

The Mardi Gras Mystery

By
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CHAPTER XIV

Chacherre's Bundle.

It was seven in the morning when Henry Gramont drove his car into Houma.

In the wire which he had sent over Chacherre's signature he had commanded Dick Hearne to meet Gramont at about this time at a restaurant near the court house. Putting his car at the curb, Gramont went into the restaurant and ordered a hasty breakfast. He had brought with him copies of the morning papers, and was perusing the accounts of Bob Maillard's pitifully weak story regarding his father's murder, when a stranger stopped beside him.

"Gramont?" said the other. "Thought it was you. Hearne's my name—I had orders to meet you. What's up?"

The other man dropped into the chair opposite Gramont, who put away his papers. Hearne was a sleek individual of pasty complexion who evidently served the gang in no better light than as a go-between and runner of errands. That he suspected nothing was plain from his casual manner, although he had never seen Gramont previously.

"Business," said Gramont, leaning back to let the waitress serve his breakfast. When she had departed, he attacked it hungrily. "You got Chacherre's wire about the stuff in his car?" Was it burned?"

"No. He countermanded it just as I was hirlin' a car to go over to Paradise," said Hearne. "What's stirrin', anyhow?"

"Plenty. Memphis Izzy's coming down today. When'll he get in?"

"He'll go direct to the other place, won't come here. Oh, I reckon he'll get there along about nine this morning. Why?"

"We'll have to go over there to meet him," said Gramont. "I stopped in here to pick you up. Hammond is still safe in jail?"

"Sure." Hearne laughed evilly. "I don't guess he'll get out in a hurry, neither!"

"Chacherre was pinched last night for the murder," said Gramont, watching the other.

"The h—ll!" Hearne looked astonished, then relaxed and laughed again. "Some fly cop will sure lose his buttons, then! They ain't got nothin' on him."

"I heard they had plenty."

"Don't worry," Hearne waved a hand grandiloquently. "The boss is solid with the bunch up to Baton Rouge, and they'll take care of everybody. So old Ben got pinched, huh? That's one joke, man!"

Gramont's worst suspicions were confirmed by the attitude of Hearne, who plainly considered that the entire gang had nothing to fear from the law. Chacherre's boasts were backed up solidly. It was obvious to Gramont that the ramifications of the gang extended very high up, indeed.

"Better cut out the talk," he said, curtly, "until we get out of here."

Hearne nodded and rolled a cigarette.

When his hasty meal was finished, Gramont paid at the counter and led the way outside. He motioned toward the car, and Hearne obediently climbed in, being evidently of so little account in the gang that he was accustomed to taking orders from everyone.

Gramont headed out of town and took the Paradise road. Before he had driven a mile, however, he halted the car, climbed out, and lifted one side of the hood.

"Give me those rags from the bottom of the car, Hearne," he said, briefly.

The other obeyed. As Gramont made no move to come and get them, Hearne got out of the car; then Gramont rose from the engine unexpectedly, and Hearne looked into a pistol.

"Hold out your hands behind you and turn around!" snapped Gramont. "No talk!"

Hearne uttered an oath, but as the pistol jerked at him he obeyed the command. Gramont took the strip of cloth, which he had previously prepared, and bound the man's wrists.

"These are better than handcuffs," he commented. "Too many slick individuals can get rid of bracelets—but you'll have one man's job to get rid of these! Oh! a gun in your pocket, eh? Thanks."

"What tell you doin'?" exclaimed the bewildered Hearne.

"Placing you under arrest," said Gramont, cheerfully.

"Here, where's your warrant? You ain't no dick—"

Gramont cut short his protests with a long cloth, which effectually bound his lower jaw in place and precluded any further idea of talk.

He then tied Dick Hearne securely, hand and foot, and then lashed him to one of the top supports of the car. When he had finished, Hearne was reasonably safe. He then climbed

under the wheel again and proceeded on his way. Hearne's lashings were inconspicuous to any one whom the car passed.

It was a little after eight in the morning when Gramont drove into Paradise. He noticed that two large automobiles were standing in front of the post office, and that about them were a group of men who eyed him and his car with some interest. Paying no attention to these, he drove on through the town without a halt.

Sweeping out along the north road, he encountered no one. When at length he reached the Ledanois farm he drove in toward the deserted house and parked the car among some trees where it could not be seen from the road.

