

THE DOUBLE CROSS

By A. E. THOMAS

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THE STORY

Jim Stanley, New York business man, orders his desk telephone taken to his home, intending to finish his dictation there. Rolfe Waterman, his partner, comes in. Both are in love with Doris Colby. Stanley proposes to Doris, and she accepts. Waterman's secretary and mistress, Nina Morgan, has overheard his conversation with Stanley and, resenting Waterman's plan to desert her, Waterman says he is penniless and must make a rich marriage. He urges Nina to tell Doris that Stanley has wronged her (Nina). Nina tells Doris her story, exacting a promise that Doris will not tell the source of her information. Doris is convinced of Stanley's duplicity and is broken-hearted, realizing that it is Stanley she loves. Waterman proposes and Doris accepts him. Stanley accepts Nina's situation, and as a wedding present gives his share of the business to Waterman. He is going to India. Waterman, aware of Waterman's crookedness, leaves his employ. The latter begins to importune Doris for money. Brooding, the gambler, is pressing Waterman for payment of gambling debts. At Waterman's urging Doris wears her magnificent diamond necklace to the opera. That night it disappears. Doris' father enlists Bromfield's aid in tracing the stones. Stanley returns to New York with an East Indian friend, Swami Ramana. Doris realizes now that she loves him, and always has. Made desperate by Waterman's conduct she suggests separation or divorce. Waterman refuses to consider either.

CHAPTER X—Continued

"Quite right, quite right. Well Jefferson, recruit the staff at once. Suppose we'll need the usual lot, eh?"

"Yes, sir. And, er—do you wish me to engage a chauffeur, sir?"

"That reminds me," said Wilson, "I met O'Hara last week. I think he'd like to come back. If you want him."

"Surely, surely—get him by all means. Good fellow, O'Hara."

"How soon do you wish to occupy the house, sir?"

"I'll come down on Friday. If you can be ready?"

"Oh certainly, with ease, sir."

"And on Saturday I shall have a few friends for the week-end. That's all for now, Jefferson."

As the butler went out Stanley lit a cigarette, and looked about the room.

"Well," he said, "it's home, anyhow. And now, Frank, this is as good time as any, I suppose, to thank you for all you've done for me while I've been away."

"I've done my best, sir."

"And no one could have done better."

"And why not? Everything I've got in the world I owe to you."

"Oh well, I did myself a good turn when I did you one. It's often like that. By the way, I suppose I'd better give Jefferson some money. He felt in his pockets. 'Hm, not much in here.'"

"How much did you want, sir? Perhaps I can."

"Never mind. There must be an old check book in that desk somewhere. Just take the cover off and we'll see."

Wilson lifted the sheet from the desk.

"Hello," said Stanley, "what's that?"

He indicated the mechanical contrivance which stood revealed upon the desk.

"Oh, yes," answered Wilson, "it's your audiotape. What is it doing here?"

But Wilson remembered everything that concerned Stanley. "Don't you recall, sir? The last day you were in your office you told me to send it down here? You were going to clean up a lot of correspondence over Sunday O'Hara brought it down."

"That's so, I remember. And then I went to India. He searched vaguely in one of the drawers of the desk, saying as he did so, 'Funny things happen to us. Now if anybody had told me, when I instructed you to send this thing down here, that I should start for India the next week, I'd have thought he was crazy. Ah, here we are.' Producing the check book, he took his fountain pen and began to fill it out."

"Well," handing Wilson the check, "give that to Jefferson before we leave. I hope it's good, as Rolin used to say. I haven't balanced my book lately."

He looked at the secretary and smiled at this feeble joke. But Wilson did not smile back. There was nothing about Waterman that could amuse him any more.

Stanley missed the answering smile. Then he yielded to the temptation he had been resisting. "Speaking of Rolin," he said, "I want to ask you something. I saw him a moment last night. Er—have you kept in touch with him at all?"

"At first, yes—there was such a lot to do about your withdrawal from the firm. But for some months I have scarcely seen him."

