness of his entire surroundings, all united to proclaim him a lover of the cup that can cheer and at the same time inebriate. This fact, indeed, was further evidenced by the earnestness with which Oyster Joe, himself making his way into the sail loft, lifted a worn tarpaulin aside and studied a row of cognac casks. So intent was his study of this wealth of joy to be that he saw and heard nothing of a slender-bodied stranger who quietly approached his abode, entered it, and stared studiously about. What made this intruder even more mysterious was the fact that across the upper part of his face he wore a narrow band of yellow cloth. The movements of this mysterious stranger were marked by celerity. When his investigations, in fact, were suddenly interrupted by a sound which grew louder along the narrow road winding inland through the salty marshes, he crept to the door, peered out and prepared himself for a promised intruder. For approaching Oyster Joe's boathouse he could plainly make out a two-horse wagon driven by a slattern-shouldered and white-bearded man of about sixty. The masked intruder crept back through the boathouse, entered the sail loft and stealthily approached the still musing figure of Oyster Joe. In a moment he had the old pirate bound and gagged. Then, hearing the wagon wheels almost at the door, the stranger dragged his inert captive to a nearby beam, lashed him to it and over him threw the tarpaulin from the cognac casks. Slipping back to the outer rooms the masked stranger drew his revolver and stood close in beside the shadow of the door, calmly waiting for the man who had already alighted from the wagon. From the mouth behind the white whiskers came a squeak, like the squeak of a rat behind a wainscoting, as the stranger's revolver was thrust unexpectedly into his startled old face. Before he could quite recover from that initial shock of surprise a strand of rope was around his wrists and he was being backed unceremoniously away into the sail loft. There, gagged and triced to a beam, he kept company with his rolling-eyed and equally mystified confrere, Oyster Joe. There he sat blinking about him as the masked stranger briskly rolled two of the cognac casks out to the waiting wagon; loaded them on the platform and as briskly drove away, taking with him both the time-worn hat and the bottle-green overcoat of the original driver of that wagon. But before debouching from the open marshlands into the busier outskirts of South Brooklyn the audacious abductor of cognac had converted himself into a somewhat startling facsimile of the earlier owner and driver of the wagon. He directed his course towards that subterranean haven of illicit beverages



"I Could Hear Their Talk Through the Little Kitchen Slide."

to come to you. I do not know where she is. But I know that she can be found!" "So you have a suspicion where she is?" "Yes," acknowledged the patient-eyed woman. "What are those suspicions founded on?" "On certain words which I overheard, words spoken by a very evil man." "What is that man's name?" "He is a one-armed man, named Legar." Golden half rose from his chair. "So you and Legar are still comrades. I see!" he cried, turning the blade of hate in that still open wound of pride. "Legar and I never were comrades. For years I have kept a little restaurant for art students and shopgirls, just off Washington square. It is near the Italian quarter there. Some-

erosity from you. But when your own daughter is in danger, when you could save her, when—" her voice broke as she saw the look of adamant on Golden's face. "Oh, it's no use; it's no use!" she cried sobbingly as she turned and groped her way towards the door. It was not until that door closed behind her that Golden once more sank into his chair. And as he sat there, wrestling with his own tangled emotions before the dark tent of his soul, Manley stood staring down at him with both studious and puzzled eyes. "For a man who counts his money in eight figures," that youth finally declared, "I think you're the most unmitigated ass that ever wore shoe leather!" "Who—what's that?" demanded the astounded millionaire. "Why, man, are you blind? Can't you see this woman is sincere, that she's telling the truth, that she prob-

known as the Owl's Nest, where Margory Golden was listlessly making preparations for the coming meal. She started suddenly as she stooped over the fire smoldering in the blackened fireplace. For from a crevice in the wall, a crevice no bigger than a man's hand, a piece of mortar unmistakably flew out and struck her on the arm. She was still staring incredulously into this crevice when a flutter of white passed her eyes and a small square of paper fell at her feet close to the edge of the coals. She unfolded the missive and read: "A cask of cognac is coming. If Legar and his men drink from it they should be drugged asleep inside of ten minutes. Press spring concealed on top of cask and follow directions there. Don't give up. And if you understand this, tap twice with the fire tongs." Below these words was the sign of the Laughing Mask. So fortifying was this knowledge in fact, that when Casavanti and Legar himself entered the gloomily-lighted

lookout, with envious eyes on the cask. "This is the real stuff! That raw dope's for Doolan's election workers!" "And the bunch a'ready soused wit' it!" commented the even more envious stickup as he helped roll the second barrel into Legar's inner quarters. Slowly the two men carried out the barrel and lifted it to the wagon. Then the driver climbed aboard. It was not until that driver was well away from the waterfront and had rounded many a corner, that he ventured to pull up and tap on the oak staves beside him. "It's all right!" he called out as he felt about the rough oak and found the hidden spring. "Just hold steady now, and I'll help you out." The girl uttered a sigh of thankfulness as they once more got under way. The Race for Freedom. Those two worthies known as Old Eli and Oyster Joe had, in their time, struggled with many knots. But nev-



"I Was Too Dazed to Do Anything More."

