

THE IRON CLAW

BY ARTHUR STRINGER.
NOVELIZED FROM THE PATHE PHOTO
PLAY OF THE SAME NAME

EPISODE XX.

The Closing Net.

MARGERY GOLDEN suddenly threw aside the magazine which she had been restlessly thumbing, and springing to her feet, crossed rapidly to the window of her cool, white bedroom. As she stood gazing out with unseeing eyes a little frown of vexation puckered her forehead. From the open windows of the spacious living-room on the first floor came the subdued murmur of voices. But to Margery's straining ears not a word of that low-toned conference was audible. Occasionally she heard the rumble of Captain Brackett's voice, more strident and authoritative than the others.

The resentful officers of the law had conceived the idea that on more than one occasion Margery had aided and abetted the Laughing Mask in slipping through his fingers, and it was for that reason she was now excluded from the deliberations where the capture of the elusive masquerader was under discussion. As anticipation of this very state of affairs Margery had devised an ingenious method for learning the plans of the detectives.

Having ascertained that the conference was in full swing, she quickly went to a small wicker table and, taking off the telephone receiver, held it pressed tightly to her ear. Her wire was a house extension connected with the trunk line which ran into the living-room, where her father and the officers were now gathered. In that room the telephone standard, resting on a heavy mahogany table, had been skillfully tampered with. Under the black-metal receiver, hanging with its flaring mouth reversed so as to more readily catch the sound waves, a number of books were piled in such a disorderly fashion as not to attract attention. But the topmost of those books propped up the receiver just enough to permit the supporting hook to spring up and open the circuit.

Over this cleverly improvised dictaphone Margery could hear every word spoken by the men sitting around that table. Presently the booming voice of the police captain came to the ears of the listening girl.

"When I go after a man I don't quit till I get him," she heard him announce in self-satisfactory tones. "I landed that one-armed fellow, Legar, in a cell all right, an' I tell you, Mr. Golden, if it hadn't been for your daughter interfering I'd had the bracelet on the Laughing Mask long ago."

Whether the aged banker would have resented this open declaration of his daughter had shuddered. Legar, supposedly notorious criminal was a question destined never to be answered, for at that moment Margery heard the door shut behind a new arrival, and again it was Captain Brackett's voice which reached her as he impatiently questioned the detective who had just entered.

"What are you doing here, Walters? Didn't you get the orders I sent you by Jenkins to take Legar out of that chicken coop they call a jail out here, an' keep yourself handcuffed to him every minute until he was safe in the Tombs?"

"I got your orders, Chief," came a hesitating voice, presumably that of the sleuth called Walters, "but I've got some bad news for you. Legar's broke jail. He croaked Jenkins and made a clean getaway."

A little while later Margery heard the explosion of this astounding verbal bombshell, a silence broken by a confusion of startled exclamations, punctuated by the wrathful oaths of the irate police captain.

"An' you call yourself a detective!" he barked at the unlucky Walters. "You ought to be out poundin' the pavement. What excuse have you got for lettin' the crook give you the slip?"

Then Margery heard the hurried tones of the censured detective as he launched into an account of the strange escape of Jules Legar.

"I don't see how it happened," he began in a somewhat aggrieved voice. "I seen Jenkins around noon. He was goin' into the jail with a tray from the restaurant. He stops and gives me your orders and says I might as well wait outside until Legar had his feed. That seemed reasonable, an' I hung around 'bout half an hour. Then, when Jenkins didn't come out, I commenced to get kind o' uneasy like an' I steps inside to see what was goin' on." The narrator paused briefly as though overcome with some terrible memory, then continued in a constrained tone.

"Lyn's face down in the corridor I found Jenkins, just outside of Legar's cell. The cell was empty, with the door standin' open and Jenkins' key in the lock. We combed every inch of that jail, but Legar had disappeared without leavin' a trace behind him. I could tell by the looks of Jenkins that he was dead, but when I turned him over I got an awful shock. His face was all twisted up with sufferin' and full of deep lines and wrinkles. Then I seen his hair was all streaked with gray. When he spoke to me he was a healthy young feller, but when I found him he was like some old man about 70, what had died of some awful disease. That's about all an' I don't see how."