"Any gossip about him?"

Wilson hesitated.

"Go on. I'm his friend—you can tell me."

"Well, sir, there's no doubt he's been pretty well nipped in the Street once or twice, and, well, it's only gossip of course, but—"

"Come on, come on."

"I hear he's been drinking a good deal."

Stanley got to his feet, walked to the window, and stood looking out.

"I'm afraid you never really liked him, did you, Frank?"

Wilson wriggled a bit, and the other continued:

"I fear you never made many allowances for him. There's no real harm in Rolin. He's always getting into hot water. It's true; but it's always the result of his impulsive disposition. He always leaps before he looks. It's a quality I've sometimes envied him."

Wilson had definite ideas about the impulsiveness of Waterman. He was upon the point of opening up the entire subject of Waterman's affairs, when Stanley changed the subject abruptly.

"I say," he remarked, looking at the audiotape, "do you suppose this thing will work after all this time? Be fun if it would. Can't remember what I was dictating about that last day in the office. I suppose I thought it was mighty important then. He touched the machine lightly. 'I can't even remember how to start it.'"

"Let me do it," said Wilson. "I've got one in the office now. Here's the way it works. If you want it to repeat what you have been saying you just push this lever. There—see?"

Instantly Stanley heard his own voice saying: "Of course there's always the possibility of error in these calculations, and it would be wise to allow a considerable margin of safety therefor. But on the whole we are in a position to say that we think well of this proposition. If you wish, I shall be glad to discuss the matter at length and in detail. Very sincerely yours."

Stanley smiled his boyish smile. But the machine went busily on:

"Don't worry about that, I'll attend to the details."

"Splendid. I have only one slight suggestion to make as to the construction of your scenario."

"And what's that?"

"I don't like the name of your villain."

"You ought to, it's your own."

"Frank," cried Stanley, "stop that thing, stop it!"

Wilson obeyed. In amazement the two looked at each other. Presently Stanley, much puzzled, remarked, "That's not my voice."

"It was at first, sir."

"Yes, yes, I know—but after that somebody else spoke. What on earth do you make of it?"

"I don't know."

"What I mean is, after the dictation, after it said 'very sincerely yours,' it spoke in another voice."

"Two other voices, I thought, sir."

"Yes, I thought so, too. Did you recognize them?"

"I thought I did."

"Whose voices were they?"

"Well, sir, I should say that one of them was Mr. Waterman's."

"Yes, and the other voice was a woman's—didn't you think so?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"Did you recognize it?"

"I think, sir, it was the voice of Nina Morgan."

"Yes, sir."

"I thought so, too, but I wondered if it was my imagination."

"No, sir. No doubt about it," Wilson assured him.

"Well, how do you account for it, Frank?"

"You know this machine stood on your desk in the office that last afternoon until every one but me had left."

"Yes, yes," objected Stanley, "but I'm sure I stopped it after I finished dictating."

"Some one must have started it again. I remember going into your office after you left and finding Mr. Waterman and Miss Morgan talking there. Mr. Waterman was sitting on the corner of your desk. He might have started it by accident—some careless gesture or other—like this."

Sitting on the corner of the desk, the secretary put one hand behind him, carelessly, as if for support and touched the starting lever of the machine, which instantly began to speak again.

"Stop it," cried Stanley irritably. Wilson obeyed him. But after a pause he inquired, "Aren't you going to hear the rest?"

Stanley smiled a little uneasily. "I was thinking it's a bit like eavesdropping, isn't it?"

"Why yes," agreed Wilson, "if we had reason to suspect anything would be said that we shouldn't hear. But it can't be anything but business—the business of the firm—your own firm."

"I suppose that's so," admitted Stanley. "Anyhow, I'm curious to hear it. If it's an offense against propriety, let's wink at it," he added with a grin. "Don't you tell on me, and I'll not tell on you."

Wilson smiled also. "I see, sir—we're two conspirators."

He shoved the cylinder back a bit, pressed the starting lever, and these were the words they heard:

"Glad to discuss the matter at length and in detail. Very sincerely yours."

