

leaved. For he recognized with bewildered amazement that he did believe it. He was no longer hot with vindictive passion. He no longer thirsted, dry-tongued, for vengeance for Hackley's death. He was chill with apprehension for the fate of these two young people, who crouched watching in agony the changes in his face, as though turning to him for help. For help! And the girl's words had startled in him an amazed questioning. What, indeed, would Hackley have said to this—Hackley, who had been a just man, as far as he had understanding. And he would have understood this. What would he have said in the presence of this grim prospective tragedy, which was tightening like bands about Dr. Renfrew's heart? Of a man guiltless of intended wrong, yet with only this flimsy story to prove his innocence?

Presently he turned and went slowly down the stairs into the room with Hackley's body. It lay as he had left it, separated by the full width of the room from the tall mirror, its head and shoulders almost in the clean-swept grate. There was no help here. And he had not expected any, nor any change. For how could it change—now? Dr. Renfrew knew, as he gazed down into its stony face, that called in time, he would have hazarded all things, even his own life itself, to preserve Hackley's—or any other—life. But, dead, he saw in the body of his friend only an empty shell—a shell, one now, with the earth and its waters.

Life had great sanctity for Dr. Renfrew; death had none. More truly than most who professed louder their belief in immortality, he lived in accordance with that belief. As he stared now again at the significant details of the room it was

no longer of Hackley he was thinking, but of the mute witness that these bore against the boy upstairs.

Suddenly he brushed his hand across his eyes with decision. He lowered the shades until the room was in darkness. He moved with skilled sureness, determination, a sort of exaltation. Yet when the canary dropped from its perch, with a metallic rattle of its claws against the tin floor of its cage, he winced as a murderer would have winced. He closed the door into the hall and locked it on the inside. He switched on the electric lights. In this brilliant burst of artificial light the room started out in all its confusion and horror; every speck was visible, and the face of the dead man huddled at the grate was white and gleaming, as Dr. Renfrew approached the desk and picked up the short and heavy-bladed paper cutter which he himself had brought to Hackley from the Mediterranean.

The police officer upon the post arrived first. He took down the names of those inhabiting the house and their relationship to the dead man. He had received unmodified, when he made his hourly telephone report to the station-house from the patrol box, the statement Dr. Renfrew had made to the police—merely, "a coroner's case." The patrolman did not ask to enter the locked study, after learning that the key was in Dr. Renfrew's pocket. He had been instructed to await the arrival of the police captain commanding the district. He waited with Dr. Renfrew in the room across the hall, until the doctor rose to admit the coroner's deputy.

The deputy, a man of 35, shook hands with Dr. Renfrew in a businesslike manner. In the interval while they waited

for the police captain Dr. Renfrew saw him examining with attention as much of the premises as he could see from his seat. Presently his eyes rested with respectful interest on Dr. Renfrew himself.

"You look ill, doctor," he said. "You should take a rest."

Dr. Renfrew changed his seat with uneasiness greater than mere annoyance. He sat by the window, nervously jerking the curtain cord, while he explained to the deputy his long friendship with the dead man. He was relieved when he heard finally the snow-stuffed rumble of the police captain's buggy.

The police captain conversed aside with the patrolman, and read over the notes in the officer's notebook.

"You were here?" He looked at Dr. Renfrew.

"Called as the family physician," Dr. Renfrew explained steadily. "Mr. Hackley was dead when I arrived."

He handed the key of the study to the captain, and followed with the deputy as the captain led the way across the hall. The captain pushed open the door of the darkened room, crossed carefully to the west window, and raised the shade. Dr. Renfrew scanned his face with painful intentness as he turned stolidly to take his first impression of the room.

Then the doctor's eyes shifted, apprehensively, to the deputy. The deputy stood silent and observant on the sill; and the fingers relaxed which had been cutting into Dr. Renfrew's own flesh.

