

# THE MAN WITH THE MASTERS' MI.

Being the Chronicles of Carlton Clarke, Telepatho-Detective Solver of Criminal Mysteries. BY FRANK LOVELL NELSON.

## The Mystery of the Trust Builder.

(This is the second of the adventures of Carlton Clarke, the solver of criminal mysteries by wonderful telepatho-detective methods. This story deals with trusts, the methods of high finance, a confidential clerk's treachery, and his patiently waiting for 25 years to avenge a wrong. It is a story strong with vital interest.)

WHEN I took up my residence with Carlton Clarke, telepathic detective, I admit it was with certain misgivings. Imagine living with a man who, in case you were out the night before, could tell you, without question, where you had been and what you had been doing. Surely I should have to make a fine of myself individually. A few weeks, however, taught me that my fears were groundless. If Clarke employed his wonderful powers in my case, it was only in anticipating my wants.

We had been house mates but a short time when I discovered that his clientele already was a large one and drawn from widely different circles. What their troubles were or in what manner Clarke was able to aid them I was unable to guess. Once, when I suspect my mind was dwelling on the mystery with rather a morbid interest, Clarke turned to me and said:

"These cases are too commonplace to interest you. Wait until we have something big and I will take you into my confidence. By the way, I expect a client this evening who ought to be worth while. He is the head of one of the best-known stock brokerage houses in the city, and in his note he says he hopes I may be able to solve a mystery affecting some of the greatest corporate interests of the country."

During the evening a severe electrical storm broke over the city. As Clarke did not expect his caller until 8:30, I retired to my room to snatch an extra hour for some work I had in hand. Soon my typewriter was clattering away to the accompaniment of the artillery of the heavens. I could hear Clarke nervously pacing the library. Without the lightning kept up one continuous flash. A bolt finally struck so near that the flash and the report seemed to come almost at the same instant. This was too much for my nerves and I decided that work was out of the question.

"It's a fierce night out. I'm afraid your man will not come," I suggested to Clarke, going to the door.

Clarke stopped his restless march. "I had begun to think so myself," he said, "but if I am not mistaken, he is just now turning into Chestnut street at Clarke's."

As well as I knew Clarke and with all my faith in his wonderful powers, this was a trifle beyond my comprehension. In less than five minutes, however, we heard a carriage drive up to the entrance. I rushed to the window and saw the coachman covering a steaming pair of handsome blacks with their rubber blankets.

"I suppose you scarcely expected me such a night as this, Mr. Clarke," said our caller, as he laid off his rain coat and top hat. "I assure you my coming serves to show that the matter is of great importance. I am Henry A. Bolton, of the firm of Bolton & Co. You doubtless had my note this afternoon. I was referred to you by a friend, who tells me that you have had considerable success in confidential cases."

I took Mr. Bolton's hat and coat, and when I returned from stowing them away in the reception hall I had my first opportunity to make a careful survey of his person.

Our visitor was evidently a man of affairs. He was rotund to the verge of corpulence. A keen gray eye—a money eye, if there is such a distinctive orb—looked straight at me. His cheeks glowed under a healthy tan and his white hair, mustache and neatly trimmed imparts him something of a military bearing. For the rest he was a member of the Mystic Shrine—witness the handsome seal on his heavy gold watch chain; he was a golf enthusiast—witness the tan and the callouses on his otherwise white palms; and his tailor was the best in the city.

When my confederate had set out the generally prescribed antidotes for a wet night and our cigars were going well Clarke asked Mr. Bolton for an explanation of his note and visit.

"Let us have the story, Mr. Bolton," he said, "and I will question you as is necessary."

"Well," began Bolton, "as you perhaps know, I am the senior member of the stock brokerage firm of Bolton & Co. Possibly you do not know the position my firm holds in the financial world, for our work is confidential in the extreme. To the world at large we are members of the principal exchanges, both here and in the East, doing a general stock brokerage business with a branch house in New York and private telegraph service. As a matter of fact, though, and I tell it to you in confidence, which I am assured by my friend you will not betray, our actual business is organizing trusts."