"Don't worry about that, I'll attend to the details."

"Splendid. I have only one slight suggestion to make as to the construction of your scenario."

"And what's that?"

"I don't like the name of your villain."

"You ought to, it's your own."

"That's the point."

"What are you getting at?"

"I suggest that you strike out the name of Rolin Waterman and substitute the name of James Stanley."

"What?"

"Precisely."

"You want me to tell Miss Colby that it is Stanley and not you?"

"Exactly."

"Stop it! Stop it!" cried Stanley again. He glared at Wilson. "Good God!" he added faintly, and abruptly sat down. Wilson could not utter a syllable. There was silence in the room for a time. Presently Stanley spoke. "It must be some kind of a joke!"

"A very poor one, I'll say," commented the other.

"But it must be, it must! Rolin—my old friend! Why, I've never been anything but generous to him in all my life. Why—I can't understand it." He put both hands to his head.

"Perhaps," suggested Wilson, "if we hear the rest it will be explained."

Stanley caught at the suggestion. "Yes, yes, no doubt. Go on." But as Wilson moved to start the machine again he cried, "No—wait—I'm afraid to hear it."

But Wilson had no intention of stopping there. "Surely, sir," he objected, "you can't stop now. It wouldn't be fair to Mr. Waterman or to anybody."

"I wish the thing had been destroyed," cried Stanley. "With all my heart I wish it had been destroyed—but you're right. We can't stop now. Go on."

A fearful silence followed. Then the alternating voices went on, steadily, relentlessly, each syllable beating like a hammer on Stanley's brain:

"Well—of all the—why on earth should I do that?"

"I'll tell you. Because you're a business man. Look here now, if you tell Doris Colby the truth you'll be getting nothing but revenge on me."

"I expect to get something else for not telling her the truth."

"Well, you won't get it."

"No."

"No, because I haven't got it. Now listen—I'm practically down and out."

"You're a member of this firm."

"Nominally, but my interest is so small it barely gives me a decent living. Stanley owns the works, he's the lad with the money—always has been. What's worse, I owe everybody in the world. I'm short a lot of stocks in a bull market—I'll be wiped out tomorrow if the rise goes on. In short I'm all in. Only one thing can save my marriage to a rich woman. And Doris Colby is just that—a very rich woman. Now you stick by me, and I'll stick—"

Silence fell upon the room like a blow.

"Go on, go on, go on!" groaned Stanley, grinding his teeth, but the secretary answered:

"That's all there is. The cylinder was used up."

There was a long silence before Wilson heard, in a voice he scarcely recognized: "I can't believe it. I can't believe my own ears. Rolin, my friend!"

"It's clear enough, sir," said Wilson quickly. "Nina Morgan went to Miss Colby and told her this vile slander. Miss Colby turned you down and married Waterman."

"I can't believe it," murmured Stanley. "Even now I can't believe it. And yet it accounts for so many things—little looks and phrases that passed between those two in the office. They meant nothing to me then, and now they all come back with a new and terrible meaning." He cudgeled his memory. "Yes, yes—and that last night—the last time I saw her. When I entered the room, Rolin and she were alone. She had just accepted him. I thought then she looked queer—not at all like a happy girl. She passed it off, but she was queer just the same, and no wonder. That vile woman had just been there telling her this terrible tale about me, making me a monster in her eyes."

He tossed both hands in the air and cried, "By God, I'll not sit down under this!" He crossed the room in three strides, seized Wilson by the elbow with a grip that hurt and said, "Look here, tell me everything that you know about him—I mean, since I went away."

At last Wilson had his opportunity, and he used it. Sunk into the depths of the big chair, Stanley, his face buried in his hands, heard him to the end. Then he spoke. To Wilson it was the voice of a stranger.

"In short, he's betrayed her as he betrayed me. I knew something was wrong when I saw her last night, but I never dreamed—how could I have dreamed?—it was like this. Frank what's become of that girl? He cried with a sudden burst of energy, "The Morgan girl, Nina Morgan, d—n her!"