Leaving the car, Gramont took his way toward the bank of the bayou and followed this in the direction of the adjoining property.

He went on to an opening in the bushes which, over the low rail fence, gave him a clear view of the Gumberts property. There he paused, quickly drew back, and gained a point whence he could see without danger of his presence being discovered. He settled into immobility and watched.

That Memphis Izzy himself had not yet arrived, he was fairly certain. Near the barn were drawn up two delivery vans, and sitting in chairs on the cottage veranda were three men who must have come in these cars. Gramont had come provided with binoculars, and got these out. He was not long in discovering that all three men on the veranda were strangers to him. They, no doubt, were men in the lottery game, waiting for Gumberts to arrive. Gramont turned his attention to the other buildings.

Both the barn and shop were open, and the buzzing thrum of machinery bore witness that the mechanics were hard at work upon the stolen cars. Gramont thought of Ben Chacherre, still tied and lashed to the chair in his room, and wondered what was to be found under the rear seat of Ben's car. He could see the car from where he lay.

Almost on his thought, a high-powered and noiseless car came sweeping down the road and he knew at once that Memphis Izzy had arrived. He knew it intuitively, even before he obtained a good glimpse of the broad, heavy figure and the dominating features. Memphis Izzy was far from handsome, but he possessed character.

"Where's the Goog?" As he left the car, which he had driven himself, Gumberts lifted his voice in a bull-like roar that carried clearly to Gramont. "Where's Charlie the Goog?"

The mechanics appeared hurriedly. One of them, no other than Gramont's friend of the adonoidal aspect, who seemed to own the mellifluous title of Charlie the Goog, hastened to the side of Gumberts, and the latter gave him evident directions regarding some repair to the car. Then, turning, Memphis Izzy strode to the cottage. He nodded greetings to the four men who awaited him, took a bunch of keys from his pocket and opened the cottage door. All five vanished within.

Gramont rose. A moment previously, fever had thrilled him; the excitement of the manhunt had held him trembling. Now he was cool again, his fingers touching the pistol in his pocket, his eyes steady. He glanced at his watch and nodded.

"It's time!" he murmured. "Let's hope there'll be no slipup! All ready, Memphis Izzy. So am I. Let's go!"

Unhurried and openly, he advanced, making his leisurely way toward the barn and shop. Charlie the Goog, who was bent over the car of Gumberts, was first to discern his approach, and straightened up. Gramont waved his hand in greeting. Charlie the Goog turned his head and called his brethren, who came into sight, staring at Gramont.

The latter realized that if he passed them the game was won. If they stopped him, he bade fair to lose everything.

"Hello, boys!" he called, cheerily, as he drew near. "I came out on an errand for the boss—got a message for Gumberts. Where is he? In the house?"

The others nodded, plainly mistrusting him, yet puzzled by his careless manner and his reference to Fell.

"Sure," answered Charlie the Goog. "Go right in—he's in the big front room."

"Thanks." Gramont continued his way, conscious that they were staring after him. If there was anything phony about him, they evidently considered that Memphis Izzy would take care of the matter very ably.

The steps of the cottage porch creaked protestingly as Gramont ascended them. Perhaps Memphis Izzy recognized an unaccustomed footstep; perhaps that conversation outside had penetrated to him. Gramont entered the front door into the hall, and as he did so, Gumberts opened the door on his right and stood gazing at him—rather, glaring.

"Who're you?" he demanded, roughly.

"Came out with a message from Mr. Fell," responded Gramont at once. "Brought some orders, I should say—"

The sixth sense of Memphis Izzy, which had carried him uncaught into a grizzled age, must have flashed a warning to his crook's brain. In the man's eyes Gramont read a surge of suspicion and knew that his bluff could be worked no longer.

"Here's his note," he said, and reached into his pocket.

Gumberts' hand flashed down, but halted as Gramont's pistol covered him.

"Back into that room, and do it quickly," said Gramont, stepping forward. "Quick!"

Memphis Izzy obeyed. Gramont stood in the doorway, his eyes sweep-

ing the room and the men inside. Startled, all four of them had risen and were staring at him. In his other hand he produced an automatic which he had taken from Dick Hearne.

"The first word from any of you gentlemen," he declared, "will draw a shot. I'm doing all the talking here. Savvy?"

They stood staring, paralyzed by this apparition. They had been sitting about the table, which was heaped with papers and with packages of money. A large safe in the wall stood open. Beside the table was a small mail sack, partially emptied of its contents; torn envelopes littered the floor.

