

WITH THE MASTER MIND

Being the Chronicles of Carlton Clarke, Telepatho-Deductive Solver of Criminal Mysteries.

BY FRANK LOWELL NELSON.

A Broken Marconigram

(Copyright, 1908, by W. G. Chapman. "TELEGRAM FOR CLARKE." I said, as I took the message which the boy delivered at the door of our Oak-street apartments one morning in midsummer. A shade of anxiety passed over the face of my house mate. "Strang, I thought that Carlton Clarke, the great telepathic detective, should be disturbed by an ordinary event as the receipt of a telegram. "Clarke took the yellow envelope and held it thoughtfully in his hand as a woman studies a telegram before summoning the courage to open it. "Do you remember Thaidia?" he asked suddenly, still holding the envelope as I signed the messenger's book. "Did I remember Thaidia?" I could forget that glorious vision of young womanhood that had flashed into our presence in the ghetto district of New York and whose psychometric mind had aided us in the solution of the puzzling mystery of the "Blue Bokhara." "I see you do," continued Clarke. "Well, my mind has been filled with forebodings concerning her all morning. I have no word, and I am certain that this message concerns her and that the news is not good. We will see," and he tore open the envelope and read it with a look of intense anger, overcast his face. Without a word he passed the message to me. I read: "On board S. S. Magellan, off Pensacola, Fla., Marconi Station. The wolf'sfangs— "No signature. A cipher? None that I was familiar with, yet it must be a meaning and a very terrible one, for as I looked at Clarke's eyes blazed with anger and beneath it he wore a look of the deepest concern. "It is from her. The wolf! I must save her, how? Sexton, can I count on you?" "You know that without asking," I replied, "but I haven't the slightest idea what it all means." "Of course not. Come into the library and I will tell you while we plan some method of action. I do not yet know what." "I first met Thaidia," continued Clarke, "when we were seated in the library, when I was an interne at Bellevue. She was a student, delving deeper than the mind of woman ordinarily goes into subjects of a scientific and psychological nature. She was a friend, a jovial companion, and these traits, allied with the beauty of which you can testify, had the effect of gathering about her a circle of admirers. But with an admirable reserve she held them all at length. "I alone came the nearest to her confidence, and the life we lived was a life of both work and play. She worked to mar it by thoughts of anything closer, both protected, she by her womanly reserve, I by my sincere respect for her. "Then Comte Armand de Loup came into our lives. He was a young French nobleman, very rich, living where and how he pleased. We were attracted to each other by the occult which he had studied in India, in Tibet, wherever the minds of thinkers run in the direction of the unknown. He was suave, handsome and at first charming in every way. It was not long, however, until his advances to Thaidia became so pronounced as to cause her to fear him and me to hate him with a just and healthy hatred. It became necessary for her definitely to repel his offers he went out of our sphere as suddenly as he had entered it, but leaving behind him his curses and his vow of the most terrible vengeance his fiery Gallic spirit could invent. "Nine years have passed since then and no word has been heard of him. After he left, translating his name literally, we called him 'the wolf.' We often talked jokingly of the time when the threatened fangs of the wolf would close upon us. The fangs of the wolf! It must be Thaidia." "As Clarke was speaking the bell rang again and a second messenger arrived. Clarke read it and handed the cover and reading it passed it to me. "It was: "Have struck. Save me." "Like ten feet it was by Marconi system from the steamship Magellan. "Wait," exclaimed Clarke. "We can do nothing. There will be a third. She is sending me word despite some terrible obstacle. "He had hardly finished when the third message arrived. Sent from the same station, it read: "Come to— "Would there be a fourth that would give us the final clue? All the day we waited with the patience we could summon, but it came not. Clarke was the time poring over the timetables of the North and South lines. At last he gave up and throwing the timetables from him he exclaimed: "Something has happened. She cannot finish. But there is another means if only she will try it." "Then he lay back in his chair and closed his eyes for a moment, as if he did not see. I began to think he slept. Then he jumped up so suddenly that he startled me. "Quick! I have it. We are going. Pack. Don't forget the arms and plenty of ammunition, and put in those four automatics we got the other day. There must be no work before we ever see Chicago again. Let's see, the train leaves in an hour and a quarter." "But where are we going?" I asked. "Involuntarily," he shouted as he dashed into his room to throw his clothes out to me to pack. "We reached New Orleans at dusk and took a cab for the railway station. As we drove away, looking out of the cab window I saw a swarthy, roughly dressed man enter another cab which immediately followed us. For more than an hour he did not stir. I began to wonder how such a looking individual happened to be riding in cabs. "As we entered our hotel I looked back. The roughly dressed fellow had discharged his cab and taken up a position across the street where he could watch the door of the hotel. "Clarke, excitedly, whispered to me: "That proves we are on the right trail. We have but to turn ourselves to find the end of it." "We registered under assumed names, went directly to our rooms and had dinner brought up. While we were eating Clarke laid the plans for the night. I felt assured that his iron body and nerves of steel would not relax until he had accomplished something, yet I complained that he had assigned to me the hardest task of all that of watching patiently in the hotel until he should need me. I bent, however, to his argument