But Margery did not wait to hear the concluding remarks of the detective, for at this point she abruptly hung up the receiver. Here was news of a startling character, which must be imparted to the masked guardian of her safety without loss of time. Without stopping to even catch up a hat, she slipped out of her room and down the stairway. As she slipped softly past the living-room, the door suddenly opened and Captain Brackett and Walters stood on the threshold. The stern-faced officer watched the slender girl as she went out the front door and closed it behind her. Then he turned to his crestfallen subordinate.

"Never mind doin' what I was tellin' you, Walters," he tersely commanded. "I want you to shadow that young woman. Don't lose sight of her for a minute."

So it happened that when Margery Golden passed by the mysterious lone boulder on Seven Oaks Hill a hawk-faced detective was hidden not 10 paces distant behind one of the great trees from which the ridge took its name. He saw the girl glance furtively about her, and then from her pursed lips came a low, thrilling call like that of

a bird. After a brief interval she repeated this signal, and presently the yellow-masked man came stealthily around the side of the great boulder. The hidden listener caught enough of what Margery Golden was saying to become aware that she was recounting, almost word for word, his own story of his escape of Jules Legar.

As he wondered from what mysterious source she had learned it the incisive tones of her hooded companion reached his ear.

"I have a theory of my own as to what was used to hold him," that fearful manner, the Laughing Mask was saying, "and I am going to find out tonight whether I am right or wrong. Legar's followers have all been wiped out with the exception of a man calling himself Skidmon. He was a brilliant scientist until he contracted the drug habit, and then, when he was down and out he fell in with Legar. He lives in a tumble-down old house at the foot of the blind alley south of Washington Square. He still has some sort of a laboratory where he potters around, always on the lookout for making some wonderful new discovery. It's my idea that he furnished Legar with—"

But that sentence was clipped short, for at that moment the detective, burning with zeal to make up for the escape of Jules Legar by the capture of the Laughing Mask, suddenly emerged from behind the oak tree and rapidly advanced upon the startled pair. As the Laughing Mask darted around the boulder toward the secret door leading into his subterranean retreat, Margery planted herself directly in the path of the coming Walters. It took that expectorated officer several minutes to shake off the clinging girl, and when he reached the other side of the great rock the Laughing Mask had disappeared completely. The detective turned in a sudden rage on the calmly smiling girl standing beside him.

"You're about gone the limit this time, young woman," he snarled as he seized her slender wrist in his powerful grasp, "and we'll see what the chief thinks of your helpin' that criminal make a getaway."

A little later the burly Walters hailed his frail prisoner into the living-room where her father and the detectives were still gathered. Captain Brackett, fuming with anger, tried his utmost to wring from her the secret of the boulder, but Margery, with a quickness of tongue that broke her sphinxlike silence, finally her loving but sorely tried father looked her in her bedroom to prevent her from further interference. Hastily going to her impromptu dictaphone, Margery heard the voice of Walters repeating what the Laughing Mask had said about Skidmon, the last of Legar's henchmen. When he had finished, the blatant tones of Captain Brackett came over that thread of copper.

"Our best move will be to watch the house of this Skidmon," he announced decisively. "An' when our man comes along we'll nab him. If we're playin' in luck we might get Legar in the same dragnet."

Then came the scrape of chairs being pushed away from the table and the hasty shuffle of feet as the detectives tried to start on this mission. As Margery replaced the receiver she realized the Laughing Mask was threatened with grave danger. In some way she must warn him. But there seemed no possibility of escaping from her bedroom.