That this was the headquarters of at least a section of the lottery gang Gramont saw without need of explanation.

"You're under arrest," said Gramont, quietly. "The game's up, Gumberts. Hands up, all of you! Dick Hearne has peached on the whole gang, and from the boss down you're all in for a term in stir. You with the derby! Take Gumberts' gun, and those of your companions, then your own; throw 'em on the floor in the corner, and if you make the wrong kind of a move, heaven help you! Step lively, there!"

Each man there had a revolver or pistol, and one by one the weapons clattered into the corner. Gumberts stood motionless, licking his thick lips, unuttered curses in his glaring eyes. And in that instant Gramont heard the porch steps creak and caught a low, startled cry.

"Hey, boss! They's a gang comin' on the run—"

It was Charlie the Goog, bursting in upon them in wild haste. Gramont stepped into the room and turned slightly, covering with one of his weapons the intruder, who stood aghast in the doorway as he comprehended the scene.

No words passed. Staring at the five men, then at Gramont, the adonoidal mechanic gulped once—and like a flash acted. He ducked low and fired from his pocket. Gramont fired at the same instant, and the heavy bullet, catching Charlie the Goog squarely in the chest, hurled his body full across the room.

With the shots Memphis Izzy flung himself forward in a headlong rush. That desperate shot of the little mechanic had broken Gramont's right arm above the wrist; before he could fire a second time, with the weapon in his left hand, Gumberts had wrested the pistol aside and was struggling with him. The other four came into the melee full weight.

Gramont went down under a crashing blow. Over him leaped Memphis Izzy and rushed into the doorway—then stopped with astounding abruptness and lifted his arms. After him the other four followed suit. Two men, panting a little, stood outside the door and covered them with shotguns.

"Lie 'em, boys," said Gramont, rising dizzily to his feet. "No, I'm not hurt—my arm's broken, I think, but let that wait. Got the ones outside?"

A stamping of feet filled the hall, and other men appeared there.

"Got two of 'em, Gramont!" responded the leader. "The third slipped in here—ah, there he is!"

Poor Charlie the Goog lay dead on the floor—a touch of heroic tragedy in his last desperate action; the one great action of his life, possibly. He had realized that it meant doom, yet he had done what he could.

"I think that's all," said Gramont. "We've sure made a killing, boys—and it's a good thing you jumped in to the minute! A second later and they'd have done for me. Take care of that evidence, will you? Get that mail sack and the letters particularly; if they've been working their lottery outside the state, it'll be a federal matter."

Gumberts, who was being tied up with his friends, uttered a hoarse cry. "Who are you guys? You can't do this without authority—"

"Don't be silly, Memphis Izzy," said Gramont, smiling a little, then twirling to the pain of his arm. "These friends of mine are members with me of the American Legion, and they've come along at my request to put you crooks where you belong. As for authority, you can ask and go hang."

"Here, boys, I've got to get out to that barn. Come along, some of you!"

He led the way out to the barn and, the others trooping in behind him, entered. He pointed out the car which had brought Chacherre here previously, and ordered the extra seat in the back opened up.

"I think there's a bundle inside," he said. "What's in it, I don't know—"

"Here we are, cap."

A bundle was produced, and opened. In it was found the aviator's costume which Gramont had worn as the Midnight Masquer, and which Chacherre had stolen with the loot. Wrapped among the leather garments was an automatic pistol.

Gramont stood aghast before this discovery, as realization of what it meant broke full upon him.

"Good lord!" he exclaimed, amazedly. "Boys—why, it must have been Ben Chacherre who killed Maillard! See if that pistol has been used—"

The Midnight Masquer had fired two bullets into Maillard. Two cartridges were gone from this automatic.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

In the Hands of Friends.

"When you leave yourself in the hands of your friends are you sure you can trust them?"

"No," replied Senator Sorghum.

"Some of them are liable at any moment to go out behind my back and dig up all kinds of needful campaign funds in a manner that I should highly disapprove of if I knew about it."

His Scattered Acquaintance.

She—What were you doing after the accident?

He—Scraping up an acquaintance.

Something to Think About

By F. A. WALKER

THE STEP BEYOND

JUST a step beyond the barriers which have so long defied us, and we are sure of our ground, certain of realizing our fondest hopes, and marching on and on with the victors.