"I don't know, sir. She never came back to the office after you went. I suppose he set her up an establishment somewhere."

"On Doris' money?"

"I suppose so."

"And you've never seen her since?"

"No, sir, not to speak of."

"Find her! Find her! Spare nothing, stop at nothing, search the world—only find that woman!"

He glared at the secretary with such intensity that the little man was frightened. "Come, come, sir," he said, "you mustn't go on like this. Take hold of yourself."

"Yes, yes, you're right," said Stanley feverishly, "no use in getting wild. Now is the time for self-control. But there was little self-control about him then."

"Frank, Frank," he went on, "are you sure I'm awake, and that I haven't dreamed this damnable thing? For God's sake tell me it's only a dream, and that I'm going to wake up pretty soon—that my old friend is still my friend, and that the girl I love is happy with the man she loves—that her life and mine have not been blasted by the wretch I called my friend!"

Wilson swallowed hard at the lump in his throat as he said, "I wish to heaven it was a dream."

"Start that machine again!" said Stanley suddenly.

Fearful of its effect, the secretary said, "Please—I think you've had enough of that, sir."

"Frank, listen. I could perhaps forgive this man the ruin of my life, but he's ruined the life of the girl I love, and for that I will never forgive him—never. For that I will have vengeance. For such things cannot be done—no, else justice must become a mockery. Start that d—d machine! I wish to hear again the voice of my friend!"

Against his will, Wilson obeyed. Without interruption Stanley heard the relentless tale once more, from beginning to end—the tale of his betrayal. When it was done he sat motionless for a time. Presently he fumbled in his pocket, produced a letter and read in a shaking voice:

"Dear old man: I haven't seen you for so long. Come and lunch with me on Wednesday. We've lots to talk about. Faithfully yours, Rolin."

"Faithfully mine," he muttered. He returned the letter to his pocket and sat with glowing eyes staring into space, seeing nothing—thinking—thinking. Minutes he sat like that. At length Wilson approached him, put one hand upon his shoulder, and said:

"It's getting late, sir—let's go."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

The Pastor Says:

A good woman as truly gives life to her husband as to her children.—John Andrew Holmes.

Osanburg for Closet Is in Favor and Inexpensive

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

In furnishing a room which has either one very large closet or two closets, an idea may be borrowed from the small modern apartment. Many of these apartments consist chiefly of a large day-time living room which is turned into a bedroom at night by extending a davenport and opening a closet door, revealing a dressing nook within. A closet of this kind must have room for a chiffonier or chest of drawers with a mirror, and places to store all the little accessories that are usually visible in a bedroom. A good drop light is needed. If the closet is big enough, there may be a pole at one side for garments on hangers. Or, as in the case of this room photographed by the United States Department of Agriculture, the room may have another closet for outer clothing.

Convenient wall bags or pockets for shoes and hose line the doors of this closet. They are hung on curtain rods top and bottom to keep them in place and make them easy to take down for washing. Behind the bureau other pockets take care of mis-