that one of us at least should get some sleep and be fresh for the morning. "Keep your car open for the telephone," warned Clarke as he left. "I'll call you the minute I have need of you." I have never rested, but I cannot say I slept much. All night I turned over in my mind all phases of the puzzle. What had the note told Clarke? Why were we soome men and a messenger boy? How did he expect to pick up the trail in this strange city? Where then would it lead to? There was obviously no answer to any of these questions, and I went to sleep with the telephone bell in the room started me into consciousness. I snatched up the receiver. "How me—Clarke. Are you dressed? That's good. Pack everything and slip out through the kitchen. Give the night porter a dollar and he will guide you. Don't worry about the bill. I'll pay it. You'll find a boy waiting at the kitchen door. Follow him. He will guide you. Watch that you are not followed. Now hurry." He need not have added that. I found the kitchen door as he directed and discovered there, puffing nonchalantly at a cigarette, one of those swarthy-looking messenger boys. He grabbed one of the suit cases that I carried and we were away. I followed him blindly through alleys and courts, turning lither and thither after a fashion so convoluted that I would have defied the most expert shadow to have followed us. At last we emerged onto a street where the boy hailed a car. "Take us to the place where the other chap is waiting, gov'ner," he said. "By this time it was dawn and I could see that our way led in the direction of the river. The streets were filled with two-wheeled cotton carts guided by sleepy negroes. We left the car and my guide dodged in and out among the long wharf houses until he came to a small boat landing where a number of small craft were tied up. One of these I had marked from afar. It was a graceful cabin launch of about 35 feet in length, a perfect beauty, trim and staunch. One might, with a fair breeze of weather, sail her out into the gulf, around the keys, right up to the coast and smack into New York harbor. "Clarke was pacing restlessly to and fro on the landing puffing at a cigarette and keeping his weather eye upon the opening between the wharf houses. "I thought you were never coming. Here, into the launch, quick!" and he designated the beauty which I had admired. "I jumped aboard, Clarke threw a bill to the boy, started the engine. "See, I wish I was goin' along," the boy shouted as we swung into the breeze and headed down the river. The 107 miles that separate New Orleans from the delta. "Clarke was busy with the engine and wheel and I took advantage of the opportunity to look about me. We were provisioned for a cruise. Within the cabin in a little cook's galley aft, was the most complete miniature of a boat I had ever seen—a tiny oil stove, a cupboard stocked with all manner of provisions. Had it been a pleasure trip I could have asked nothing better. "Now we were dancing along merrily over the rippling surface of the mighty river, in and out of the craft of all nations which, owing to the genius of American engineers, are able to make this inland port. Clarke steered by the side wheel and a grim smile of satisfaction stole over his face. "At last," he said, "I can tell you whether we are bound and what we probably have before us, but this work of steering is getting tiresome. Come and take the wheel and I will rest a bit." "I took the wheel and watched Clarke curiously while he lifted the cushions and removed the seat upon which I had been sitting. Almost without my seeing extended in the locker the rigid form of a man. "You may get up now," said Clarke, and the body rose to a sitting posture, climbed painfully out of its narrow quarters and stretched its cramped limbs. The fixed expression and the glassy eyes told me the secret—a perfect state of hypnosis. It was the man of the cab, the watcher at the hotel. "I had then the full import of Clarke's devilish cunning, his masterly use of the minds of men by the use of forces which bordered on the supernatural, dawned upon me. Here was the pilot who had watched us from the time we wolf and to Thaidia, the spy turned to account against his own employer. The path lay by water, this evidently Clarke had discovered. "Yes, it was absurdly simple," remarked Clarke, quietly, divining as he so often seemed to do my train of thought. "I was as far from a pleasure trip, that I knew I had the master key to the situation. It was easy to turn from the shadowed to the shadow. I slipped out of the hotel, through the kitchen, prepared the way for you, and while our pilot here was watching the front entrance of the hotel I was within a step of the door. You know my method and it was not long before I had him in my power and knew all that he knows. 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