"I will say by way of parenthesis that the business deals of Bolton & Co. have since become so well known to the world through the investigations of the Department of Commerce and Labor that I am not violating this confidence in the course of this narrative."

"We are closely affiliated with the well-known firm of P. J. Forgan & Co., of New York," continued Mr. Bolton. "Most of the combinations of capital which have in reality had their inception in our office. I may say, without egotism, that I am the father of the modern trust idea, for I had it worked out in detail 25 years ago."

"Recently our most fortunate ventures have been in concerning the manufacture of minor articles which are, however, important necessities in household economy. There was the lamp chimney trust, the potato masher trust, the can-opener and cork-screw trust, and many others which I might mention, all of which were ideas of mine, and were organized in our office. We have also had a hand in, practically all of the better-

known combinations of capital within the last half-dozen years.

"I am telling you this, not in a boastful way, but because it is necessary that you should have a thorough understanding of the details of our business and because it has an important bearing. I believe, on what is to follow."

"Naturally we receive a large daily mail from our house in New York, which, as you doubtless know, is in charge of James H. Hazen, my son-in-law. The mail invariably includes a daily report of the business done by the New York house. I give this mail my personal attention.

"It was about six months ago that I first noticed something peculiar in this department of our business. One day, in going through the New York mail, I observed an error in the spelling of some common word in the daily report. It rather galled me and I took my pen and corrected it. As I turned the sheet over upon the blotter my eye was attracted by a sentence lightly written in pencil on the back. The hand was the merest childish scrawl and the substance so utterly foolish that I paid no attention to it. I thought it likely that one of the children of the clerk, whose duty it was to write up the report, had been in the office scribbling on the blanks. Here is the report."

Mr. Bolton took a document from an imposing pocketbook and laid it upon the table. We read upon it the following sentence:

"I see two black cats on the backyard fence."

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Bolton after Clarke had studied the scrawl for a few minutes.

"Evidently a disguised hand," answered Clarke. "There's new system of vertical writing in the easiest penmanship imaginable under which to hide a characteristic hand. But go on. This certainly is not sufficient excuse for calling in an expert."

"Certainly not," answered Bolton. "I should have thought nothing of this had it not been for the events which followed. I do not say that I immediately connected these events with this scrawl, but you will see how I was led to this inference as I proceed."

"At the time this report reached me we had just concluded with the house of Forgan & Co. an arrangement to buy up all of the broom factories in the country and organize them into a trust. The broom, as you know, is an insignificant article, but it is found in every home in America. Our plans were going nicely. We had every factory in the country save one. This one, however, had an output equal to the combined output of all the others, and its purchase was absolutely necessary to our plans."

"When this daily report came we were just opening negotiations for its purchase with every prospect of success. The day after the receipt of the report I met the owners, and their terms nearly knocked me into a heap. Nothing less than the presidency of the trust, a majority of the board of directors and 61 per cent of the stock! If you know anything about business you know that these terms were impossible. No amount of persuasion would shake them or disclose their reasons, and the upshot was that we gave up the project, the house of Bolton & Co. lost more money than I care to think about, and my credit with Forgan & Co. was seriously damaged."

"A few weeks afterward we essayed the launching of the souvenir postal card trust. It may surprise you when I tell you that the business done in souvenir postal cards in this country runs far up into the millions annually. I had watched the progress of the fad, and thought I saw a chance for a pretty speculation. We had bought up a few small houses as a basis, but the business was practically controlled by the big printing firm of Hollawell & Eubank, whose stock passes on the curb. The stock had been hovering around 200 and I had given my brokers orders to buy the minute it dropped below 95. We had picked up but a small block of shares at that figure, when one morning, in looking over the mail, I saw another notation on the back of the daily report. Here it is."

We looked at the paper which he held out, and read in the same childish hand:

"Two boys on the grass playing mumbletypeck."

"What happened?" queried Clarke.

"Enough," answered Bolton. "The next day H. & E. jumped to 110 under feverish buying. The next to 115, the next to 134, the next to 150. In a week a hitherto neglected stock could not be had at 200. The souvenir postal card trust was still-born. Our money loss was not great, but our loss in prestige was considerable."