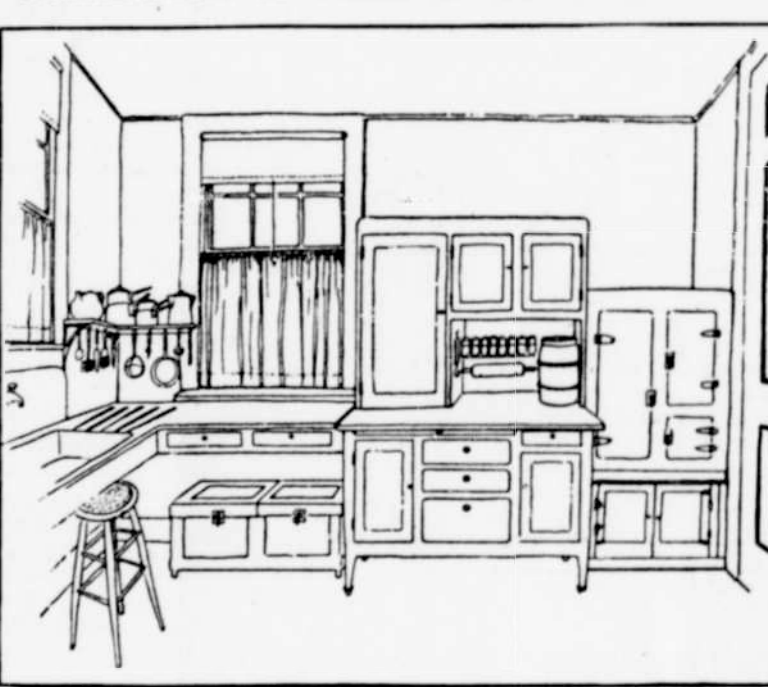


A Closet May Conceal a Dresser or Chest of Drawers.

cellaneous small articles that are needed at the dressing table. These wall bags are made of osanburg, to match the draw curtains and upholstery covers used in the room. Osanburg is a strong washable cotton fabric recently come into wide use for household furnishings. It is easily laundered, inexpensive, and if not desired in natural color, can be dyed. In the South it has long been known for many practical uses.

Meat Sandwiches. An infinite variety of meat sandwiches can be made—beef, lamb, ham, chicken, tongue, fresh roast pork, pork tenderloin, etc. The meat may be sliced thin and placed between buttered bread or minced and mixed with mayonnaise or salad dressing.

UTILIZATION OF WALL SPACE IN KITCHEN



Excellent Use of Wall Space for Convenience and Good Lighting.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

One of the secrets of efficient work in the kitchen is good utilization of wall space for the necessary equipment. The illustration, from the United States Department of Agriculture, shows an excellent grouping of equipment in a rather large kitchen. The object is to bring the various work centers as close together as possible, so that the housewife will not take needless steps in preparing or clearing away meals. In this particular kitchen the entire fourth side of the room is taken up by a large dining table seating eight persons. In case where there is a separate dining room or alcove, the same part of the room might be fitted with shelves or used to accommodate any additional equipment, such as a work table or an ironing board.

The sink, with its double drainboards, is on the left, in front of a window. There is a dish closet, not shown in the picture, at the extreme left end of the sink. Most right-hand ed people move from left to right in going from one task to another, as in turning from the food preparation center where vegetables are prepared—the sink—to that where other foods

HOUSEHOLD NOTES

Give children responsibilities appropriate to their age and experience.

The preschool child's diet may include any vegetable properly prepared, except corn and dried beans.

Several short applications of a chemical will remove a stain more effectively than will a continuous application.

The so-called lazy child may be

MORE VARIETY IN SCHOOL LUNCHES

Sameness About Material Carried Daily.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

There is apt to be a discouraging sameness about the lunches the children carry to school. Why not make sandwiches of different kinds of bread once in a while? Use whole wheat, rye, or steamed brown bread sometimes in place of the usual white bread; or raisin, nut, or date bread, all of which are good with cheese filling or no filling at all. Or orange bread, made with chopped cooked orange peel. For a change omit sandwiches and include biscuits, rolls, or corn bread, or oatmeal or bran muffins. A piece of cheese, hard-cooked egg, or a chicken drumstick may take the place of sandwich filling. The center of a roll may be hollowed out and filled with chopped meat or cooked fish seasoned with mayonnaise. A small bag of crisp potato chips is liked occasionally, and, not too often, a piece of pickle.

Salad fillings, including a leaf of lettuce and any preferred dressing, always help to make ordinary sandwiches more moist. Bacon and lettuce, ground peanuts mixed with cream, cooked meat cake in thin flat slices are other good fillings suggested by the bureau of home economics to vary the sliced cold meat that appears so frequently.

