

FOUL PLAY

BY WILL SEAT.



HERE is no escape! sighed the Rev. De-lavan Meers, resting his thin white face in his slim white hands. An awful deed invests itself with the character of doom.

"Tut, tut, my young friend," expostulated Judge Josiah Marcellus. "That isn't the gospel of good things you have preached so well. The fact is you are hipped through worry."

"Now I am not going to ask you the cause; I can't possibly; I didn't want to know. I am going to crush the resultant snake, once for all. Give me the blackmailing letters, so."

"Tomorrow you and Elsie quietly sail on the bark Ariadne, for Naples and return. I have made all the arrangements. There will be but one other passenger, a young man named Diggle, down with the consumption. You will never know he is aboard."

At the same time the papers will announce that you and your wife are about to spend the vacation voted by your church in Europe, sailing a week hence. The wretched health of both will account for your seclusion meanwhile."

"My idea is that the blackmailers will at once make another demand. It will be answered in your name by the statement that you refuse to continue paying over money as demanded from time to time; but that you are willing to pay a lump sum for the delivery of the infernal thing, whatever it is, that has been held over you. Through protracted negotiations the rascals must show their hands, and then we will have them and it, never fear."

"That's all, my dear fellow, the very last word. Give my love to Elsie. Good luck and good-by, and both come back as rosy and jolly as children."

When his agitated visitor had gone the judge touched the button on his desk and called his confidential man, Cronk, into the office.

"He is a week, Abe," he began, "a nervous wreck. I didn't dare ask particulars of him. It's hard on you, but we must carry out my first suggestion. Here are the letters; all alike except in the date."

Cronk drew out the top letter. It was typewritten and read as follows: "Unless you send at once to L. Habitat & Co., at 4 Front street, \$1000, the thing you lost on the night of June 27, 1905, will be delivered to your wife."

"That number in Front street is a private postoffice," mused Cronk, "kept by an old codger who has a high reputation in his line for mind-reading his own affairs. So long as box rent is paid he knows and wants to know nothing whatever of the person reading it. How long has this sort of thing been going on, Judge?"

"Ever since his marriage; lot me see, three years ago. Yes, in the fall of 1905," the judge answered.

"That is to say, shortly after the loss of the thing on which the blackmail is founded?"

"Yes, that is true; though of course coincidence in time does not imply any other relation."

"Mr. Meers was a sort of missionary clergyman, then?"

"Yes, working among the poor."

seeking out the desperate. You must have heard of the wonderful work he did in preventing suicide."

"I have heard nothing but good of the gentleman," Cronk responded dryly. "And now the desperation which he has cured in others has attacked him, hey? Strange! It seems almost like fate."

"Meers got off some such fool talk himself," said the judge irritably; "but he at least has the excuse of nervous exhaustion. For heaven's sake—"

"Excuse me, sir, but the man is too blameless to have ever committed evil; and yet he is morbid. He must therefore charge himself with some neglect. Perhaps the loss of the thing to which these notes refer caused this neglect."

"Might it not have been a letter, then, which called on him for help—for help which was not furnished—from one who committed suicide for the lack of it; from a suicide who was dear to the lady he so soon afterward married?"

"Don't you see, sir, don't you see the progressive probability? Tell me, did Mrs. Meers have a near relation who died about this time?"

The judge looked startled and then deeply annoyed.

"Yes," he admitted. "George Lessing did die in the summer of 1905. He was Mrs. Meers' twin brother, and of course, most dear to her."

"But what of it? Don't waste your time with such a prior nonsense. Get your facts, man; first get your facts, and then we can make deductions with some degree of certainty."

"Very good, sir," agreed the detective. "I will get my facts; but, with all due respect, the death of Mr. Lessing at that time is one of them."

So the answer as outlined by the judge was sent to L. Habitat & Co., written in a close imitation of the clergyman's hand, but no response, acquiescent or menacing, came to it. The days of the week passed.

The papers commented on the prospective European trip of Dr. and Mrs. Meers, with regret that their delicate health forbade any sort of a public goodby. The Rumanian sailed and Cronk in confidential touch with the captain, who had readily agreed to the innocent deception was convinced by his own personal scrutiny that not one of the hundreds of female, eighteenth and fifties who stepped over the steamer and waved a good voyage from the wharf had even the slightest interest in the whereabouts of the two invalids.