"But it is useless to multiply cases. To epitomize, when New York wrote 'Two geese are in the pond,' the safety pin trust went under. When 'A fox ate two chickens' appeared, the brick trust failed, with great loss to Bolton & Co. This brings it down to yesterday, when this inscription appeared," and Bolton laid a third report before us.

The line was:

"Cattaline et forte dux."

"Now, Mr. Clarke—and Mr. Sexton, I may add—as you seem to be equally interested, I have given you a pretty full account of the case. I can never tell you the worry it has caused me. The blows delivered my house recently have been heavy, and many times I have seen financial ruin staring me in the face. If you can explain this mystery, and put a stop to these occurrences, you may save me from the bankruptcy court, which, with me, means a suicide's grave."

"Let me ask you first, Mr. Bolton," said Clarke, "if any similar notations have appeared on any paper which you send daily to your New York office?"

"I thought you would ask that, and I am prepared for you. Some months ago my son-in-law, Mr. Hazen, complained that our daily confirmation of wired messages was being defaced, and suggested, rather sarcastically, that we keep children out of our office. As soon as my suspicions began to take form, I asked him to send me all of the daily confirmations which contained



anything in any manner out of the ordinary. I have marked the lines of these sentences, and here they are:

"Three cats eating catnip."

"If a farmer sold three chickens for."

"If the feathers of 60 ducks will stuff."

"That is the list, and if you can make anything out of such ridiculous nonsense, you are smarter than I am, and that's considerable of an admission for Henry Bolton to make to any man."

"Were these sentences in a hand similar to the one which penned the lines on your daily report?" inquired Clarke.

"Here is one of the originals, and you may see for yourself," said Bolton, again drawing his ponderous wallet. The writing was very similar, being vertical. "Clearly the same effort to disguise a well-formed hand," commented Clarke. "Now, Mr. Bolton, tell me exactly through whose hands these papers are accustomed to pass. First, take the report which you receive daily."

"It is opened by my personal file clerk, together with other papers to be filed, this to me in a basket, together with other mail. In fact, I usually find this basket on my desk when I arrive in the morning. After I have glanced over the report I put it in another basket, together with other papers to be filed. This is removed by my confidential man, who gives it to the chief clerk, who, in turn, gives the papers to the filing clerk, who puts them in their proper files. The daily confirmation list is made up by the chief clerk, comes to me through the hands of the confidential man, and is returned by me to him. He then gives it to the file clerk, who, with his other duties, attends to the sealing and stamping of all the mail which leaves my private office. I am not familiar with the smaller details of the New York office, but I imagine much the same method is employed there."

"Now, tell me something of these employees, beginning with the confidential man."

"Tobias Hippie, our confidential man, has held his present position for 25 years. He is a native-born American, and was taken into the firm at the age of 20. We were both clerks together. One of my first orders was to place him in the position he now holds, and to give him a substantial increase in salary. He is a very religious man, a deacon in the church, besides being greatly interested in city mission work. His salary is \$20,000 a year, which is much more than such positions usually command, but he is more than a mere clerk. He lives in his own home, a very handsome one in Riverside. His son, by the way, is attentive to my youngest daughter, so you see we are bound together by family as well as business ties."

"Have you ever known him to gamble?" inquired Clarke.

"Never. It is a capital crime in my office for any of the working force to have any dealings on the exchange. Besides, Hippie is opposed to the stock market on principle. Several times his conscience has troubled him so regarding the nature of the business with which he is connected that only by reminding him of the stronger duty to his family have I prevented him from resigning. But it is needless to question me regarding Tobias Hippie. If ever a man was the soul of honor, he is, and I would as soon suspect myself as suspect him."

"Now for the chief clerk, then," said Clarke.

"The chief clerk, Gordon Wiley, is a young man who has only been with us about six months. He came from the New York house and is a protégé of my son-in-law. I know very little about him other than that he does his work well and seems invariably civil and willing. I have felt slightly prejudiced against him at times, because he wears more expensive clothes than he should on \$25 a month, but I have found no reason to let that weigh against him."

