

# SHEEP'S CLOTHING

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

Author of "THE LONE WOLF," "THE BRASS BOWL," Etc.

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## CHAPTER II—Continued.

The Dowager Dragon glanced fore and aft; but there were no other passengers within earshot, and the ports behind them, though slightly, were shut and sound-tight. "Betty Merrilees," she said.

"You're warm—as the children say in hide-and-seek."

"Aha!" the lady cried in triumph. "Well, then! Betty doesn't mean to try to beat the customs. She told me so herself. The row that man Loeb has kicked up about smuggling has scared her so that she's made up her mind to declare every blessed trinket. So you see, Quoin, you're simply wasting your time trailing Betty Merrilees."

Quoin smiled vaguely at his finger tips. "No, I'm not," he contradicted.

Mrs. Beggarstaff sniffed suspiciously. "I've guessed wrong?"

"For once in a way. The truth is, I don't care whether Mrs. Merrilees defrauds the government or not. It's over a year since I left the secret service. I don't like the work—too tame—and having learned all it could teach me, I quietly dropped out and returned to my old field."

"Private investigation, eh?"

"There's some fun in that," Quoin said with mild enthusiasm. "Odd jobs—I love 'em. They're generally so very odd—unexpected besides."

"Quoin," the lady inquired with a change of tone, "you remember the Joachim collection?"

"Do I remember it!" Quoin protested with reproachful sincerity. "I wish I might hope ever to be repaid for the sleep I lost on that case!"

"You never got a clue?"

"Never one. That was a masterly job."

"Has none of the stuff ever turned up?"

"Oh, plenty of it, here and there—mostly in Europe. In fact, I'm told that Joachim has reassembled most of the collection; but it has cost him five times his original outlay."

"There are, of course, pieces still missing?"

"Oh, naturally!"

"Well, then," said the lady deliberately, "I don't mind telling you that there's one piece I distinctly remember, on board this ship—a magnificent sardonyx cameo."

"Truly?"

"Would you care to see it? Then—look!"

Mrs. Beggarstaff unclosed her left hand. In its palm lay Miss Carteret's brooch!

With a wondering exclamation, Quoin bent forward to examine the cameo, while Mrs. Beggarstaff regarded with a triumphant smile his bent head. It was something to have started the greatest living detective, which was precisely the distinction the keen-witted old woman accorded this man.

"Take it to the light and have a good look."

"Thank you," said Quoin, rising instantly and moving forward, to the lighted companionway, where he lingered a long minute, intently inspecting the brooch with a small magnifying glass.

"Unquestionably one of the missing pieces," he declared flatly, returning, "and, if I'm not mistaken, one of the finest in the collection. How did you come by it, please?"

"It's the property of the young person who shares my cabin; name, Lucy Carteret. She's an American, about twenty, and has lived abroad all her life. Now she's going to New York to join her father, who—she says—gave her this on her fifteenth birthday."

"The question is, who is Carteret's father?"

"I'm not psychic," Mrs. Beggarstaff objected. "The woods are full of Carterets; but I know none that this child resembles in any way. Besides, she has denied every relationship I've suggested so far."

"But we mustn't forget that, when found, this paternal Carteret will probably prove to be a perfectly honest bourgeois who picked up the cameo casually in some out-of-the-way shop, at home or abroad. I've often thought that the widespread distribution of that loot might be taken as pretty good evidence in support of something I've always contended was a popular chimeric—the existence of a regular organization of social freebooters. You're going?" he asked as Mrs. Beggarstaff stirred and sat up, preparatory to rising.

"The present owner of this bauble is asleep—and I want to replace it before she wakes up."

"One minute, if you don't mind. Perhaps you can tell me something—"

"On one condition," the old lady stipulated firmly. "You must let me in on the ground floor. I'll not lift my hand to help you in anything that's a mystery to me."

"I don't mind telling you in the least. This isn't a case—just simple curiosity on my part. Did you ever know anybody by the name of Hicks-Lorrimer—in London?"