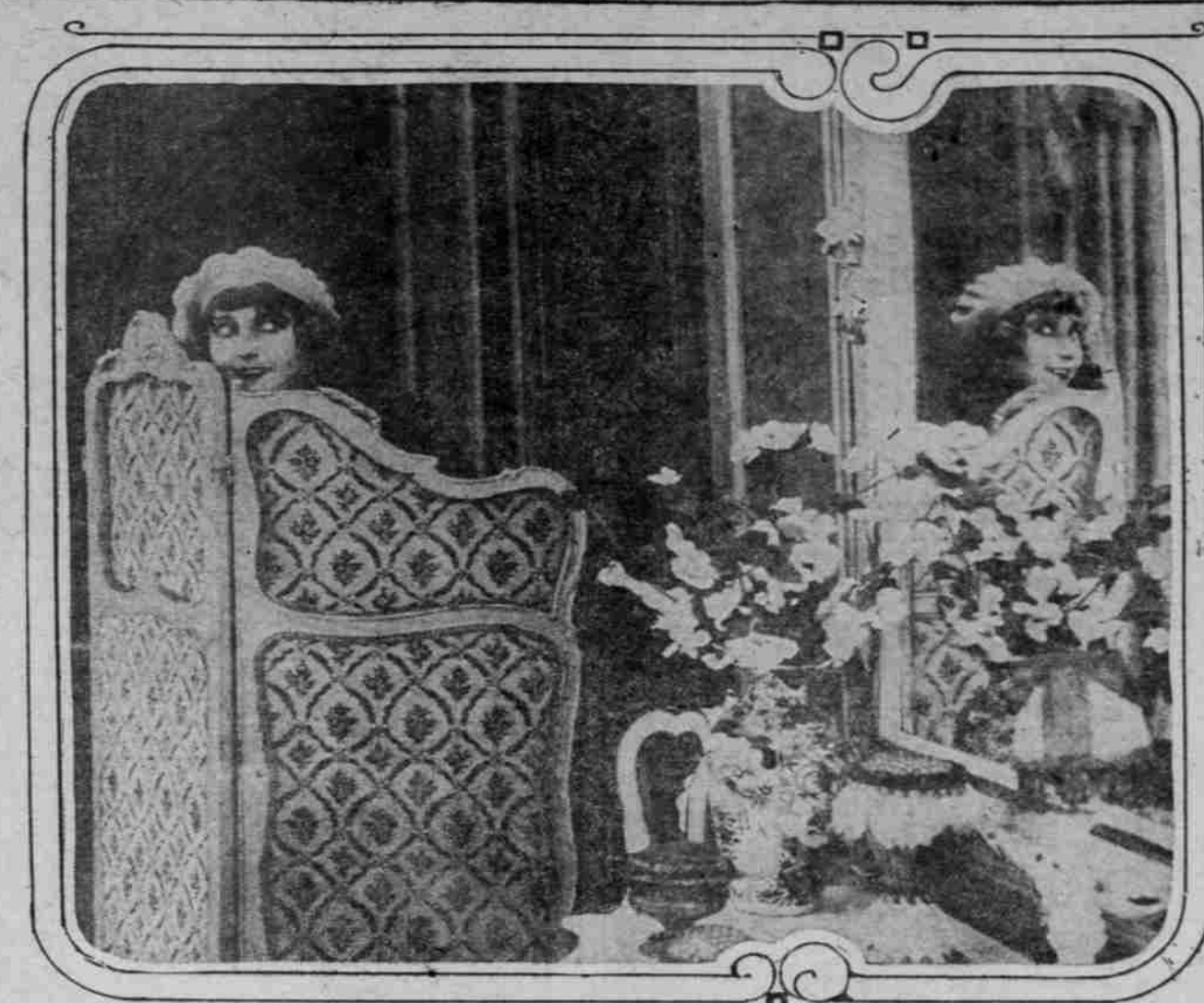
When to force the locked door, and the sheer drop from her third-story window prohibited that method of egress. For a moment she stood in hopeless dejection. Then a sudden scheme flashed into her mind. Which she hastened to put into execution. When her father unlocked the door and went into that room to speak to Margery before he started for the city with the detectives he gave an incredulous gasp of amazement.

The heavy brass bed had been pushed up to the window, and tied around one corner a crossbar of the bed and a twisted sheet. And that improvised rope of linen ran out through the open window. As Enoch Golden saw the knotted sheets only reached half way down the side of the house, he immediately reached the conclusion that Margery had been so extremely terrified by her temporary imprisonment as to attempt to escape by this foolhardy method. With visions of his idolized daughter lying crushed amid the shrubbery under the window, the old banker, half beside himself with anxiety, rushed frantically down the stairs and out around the house with the astonished detectives close behind him.

At the moment when all her fallers were wildly searching for her battered father, a demure-faced girl slipped quietly out of her bedroom closet, and making her way out of the house by the back door, ran lightly toward the garage, in front of which her high-powered roadster was standing. The puzzled group under Margery's window had found no trace of her lifeless body, but they suddenly saw a decidedly unattractive girl driving a gray roadster, tearing past them down the gravelled drive. And when the car swerved into the highway that girl even had the effrontery to send them a little derisive farewell flutter of her slender white hand.