Be sure to season all sandwiches with sufficient salt, and keep a small salt shaker with the lunch basket. Cut the bread evenly, but not too thin, and spread it carefully on both sides so that the butter forms a coating that prevents the filling from soaking through. Don't get the edges smeared with butter. Butter should be creamed before it is spread on bread for sandwiches, but it should not be melted, as that makes it soak into the bread.

Make Pineapple Sauce for Cottage Pudding

A new combination to many people is a cottage pudding with a hot pineapple sauce poured over it. Any preferred recipe for cottage pudding may be used. The baking should be timed so that the dessert will be just done when it is time to serve it. The sauce can be kept hot in the double boiler. As this sauce is made from canned pineapple, this is an excellent cold weather dessert. The bureau of home economics has tested the proportions given below:

1 No. 2 can (about 1 1/2 cups) pineapple
2 cups pineapple juice
1/2 cup sugar
1 tbs. cornstarch

Drain and press the juice from the crushed pineapple. Mix the cornstarch and the sugar and add it to the juice. Cook this mixture in the upper part of a double boiler over the direct flame until the sauce thickens. Stir constantly. Place the upper part of the boiler over the lower part, cover, and cook the sauce for ten minutes. Remove from the fire, and add the butter, salt, and pineapple, and mix well. Serve over cottage pudding.

For Colds—



How many people you know end their colds with Bayer Aspirin! And how often you've heard of its prompt relief of sore throat or tonsillitis. No wonder millions take it for colds, neuralgia, rheumatism; and the aches and pains that go with them. The wonder is that anyone still worries through a winter without these tablets! They relieve quickly, yet have no effect whatever on the heart. Friends have told you Bayer Aspirin is marvelous; doctors have declared it harmless. Every druggist has it, with proven directions. Why not put it to the test?



Hold Ostrich Plumes for Return to Favor

If feathers ever come back into favor many a poor man will make a fortune. There are still many ostrich feathers in storage at customs warehouses in Britain. The plumes were left on their owners' hands when the fashion changed.

Some of them would have been extremely valuable 20 years ago. Now they can be used only in making cushions or dusters, while a few of the smaller feathers are sold each year to dressmakers for the costumes of debutantes who are to be presented at court.

The fact that synthetic feathers are now being made causes the value of the real ones to depreciate still more. Yet a number of dealers believe that feathers will come back soon, and are determined to keep the rarer plumes till they do.—London Answers.

Drug of Great Power

A drug obtained from an East Indian plant called the gausebasu which has been used as a remedy for toothache for many years, has now been examined by a London pharmacologist, Dr. E. Hesse, who has found that it is one of the most powerful surface anesthetics known, about 30 times stronger than cocaine. It has a most violent action on the heart, and strongly resembles the African arrow poison. Doctor Hesse regards such a powerful poison as probably much too dangerous to be used generally as a local anesthetic.

Artificial Silk Tests

The immense increase in the artificial silk trade has led to the use of many new methods in the process of manufacture. Two Japanese workers, Y. Kani and S. Nakashima, have introduced the use of micro-photographs (that is, photographs taken through the microscope) for observing the minute structure of the filament in artificial silk. In this way they can quickly discover whether alterations in the conditions of spinning have any effect on the texture.

Past Fly Time

Buddy, age five, and his mother were on a street car recently when a woman with a veil on her hat sat down opposite them. Buddy looked at the veil intently for a short time and then asked:

"Mother, why doesn't she take that off? The flies are almost gone now."

Dummy Silk Tickets

Patrons of a moving picture theater at Arras, France, now buy their tickets from a dummy, dressed in the costume of an usher. When the correct amount is placed in a container the figure produces a ticket. The automaton salesman is especially popular among children.

Sad

"Tommy, why did you stay away from school yesterday?"

"I was sick."

"Too bad. I wanted to let you out for football practice."

Then he was sick.

Foresight

"Will you have the lady's name engraved on the ring?"

"No, put: 'From Gustave to his first and only love,' and then I shall never have to have it altered."

Evidently

"Aw, he's not such a good catch."

"Dropped you did he, girlie?"—Louisville Courier-Journal.

In twenty years these will be "the good old days."



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