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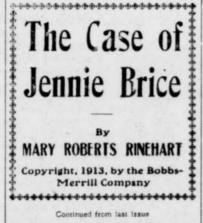
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nie Brice saying she was going away. and that we need not try to find her. went to Horner, but I had lost track of her completely. Even then, we did not believe things so had as they turned out to be. We thought she was giving us a bad time, but that she would show up.

"Ladley was in a blue funk for a me. Bronson and I went to him. We time told him how the thing had slipped



gallows."

We didn't want to go to the police and confess if we could help it. Finally he agreed to stick it out until she was found, at \$100 a week. It took all we could beg, borrow and steal But now-we have to come out with the story anyhow.'

Mr. Holcombe sat up and closed his notebook with a snap. "I'm not so sure of that." he said impressively. ••1 wonder if you realize, young man, that. having provided a perfect defense for this man Ladley, you provided him with every possible inducement to make away with his wife. Secure in your coming forward at the last minute and confessing the hoax to save him, was there anything he might not have dared with impunity?"

"But I tell you I took Jennie Brice out of town on Monday morning."

"Did you?" asked Holcombe sternly. But at that, the schooltencher, having come home and found old Isaac sound asleep in her cozy corner, set up such a screaming for the police that our meeting broke up. Nor would Mr. Holcombe explain any further.

ould come often to see me." "Bravo." he exclaimed. "Of course. CHAPTER XIV. R. HOLCOM with your present wisdom and exp M early the next morning. rience, you would do nothing so foolheard him moving around 2. 11 ish. But this girl was in her teens at 5 o'clock, and at 6 he bang-She was not very far away, for he ed at my door and demanded to know probably saw her that Sunday after at what time the neighborhood rose noon, when he was out for two hours He had been up for an hour and there And us the going was slow that day were no signs of life. He was more and he had much to tell and explain I cheerful after he had a cup of coffee. figure she was not far off, probably in commented on Lida's beauty and said this very neighborhood."

that Howell was a lucky chap. "That is what worries me, Mr. Holcombe." I said "I am helping the affair along and what if it turns out budly ?"

He looked at me over his glasses "It isn't likely to turn out badly," he said. "I have never married. Mrs. Pitman, and I have missed a great deal out of life."

"Perhaps you're better off. If you had married and lost your wife"was thinking of Mr. Pitman

"Not at all." ne said with emphasis "It's better to have married and lost than never to have married at all, ery man needs a good woman, and it doesn't matter how old he is. The older he is the more he needs her. 1 am nearly sixty "

I was rather startled, and I almost

dropped the fried pointoes. But the next moment he had got out his note-book and was going over the items again. "Pillowslip," he said, "knife, broken; onyx clock wouldn't think so much of the clock if he hadn't been so dominably anxious to hide the key. the discrepancy in time as revealed by the trial-yes, it is as clear as a bell Mrs. Pitman, does that Maguire wo-man next door sleep all day?"

"She's up now," I said, looking out the window. He was in the hall in a moment, only

to come to the door after, hat in hand, "Is she the only other woman on the street who keeps boarders?"

"She's the only woman who doesn't." snapped "She'll keep anything that 1 snupped doesn't belong to her-except boarders. "Ah!"

He lighted his corncob nine and stood puffing at it and watching me. He made me uneasy I thought he was poing to continue the subject of every tian needing a wife;

But when he spoke he was back to the crime again: "Did you ever work a typewriter?" he asked

What with the surprise, I was a little sharp. "I don't play any instrument except an egg beater." I replied shortly, and went on clearing the table

"I wonder do you remember about the village idiot and the horse? But of course you do. Mrs. Pitman, you are a woman of imagination. Don't you think you could be Alice Murray for a few moments? Now think-you are a stenographer with theatrical ambitions. You meet an actor and you fall in love with him and he with you

That's hard to imagine, that last." "Not so hard." he said gently. "Now the actor is going to put you on the stage, perhaps in this new play, and some day he is going to marry you.