When Margery finally threaded her way through the crooked streets and brought her car to a stop close to the entrance of the blind alley on the south side of Washington Square, the great moon was just rising over the battlement of skyscrapers, and by its mellow luster she could discern the outlines of a ruinous old dwelling standing at the foot of that gloomy and forbidding alley. With the exception of a single light faintly glimmering in one of the upper stories, the house was in total darkness.

As Margery paused in front of the dismal old rookery she suddenly perceived in the moonlight a shadowy form mounting steadily upward on the narrow fire-escape ladder. When that stealthy prowler stopped on the iron platform just outside the lighted window she saw it was the daring masker and realized she was too late to warn him. Before she could attract his attention he cautiously raised the window and vanished into that house of mystery. But she quietly determined he should not be taken unawares by his enemies. Under the fire escape she found a dilapidated ash barrel, and by



Margery from Her Place of Concealment
Saw The Loose Lipped Malefactor

standing on this shaky pedestal she gazed a foothold on the lowest rung of the rusty metal ladder. When she had groped her way to the landing she saw an empty dimly lighted chamber. But through a doorway leading from that room came a white flood of illumination and the sound of angry voices. She slipped into the empty bedroom and, warily crossing the floor, stood in spellbound wonder gazing through the open doorway. That heavily shuttered room, into which she was peering was fitted up like the well-equipped laboratory of a scientist. A powerful light came its rays over a long workbench littered with microscopic slides, fermentation tubes and culture mediums and the various other tools used by the microbiologist for research purposes. Backed up against this bench stood the tense figure of a middle-aged man with drooping eyelids and the pasty gray complexion that betrays the habitual use of some noxious drug.

He had apparently been interrupted in the midst of his investigations, for on the bench just behind him was some object protected from the light by a strip of this taweling, a long platinum needle used in extracting germ colonies from their cultures, a compound microscope and an open notebook for recording the result of his labors. Facing the intimidated drug fiend stood the Laughing Mask, the black muzzle of his revolver a few inches distant from his forehead of that once distinguished scientist, who was apparently playing for time. Presently the masked wrong-righter spoke in a stern and determined manner.

"My patience is about exhausted, Skidmon," he said to the man shrinking back against the bench, "and unless you write that confession clearing me of those crimes committed by Legar with your devilish assistance, I am going to shoot you through the head with as little compunction as though you were a common criminal. Your terrible poisons have been responsible for more than one unsolved murder and society will be well rid of you."

This convincing threat had the desired effect, for the stoop-shouldered biologist moved sullenly toward a smirking desk standing near the window. Before the reluctant pen traveled slowly over the sheet of foolscap, the Laughing Mask stood looking over his shoulder, prompting the other's delinquent memory with an occasional quiet word and the insistent menace of that ever-ready revolver. The details of those abhorred crimes, committed in cold blood by Legar for the sole purpose of setting the police upon his enemy, had practically been completed when a shrill and penetrating whistle sounded from the alley.

The Laughing Mask turned quickly to the window, and, throwing back the shutters, leaned out and strove to ascertain the meaning of that forbidding signal. For a moment only he relaxed his guard over the crafty poisoner, but that moment gave Skidmon the chance he had been seeking. Before the startled girl, watching through the doorway, could cry out a word of warning, he launched himself upon that half-bent figure leaning out of the open window.

Caught at a decided disadvantage and unable to use his weapon, the Laughing Mask struggled desperately to free himself from those lean and clutching fingers. But, despite his frantic efforts, he was unable to throw off the oppressive weight of his antagonist's body, which was steadily bearing him backward over the narrow window-sill. Then, as the infuriated and drug-crazed criminal threw every ounce of his strength into one final effort to rid himself of his enemy, the Laughing Mask suddenly lost his balance, and, grasping wildly at the empty air, plunged headlong from the window down into the abyssal darkness.

He seemed doomed to sure destruction, but fate decreed the springy branch of an elm tree should catch that hurtling body, and the force of his fall was broken when, limp and unconscious, he dropped a second later onto the stone flagging by the cellar doorway. To the savagely exultant scientist and the horror-stricken girl who had witnessed the swift tragedy it seemed certain that the Laughing Mask had met with death, for they did not know by what a slender margin he had cheated that grim reaper.

With sudden decision Skidmon

wheeled about and came rapidly toward the room where the sorrowful girl was standing. She barely had time to dart into a closet and pull the door softly shut after her, when he passed her place of concealment. Then followed a rasping noise as he locked the window by which she had entered, and after a little silence she heard the sound of his receding footsteps. When she finally ventured from the stifling confines of the closet the laboratory was deserted, but from a closed door on the opposite side of that strange chamber came unmistakable sounds of hurried preparations for flight.