er had they worked harder than over the knots of the mysterious stranger who had left them trussed and bound to the beams of their own sail loft. They might, indeed, have remained gurgling and writhing there like two tethered copperheads while the careless tides rose and fell about them, had not one Scupulo visited Coney Island in his dilapidated car of ancient vintage, and having there conferred with a lush dip in hiding from the flatties of Manhattan, decided to circle homeward by way of Oyster Joe's, in the hope of that refreshment which had more than once cheered him on his dusty journeys. Instead of finding refreshment, however, he unearthed two ferocious-eyed and dry-throated captives, who, when released, danced and gesticulated incoherently about their habitation. Then, when speech had returned to them the visit of the mysterious stranger was explained and the necessity of getting in touch with Legar made plain. It was not long, accordingly, before three men and a car naively missing on one cylinder went coughing inland along the narrow road threading those uncounted acres of sea marsh. They were within fifty paces of a cross-roads landmark known as Chimney-Pot Corner when a bellow not unlike that of a branded range steer burst from the indignant throat of Old Eli. For that worthy had the unique experience of beholding not only his own purloined team and wagon, but a disconcertingly lifelike replica of himself driving it. Scupulo, with the genius of a true general, arrested the progress of that wagon by promptly stopping his car directly in its track. This collision in no way improved the vehicle of ancient vintage; but sterner issues were at hand. A moment later the belligerent trio from the broken car were triumphantly charging for Margory Golden and her guardian. That guardian, fully realizing the meaning of the charge, tossed his reins to the frightened girl and commanded her to drive for all she was worth. Then he himself prepared for invaders. It was to the first comer that he directed his main attention, for Scupulo, he noticed, already held a knife in his swarthy hand. One well-placed kick on the clenching knuckles, however, sent that glimmering icicle of steel circling off into the road-dust, and an equally well-placed blow on the jaw sent the owner of the knife after it. In the meantime, however, both Oyster Joe and Old Eli had gained the wagon platform. The former found himself suddenly clenched by the waist and lifted clear of the wagon. Why he should so quickly and so violently come into collision with the swaying figure of Oyster Joe, like an alley ball hitting a nine-pin, was a matter which for all time remained a mystery to him. But over the side of the thundering wagon the two figures suddenly toppled, rolling along the dust with limbs interlaced and clawing hands unreasonably clenched in each other's hair. And before they regained either their feet or their mental faculties, the wagon itself was well on its way. Yet the driver of that wagon knew that his escape was only a temporary one.

being followed," was the stranger's answer. "Then I'll tell you!" The girl stared back along the dusty roadway. But along that roadway was nothing to be seen. What she saw when she turned again, though, was a gray wig and a fringe of yellowish-white whiskers lying in the bottom of the wagon. And when she lifted her eyes to the stranger's face she beheld on that face, suddenly rejuvenated, the narrow band of a yellow mask, a yellow mask which covered the eyes and the upper part of the head. But below the mask, intimidating as it was in its mystery, she could see that the mouth was a smiling one. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

"We've got to get out of this!" he called to the lurching girl at his side, as he seized the reins and caught up a whip. "We've got a run of a mile and more before we can reach Bohawkin bridge and help!" He lashed the team forward. "We've got to get to that bridge!" The girl suddenly caught at his arm. "I can see a car!" she called out. "It's following us! It's gaining on us!" Again the driver plied his whip. "Are they still gaining?" he asked, a moment later. "Yes," was the girl's answer. "But, see, there's the bridge ahead of us!" "By the help of God, we can make it!" suddenly exulted the man at the reins, for already his tired team was plunging up the incline of the bridge approach. They were on the bridge now, thundering across the draw. A power house attendant, framed in his grimy doorway, stared at them in wonder. "Lift your draw!" frenziedly commanded the stranger. "Stop that car! For God's sake stop that car!" But the man in the jumper saw no reason for any such action. The other, brushing him aside, leaped to the control lever. The outraged bridgewarder at the same moment leaped for the intruder. But that intruder, for all this sudden attack, was not to be turned from his purpose. The lever was thrown over and one end of the massive draw, responding to the impulse of the equally massive machinery, rose slowly from the lip of the dusty roadway. Legar's car was already thundering across its span as that network of steel began to lift. But the increasing incline of the draw, for all the car's momentum, sucked from that straining engine its added strength, retarded a little and yet a little more the hurrying wheels. But in the ascension of the draw-end there was no delay. It was then and then only that a sudden shout rose from the car. Five men, realizing what lay before them, stood up in their seats as that throbbing and pulsing thing on wheels, mounting to the edge of the draw, for one moment poised there, and then dropped, like a poolball in its pocket, to the riverbed below. It was not until then that the bewhiskered man at the control lever became fully conscious of the fact that the engineer in the oil-stained jumper was striking and clawing at his intent body. He endured that assault until the lever had been reversed and the draw started back on its descent. Then, wheeling, the stranger sped across the draw and leaped into the waiting wagon. "Look!" cried the girl, pointing to the riverbed beneath them. There the stranger could see Legar and two or three of his men clinging to a row of broken pling like limpets about a river derelict. "I was hoping," said the stranger as he caught up the reins, "that this would be the last of him!" "Why should you hope that?" asked the girl at his side as they went lurching onward again. "I hoped it for your sake," was his answer. "But who are you, that you should do all this for me?" "Look back and make sure we're not



He Directed His Course Toward the Owl's Nest.

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