The thought thrills us with elation, but how hard it is to make the final stride when we are worn and weary.

Human nature is prone to lose courage when the chase is tiresome.

It inclines to become disheartened when carefully worked out plans and calculations fail immediately to produce anticipated results.

The fatal fault with most of us is lack of patience, coupled with an inclination to be governed by impulse rather than reason at the turning moment when everything is dependent on calmness and firmness of purpose.

We incline to haste when we should go slowly and take accurate account of our energy, where we should conserve it, that our minds may not be filled with fear and finally overcome with sickening apprehension.

In business, as in love, most of our miserable failures result from our refusal to consider seriously the step beyond.

For some paltry reason, a whim of the fancy, or a laxity of activity, we find ourselves at the crucial moment weary of the chase.

So we sit in the inviting shade of a friendly nook, while our more ambitious rivals steal a march upon us and capture the prize, only a step beyond our impatient reach.

The blame is our own. But the truth never penetrates our souls until the clear perspective of years gives us a sharper vision which enables us to see our folly.

It is not until then that we fully understand our shortcomings.

To make amends for our own deficiencies, we proceed to pass around advice to our intimates, which, as a rule, falls on barren ground. They know us!

There is but a step between success and failure, likewise but a step between hope and despair. When the occasion comes for action very few of us, alas, know how to make the step, though it is inviting and has an air of simplicity.

And yet there is probably no other movement more vitally important to man's future success than the step just beyond.

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THE ROMANCE OF WORDS

"PLUCK"

EXCEPT as a synonym for courage, pluck appears to have little in common with the words which are derived from the French root-word "coeur," meaning "heart" but, in reality, they are very closely allied, having their parentage in the old belief that the heart is the seat of bravery. "Courage" and "courageous" both bear testimony to this belief, having come down to us by way of the French, while "pluck" is essentially Anglo-Saxon and was formerly the slang term for the entrails of an ox or steer. When the butcher laid open the carcass of the animal he would divide the great arteries leading to the heart, cut through the windpipe, and then lift or pluck out the heart and lungs, referring to the entire mass as "the pluck."

Merely as an indication of the comparative infancy of the word, Sir Walter Scott wrote in his journal in 1827 that a certain man was "wanting in that article which is blackguardedly called 'pluck.'" For a number of decades past, however, the word has been sanctioned by the best usage in English and this butcher's colloquialism has taken its place alongside the aristocratic words of the language.

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Had It Learned.

Diner—I have eaten much better steaks than this one.

Walter (through force of habit)—Not here, sir, not here.—American Legion Weekly.

ONCE IS ENOUGH



THE SANDMAN STORY

HENPECKED ROOSTER

ONE day Mr. Rooster said to his wife, "My dear, I am going on a little excursion with Mr. Drake. He said he will show me a bit of the world I have not seen."

Biddy was a very wise creature, and having lived for some time she knew when to give advice to her husband and when to keep silent, but this was one of the times she felt she must speak.

"I would not go far away with Mr. Drake, my dear," she said. "You know you cannot stand the weather as he can and it looks to me like rain."

"Oh, bother," crowed Mr. Rooster, "can't you see the weather is fine, and besides Mr. Drake told me this was



Mr. Rooster Went Along.

sure to be a fine day and he ought to know; he is older than we are."

"It may be a fine day for ducks," replied Biddy, "but not for hens and roosters. Better not go far away."

"Come along, don't let your wife boss you, Mr. Rooster," said Mr. Drake, who had just waddled along. "I never let my wives tell me what to do, and I have had several; it is going to be a fine day, I tell you."

Mr. Rooster lifted his head higher and strutted off with Mr. Drake down

the road; the sun was shining and there were plenty of worms and bugs to be found, and though the sky did look dark once in a while Mr. Drake assured him that the weather was sure to keep fine, so Mr. Rooster went along where Mr. Drake led him.

The first thing he knew he was in the woods and the rain was pattering on the leaves. "Guess I better run home," he said.

"Oh, this is fine weather," said Mr. Drake. "Don't be frightened by a little rain. You rest under this tree and I will take a swim in the pond. I do love a swim when it is raining."

So off went Mr. Drake, leaving Mr. Rooster all dripping wet under the tree and feeling very unhappy, and he wished very much he had listened to his wife and stayed near the barnyard.

By and by the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled and down came the rain as if poured from a pail.