If the death of the Laughing Mask were to be avenged, absolute proof must be obtained of the murderous practices of his leaden-faced assassin, and step by step Margery edged toward the long workbench where Skidmon had been experimenting.

As the moon swung across the star-strewn heavens its pale light disclosed the still form of the unconscious Laughing Mask lying under the laboratory window from which the infuriated scientist had flung him. A one-armed man, who came slinking out of the shadows, saw that inert figure and bent over it with a savage exclamation of triumph. He glanced furtively about him, and, throwing back the bulkhead doors leading into the cellar, backed down the short flight of steps, dragging the Laughing Mask after him, like a spider dragging a fly into some dark recess.

Legar seemed strangely at home in his dark and gloomy surroundings, for after letting the Laughing Mask drop heavily to the cement flooring, his groping fingers quickly found a battered lantern hanging from a rusty hook. This feeble illumination showed the cellar to be piled with all sorts of discarded household furniture, including a pile of worn-out carpeting near where the masked man was lying. As Legar bent over that helpless figure a faint noise came from the stairway leading to the floor above. He in-

stantly straightened up and stood intently listening. Then, holding the lantern before him, he cautiously advanced toward the spot from which that sound had come. At the moment he turned his back an incomprehensible thing happened.

From under the pile of carpeting two pairs of long arms suddenly stretched out toward the silent form of the Laughing Mask, and, quickly seizing him by the feet and shoulders, dragged him under the frayed folds of that ancient floor covering. When the scared outlaw gave up his fruitless search and returned to the place where he had left the silent form of the Laughing Mask, with the full intention of dispatching that sworn enemy with his own hands, he gave a gasp of incredulous amazement as it dawned upon him that his intended victim had completely disappeared.

It flashed into his mind that the Laughing Mask might have recovered sufficiently to have crawled up the short flight of cellar steps, and, hurrying outside, he commenced a systematic search of the dark corners where a man in desperate straits might endeavor to hide. He had hardly left the cellar when the pile of threadbare carpet showed signs of sudden agitation, and, in obedience to certain commands issued in painfully broken whispers, two spectral figures emerged from under that singular refuge and glided toward the stairway leading to the upper story, where the laboratory was located.

In that laboratory the wide-eyed Margery Golden was searching the littered workbench, hoping to find something to incriminate the venomous Skidmon. She did not venture to touch the glittering instruments, but turned her attention to the object which was hidden under the thin strip of taweling. When, after a little hesitation, she gingerly raised that flimsy covering, she saw a thin glass vessel bearing a printed label and half filled with a gelatinous substance. She stooped and read from the label the

words "Colon Bacilli," but that did not convey to her that in the nutrient medium contained in that Petri dish was a culture growth alive with millions of malignant germs. Hoping to find some more tangible clue, she replaced the towel and picked up the open notebook lying near the microscope. Her face went white with the horror of the thing as she deciphered the cramped entries:

May 13—Emmerich has advanced the theory that old age is brought about in large part by the weakened resistance of the organism to the ravages of the bacillus coli, colonies of which invariably infest the digestive tract of every person even though in normal health. The activity and number of these bacilli vastly increase with advancing age, causing a form of auto-intoxication and a subsequent decline in the activity of the system. Increased blood pressure, and other symptoms of general structural decay. It would seem probable that from a sufficiently large colony of colon bacilli a virulent toxic poison might be extracted, which, administered even in minute quantities, should almost immediately attack the tissues and destroy the subject with all the indications of death from extreme old age. Such a poison, apparently unknown to science, and already present in less malignant form in every human system, would be extremely valuable in the study of an autopsy. I shall immediately start experimenting along these lines.

May 15—The colony of colon bacilli which I started in a gelatin culture medium is multiplying rapidly. Flourishes best at blood heat—destroyed at temperature of 55 degrees Celsius. The change in color from grayish white to brown should indicate an increase in virulence and pathogenic qualities.

May 17—Inoculated guinea pig with bacilli poison—died instantly; body shrunk and withered; much encouragement.