He drew back, that they might see he intended to leave them free to investigate and draw conclusions as they wished—without interference from him, without comment.

The deputy greeted this movement

with a gratified look. He had not tried to hide from Dr. Renfrew his satisfaction at having received this case. He was plainly eager to show his efficiency before the great authority on medical jurisprudence in this matter which had more than ordinary interest for the doctor.

He had spoken, while they waited in the other room, of Dr. Renfrew's latest book, and, with particular admiration, of those parts of it which dealt with the first appearance of a scene of violent death. Now he drew the police captain's attention by an abrupt gesture away from the body, which lay directly in front of the tall mirror on the side of the room farthest from the grate, to the room itself.

The first impression given by the room was its perfect orderliness. The police captain turned from where he stood beside the body and joined the deputy at the desk.

The clean white papers upon the desk were arranged exactly in neat piles on the flat top. The deputy noted that they were classified carefully—one pile of receipts, another of unpaid bills.

The bunch of keys had been laid with care on top of the larger pile. The police captain nodded understanding, as the deputy pointed to the keys, and took them up and tried them on the desk.

When he found one that fitted he opened the drawers, whose contents showed the same orderliness as the desk top.

The bottom drawer, however, was empty. He reclosed and locked them, and the deputy made written note of the position of the keys, the papers, and the kitchen chair.

This chair stood pushed close up to the desk, as a man pushes up his chair when his day's work is finished.

The deputy, lifting his eyes from his notebook, saw the police captain stooping beside the grate. The armchair had been drawn close to the grate and stood upon the little Oriental hearth rug. The grate itself was littered with a mass of burned papers.

The police captain tried to disengage the largest of these charred papers from the rest, but it turned to impalpable powder between his fingers. He rose and talked with the deputy in a low tone. They turned together to their examination of the body.

The body lay at the side of the room farthest from the grate, exactly in front of the tall pier glass on the wall. Its head and shoulders rested on the bearskin rug at the mirror's foot.

The police captain and the deputy knelt beside this rug, matted with blood, and examined the wound in the neck. They noted attentively the attitude in which the body lay, the position of the legs and arms.

The deputy crawled to look at the right hand. He straightened, observing with deep absorption the position of this hand.

Suddenly he stooped and felt underneath the desk. He uttered an exclamation of triumph as he brought out from under the desk—a short, thick-bladed knife.

Dr. Renfrew was breathing quickly as the deputy held the knife toward him.

"It belongs upon the desk," the doctor explained. "I brought it to him myself last year when I visited the Mediterranean. It was not meant—but he used it for—a paper cutter!"

The deputy pointed out to the police captain a stain upon the heavy, inlaid blade. He laid the knife upon the desk and made note of it in his book. They walked to the other side of the room and talked together for a time inaudibly. Then, almost jubilant in his success, the deputy coroner turned to Dr. Renfrew.

"You'd think," he commented, conversationally, as though his business were finished, "possessing all precedent circumstances, his intimates ought to have been able to forestall an event like this."

"An eccentric man, you say—and, perhaps, not happy in his family. Lonely-growing old. Saturday afternoon, and his week's work finished. All his affairs in order. He arranges his papers, clears out this lower drawer, burns those papers which he does not want made public. Then—!"

Dr. Renfrew felt himself pale as death. He was burning with recollections of thirty years of professional morality, professional ideals, which in the end had come to this—that he must, for others' sake, shrink from the apprehensions of a criminal and triumph by deceit. But he met their eyes steadily.

"Then you make it—?" he demanded.

The deputy stared in surprise. He had felt, in the presence of this great authority, like a schoolboy before the master. He was now suddenly impressed by the extent to which Dr. Renfrew had aged and weakened through the death of his old friend.

"Clearly suicide, Dr. Renfrew," he answered, almost with compassion. "No jury can ever doubt it. Why, you can even see where he cut his own thumb in using the knife!"