Mr. Rooster started for home soaked to the skin, and when he crept under the barnyard gate his wife, who was peeping out from under some bushes, saw him. "What did I tell you?" she said. "I knew just how it would be. Now you come right into the house and dry those wet clothes and get into bed."

"I'll put your feet in hot water and give you ginger tea and wrap you up in a blanket and the next time Mr. Drake wants to go on an excursion tell him to take some one that likes wet weather," and she gave him a sharp peck to let him know she meant it.

Biddy talked so fast that Mr. Rooster could not get in a word edgewise, and he didn't have anything to say anyway, so he meekly obeyed, and that was how he became a henpecked husband, for after that when Mr. Rooster started to do anything his wife did not like she had only to say, "Remember your trip with Mr. Drake," and give him a peck with her bill and the question was settled the way Mrs. Biddy wanted it.

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"What's in a Name?"

By MILDRED MARSHALL

Facts about your name; its history; meaning; whence it was derived; significance; your lucky day and lucky jewel

CAROLINE

IT'S a curious fact that some heroes lose, rather than gain, popularity, when their deeds are recorded in romance. Such was the case of the famous Karl of the Franks, who is responsible for the origin of the feminine name Caroline. The great emperor has suffered at the hands of romantic chroniclers, but history preserved the memory of "Carlo Magno," and from his name came a long series of masculine and feminine names.

The first feminine translation known is Carlotta. This name was synonymous with Charlotte in those early times, and, indeed, Charlotte and the Caroline of today are almost interchangeable, if their origin is to be observed, no matter how separate and distinct they seem to be. Charlotte, or Carlotta, of Savoy married Louis XI and introduced the name to French royalty. Charlotte 'Albret had the misfortune to be given in marriage to Cesare Borgia and had one daughter, who married into the house of La Tremouille, whence the brave Lady Derby carried it into England.

The Huguenotism of that house connected it with the house of Bonillon, whose heiress, Carola, or Charlotte, was married in 1588. There the house of Orange derived it and it became known in Germany and was brought to England in its full popularity by the good queen of George III. It gained sentimental vogue and an international fame through Goethe, who chose the name for his heroine of "Werther."

The first Caroline was evolved in Italy, but was quickly adopted by southern Germany and in turn brought to England by the wife of George II, who made it extremely popular among the nobility. America received it first through the Carolinas (North and South), and its fame and popularity as a feminine proper name spread rapidly.

Caroline has numberless derivatives and contractions. England calls her Charlotte, Lotty, Chatty, Caroline and Carrie. In France she is Carollina, Charlotte and Lottie. Carlotta and Lola are purely Spanish and Carlotta and Carollina are the Italian versions. Germany preserves the original preference for Charlotte, Carollina and Lina.

Caroline's talismanic gem is the diamond. It promises her faithful love: if she is married it will enhance the love of her husband, but it should never be purchased, as it is only potent when it is a gift. Her lucky day is Saturday and 1 is her lucky number.

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Asbestos Production.

The best asbestos is obtained from Canada and from Italy. Canada alone is now digging more than 70,000 tons a year.

A LINO O' CHEER

By John Kendrick Bangs.

THE LOVER

THEY say the world loves lovers all— That's why I love myself, For I'm a lover and will fall For all its loving pelf.

I love the earth, the sky, the sea, And all that in them lies, I love the gifts life brings to me, Each one a glad surprise.

I love the day, I love the night, I love life's ordered plan, That since the sun first shed its light, Has promised joy to man.

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YOUR HAND

How to Read Your Characteristics and Tendencies—the Capabilities or Weaknesses That Make for Success or Failure as Shown in Your Palm

MONEY IN THE HAND

INHERITANCE of money being always interesting, especially to those who look forward to receiving a legacy, it is well to note what the hand has to say on the subject. Note whether the top phalanx of the finger of Jupiter (the forefinger) bears on the inside, toward the other fingers, a deep vertical line. If the same finger has a number of short, horizontal lines crossing the bottom phalanx, it is also the sign of the inheritance of money.

Next, inspect the rascette, or bracelet, at the wrist. If there is a well-marked, small cross there, money will come to the fortunate possessor of the cross, through inheritance.

Of all the signs of the inheritance of money, however, the strongest is a line running from a star on the mount of Venus (the ball of the thumb) to the middle of the palm of Mars, the "hollow" of the hand. This indicates a large inheritance.

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