



The THIRD DEGREE

A NARRATIVE OF METROPOLITAN LIFE

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

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SYNOPSIS.

Howard Jeffries, banker's son, under the evil influence of Robert Underwood, a fellow-student at Yale, leads a life of dissipation, marries the daughter of a gambler who died in prison, and is disowned by his father. He tries to get work and fails. A former college chum makes a business proposition to Howard which requires \$2,000 cash, and Howard is broke. Robert Underwood, who has been repulsed by Howard's wife, Annie, in his college days, and had once been engaged to Alicia, Howard's stepmother, has apartments at the Astoria. Howard decides to ask Underwood for the \$2,000 he needs. Underwood, taking advantage of his intimacy with Mrs. Jeffries, Sr., becomes a sort of social highwayman. Discovering his true character, she denies him the house. Alicia receives a note from Underwood, threatening suicide. Art dealers for whom he has been acting as commissioner, demand an accounting. He cannot make good. Howard Jeffries calls in an intoxicated condition. He asks Underwood for \$2,000 and is told by the latter that he is in debt up to his eyes. Howard drinks himself into a maudlin condition, and goes to sleep on a divan. A caller is announced and Underwood draws a screen around the drunken sleeper. Alicia enters. She demands a promise from him that he will not take his life, pointing to the disgrace that would attach to herself. Underwood refuses to promise unless she will renew her patronage. This she refuses to do. Underwood kills himself. The report of the pistol awakens Howard. He stumbles over the dead body of Underwood. Realizing his predicament he attempts to flee and is met by Underwood's valet.

CHAPTER VIII.—Continued.

Howard was at no time an athlete, and now, contrasted with the burly policeman, a colossus in strength, he seemed like a puny boy. His cringing, frightened attitude, as he looked up in the captain's bulldog face, was pathetic. The crowd of bystanders could hardly contain their eagerness to take in every detail of the dramatic situation. The prisoner was sober by this time, and thoroughly alarmed.

"What do you want me for?" he cried. "I haven't done anything. The man's dead, but I didn't kill him."

"Shut your mouth!" growled the captain.

Dragging Howard after him, he made his way to the elevator. Throwing his prisoner into the cage, he turned to give orders to his subordinate.

"Maloney, you come with me and bring Officer Delaney." Addressing the other men, he said: "You other fellows look after things down here. Don't let any of these people come upstairs." Then, turning to the elevator boy, he gave the command: "Up with her."

The elevator, with its passengers, shot upward, stopped with a jerk at the fourteenth floor, and the captain, once more laying a brutal hand on Howard, pushed him out into the corridor.

If it could be said of Capt. Clinton that he had any system at all, it was to be as brutal as possible with everybody unlucky enough to fall into his hands. Instead of regarding his prisoners as innocent until found guilty, as they are justly entitled to be regarded under the law, he took the directly opposite stand. He considered all his prisoners as guilty as hell until they had succeeded in proving themselves innocent. Even then he had his doubts. When a jury brought in a verdict of acquittal, he shook his head and growled. He had the greatest contempt for a jury that would acquit and the warmest regard for a jury which convicted. He bullied and maltreated his prisoners because he firmly believed in undermining their moral and physical resistance. When by depriving them of sleep and food, by choking them, clubbing them and frightening them he had reduced them to a state of nervous terror, to the border of physical collapse, he knew by experience that they would no longer be in condition to withstand his merciless cross-examinations. Demoralized, unstrung, they would blurt out the truth and so convict themselves. The ends of justice would thus be served.

Capt. Clinton prided himself on the thorough manner in which he conducted these examinations of persons under arrest. It was a laborious ordeal, but always successful. He owed his present position on the force to the skill with which he browbeat his prisoners into "confessions." With his "third degree" seances he arrived at results better and more quickly than in any other way. All his convictions had been secured by them. The press and meddling busybodies called his system barbarous, a revival of the old time torture chamber. What did he care what the people said as long as he convicted his man? Wasn't that what he was paid for? He was there to find the murderer, and he was going to do it.

He pushed his way into the apartment, followed closely by Maloney and the other policemen, who dragged along the unhappy Howard. The dead man still lay where he had fallen. Capt. Clinton stooped down, but made no attempt to touch the corpse, merely satisfying himself that Underwood was dead. Then, after a casual survey of the room, he said to his sergeant:

"We won't touch a thing, Maloney, till the coroner arrives. He'll be here any minute, and he'll give the order



The Persistence of His Stare Made Howard Squirm.

for the undertaker. You can call up headquarters so the newspaper boys get the story."