# The Ten-Dollar Gold Piece

By ISABEL OSTRANDER  
Illustrated by Carl Gfroerer



GRANT RIDGEWAY, one of the supreme powers in the financial world of two continents, had never been known to miss a directors' meeting to which he had been summoned.

His whole life, from its obscure, bucolic beginning, had exemplified thoroughness, attention to detail, and efficiency. Whatever he undertook he carried through—despite the fact that his office force comprised a small, specialized army—with his own keen eye focused, his own dynamic brain trained, upon even the least significant move.

He brought that dominating characteristic to bear upon every ulterior responsibility he assumed, and whenever he consented to serve on the board of directors of a bank or trust company, that institution could rely unerringly upon his presence at every meeting which was called.

If anything of moment in his own multitudinous affairs conflicted, it was inevitably deferred; if a difficulty arose in his private domestic life, it as inevitably was met and adjusted without his presence, should its arrival coincide with the call of a board's president.

Men said that Ridgeway would have stayed the hand of death, or, falling that, have risen from the grave itself, to attend a meeting. They cited his absolute reliability and inexorable rule of promptitude and surety of purpose as component steps of his ascent to the throne of money monarch.

They were undoubtedly correct in these asseverations, in so far as they applied to his conduct of his own affairs; but with regard to the directors' meetings, no one had ever dreamed of the truth.

He did not place them at the head and front of the multifarious matters of state and finance which claimed him, consider them of higher importance than profit or loss, friendship or enmity, happiness or misery, life or death, because of any dominating force in his character of thoroughness, or efficiency or undeviating adherence to executive duty. His never-falling presence was due to an absurdly insignificant cause, ludicrous were it not tragic in a man of his caliber.

He attended for one thing, and one thing only: to procure that little gleaming metal disk, the ten-dollar gold piece which was the wage of every director who came when he was summoned, and gave his time and more or less bored attention to the matter in hand!

Had the world guessed that he who controlled steamship lines and railroads, whose vast holdings extended to every quarter of the globe, who numbered emperors and kings among his creditors, attached any importance to the solitary little gold piece it would have scoffed, at first incredulously, then contemptuously, and gone its way.

But Grant Ridgeway kept his obsession sedulously from the world. He himself could not have told when or why this habit had first gripped him and grown, lichenlike, into a miserly passion which overmastered even his indomitable will. Perhaps the corroding poverty of his early youth, the bitter, subconsciously remembered struggle and unswerving self-denial to attain the first ten dollars

he had ever possessed, had something to do with his obsession. Perhaps it was the memory of his supreme hour of exultation at achieving a long-strived-for honor, when years before he had attended the first directors' meeting to which he had been bidden, and the little golden coin, winking up at him from the shining mahogany table, had held for him a magic charm never to be broken.

Whatever its cause, he hoarded them secretly, avariciously, with a miser's gloating greed, and each one added to the ever-increasing pile brought to him an exhilaration, a sense of power, which no triumph, however colossal, on bourse or exchange could bestow.

When the Gotham Bank hurriedly called a meeting of its directors on a Saturday morning, of all times in the world, it must undoubtedly have had some pressing and urgent reason for so doing. With that we have no more concern than had Grant Ridgeway, in his inmost thoughts.

His mind was centered on the fresh ten-dollar gold piece to be added to his store; yet there were other considerations which he might well have taken into account.

He had grown so accustomed, in his long, hotly contested game with destiny, to treat every one who came within the grasp of his power as mere pawns, to be moved at will, that when he found them going counter to the guiding touch of his fingers it caused him vague irritation and surprise. Nothing more than a momentary sense of annoyance, however—it was so easy to sweep them from the board.

But there were two women who could not so easily be eliminated from his scheme of things; his tiresomely ailing wife and his dead brother's daughter, Constance.

If he had ever loved the soft-eyed, palely pretty village girl whom he had married when he himself was little more than a plowboy, the succeeding years of struggle and achievement had wrested from him all tender memories and capacity for sentiment.