## MRS. BEGGARSTAFF DISCOVERS THAT LUCY CARTERET OWNS A BEAUTIFUL NECKLACE WHICH HAD BEEN STOLEN FROM A VALUABLE COLLECTION SOME TIME BEFORE

A beautiful, well-bred English-woman, nervous and suspicious, finds when she boards the steamer *Alsatia*, bound from Liverpool for New York, that her stateroom mate is Mrs. Amelia Beggarstaff, a fascinating wealthy American widow of about sixty years. The girl says her name is Lucy Carteret and that she is going to America to meet her father, who has lived there many years. Something about the girl's manner makes the widow wonder what's the trouble. She is much surprised to find Lucy possesses a magnificent necklace which the girl said her father had given her for Christmas.

"Bless my income!" exclaimed Mrs. Beggarstaff indignantly. "No! Who is he—or she?"

"I don't know; that's why I asked you—who know everybody. One question more: What do you know about your friend Mr. Craven?"

"Tad Craven?" exclaimed the Dowager Dragon in blank amazement.

"What's he been doing?"

"Nothing very desperate; only making love to Mrs. Merrilees. Think she'll marry him?"

"Couldn't say. She's a flighty creature, and Tad's tremendously amusing. What concern is it of yours?"

"None whatever. You haven't told me what you know about him."

"Why—of course!—what the world knows. He's an entertaining little man who came out of nowhere to cheer us up about fifteen years ago. Never was heard of before one fine morning when we all woke up to find he belonged. No money, so far as I know—or just enough to enable him to live well without working too hard. Nowadays New York teems with just this type of unaccountable persons—decent, diverting, well-bred, and three-quarters idle. That's all—except I like the man."

"You never heard he was married?"

"He isn't!" Mrs. Beggarstaff exclaimed, dumfounded.

"I don't say so. I only wonder. Of course, if you never heard he was married, you never suspected him of having a daughter—you're too pure-minded."

"Thank you for nothing. What are you driving at?"

"And if he hasn't a daughter, who in thunderation is Lydia?"

"Quoin," said the Dowager Dragon solemnly, "I warn you, if you keep me on tenterhooks another instant—"

"Here you are, then," the detective interposed hastily; "but keep it to yourself. Yesterday afternoon, when I was killing time in the wireless house, a message came in which I read over the operator's shoulder as he wrote it down. It was for Craven, and ran something like this: 'Lydia disappeared. What shall I do? Await advice before notifying police.' Signed, 'Hicks-Lorrimer.' And after

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## CHAPTER III.

Long after dark Miss Carteret wakened. For some minutes she lay in lazy content, unstirring, wide eyes dreaming into obscurity. The stateroom was dusky with shadows; but deck lights beyond the open window ports pointed wan squares upon the white interior woodwork. The sweep of clean sea air through the room was as sweet as fresh cool water to a parched throat. Feeling stronger and more herself for each delicious breath, humbly the girl gave thanks; for it seemed that, with the passing of the gale, the ghastly incubus of mal-demer had been exorcised.

Presently, conscious of a pang of hunger, she touched the repeating spring on her bracelet watch—an exquisitely small, jeweled extravagance, her father's gift of the previous Christmas—and bent an attentive ear to its elfin chime. Eight o'clock. It was too late to dress and dine in public. But as she lay in doubt, trying to decide whether she was really as hungry as she felt, or would do better to deny herself food until breakfast, she heard a sound from the outer deck so singular that in a twinkling it focused her drowsy, errant wits.

The sound was "Pst-pssst-pssst," a trisyllabic hiss of which each part was longer and more emphatic than its predecessor. Unmistakably of human origin, though as odd and alarming as the warning of a serpent, it brought the girl from her bed to her feet with a start.

Her movement was a noiseless one. The man who had sounded that strange call she discovered stealing immediately outside the window; his back was to it, so that she could see little more than the concave line of his dark, lean, shaved cheek, and the back of a long, narrow head beneath a steamer cap with visor well down over his eyes.

Almost immediately the hiss was answered by quick, light footsteps, and the voice of one as yet invisible, a voice of guarded accent but vibrant with indignation. "What the devil do you mean by buzzing me like that?"

The girl trembled. Unless her senses were untrustworthy, she knew that voice better than her own. It seemed impossible that she could be mistaken.

It was again audible, the response of the man outside the window having escaped her. "You infatuate ass! Don't you know better than to take such chances?"