While the sergeant went to the telephone to carry out these orders, Capt. Clinton turned to look at Howard, who had collapsed, white and trembling, into a chair.

"What do you want with me?" cried Howard appealingly. "I assure you I had nothing to do with this. My wife's expecting me home. Can't I go?"

"Shut up!" thundered the captain. His arms folded, his eyes sternly fixed upon him, Capt. Clinton stood confronting the unfortunate youth, staring at him without saying a word. The persistence of his stare made Howard squirm. It was decidedly unpleasant. He did not mind the detention so much as this man's overbearing, bullying manner. He knew he was innocent, therefore he had nothing to fear. But why was this police captain staring at him so? Whichever way he sat, whichever way his eyes turned, he saw this bulldog-faced policeman staring silently at him. Unknown to him, Capt. Clinton had already begun the dreaded police ordeal known as the "third degree."

CHAPTER IX.

Fifteen minutes passed without a word being spoken. There was deep silence in the room. It was so quiet that once could have heard a pin drop. Had a disinterested spectator been there to witness it, he would have been at once impressed by the dramatic tableau presented—the dead man on the floor, his white shirt front spattered with blood, the cringing, frightened boy crouching in the chair, the towering figure of the police captain sitting sternly eyeing his hapless prisoner, and at the far end of the room Detective Sergeant Maloney busy sending hurried messages through the telephone.

"What did you do it for?" thundered the captain suddenly. Howard's tongue clove to his palate. He could scarcely articulate. He was innocent, of course, but there was something in this man's manner which made him fear that he might, after all, have had something to do with the tragedy. Yet he was positive that he was asleep on the bed all the time. The question is, would anybody believe him? He shook his head pathetically.

"I didn't do it. Really, I didn't." "Shut your mouth! You're lying, and you know you're lying. Wait till the coroner comes. We'll fix you."

Again there was silence, and now began a long, tedious wait, both men retaining the same positions, the captain watching his prisoner as a cat watches a mouse.

Howard's mental anguish was almost unendurable. He thought of his poor wife who must be waiting up for him all this time, wondering what had become of him. She would imagine the worst, and there was no telling what she might do. If only he could get word to her. Perhaps she would be able to explain things. Then he thought of his father. They had quarreled, it was true, but after all it was his own flesh and blood. At such a critical situation as this, one forgets. His father could hardly refuse to come to his assistance. He must get a lawyer, too, to protect his interests. This police captain had no right to detain him like this. He must get word

to Annie without delay. Summoning up all his courage, he said boldly: "You are detaining me here without warrant in law. I know my rights. I am the son of one of the most influential men in the city."

"What's your name?" growled the captain.

"Howard Jeffries." "Son of Howard Jeffries, the banker?"

Howard nodded. "Yes." The captain turned to his sergeant. "Maloney, this feller says he's the son of Howard Jeffries, the banker." Maloney leaned over and whispered something in the captain's ear. The captain smiled grimly.

"So you're a bad character, eh? Father turned you out of doors, eh? Where's that girl you ran away with?" Sharply he added: "You see I know your record."

"I've done nothing I'm ashamed of," replied Howard calmly. "I married the girl. She's waiting my return now. Won't you please let me send her a message?"

The captain eyed Howard suspiciously for a moment, then he turned to his sergeant: "Maloney, telephone this man's wife. What's the number?"

"Eighty-six Morningside." Maloney again got busy with the telephone and the wearying wait began once more. The clock soon struck two. For a whole hour he had been subjected to this grueling process, and still the lynx-eyed captain sat there watching his quarry.

If Capt. Clinton had begun to have any doubts when Howard told him who his father was, Maloney's information immediately put him at his ease. It was all clear to him now. The youth had never been any good. His own father had kicked him out. He was in desperate financial straits. He had come to this man's rooms to make a demand for money. Underwood had refused and there was a quarrel, and he shot him. There was probably a dispute over the woman. Ah, yes, he remembered now. This girl he married was formerly a sweetheart of Underwood's. Jealousy was behind it as well. Besides, wasn't he caught red-handed, with blood on his hands, trying to escape from the apartment? Oh, they had him dead to rights, all right. Any magistrate would hold him on such evidence.