"Is that what he promised the girl?" According to some letters her moth r found, yes. The actor is married. but he tells you he will divorce the wife. You are to wait for him, and in the meantime he wants you near himsway from the office, where other men tre apt to come in with letters to be typed and to chaff you. You are a pretty girl."

"It isn't necessary to overwork my magination." I said, with a little bit-I had been a pretty girl, but terness. work and worry-

"Now you are going to New York very soon, and in the meantime you have cut yourself off from all your people. You have no one but this man. What would you do? Where would von go?

"How old was the girl?"

"Nineteen." "I think." I said slowly, "that if I were nineteen and in love with a man and hiding I would hide as near him as possible. I'd be likely to get a window that could see his going out and couling in-a place so near that he

During the remainder of that morning I saw Mr. Holcombe at intervals going from house to house. Finally he came back, flushed and excited.

"I found the house," he said, wiping his glasses. "She was there, all right, not so close as we had thought, but as close as she could get.

"And can you trace her?" I asked. His face changed and saddened. Poor child?" he said. "She is dead.

Mrs. Pitman!" "Not she-at Sewickley!"

"No," he said patiently. "That was Jennie Brice."

"But-Mr. Howell"-

"Mr. Howell is a young ass," he said with irritation. "He did not take Jeanie Brice out of the city that morning. He took Alice Murray in Jennie Brice's clothing, and veiled."

Well, that is five years ago. Five times since then the Allegheny river, from being a mild and inoffensive stream, carrying a few boats and a great deal of sewage, has become a raging destroyer and has filled our bearts with fear and our cellars with mud

A few days ago, as I said at the be ginning, we found Peter's body floating in the cellar, and as soon as the yard was dry I buried him. He had grown fat and lazy, but I shall miss him.

Yesterday a riverman fell off a barge along the water front and was drown-They dragged the river for his ed. body, but they did not find him. But they found something an onyx clock. with the tattered remnant of a muslin pillowship wrapped around it. It only bore out the story as we had known it for five years. The Murray girl had lived long

enough to make a statement to the po lice, although Mr. Holcombe only learned this later. On the statement being shown to Ladley in the juil and his learning of the girl's death, he collapsed. He confessed before he was hanged, and his confession, briefly, was like this:

He had met the Mun ay girl in connection with the typing of his play, and had fallen in loce with her He had never cared for his wife, and would have been glad to get did of her in any way possible. He had not in-tended to kill her, however. He had planned to elope with the Murray girl. and, awaiting an opportunity, had per sunded her to leave home and to take om near my bous

Here he had visited her daily, while his wife was at the theater.

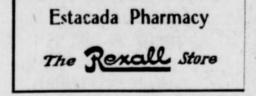
They had planned to go to New York together on Monday, March 5. On Sunday, the 4th, however, Mr. Bronson and Mr Howell had made their curi-

ous proposition. When he accepted, Philip Ladley maintained that he memt only to carry out the plan as suggested. But the temptation was too strong for him. That night, while his wife slept, he had strangled her.

I believe he was frantle with fear, after he had done it. Then it occurred to him that if he made the body un-recognizable he would be safe enough. On that quiet Sunday night, when Mr. Reynolds reported all peaceful in the Ladley room he had cut off the poor wretch's head and had tied it up in a pillowslip weighted with my onyx clock!

It is a curious fact about the case that, the scar which his wife incurred to enable her to marry him was the means of his undoing. He insisted. and I believe he was telling the truth. that he did not know of the scarthat is, his wife had never told him of it and had been able to conceal it. thought she had probably used paraffin in some way.

In his final statement, written with great care and no little literary finish. he told the story in detail; of arrang-



ing the clews as Mr. Howell and Mr. Bronson had suggested; of going out in the boat with the body, covered with a for cont, in the bottom of the skiff; of throwing it into the current above Ninth street bridge, and of seeing the the fur coat fall from the boat and car-

Concluded in next issue.