May 20—Discovery has just been put to a gratifying practical test—managed to get a needle infected with the bacilli exact to Legar, who had been captured and confined in prison. Legar has just communicated with me, and I have been able to deliver the contaminated needle, and the man was seized immediately with convulsions and died in two or three minutes with all the symptoms as to be expected. Legar regained his liberty and now wishes to destroy an entire family.

As with a shudder Margery came to the last unfinished and cold-blooded entry she heard Skidmon rapidly approaching the door. Throwing the incriminating journal into her drawer, she quickly stole into the back room, where she could watch the laboratory without being observed herself. She saw the unheeded bacteriologist hurriedly drag a battered trunk from a dark and cavernous closet. As he threw an uneasy glance toward the door leading into the hall his face suddenly froze into an expression of abject terror.

Advancing from that doorway came a figure with features cloaked by a mocking yellow mask. This startling apparition deliberately aimed a black automatic at the terrified scientist and with his left hand silently pointed to the desk where lay the unfinished confession. More overcome with fear by the return of the man he had apparently hurried to his death than awed by the threatening revolver, Skidmon faltered toward the desk in obedience to that silent, but obvious command.

But his intelligent mind worked quickly, and by the time he had fixed his name to that document vindictive the masked fugitive from Legar's atrocious crimes he had banished the fears which this supernatural resurrection had caused him, and determined on a course of action. Rising from the desk he approached the Laughing Mask, who was standing near the open closet with his ready weapon in his hand. Skidmon held out the signed confession, but before the other could take it the paper, with the seeming inadvertence, slipped from

Copyright Arthur Stringer

the fingers of the scientist and fluttered to the floor. As he stooped to pick it up he suddenly buried his weight against the legs of his unsuspecting enemy with a force that sent him toppling over backward into the depths of the closet, and before the Laughing Mask could again his footing the door had been swung shut and bolted.

Margery, from her place of concealment, saw the loose-lipped malefactor make a motion as though to destroy the confession, but he suddenly grew rigid as though gripped again by the hand of fear. Following the direction in which his eyes were staring, she saw the reason for his trepidation. A figure masked in the identical manner as the man just imprisoned in the closet came slowly through the hall doorway. He also held a black-masked and well-trained Skidmon, but he walked with a painful effort, as if his body were bruised and sore.

"It would be foolish to tear up that little document," he said in tones of grim determination. "I shall have to have to write it over. As it is rather essential to my welfare, I'll trouble you to hand it to me."

But instead of complying with this demand the dazed and panic-stricken investigator backed slowly away from that terrifying specter, who seemed to be impervious to looks and to as nervous as many lives as a cat. His retreat was suddenly checked by the laboratory workbench, which he had dropped a trembling hand to steady himself. As he did so there came a sharp sound of breaking glass and, with an abrupt cry of pain, he flung up his deeply gashed hand, splashed with blood and a thick ooze of gelatinous material. His fingers were splintered pieces of the fragile vessel which had contained the colon bacilli culture. A dull moan of horror came from his lips as he realized he was hopelessly inoculated with the deadly virus of the germs he had himself so carefully nurtured for the purpose of destroying others.

In wild desperation he caught up the towel from the work bench and scrubbed the wound with wood and attack substance from his open wound. But the strip of linen dropped from his nerveless fingers as a series of convulsive tremors shook his tortured body. Then his knees gave way under him and he slowly sank upon the floor, gasping frantically for breath. His lean fingers opened and closed. His gasping vitality offered but weak resistance to the virulent poison which was averaging its way into his system, and, jerky spasms, his pain-racked form was stilled in death.

Overcome by the sight of that gruesome tragedy, Margery stood aghast to the floor, inarticulate and trembling. She saw the Laughing Mask pick up the confession and go out of the laboratory to the stairs. Still holding his revolver, he descended to the cellar with the air of a man whose mission it was to deliver a message. He hastily concealed himself back of the piles of carpet he heard Legar returning from his futile search of the premises. That masked worker of iniquity suddenly found himself looking into a revolver held by the Laughing Mask, who had stepped out of the shadows.

Realizing he had been outwitted and that resistance was useless, Legar obeyed the curt command of the other. But his evil genius was not slumbering, and as his lifted right hand came in contact with a large, rather flower pot standing on a shelf above him he grasped that heavy object and hurled it at the masked man's full in the face of his masked opponent.