"Write again," said the judge, "manfully. You misdirected or failed to stamp the letter."

"It looks to me," said Cronk, "as if the person who opened the first letter was surprised, perhaps shocked, or she may have expected to find \$1000 enclosed as formerly without a word of explanation; but instead saw a revelation of the cause and source of this income, perhaps for the first time."

"Why do you drag in a woman?"

"Because sir, many a scoundrel has a good wife who is utterly in ignorance of his chicanery. Such knowledge coming suddenly to such a woman would cause her to do what I believe has been done in this case, to abandon the box at the private postoffice at once."

"And the scoundrel, where is he?"

"He may have gone away, sir, con-

scient that this money would be sent for his wife's support meanwhile."

"Assumption, naked, shadowy assumption!"

"Aye, sir, but capable of verification. This old codger, Monkert, who keeps the private postoffice, faithful as he is to his customers, is very glad to oblige any one of power or authority. If the box has been abandoned his duty, as he makes it out, is over, and he will be ready enough to tell me all he knows of the firm of L. Habitat & Co."

Accordingly that night Cronk visited the dingy little shop, the main source of revenue of which was the rent from the private boxes. Monkert, the bent and hairy nondescript of a proprietor, peered suspiciously over the silver rimmed glasses balanced on his enormous nose. "I know noddings, noddings," he repeated.

"But this is to oblige Judge Marcellus in a private matter," Cronk urged. "You know him, you know me; you know that we can help if the time comes when you need help."

"Ach, only too soon," moaned Monkert.



MEERS AND ELSIE QUIETLY SAILED ON THE ADRIADNE.

kert. "Ze poleeze von dar, the inspectors go next—there is no chance for an honest man to make his bread. But will you remember, you promise?"

"I promise," agreed Cronk.

"It was a young woman who took away a letter 10 days ago. The next day she surrendered her box. A foolish young woman, zat is all."

"All?"

"You promise? Yes? Sure? A foolish young woman, because she put aside for a scruple ze support provided by the man she lived with while he is away to recuperate."

"A deefent sort, zat one, what you call a high roller. But he is sick. He coughs terrible; so, so, so. I know not where they lived, so help me; nor what his name was, zat I know. But look, look. You promise? You will remember, sure? Well, there she goes now."

And as Cronk looked through the dingy entrance out upon the shiny blackness of the damp and gloomy street he saw the white, scared face of a young woman hurrying by with a bag of bread under her arm.

at the upper end of his rows and fills his wagon. He then goes with his load to the lower end of his rows, puts the carrots in sacks and returns for another load. His name is on his sacks and the weight of his crop and all that of all others is published in the school paper. The auto which collects the sacks of carrots takes them to a building on Broadway. This building is one of a long row of buildings which look very much alike.

The are square structures 40x40 and four feet high with a platform along the top of them. A sloping bridge runs from the street to the platform, the base of the building is twenty-five feet below the street and fifty feet from the street the sloping bridge rises fifteen feet.

Up this the auto easily goes and stops over an opening in the platform through which the load is dumped into a big tank on the top story. Around the tank are as many children as can work comfortably.

They take the carrots one by one and put them under a knife which cuts off the tops. Then the carrot is turned around and a little of the small end cut off. The parts cut off drop into a tank below. When cutting off the tops the carrots are so placed that the knife cuts into the carrot a little. If a carrot is round, shapely and of medium size it is put in an opening and falls into a big box below. If it is too small or too big or irregular in shape it goes through another opening into a different box.

As the carrots in the field are all separated and not less than six inches apart there are very few either too big, too small or not of proper shape.

Cleaning the Carrots

The box into which the carrots drop is four feet wide, four feet high and eight feet long. A two inch pipe runs through the ends and the box revolves on this pipe. Along the top of the pipe are a number of small holes. When the box is about three-fourths full the cover is put on, water started in the pipe and the box revolved. As the box turns a part of the water runs out through little holes in the bottom.

When the water runs clear the cleaning is done, the water drawn off and the carrots are dropped into a tank on the place below.