His wife should be the head of his vast establishments in town and country, the mother of sturdy, keen-witted children, the brilliant, tactful, superlatively clever hostess of his renowned guests, the showcase to display before society and the world at large his opulence and power in the magnificence of her appearance and wealth of her jewels. Instead, she was a semi-invalid; gentle and uncomplaining, it is true, but with no mental growth, no grasp of his ambitions, clinging to him with the desperate strength of the weak and helpless, asking—not as if it were her right, of course, but as a supreme favor—for a continual, monstrous sacrifice from him.

His time—if he would only give her just a few minutes each day! Minutes which were priceless, time which was of inestimable value to his career, to the world—and she wished them sacrificed to her! She, who gave nothing in return, who lay listlessly upon her couch all day and lived in the memories he had put resolutely behind him!

It was possible, of course, that she suffered; but what was mere physical suffering? Grant Ridgeway had never known a day's illness in his life; he couldn't have spared the time.

If his wife had been a disappointment to him, his niece had proved a veritable thorn in his side.

When, orphaned and possessed of a huge fortune in her own right, she had come to him as his ward, he had assured himself that within his hands was another instrument to further his own ends.

But here again a perverse fate had intervened, and the instrument proved to be anything but a pliant one. His interests on the other side needed strengthening, in a sudden crisis which had arisen; an alliance between a member of a certain great, influential English house and one of his own blood would have been a triumphant stroke of diplomacy.

Carlton Escheby was just the man. He had no title, hence the press and the public could not rave about another American heiress sold to the effete British nobility.

On the other hand, he and his ancient family possessed unbounded influence, by right of birth and breeding, in just the right quarter to further materially Ridgeway's plans; and Escheby needed Connie's money to keep up Escheby Towers and the house on Park lane, to say nothing of the shooting-box in Scotland and the vast estate on the bleak west coast of Ireland.

Escheby—his hair a little thin, his shoulders slightly narrow, the vicious lines of dissipation showing a trifle too prominently on his middle-aged, hawk-like face—came condescendingly to the sacrifice.

Connie saw him, and her clear blue eyes flashed dangerously, but she merely tilted her delightfully democratic little nose still higher than nature had intended and turned upon him a superb, dimpled young shoulder.

Later she did what no one else had dared to do in the history of man; she appeared before her uncle in his inner sanctum of offices, a silken whirlwind of wrath, and told him what she thought of him, and his plans, and Escheby.

Especially the latter.

Of course she had complicated the situation by proceeding to fall in love with Burke Neville, who had no influence to further Ridgeway's ambitions, or anybody else's, and no prospects for himself beyond those which youth and effrontery and a fledgling admission to the bar bestowed upon him.

Ridgeway had promptly forbidden the good looking young scamp the house, and had put his incorrigible niece practically under espionage.

Carlton Escheby had stayed on—he liked the little Yankee flapper's spirit, by gad—but Connie treated him with an impregnable indifference, and her uncle with a pitying scorn, which perturbed the latter more than he would admit to himself. She must prove amenable in time, of course; no one had ever successfully defied him yet. Meanwhile he had a sneaking suspicion that she was seeing Burke Neville, or communicating with him, in spite of his explicit orders, and the sensation of being even temporarily thwarted was a new and unpleasant one.

So matters stood on the Saturday morning of that hurriedly called directors' meeting at the Gotham Bank.

There was no question of Ridgeway's attendance, of course, even though the market had exhibited alarming tendencies at closing time the day before—there was that precious ten-dollar gold piece to be obtained.

To the other crisis at home, the state of his wife's health, Ridgeway gave not a thought.