That crashing and unexpected blow accomplished its purpose, for the Laughing Mask dropped his revolver. The less heap as though he had been struck by a bullet. The one-armed man, bending over his apparently lifeless enemy, felt the pulse of the victim's inner pocket of his coat. As he glanced at it by the sickly light of the lantern he realized that Skidmon had hurried to the stairs to tell Skidmon to account for disclosing his guilty secrets.

The stairs from the cellar led directly into the dark and many-doored kitchen, and here Legar paused and struck a match in order to get his bearings. The dim light showed him proved to be that of a small buttery pantry, and by the flickering light of the match he saw in the gloomy corner a man whose face was hidden with folded arms. The silently-accusing figure was a yellow mask such as Legar had last seen shrouding the face of the man whose body he had found dead in the cellar. With a half-strangled oath he dropped the glowing match and slammed the door on that masked apparition.

In mad haste he groped along the wall until his fingers came in contact with a door knob, and, with a startled gasp, he opened it. He then found himself in the dimly lighted hall. Throwing apprehensive looks behind him, he raced up the stairs to the third-story landing, where he paused to regain his breath before entering the laboratory of his traitor-henchman. The silence was broken only by the sound of his labored breathing, but he suddenly recoiled as though struck a blow. Down the narrow passage came the Laughing Mask, slowly advancing with measured tread like an avenging Nemesis.

For a moment the terrified malefactor cowered against the rickety banisters. Then, as that dread figure came nearer, he wheeled about and darted down the stairway, steadily opening the door to meet him came another figure with its face also covered by a cynically smiling yellow mask. The despairing criminal turned and fled toward the attic, but standing motionless at the top of that last flight of stairs was still another yellow-masked figure. Like some fear-crazed animal, Legar rushed blindly through the laboratory doorway. Skidmon's body lay where it had fallen, and as Legar's eyes fell on that ghastly and distorted face he gave a sobbing moan of fear.

As he glanced toward the hall doorway he saw his escape was cut off in that direction, for standing on the threshold was a quietly waiting Laughing Mask. He threw open the door leading into the chamber where Skidmon lay, and, staggered in packing his effects, but stationed in the center of that room was a forbidding form wearing a yellow mask. Legar staggered back, away from that hateful vision, he tripped over the body of the dead scientist and fell heavily, striking his forehead. A gasping cry came from the edge of the laboratory bench. He slowly got to his feet, pressing his hand in a dazed manner against his injured temple, from which a little crimson stream was trickling down into his eyes.

Catching up the towel which had covered the gash on his forehead, Skidmon, he mopped the blood from his eyes, and the jagged wound on his forehead. Then as he felt a clammy moisture on his fevered skin he hastily examined the towel and saw it was smeared with a substance resembling a crushed jelly fish. He saw a base of that gelatinous matter on the bench and quickly picked out of it a piece of broken glass bearing a printed label. As he read the words, "Colon Bacilli," he knew his doom was sealed, for he had

(Continued on Page 5.)

AT MILKING TIME

By Ben Hur Lampman.

I
In the fog of my cornob when evening grows dim,
As I go for the cattle, I summon back Jim;
And the smoke that drifts out through the shadows
Of night

Is light as our Jimmy's tossed tow-hair was light.
And I listen intently, half hoping to hear
The tune that he whistled half shrill on my ear;
And I glance o'er my shoulder, as though his young
laugh

Preceded the patter of feet on the path—
The patter of bare-footed haste, and the glee
Of Jim and his collie descending on me.
There's a calf that was his—she's a grandmother

now
To many a sturdy old Holstein and cow—
She's seen her best days, but when evening grows dim
I fancy she's waiting to welcome back Jim;
For she lows at the gate when it's time for the
stars—
And the old man is lonely who lets down the bars.



There are thoughts that a gaffer will tell to his God,
When the breath of the evening is over the sod,
That a man wouldn't ever confess to his wife—
That are twisted and spun in the web of his life,
That nestle so close to the roots of his heart
That one nor the other are neither apart.
So nobody knows that when evening grows dim
As I go for the cattle—I'm going with Jim.
Now a woman may treasure her trinkets and curls,
But a man must be gruff, though his heart's like a
girl's—
Yet there's times, when the smoke never tasted so
sweet,
That he hears on the cow-path the patter of feet—
The patter of little brown feet, and the shrill
Eerie whistle that rings in his old ears still.
And he fancies—forgive him—when evening grows
dim,
That the soft-eyed old Holstein is lowing for Jim.