Around this tank are numerous paring machines which in the twinkling of an eye take off a thin peeling and drop the carrots into another tank around which are the slicing machines. These machines are circular boxes three feet in diameter with a box two feet in diameter inside leaving a space six inches wide between the circles.

In this space the carrots are placed on end until it is full when revolving

"I am from Dr. Meers," said Cronk simply. "Before he went away in the hope of recovering his health he put his affairs into my hands, but with the instructions that I must protect the innocent, aid the unfortunate and wrong no one."

"Is he consumptive?" asked the young woman, when he had followed into the absolute lodgings. "If he is I am sorry for him and for her."

"No, but he is nervously broken from the long strain of meeting iniquitous demands."

"Oh, if I could I would repay! I would repay! But look at me, look around you. I have nothing."

"You have that which gave your husband power over him."

"No, not if I have where is it? Take it if you can. I know nothing except that the letter showed that evil had been done, evil that I would not knowingly endure, no matter what the cost. So I left the hotel where we had stayed and came here; he had told me he used it for a sort of office. It was the only place."

Cronk gazed about curiously. Yes, abide your husband's return. Should he not find you there to explain, to persuade, he might seek refuge in even more desperate courses."

"I will, I will, God bless you, God help me!" sobbed the young woman, making for the door. "But, oh, I fear it is too late. I fear the sea voyage will not help him, he was so ill, so racked, so worn." And out she flew like a wrath.

"The very machine, the identical type," he reflected. "Merely corroborative, of course, but if the characteristis I noted in the blackmailing letters should show themselves, the conclusion would be pretty close to proof. And now to apply the process of elimination to this room. If everything extraneous is put aside, something of importance should remain."

The search that followed was typical of the deliberate thoroughness of the man. Article after article was closely examined and then placed at one side of the room. It was the broken door cupboard, however, which unexpectedly made discovery.

When Cronk having denuded its shelves, began to move it, with a shud-

dering creak it went to pieces; and a letter in its envelope, which had been hid under the cheap ornamentation of the top, fell out on the floor.

Taking the letter from the envelope, which was addressed to "Mr. George Lessing—kindness of Dr. Meers," Cronk read its typewritten text as follows:

Dear George: I am strangled, busted and utterly confounded, with nothing to live for and everything to die for. Unless I receive, the sum of \$2500 tonight I shall shuffle off this mortal coil. I send you this by the sure hand of that soft ass Meers, who knows my extremity. Send back the money by him or my blood, the blood of your old chum, be on your head. It's little enough to ask, when were I in your place I would voluntarily do so much more for you. You will never miss this pittance from your superfluity. Besides, you know Elsie. Elsie would mourn you can't know how despairingly she would mourn. Verbum sap, old fellow, and send.

Having passed a few corners and left sacks we think we would like to get off and make the trip with one of the pupils. We ask the driver to stop and let us off but he says I don't need to stop. Just sit down in the slide let go all holds and you are off. It took considerable time to muster up courage to do this, but at last we did it and were deposited on the ground with out a jar.

The boy then emptied his big sack in to the body of his little wagon and started off. At the first home he took a bucket picked rapidly from the little bags in the wagon the vegetables ordered then ran to the door set down the full bucket and took the empty one. In the empty bucket was a slip of paper on which was the order for next day.

We were told that every Saturday a bill for the week was put in the bucket with the vegetables and on the next Monday a check was found in the empty bucket for the amount.

Having learned what we can of the operation of marketing vegetables we will return to the building where the work of preparing them for cooking is done and see what becomes of the refuse matter.

The tops and peelings of carrots, turnips, etc., the papais, the corn husks and stalks (when the last ear of corn on a stalk is taken stalk and all is brought in) the refuse from cabbage, cauliflower and all other plants all go together to the cutting machine where it is cut fine and then carried on a belt with buckets on it to the top of the next building which is a silo. All vegetables that are not fitted for cooking also go through the cutting machine and into the silo.

Germany Will Not Bargain With Entente for Terms

Washington, Jan. 12.—Germany will make no attempt to bargain with the allies for peace or make another move at this time unless encouraged to do so by the United States or another communication from the entente powers.

This was the statement today of German diplomats, who were shown the United Press cable from London saying the cause of peace has been given a shove by the allied reply, which "inferentially invites Germany to bargain for peace."