Her ailment had within the last few days taken a decided turn for the worse, and she was to be operated upon that morning; but it was of no serious consequence—just another of those interminable, ever-recurring operations of hers, which left her more drawn and shadowy-looking than ever and disarranged the perfectly-oiled machinery of the household, and made even his own private rooms, far removed as they were from hers, reek of disgusting, sanitary, hospital odors.

Grant Ridgeway attended his directors' meeting, aided with his usual judicial decisiveness in the adjustment of the sudden-arisen difficulty, and stepped into the limousine for a look-in at his office before going home, with the magic, glittering ten-dollar gold piece tucked in the palm of his hand beneath his glove, where he could feel the tangible evidence of the cold disk pressing into his flesh.

Leaning well back in a close-curtained corner of the car, he exulted over his newly-born possession.

Meanwhile several things had happened.

At the house far up the avenue facing the park—a house as uncompromisingly grim and straight and austere as Ridgeway himself—Connie, listlessly drawing on her gloves, knocked at her aunt's door.

"Please ask Aunt Margaret if she wants anything from the shops," she told the impassive-faced maid. "I'm going downtown. Tell her that my uncle said I might use the green car."

"Mrs. Ridgeway does not wish anything." The maid returned to her after a moment. "She hopes that you will remember to be at home promptly at 1 to take luncheon with Mr. Ridgeway."

Connie stepped into the green car, her eyes snapping with mischief.

She knew nothing of what was so soon to take place in the house she had just left. It was by her aunt's own timorous-voiced request that she was allowed to remain in ignorance.

"Don't tell her about the operation, Grant, please, until—until it is all over," Margaret Ridgeway had pleaded. "She is so young, it will worry her and make her unhappy. The young always feel so deeply."

"Just as you like, of course," he had replied indifferently. "There's nothing to worry about; you'll come through all right. Connie shouldn't feel so much, anyway. She ought to think a little, use her brains instead of her emotions for a change."

Watching the little clock in the limousine assiduously, Connie stopped at a shop or two that the keen-eyed chauffeur in her uncle's employ might be thrown off his respectfully suspicious guard. Then she gave him an address in Washington Square, south.

It was in the very center of the thoroughfare which bisects that quiet park that the mishap occurred. Connie started forward in the seat, her cheeks aflame and eyes glowing with excitement, as the engine of the car gave a series of angry, baffled snorts and slowed.

Burke Neville had succeeded, then! If her uncle had bribed the chauffeur to spy upon her, Burke had assuredly arranged a counter-stroke with one of the mechanics in the garage, as he had promised.

Now, if he were only in time—  
A long, low, gray racer-drew up swift.

ly beside them and stopped, and its single occupant inquired courteously if he could be of any assistance. As her chauffeur was bending abstractedly over the raised hood of the motor, Connie opened the door herself and descended.

"How do you do, Mr. Neville," she said, adding blandly: "This is quite a surprise. I wonder if you would mind taking me home in your car? Mine seems to be disabled."

"I shall be delighted!" The young man's looks did not belie his words. "Give me your hand, Miss Ridgeway; it's rather a step up. I can run you to your home in no time."

"You can bring the packages I left in the car when you've started the engine again, Williams," Connie observed to the perturbed chauffeur, who advanced indecisively, as if not quite daring to intercept her. "I'm in no hurry for them."

"If you please, miss, I'll have the car fixed in a few minutes. I can't quite tell what's wrong, but it won't take me long to adjust it," he begged. "I—I must take you back myself, miss. Excuse me, but it's by Mr. Ridgeway's orders—"

"All right, Connie?" interposed Burke hastily. Then he added in low, tenderly exultant tones: "I've got the license, dear, and the ring! Did you bring your veil? That's good! Tie it on tight and hold fast!"

The chauffeur gazed distractedly after the low gray car as it sped swiftly up the avenue and was lost in a maze of traffic; but the two happy young people within it had dismissed him from their thoughts.

Some of the blood which had made Grant Ridgeway a man of quick, irrevocable decision and force of action flowed in Connie's veins also; a fact which her uncle had perhaps overlooked in his arbitrary plans.

