



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 regaled 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. Howard is turned over to the police.

CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

"But what's the good of sitting here in this death house?" protested Howard. "Take me to the station if I must go. It's intolerable to sit any longer here."

The captain beckoned to Maloney. "Not so fast, young man. Before we go to the station we want to ask you a few questions. Don't we, Maloney?"

The sergeant came over, and the captain whispered something in his ear. Howard shivered. Suddenly turning to his prisoner, the captain shouted in the stern tone of command:

"Get up!" Howard did as he was ordered. He felt he must. There was no resisting that powerful brute's tone of authority. Pointing to the other side of the table, the captain went on:

"Stand over there where I can look at you!" The two men now faced each other, the small table alone separating them. The powerful electroliner overhead cast its light full on Howard's haggard face and on the captain's scowling features. Suddenly Maloney turned off every electric light except the lights in the electroliner, the glare of which was intensified by the surrounding darkness. The rest of the room was in shadow. One saw only these two figures standing vividly out in the strong light—the white-faced prisoner and his stalwart inquisitor. In the dark background stood Policeman Delaney. Close at hand was Maloney taking notes.

"You did it, and you know you did it!" thundered the captain, fixing his eyes on his trembling victim.

"I did not do it," replied Howard slowly and firmly, returning the policeman's stare.

"You're lying!" shouted the captain. "I'm not lying," replied Howard calmly.

The captain glared at him for a moment and then suddenly tried new tactics.

"Why did you come here?" he demanded.

"I came to borrow money."

"Did you get it?"

"No—he said he couldn't give it to me."

"Then you killed him."

"I did not kill him," replied Howard positively.

Thus the searching examination went on, mercilessly, tirelessly. The same questions, the same answers, the same accusations, the same denials, hour after hour. The captain was tired, but being a giant in physique, he could stand it. He knew that his victim could not. It was only a question of time when the latter's resistance would be weakened. Then he would stop lying and tell the truth. That's all he wanted—the truth.

"You shot him!" "I did not."

"You're lying!" "I'm not lying—it's the truth."

So it went on, hour after hour, relentlessly, pitilessly, while the patient Maloney, in the obscure background, took notes.

CHAPTER X.

The clock ticked on, and still the merciless browbeating went on. They had been at it now five long, weary hours. Through the blinds the gray daylight outside was creeping its way in. All the policemen were exhausted. The prisoner was on the verge of collapse. Maloney and Patrolman Delaney were dozing on chairs, but Capt. Clinton, a marvel of iron will and physical strength, never relaxed for a moment. Not allowing himself to weaken or show signs of fatigue,

# The THIRD DEGREE

A NARRATIVE OF METROPOLITAN LIFE

By CHARLES KLEIN AND ARTHUR HORNBLow

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

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he kept pounding the unhappy youth with searching questions. By this time Howard's condition was pitiable to witness. His face was white as death. His trembling lips could hardly articulate. It was with the greatest difficulty that he kept on his feet. Every moment he seemed about to fall. At times he clutched the table nervously, for fear he would stumble. Several times, through sheer exhaustion, he sat down. The act was almost involuntary. Nature was giving way.

"I can't stand any more," he murmured. "What's the good of all these questions? I tell you I didn't do it."

He sank helplessly on to a chair. His eyes rolled in his head. He looked as if he would faint.

"Stand up!" thundered the captain angrily.

Howard obeyed mechanically, although he reeled in the effort. To steady himself, he caught hold of the table. His strength was fast ebbing. He was losing his power to resist. The captain saw he was weakening, and he smiled with satisfaction. He'd soon get a confession out of him. Suddenly bending forward, so that his fierce, determined stare glared right into Howard's half closed eyes, he shouted:

"You did it and you know you did it!"

"No—I—" replied Howard weakly.

"These repeated denials are useless!" shouted the captain. "There's

already enough evidence to send you to the chair!"

Howard shook his head helplessly. Weakly he replied:

"This constant questioning is making me dizzy. Good God! What's the use of questioning me and questioning me? I know nothing about it."

"Why did you come here?" thundered the captain.

"I've told you over and over again. We're old friends. I came to borrow money. He owed me a few hundred dollars when we were at college together, and I tried to get it. I've told you so many times. You won't believe me. My brain is tired. I'm thoroughly exhausted. Please let me go. My poor wife won't know what's the matter."

"Never mind about your wife," growled the captain. "We've sent for her. How much did you try to borrow?"

Howard was silent a moment, as if racking his brain, trying to remember.

"A thousand—two thousand. I forget. I think one thousand."

"Did he say he'd lend you the money?" demanded the inquisitor.

"No," replied the prisoner, with hesitation. He couldn't—he—poor chap—he—

"Ah!" snapped the captain. "He refused—that led to words. There was a quarrel, and—" Suddenly leaning forward until his face almost touched Howard's, he hissed rather than spoke: "You shot him!"

Howard gave an involuntary step backward, as if he realized the trap being laid for him.

"No, no!" he cried. "Quickly following up his advantage, Capt. Clinton shouted dramatically: 'You lie! He was found on the floor in this room—dead. You were trying to get out of the house with-

ing unlawful methods in conducting his inquisitorial examinations."

"Stop your lying!" he said fiercely. "Tell the truth, or we'll keep you here until you do. The motive is clear. You came for money. You were refused, and you did the trick."