Austro-Hungary's Note

Amsterdam, Jan. 12.—Austro-Hungary has addressed a note to all neutrals in the same terms as that forwarded yesterday by Germany, according to Vienna advices this afternoon.

along the swag to your true friend. KENNETH MIX.

"The scoundrel, the unutterably vile scoundrel," mused Cronk, after a grim smile of recognition at the type-writing. "Could anything be more damnable base than the innuendo? Here are facts with a vengeance, as the judge might say. Let me construe them."

The sure and rapid play of the detective's trained imagination gave fire to his dull eyes and color to his torpid face.

"Meers must have wifely withheld the letter," he concluded. "Meers, who loved the girl himself and afterward married her. That was the evil deed which to his mind has invested itself with the character of doom."

"He believes that by his wifely neglect this man, Kenneth Mix, came to his death. In some way he lost this letter, or it was stolen from him. No wonder he has paid the nameless villain who has held it over him rather than run the risk of having it brought to the attention of the wife he loves so tenderly."

"Perhaps if Lessing had lived he might have advised with him and been guided by him, poor, unworried fellow; but Lessing was dead. Was Mix also dead, as he threatened, as Meers believes?"

"No; here is the most amazing part of this amazing scheme. Mix is alive; Mix got possession of this letter, and Mix levied blackmail upon it as the firm of L. Habitat & Co."

"But yet it is true, sir," persisted Cronk in the face of the judge's indignant denial. "Compare these blackmailing letters with the letter to George Lessing. Can't you see yourself that they are written in the same type by the same kind of machine?"

"Perhaps so," agreed the judge indifferently, "but that is more interesting than important when you consider how many hundreds of thousands of that machine may have been sold."

"True, sir; that is corroborative only. But scan these pages again, please. Can you not see a similarity which does not depend either upon the type or the machine, a similarity in style, rather?"

"There is a compact look to them all," said the judge slowly, "as if the words were pressed too closely together for good workmanship; but—"

"Ah, sir, that is the very point; I knew I could rely on the absolute fairness of your judgment."

"Good typewriting requires that there should be a space after every comma or semicolon. It is one of the little tricks of the trade taught in the schools which one who is self-taught is not apt to find out or acquire."

"The uniform typewriting of all these exhibits is amateurish in several respects; but this one characteristic of no space after punctuation is never missed. Now, then, when to estimate of type and machine there is added an unvarying idiosyncrasy which would naturally come to such an idle profligate on trying to write for the purpose of deception does not all this approximate to proving that Kenneth Mix is L. Habitat & Co?"

"It may be so," sighed the judge, "though he was supposed to have drowned himself. In that case I can't congratulate you too heartily on securing that fatal letter to George Lessing."

"I remember Mix in the best of his best days, when he was admired and courted for his cleverness, his good looks, his fascinating ways. An ungrateful, heartless rascal, without one redeeming feature."

"But there was a darker side to him, a brooding, revengeful spirit, due to that inordinate vanity which is the source of so much crime. By this time, after such a career, the man must be dangerous."

"Yes, yes, I rejoice, if it be true, that the letter has been snatched from his clutches, and that Meers and his wife will be far away when he learns of this loss."

"Do you think he would harm them, sir?"

"What, with an empty pocket and a wounded vanity and the old passion for Elsie, which he would call love, reviving embittered?"

"Then, sir, it is lucky he is not a fellow-passenger on the Ariadne."

"Lucky? For Mix not to learn in the idleness and sloth of mid-ocean that they have planned to deceive him, to escape from his extortions by sailing a week ahead of their announced time; that the blackmail which he provided for the care of this young woman with whom he has been living will not be forthcoming; that in all probabilities the matter has already been placed in a detective's hands, and in addition to all this chagrin and anger not to have the sight of Meers and Elsie as man and wife receive his lawless emotions—lucky, Cronk? And Mix lurking half dead in a berth? Why it is providential."

"Had any such mischance occurred I would believe with poor Meers that an evil deed acquires the character of doom. But why do you harass me with any such insupportable problems?"

"Because, sir, Mix is a consumptive who has just sailed away on a sea voyage for his health—"

"And so you think he may be their fellow-passenger? I learned about a young man named Diggle's? Impossible! You don't for one minute credit such an unspeakable idea, do you?"