"The file clerk I think you can count out altogether. He is an overgrown boy, and I am satisfied that if he lives to be as old as Methuselah, he will still be filing papers at the rate of eight dollars a week."

"It is clear," commented Clarke, meditatively puffing his cigar, "that you have stumbled upon somebody's secret code. Your reverses in business are doubtless the result of information given and received through this method. What I fail to understand is, why the parties to the conspiracy, for such it appears to be, did not adopt the quicker medium of the telegraph, or the safer method of the private letter. This point doubtless will be clear if we can get at the roots of the mystery. Did it ever occur to you that you might break the thread of information by pocketing the report immediately on its receipt and never letting it out of your hands?"

"But it only dawned on me gradually that there was any connection between these writings and my business losses. I have taken that course with yesterday's report and it has never been out of my possession."

"Then it will be interesting to see if the developments are the same, although I am inclined to believe that we will have the whole matter cleared up before we will have time to test that plan. Now let me ask you if anyone in your office, or any of your competitors, has apparently benefited by your losses?"

"Absolutely none, and that is one of the things that mystify me. The stocks of companies which we have been after have been bought by small brokers practically unknown on the street, and evidently acting for some person or persons who are strictly in the background. Now,

Mr. Clarke, I am a man of business and I recognize that you have accumulated the methods. So take your time and I will give you every advantage in getting to the bottom of this. If you succeed you may write your own check for your services. Is there anything else you would like to ask me?"

"No; I will look into the case tomorrow. I shall doubtless call at your office in the capacity of one seeking advice regarding the placing of some securities. It will be strange if we do not turn up something."

When the sound of Bolton's carriage wheels had died away, and Clarke and I were again seated in our cozy little library, my companion sat for many minutes gazing fixedly at a list of the mysterious sentences which he had hastily scribbled.

"An apparently simple case, Sexton," he finally said. "But there are depths to it which we have not sounded. Bolton was as honest with me as it is possible for a man to be who is daily in the mad vortex of money-getting. There was something in his mind, however, which I could not grasp. Several times I had a stray thread and then it was gone. I feel that, before we are done, we will witness a drama of human hearts; yes, perhaps a tragedy."

"Can you make anything out of the cipher?"

"No, and I have little hopes of doing so. It is obviously an arbitrary code, and the fact that the sentences always stop short of ten words would suggest it was devised for telegraphic purposes, despite the use to which it was put."

"Which of the clerks do you suspect?"

"I asked, as Clarke tossed away his cigarette and seemed inclined to end the conversation.

"Oh, that deals with the mind of man, something upon which it is impossible to speculate. According to Bolton's judgment, Hippie and the file clerk are out of the question. This leaves only Wiley, the expensive dresser. But we shall see. Now you had better go to bed and get some sleep. I will sit up a while and think it over. By the way, Sexton, if you want to pick up some money and test the cash value of telepathy at the same time, buy Boxboard early tomorrow. Bolton is going to buy it."

"Why don't you buy it?" I asked.

"Oh, it is not in my line, and I have a horror of these money changers. Still, I shall not balk at Bolton's check if I succeed. It will only be spoiling the spoiler."

which ornamented the cover, for a solution of the mystery.

I awoke late, and when I reluctantly piloted my sleepy way to my morning bath, I found Clarke was already away.

About 3 o'clock he returned. His dark, handsome face was inscrutable, and he vouchsafed no information further than that he had spent the major portion of the day in Bolton's office, and had seen Hippie, Wiley and the file clerk, whose names turned out to be Bobus. I judged that he had not been able to engage either of them in a conversation sufficiently intimate to make his peculiar "third degree" effective.

We ordered a 6:30 dinner; after it I intended to go to the theater.

As soon as we were seated at the table, Clarke buried his face in his evening paper, looking up with one to say "Boxboard is up ten points. Did you buy?"

I confessed that I had not.

Suddenly the telephone bell rang violently.