Suddenly producing the revolver, and holding it well under the light, so that the rays from the electroliner fell directly on its highly polished surface, he shouted:

"Howard Jeffries, you shot Robert Underwood, and you shot him with this pistol!"

Howard gazed at the shining surface of the metal as if fascinated. He spoke not a word, but his eyes became riveted on the weapon until his face assumed a vacant stare. From the scientific standpoint, the act of hypnotism had been accomplished. In his nervous and overfatigued state, added to his susceptibility to quick hypnosis, he was now directly under the influence of Capt. Clinton's stronger will. He was completely receptive. The past seemed all a blur on his mind. He saw the flash of steel and the police captain's angry, determined-looking face. He felt he was powerless to resist that will any longer. He stepped back and gave a shudder, averting his eyes from the blinding steel. Capt. Clinton quickly followed up his advantage:

"You committed this crime, Howard Jeffries!" he shouted, fixing him with a stare. To his subordinate he shouted: "Didn't he, Maloney?"

"He killed him all right," echoed Maloney.

His eyes still fixed on those of his victim, and approaching his face close to his, the captain shouted:

"You did it, Jeffries! Come on, own up! Let's have the truth! You shot Robert Underwood with this revolver. You did it, and you can't deny it! You

know you can't deny it! Speak!" he thundered. "You did it!"

Howard, his eyes still fixed on the shining pistol, repeated, as if reciting a lesson:

"I did it!"

Quickly Capt. Clinton signaled to Maloney to approach nearer with his note-book. The detective sergeant took his place immediately back of Howard. The captain turned to his prisoner:

"You shot Robert Underwood!"

"I shot Robert Underwood," repeated Howard mechanically.

"You quarreled!"

"We quarreled."

"You came here for money!"

"I came here for money."

"He refused to give it to you!"

"He refused to give it to me."

"There was a quarrel!"

"There was a quarrel."

"You drew that pistol!"

"I drew that pistol."

"And shot him!"

"And shot him."

Howard collapsed into a chair. His head dropped forward on his breast, as if he were asleep. Capt. Clinton yawned and looked at his watch. Turning to Maloney, he said with a chuckle:

"By George! It's taken five hours to get it out of him!"

Maloney turned off the electric lights and went to pull up the window shades, letting the bright daylight stream into the room. Suddenly there was a ring at the front door. Officer Delaney opened, and Dr. Bernstein entered. Advancing into the room, he shook hands with the captain.

"I'm sorry I couldn't come before, captain. I was out when I got the call. Where's the body?"

The captain pointed to the inner room.

"In there."

After glancing curiously at Howard, the doctor disappeared into the inner room.

Capt. Clinton turned to Maloney.

"Well, Maloney, I guess our work is done here. We want to get the prisoner over to the station, then make out a charge of murder, and prepare the full confession to submit to the magistrate. Have everything ready by nine o'clock. Meantime, I'll go down and see the newspaper boys I guess there's a bunch of them down there. Of course, it's too late for the morning papers, but it's a bully good story for the afternoon editions. Delaney, you're responsible for the prisoner. Better handcuff him."

The patrolman was just putting the manacles on Howard's wrists when Dr. Bernstein re-entered from the inner room. The captain turned.

"Well, have you seen your man?" he asked.

The doctor nodded.

"Found a bullet wound in his head," he said. "Flesh all burned—must have been pretty close range. It might have been a case of suicide."

Capt. Clinton frowned. He didn't like suggestions of that kind after a confession which had cost him five hours' work to procure.

"Suicide?" he sneered. "Say, doctor, did you happen to notice what side of the head the wound was on?"

Dr. Bernstein reflected a moment.

"Ah, yes. Now I come to think of it, it was the left side."

"Precisely," sneered the captain. "I never heard of a suicide shooting himself in the left temple. Don't worry, doctor, it's murder, all right." Pointing with a jerk of his finger toward Howard, he added: "And we've got the man who did the job."

Officer Delaney approached his chief and spoke to him in a low tone. The captain frowned and looked toward his prisoner. Then, turning toward the officer, he said:

"Is the wife downstairs?"

The officer nodded.

"Yes, sir; they just telephoned."

"Then let her come up," said the captain. "She may know something."

Delaney returned to the telephone and Dr. Bernstein turned to the captain:

"Say what you will, captain, I'm not at all sure that Underwood did not do this himself."

"Ain't you? Well, I am," replied the captain with a sneer. Pointing again to Howard, he said:

"This man has just confessed to the shooting."

At that moment the front door opened and Annie Jeffries came in escorted by an officer. She was pale and frightened, and looked timidly at the group of strange and serious-looking men present. Then her eyes went round the room in search of her husband. She saw him seemingly asleep in an armchair, his wrists manacled in front of him. With a frightened exclamation she sprang forward, but Officer Delaney intercepted her. Capt. Clinton turned around angrily at the interruption.

"Keep the woman quiet till she's wanted!" he growled.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

As You Like It.

The aged, worn, and guileless-looking individual sauntered up to the desk of the clerk in a southern hotel, and quavered, as he drew from his wallet a yellow bill, "Friend, will you kindly give me five silver dollars in exchange for this memento of the good old confederate days?"

The clerk glanced quickly at the proffered bill, smiled to himself, tossed it into the drawer, and counted out the five dollars. When the guileless-looking individual had gone, the clerk examined the bill he had just taken in. He found that it was, or was not, a good U. S. bill. Either way you take it, it makes a story. It has never been decided which is the better way.

—Puck.

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