Her little chin was set firmly, her red lips pressed tightly together, but her eyes were dark and misty as she looked straight ahead of her; far ahead into the future which she had taken into her own hands.

Carlton Escheby, lounging complacently over his breakfast at the club, little dreamed that what was taking place at that precise moment would change the probable course of his whole future.

If Grant Ridgeway had been at the bedside of his wife, instead of attending the directors' meeting, Connie would not have dared practice the cunning deceit which she had been guilty of in signing her uncle's name so cleverly to the order which put the green car at her disposal for the morning, thus enabling her to elope with Burke Neville. Had that feat not been accomplished there remained still a chance that her uncle's coercion might have prevailed upon the young, impressionable girl to bestow herself and her own huge fortune upon the Englishman, with the result that Escheby Towers would have been rehabilitated.

Instead of which, it was destined, in the years to come, to pass into the hands of Jeremiah Griggs, the Chicago beef packer, and still later, on his death, to be turned by his widow into a haven of rest for London's destitute and hopeless ones.

Could Escheby have been vouchsafed a glimpse into the future and seen the broad, green, aristocratic lawns of the Towers dotted with scattered groups of pale, wan, hungry-eyed people, and little children with their pinched faces turned wondrously to the sunshine, his breakfast would have been vastly disturbed.

As it was, he meditated profoundly whether he should spend a frigid evening in the Ridgeway drawing-room or go to the play and take Dolly Drayton to supper afterward—and decided on the latter.

In Grant Ridgeway's private office in the towering skyscraper far downtown John Tremont, his private secretary, stood with troubled brow watching the narrow white ribbon of the stock-ticker as it slid sinuously through his fingers.

Two days before he had received private and confidential information, in a bibulous moment, from a clerk in the offices of the great Reuterdahls that they had definitely decided to suspend operations almost at once on their vast copper concessions in South America, owing to certain European financial conditions.

Ridgeway had coldly rejected his secretary's deferential attempt at a warning—and now \$800,000 worth of stock which he owned in those copper mines was in jeopardy. Some one else had evidently got wind of the Reuterdahls' intentions, which was evidenced by the sudden, convulsive fluctuation in copper that had caused such excitement at the close of the market on the previous afternoon.

Ridgeway had always prided himself on his judgment of character. He had come to know John Tremont thoroughly in the years of the younger man's service, and what he knew he relied upon.

Therefore, when his absence was unavoidable, and financial matters of minor import were to be transacted, he had given his power of attorney to Tremont, and the secretary had never failed him.

With the opening of the market that morning copper had taken a violent upward leap, then fallen straight as a plummet.

Ridgeway had made it an invariable rule never to allow himself, on any account, to be communicated with at a directors' meeting, and now a fourth part of his colossal fortune trembled in the balance. Tremont, watching the ticker, and knowing what was coming, realized the immensity of his moment.

He held the power of attorney; should he use it? Dared he pit his casually gained knowledge and untried judgment against the experience and astute calculations of the money monarch, who had dominated his kingdom, secure on his throne, through panic after panic, for a score of years?

Eight hundred thousand of his employer's money lay in the hollow of his hand. Should he remain obediently quiescent and let it slip through his fingers, or, defying Ridgeway, act upon his own initiative and save it?

If by any chance the information which he had received was erroneous, and his judgment failed—if in acting upon his sudden, unprecedented impulse he should lose his employer's money instead of saving it for him, what would the future mean?

He thought of Betty, the girl who was waiting to become his wife; the girl whom Ridgeway had summarily dismissed from the office a year ago as being incompetent.

It is true, Betty had never been intended by nature for office work. She was soft, and yielding, and womanly, and very sweet, but she had no possible idea of time or method, and she could not read her own shorthand. Grant Ridgeway did not require a cloud of misty brown hair, and melting hazel eyes, and