"Oh, it's all right. He's up on the boat deck, chinnin' with some skit. I made sure of that before I laid for you. Trust me."

"Trust you to play the fool! Don't you know every word you utter can be overheard in those staterooms?"

Instinctively the girl crouched in the shadow of her bedstead, in deadly terror lest she be detected at her involuntary eavesdropping—so strong upon her sensitive perceptions the psychological effect of this surreptitious passage.

But her fears were quickly dissipated, the interview terminating as abruptly as it had begun.

"Good-night!" that well-remembered voice continued incisively. "And for the last time I warn you: Don't approach me again aboard this ship!"

"But—listen," the other pleaded and threatened in the one breath. "We got to get a straight answer out of you—"

"I've given it already—twice. For the third time—no!" With this the last speaker strode briskly forward.

Rising as silently as any shadow, Miss Carteret again turned her face to the port.

The man who had hissed was still there, watching the other way.

She fancied something sullen and menacing in the lowering inclination of his head, the stoop of his narrow shoulders.

Suddenly, with a mumbled word, inarticulate with anger, he turned and went swiftly aft.

"Do you believe that Lucy Carteret is telling the truth and that she is an honest, high-class girl; or do you think she is one of a band of shrewd crooks? The next installment brings important developments.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Few Individuals Honored.

France delights in naming its streets after some particular building, or some happening, or a great victory, and this is also true to a certain extent in Canada, where there is only one capital city which commemorates an individual. This is Charlottetown, the capital of Prince Edward Island. The Charlotte so remembered was the daughter and only child of George IV, who died only a year after her marriage in 1817.—Philadelphia North American.

## NEW MAIL SORTING MACHINE ALMOST HUMAN



This new mail-sorting machine which is being tried out by Uncle Sam is wonderfully efficient and seems to be almost human. The machine is 25 feet long and has a system similar to the linotype. It saves a great deal of labor, makes working conditions more ideal, and can be worked by a single operator. He sits in front of it with a large stack of letters. He reads Columbus, O., on one envelope, Springfield on another and New York on another. He presses the Columbus key and the envelope is whisked away, shot here and there until a certain combination of metal parts releases it and it drops into the Columbus, O., box. The same course is followed with the other envelopes.

## PLAN TO CHART THE ATMOSPHERE

Uncle Sam's Experts Prepare to Make Survey of Air to Aid Aviation.

## FOR PROTECTION OF FLIERS

Work Made Necessary by Fact That Soon Thousands of Airplanes Will Be Soaring Over the American Continent.

Now that the airplane is practically perfected, and many people learning to fly, an effort is being made by the national advisory committee for aeronautics to promote the study of the atmosphere over this continent and the adjacent waters, and have a set of accurate charts made for the benefit of aviators. This investigation is to be known as an aerological survey.

Especially is this problem vital as it concerns the national preparedness program. This fact is brought out by Dr. Charles D. Walcott, secretary of the Smithsonian institution and chairman of the executive committee of the national advisory committee for aeronautics, who urges most strongly the establishment and maintenance of aerological surveys over North America and the adjoining waters for the protection of the lives of our aviators, the safety of aircraft and the furtherance of their operation.

## Little Known of Air.

"At present," states Doctor Walcott, "practically nothing is known of the movements of the fluid in which shortly thousands of aircraft representing millions of dollars in investment will be floating and, what is far more important, they will be operated by thousands of our finest specially trained young men."

Aviation is recognized as one of the prime factors, if not the initial necessity, of preparedness. During the past 12 months the national advisory committee for aeronautics has been exercising every means within its power to advise and assist the aerial arms of the government, both for land and sea operation. This committee has been able to assist in standardizing airplane construction to a certain extent, has met with manufacturers of airplanes and airplane motors in an effort to expedite the delivery of machines to the government, and has been of great assistance in the solution of many other problems.

## Aerological Stations Planned.

The committee believes that the time has come when aerological stations should be established and maintained, especially in conjunction with military training stations maintained now or in the future for the instruction of aviators. The plans include, through the co-operation of the weather bureau, the establishment of additional aerological stations for observing, measuring and investigating atmospheric phenomena in the aid of aeronautics, not only at the surface of the earth but at different elevations up to 10,000 feet or more, and the mapping of the same. The functions of this system would serve aviation much as the hydrographic office of the coast and geodetic survey advises on ocean navigation.