"It's the Tombs for him, all right, all right," muttered the captain to himself; "and maybe promotion for me."

Suddenly there was a commotion at the door. The coroner entered, followed by the undertaker. The two men advanced quickly into the room, and took a look at the body. After making a hasty examination, the coroner turned to Capt. Clinton.

"Well, captain, I guess he's dead, all right."

"Yes, and we've got our man, too." The coroner turned to look at the prisoner.

"Caught him red-handed, eh? Who is he?"

Howard was about to blurt out a reply, when the captain thundered: "Silence!"

To the coroner, the captain explained: "He's the scapegrace son of Howard Jeffries, the banker. No good—bad egg. His father turned him out

of doors. There is no question about his guilt. Look at his hands. We caught him trying to get away."

The coroner rose. He believed in doing things promptly.

"I congratulate you, captain. Quick work like this ought to do your reputation good. The community owes a debt to the officers of the law if they succeed in apprehending criminals quickly. You've been getting some pretty hard knocks lately, but I guess you know your business."

The captain grinned broadly. "I guess I do. Don't we, Maloney?" "Yes, cap.," said Maloney, quietly. The coroner turned to go.

"Well, there's nothing more for me to do here. The man is dead. Let justice take its course." Addressing the undertaker, he said: "You can remove the body."

The men set about the work immediately. Carrying the corpse into the inner room, they commenced the work of laying it out.

"I suppose," said the coroner, "that you'll take your prisoner immediately to the station house, and before the magistrate to-morrow morning?"

"Not just yet," grinned the captain. "I want to put a few questions to him first."

The coroner smiled. "You're going to put him through the 'third degree,' eh? Every one's heard of your star-chamber ordeals. Are they really so dreadful?"

"Nonsense!" laughed the captain. "We wouldn't harm a baby, would we, Maloney?"

The sergeant quickly indorsed his chief's opinion. "No, cap."

Turning to go, the coroner said: "Well, good-night, captain." "Good-night, Mr. Coroner."

Howard listened to all this like one transfixed. They seemed to be talking about him. They were discussing some frightful ordeal of which he was to be a victim. What was this 'third degree' they were talking about? Now he remembered. He had heard of innocent men being bullied, maltreated, deprived of food and sleep for days, in order to force them to tell what the police were anxious to find out. He had heard of secret assaults, of midnight clubbings, of prisoners being choked and brutally kicked by a gang of ruffianly policemen, in order to force them into some damaging admission. A chill ran down his spine as he realized his utter helplessness. If he could only get word to a lawyer. Just as the coroner was disappearing through the door, he darted forward and laid a hand on his arm.

"Mr. Coroner, won't you listen to me?" he exclaimed.

The coroner started, drew back. "I cannot interfere," he said coldly. "Mr. Underwood was a friend of mine," explained Howard. "I came here to borrow money. I fell asleep on that sofa. When I woke up he was dead. I was frightened. I tried to get away. That's the truth, so help me God!"

The coroner looked at him sternly and made no reply. No one could ever reproach him with sympathizing with criminals. Waving his hand at Capt. Clinton, he said: "Good-night, captain."

"Good-night, Mr. Coroner." The door slammed and Capt. Clinton, with a twist of his powerful arm, yanked his prisoner back into his seat. Howard protested.

"You've got no right to treat me like this. You exceed your powers. I demand to be taken before a magistrate at once."

The captain grinned, and pointed to the clock.

"Say, young feller, see what time it is? Two-thirty a. m. Our good magistrates are all comfy in their virtuous beds. We'll have to wait till morning."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Profitable Glass Eye. "Nobody is going to poke out a good eye just for the sake of getting a glass eye," said the city salesman, "but I know a man who makes money on his glass eye. He goes to Europe three times a year on business. While there he does a little trading in jewels as a side line. It is on the homeward trip that he turns his glass eye to good account. In the cavity back of it he carries two or three small but valuable diamonds. Half the duty saved is his commission on these stones alone. The customs inspectors have never got on to him. Naturally they can't go around jabbing their fingers into people's eyes."—New York Sun.

A Chance in Any Case. Muriel (letting him down easy)—I should advise you not to take it to heart. I might prove a most undesirable wife. Marriage is a lottery, you know.

Malcolm (bitterly)—It strikes me as more like a raffle. One man gets the prize and the others get the shake.—Smart Set

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