"Ah, I expected that; no theater for you tonight," exclaimed Clarke, jumping up so suddenly that he sent a ringer of sound throbbing down the hall. The ends of the conversation I caught were as follows: "Yes, this is Carlton Clarke. We'll be down right away—Behind the door, please—Don't fear. We shall come armed."

"Come on, Sexton, we're wanted," he then said to me, while he took his favorite revolver from the rack of arms and handed me a weapon.

"By the cars; it will be quicker than a cab; takes us to the door. Sexton, I'm afraid I've made a terrible mistake. I've turned a few loose on you. Your life is in danger. God send we get there in time. It will be all right if he follows my advice."

By this time we were on the car, and my companion relaxed into taciturnity.

The great office building was almost deserted when we reached it. Here and there a light on the dizzy facade showed where some belated worker was closing up the day's business. As safe a place for a crime, I thought, in the heart of that cavernous structure, as in the depths of an unbroken forest.

The one elevator which was still running took us quickly to the floor, the whole of which was devoted to the offices of Bolton & Co. The outer door was closed. Clarke silently opened it with a key, evidently having prepared himself for such an emergency. Quickly, noiselessly and with knowledge of his previous visit, Clarke guided me through the dark labyrinth of small rooms until we reached the door leading to Bolton's private office.

Within we heard the sound of angry voices in dispute. The door was slightly ajar, and, lifting a warning finger to me, Clarke applied his hand to the handle, while I noted that he had his weapon in hand with the barrel in line with the opening.

Placing his mouth close to my ear he whispered: "He has my promise not to interfere unless absolutely necessary."

From the heat of the discussion within there was no danger of his being overheard.

"Do you mean to tell me that I cannot read, sir? Do you dare tell me you did not write those words?"

This was the first connected sentence I was able to distinguish. The voice was Bolton's.

"You have browbeaten me long enough," answered his companion. "Come with me to the vault and we will prove to you that every one of the daily reports for years contains the same line as 'Three cats eating catnip.'"

"It is a farce, you scoundrel, but I will give you every chance to prove your innocence."

We heard them step into the vault, where the conversation was continued in now muffled tones.

Suddenly we heard a curse, a loud cry, the sound of falling body, and then we were in the office, at a bound, with myself at his heels. He had scarcely reached the center of the room when a tall, angular, gray-haired man sprang from the vault. With a demoniacal laugh he swung the heavy door shut, and rapidly spun the dial which threw the combination. His eyes straightened up to find himself looking into the muzzle of Clarke's revolver.

"Now, Mr. Tobias Hippie, we'll have that vault open at once, and let Mr. Bolton out," said Clarke, while my companion held me back in asking anyone to pass the butter.

of exultation came into Clarke's face which I knew meant victory.

"To—lo—ry," he cried, carefully spinning the dial.

There was a click. Clarke swung the door open and rushed into the vault, while Hippie slipped through my arms into a limp heap on the floor.

"That was a close shave, Mr. Bolton," said Clarke, after he had applied a pair of handcuffs on the still unconscious Hippie, telephoned for the police, and we were seated at the broker's desk. "Why didn't you send for me earlier? It is a wonder he did not attack you and find some way to kill you."

"I don't understand it at all, Mr. Clarke," answered Bolton, panting with excitement. "I followed your instructions to the letter. We talked it over for an hour or more after the office closed and then I asked him to endorse the document which you report with the line, 'Daily Reports from New York.' Here is what he wrote in a hand, as you see, similar to what he showed me when he came to the door. He said that he really believed he thought he was right."

"Yes, he did believe he was right," said Clarke.

"But what in the name of common sense is the explanation of it all?" asked Bolton.

"Hippie, himself, will be the best one to tell us that," said Clarke. "He now is completely under my influence, and I believe I can make him divulge the whole case."

Stepping over to the prostrate form of the clerk, he said: "Get up Mr. Hippie, and take a chair at the desk."

The gaunt old man obeyed mechanically.

"Now, Mr. Hippie, I want you to tell us as briefly as possible the cause of your attempt to ruin Bolton and the method you took to do it."