## LIVING COST VARIES

Wide Range of Prices Shown by Inquiry in Alaska.

High Transportation Charges in Some Sections Are Responsible—Common Laborers Get Big Wages.

There is probably no region in which the actual cost of the necessities of life varies so greatly as it does in Alaska, according to experts of Uncle Sam's department of agriculture, who have recently made a study of that country in order to ascertain agricultural and other information of interest to the prospective settlers in that section of the United States.

It is well-known that wages in that country are high, but, on the other hand, there are said to be places in the remote interior to which it costs a dollar a pound to transport provisions from tidewater; consequently the consumer must pay this freight rate in addition to the actual value. It is said, however, that at other places in the coast towns, particularly those nearest Puget sound cities, provisions can be obtained at a comparatively small advance on the prices in Seattle.

There are as yet but few laborers employed in agriculture in Alaska, it is said. Few of the homesteaders have money to hire labor, and, therefore, have to depend on their own efforts for the clearing of their land and the erection of their buildings. Up to the present year it is said that the wages for common labor in Alaska have been \$7.50 a day for eight hours' work. As development progresses there will, of course, be more and more demand for men to do the work. Officials who made the study say, therefore, that any young, able-bodied man who is willing to work at anything he can find to do can find work somewhere in Alaska, so that he not only can make a living, but if he is of a saving disposition he can lay something aside.

Alaska is not a wheat country. The experts found, however, that certain varieties of spring wheat have been grown and can be matured in favorable seasons in all of the interior valleys, but wheat does not do its best in these far northern latitudes. The agricultural experiment stations are now engaged in developing varieties of spring wheat which will mature in a shorter period of time than those now grown in the states or in Canada.

## Garrison Virgin Islands.

Two hundred and fifteen United States marines from Haiti and Santo Domingo were landed in the Virgin Islands, formerly the Danish West Indies, to form the first United States garrison in this newly acquired island possession.

Having been stationed ashore guarding American legations abroad and the naval stations in our many island possessions for years, the garrisoning of the Virgin Islands is no new duty for Uncle Sam's "soldiers of the sea."

## Drift Is Cityward.

The drift of population in the United States is still strongly to the cities. Census bureau reports show that 40.9 per cent of the country's inhabitants live in places of more than 8,000 residents, as against 33.0 per cent in 1910.

## JUST MISSED DEATH

MISSIONARY'S FEARFUL EXPERIENCE IN OLD VAULT.

Cowardice of His Two Zulu "Boys" Nearly Led to Disaster—Wife Helped Rescue Him in the Nick of Time.

"A missionary has to be a Jack-of-all-trades," remarked Rev. Yandel Collins, who was home on a furlough after twenty years in South Africa. "There was an underground room, about eight feet deep by eight square, walled with brick and plastered with tarred cement, beneath the children's bedroom in our mission house at Mupola; it was for storing corn, or mealie, as they call it in Natal. I didn't like to use it because it was so damp, and for a year I had been using galvanized iron tanks that I riveted and soldered myself. I had almost forgotten the existence of the old corn cellar when, toward the close of the next rainy season, we noticed a strange, sickening odor pervading the house. When I removed the square wooden lid over one end of the old vault, the stench was enough to knock you down. A few quarts of molded mealie had been left on the cellar floor; rats had enlarged a crack in one corner in order to get at this provender, and the heavy rains had seeped through the rat hole and left about six inches of water, wherein some of the rats had drowned themselves. You can imagine what the smell was like.

"I ordered Malusi and Mutyani, two gigantic Zulus, to clean out that vault; but they refused, unless I would go down first. They firmly believed that a demon dwelt in that black hole!

"So I got the two boys to stand over the trapdoor while I prepared to descend the short ladder that leaned against the wall a foot from the opening. I lowered a pall on the end of a stout rope, which I made Malusi take hold of, and then, with a lighted candle in one hand and a shovel in the other, I swung down on my elbows until my feet found the ladder. I tested it, found it apparently firm, took another step downward; and then with one last, long breath I let go my hold on the floor and trusted my whole weight to the ladder.

"The ladder was as rotten as everything else in that