"I did, sir, to the extent of asking the shipping agent of the Ariadne to send you any letter he might have from Diggle. Ah, this must be the messenger now!"

The judge turned a startled face toward Cronk and held hesitatingly the packet which the lad, briskly entering, left with him. Then his features settled into judicial calm and he broke the envelope as if about to examine a sealed verdict.

"Two inclosures, Abe," he said as he opened the top one of the folded sheets.

He scanned the compact, typewritten lines, and then, with a groan, handed it to the detective.

"A letter from Diggle's," said the detective in his contemplative way, "making arrangements for his care during the voyage. Written with the same type and machine there is added an unvarying idiosyncrasy which would naturally come to such an idle profligate on trying to write for the purpose of deception does not all this approximate to proving that Kenneth Mix is L. Habitat & Co?"

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How School Children Improve Vacant Lots and Beautified City

In the winter months of 1917 the farming operations commenced. The lots nearest the schools were first cleared of rubbish ploughed and harrowed and so fitted for cultivation. In the spring vegetables were planted.

As much ground was put in each of the common vegetables as the hands or directors of each school thought advisable and all the rest planted with potatoes.

But one thing was planted on a lot. When the crop on a lot was harvested the ground was ploughed and some kind of grain with grass seed sowed on the front part and berry bushes set out on the rear end. As the different vegetables matured at different times this work continued from mid summer until cold weather in the fall.

During the time the vegetables occupied the ground no weeds were allowed to grow. The electrically propelled cultivators were kept busy and the ground between the plants not touched was worked with hoes or the weeds pulled up by little fingers that were always ready and willing.

The next year the lots next were improved were handled the same way and so the work went on until the city was one big park.

The grains raised with the grass seed, was cut when cold weather stopped its growth and put in silos for future use. The second year the weeds were kept down among the berry bushes and strawberry plants and the grass cut often and stored in silos.

The third year the grass having become firmly rooted many of the lots were used as a pasture for stock.

Just An Example

As an example of how the children work now I will take up a few rows of carrots. The seed is planted in rows eight feet apart. The rows run across the field east and west. When the plants are of the right size to transplant a plow throws them out on the surface. A box 12x12 inches and 12 feet long has a wheel at each end of it. The rim of each wheel is two inches wide and six inches high. On the rim are little points of iron two inches long, one inch thick, at the rim and coming to a point at the end.

At the upper end of his rows and fills his wagon. He then goes with his load to the lower end of his rows, puts the carrots in sacks and returns for another load. His name is on his sacks and the weight of his crop and all that of all others is published in the school paper. The auto which collects the sacks of carrots takes them to a building on Broadway. This building is one of a long row of buildings which look very much alike.

The are square structures 40x40 and four feet high with a platform along the top of them. A sloping bridge runs from the street to the platform, the base of the building is twenty-five feet below the street and fifty feet from the street the sloping bridge rises fifteen feet.

Up this the auto easily goes and stops over an opening in the platform through which the load is dumped into a big tank on the top story. Around the tank are as many children as can work comfortably.

They take the carrots one by one and put them under a knife which cuts off the tops. Then the carrot is turned around and a little of the small end cut off. The parts cut off drop into a tank below. When cutting off the tops the carrots are so placed that the knife cuts into the carrot a little. If a carrot is round, shapely and of medium size it is put in an opening and falls into a big box below. If it is too small or too big or irregular in shape it goes through another opening into a different box.

As the carrots in the field are all separated and not less than six inches apart there are very few either too big, too small or not of proper shape.

Cleaning the Carrots

The box into which the carrots drop is four feet wide, four feet high and eight feet long. A two inch pipe runs through the ends and the box revolves on this pipe. Along the top of the pipe are a number of small holes. When the box is about three-fourths full the cover is put on, water started in the pipe and the box revolved. As the box turns a part of the water runs out through little holes in the bottom.

When the water runs clear the cleaning is done, the water drawn off and the carrots are dropped into a tank on the place below.

Around this tank are numerous paring machines which in the twinkling of an eye take off a thin peeling and drop the carrots into another tank around which are the slicing machines. These machines are circular boxes three feet in diameter with a box two feet in diameter inside leaving a space six inches wide between the circles.

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