The story came in a quiet voice little in keeping with the set and staring expression of the narrator.

"Thirty-five years ago," he began, "Bolton and I were both clerks for this firm. We were friends and inseparable companions. I had \$10,000 which had been left me by my father. I was in love with a beautiful girl and believed that she was equally in love with me, and that shortly we would be married. I was ambitious and intended with my patrimony to buy myself into the firm."

"My ruin came in a day through this man. Through his cunning and well-arranged inside information furnished by him, I invested my little fortune in the stock of a railroad, buying a large block of shares. The market was a downward turn of the market was to make me independent for life. The next day the company was in the hands of a receiver. My stock fell 20 points, and I was penniless."

"This delayed my marriage. In the meantime, I had introduced Bolton to my intended wife. He seemed to take the loss of my fortune as much to heart as I did, and I believed him. My suspicions were not aroused until I learned that he had taken \$10,000 and was to be taken into the firm. For lack of evidence I smothered my wrath and accepted the position of confidential clerk with apparent gratitude."

"Then the love of my intended bride began to cool, because, I thought, of my fall in fortune. I was undecided when her engagement to Bolton was announced. I had a strong feeling and took his hand in congratulation."

"A few months after they were married I found among his papers damning evidence of his treachery. He had led me into a trap with the intention of ruining me and profiting by my ruin, and that the money which bought his place in the firm was his money. The idea of revenge took root in my heart. I meditated murder, but what is death compared to a crushing blow dealt by a villain who has wronged me? I was safe from me through the love I bore the woman who could never be angry. While she lived I made no move against the man who had wronged me, but I learned his business intimately, that I might strike the harder when I did strike, raising a family as was raised by the sudden fall of the Lord, and withal awaiting my turn of the wheel of fate."

"When a year ago the dear heart that was my first love died, I was in the grave I set my machinery in motion. I made a connection with a house in New York City which Bolton would never suspect. We arranged to buy various domestic animals stood for various stocks. We thus were enabled to block every deal which the house of Bolton & Co. touched, besides, by unloading in time, to make a nice profit of our own. In a few months we would have driven Bolton & Co. to the wall, but I stopped just two anxious and gave the plot away somehow."

Through this strange interview Bolton sat with bowed head and closed eyes.

"I trust that you can do your part from his charge, Mr. Bolton," said Clarke.

"No, God forgive me, I can't. I did take advantage of him in the early days. I made myself believe at the time that it was all in the way of business, but I have suffered in conscience for it ever since, and have regarded the \$10,000 which I have paid him every year as partial atonement. I can't blame myself on my dead wife's account. She did not love Hippie, and she did love me. She never would have approved my any plan."

"Now," said Clarke, "there is only one more point to be cleared up, and that is why Hippie scribbled on the backs of the reports the message which he showed me. I think we shall find, Mr. Bolton, that you owe your discovery of this plot more to a very rare form of insanity, which brooding on his trouble case produced in Hippie's naturally fanatical brain, than to your efforts. He is afflicted with graphia, a peculiar disease of the mind which causes him to write, not always what he intends to write, but what is uppermost in his mind. I met a similar case once in Bellevue Hospital, and I rather suspected as much when I advised you to ask him to endorse one of the reports. He tried to endorse the report as he has done in his methodical way for years, and as you probably have noticed, had you not been too engrossed with business to look at the backs. Then the last message he had wired to New York struck his mind and he wrote that instead. It was a chance shot on my part, I admit. Ah, Inspector Shipp, here is your man. Wait until I unhandcuff him, and see that he does not do violence to himself until we can notify his family. I think you will find it a case needing medical attention, and not properly one for an epenitentiary."

Dazed and bewildered at the strange company in which he awoke to consciousness, Hippie was led away and the chaplain closed on the wreck of a brilliant mind and the blasting of a once fair name. I did not see the check which Carlton Clarke received from Bolton, but I never heard him complain that it was not satisfactory.

(The third of the series of the adventures of Carlton Clarke, entitled "The Case of the Zinc Case," will appear next week.)