

Everybody's Magazine

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If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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A Complete Novelette

The Wax Cylinder

*A Fortune, a Girl's Love and a Man's Life
Hang on the Solution of a Startling Mystery*

By David Gray

Author of "Gallops" and "Ensign Road"

Illustrations by J. Henry

MAJOR LIONEL WORTLEY DE TRAFFORD RIVERS sat in the officers' club at Boulogne and contemplated his boots.

He was aware of one Spicer. Rivers considered Spicer a "dreadful fellah" and a bore.

Spicer perceived the maneuver but was not resentful. He had observed that it was a way with swells. They shrank and glared if you clapped 'em on the back. God had made them thus. "Yet," Spicer argued, "bein' human, they must be human." He was on the point of ringing for a waiter and inviting Rivers to "name what 'e'd 'ave" when a tall, broad-shouldered man of thirty-five idled into the room. His blue eyes showed the habit of command. His nose was slightly aquiline, his chin and jaw well modeled and firm. He was a fine-looking man of Norman type and his rank was lieutenant-colonel. But it was obvious to Spicer that he was not "a swell." Spicer placed him as a colonial, though his uniform was British.

He watched him turn idly from the newspaper-table, glance about the room and discover Rivers's back. He saw the light of recognition kindle in his eyes. He saw him start impulsively, with the obvious design of surprising Rivers with a clap on the shoulder. Spicer knew what was coming. He could see Rivers's stare, hear his cold drawl expressive of aversion.

The stranger's pace quickened as he neared his unconscious victim. The next

instant he was shaking Rivers by both shoulders. At this point Spicer's jaw dropped and he stared open-mouthed, for Rivers instead of withering his assailant, shouted joyously. "My God! It's old Pike!"

Scandalized, Spicer turned to his newspaper. For a moment he had thought they were going to kiss like Frenchmen. The last he saw of them, Rivers was leading the way to the greater privacy of the adjoining room.

"Well, you old swine," said Rivers affectionately. "I thought you were still in that Bournemouth hospital. I was going to hunt you up."

"You're on your way home, then?"

Rivers nodded. "It looks that way. Rather time—what?" His eye caught the calendar on the writing-table. It announced the day as March 18, 1919. "Getting on devilishly well toward five years. But what are you doin', son?"

"Got a job promised me in South Africa. Off next month. While they're waiting to demobilize me I thought I'd run over and look about; try to get track of my kit."

"I don't think a kit would bring me back, once I set foot in England and a free man," said Rivers. "Let this bloody kit go hang," he went on. "My boat is leavin' in an hour. I can get you aboard! You come back to London and stop with me. There's an extra room in Mount Street, and we'll have a spree. It's owin' us, son."

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"It listens good," said Pike. "Perhaps later in the week, but not to-day."

"Rubbish!" said Rivers.

"I've got to go out to the hospital; got a mystery on."

Rivers looked at him questioningly. "You're not going to let them go operating again?"

"No," said Pike. "This isn't medical. This is a—I don't know what you would call it." Laughing, he unbuttoned one of the breast pockets of his tunic and produced an envelope from which he took a slip of notepaper.

"What do you make of that?" he said, handing it to Rivers.

The half-dozen lines were written in pencil, in a woman's hand. It was the writing of a person of education. Rivers read: "You are being watched. You probably know why. This is all I can tell you, all I know." It was unsigned.

"I'll be damned!" observed Rivers. He looked at Pike.

"It means nothing to me," Pike said slowly. "As far as I know there's no more reason why I should be watched than you. I've never stolen anything. As far as I know I've got no past, and I know I've got no money."

"Have you any idea who wrote it?"

"Yes and no," Pike answered. "When I got to the hospital in England, this thing was found pinned on the shirt of my pajamas. The presumption is that it must have been the nurse out here at the base that got me ready to be evacuated."

"Would you know her again?"

"Yes, I would," said Pike. "I had one eye out of bandages. She was a very unusual-looking girl."

"Unusually good-looking?"

Pike nodded.

"It's a hundred to one it's a joke," said Rivers wisely. "Girl wants you to chase her."

"I've seen worse chasing," said Pike.

"Chuck it, son," said Rivers, "and go aboard with me. London's full of accommodating beauty these days."

Pike's gaze wandered off to the wall. For the moment he seemed unconscious of Rivers, unconscious of his surroundings. He was away, somewhere. Then with a little start he came back.

"Can't do it," he said. "Must look up

my kit. Unless I'm mistaken, I've got it marked down at the hospital baggage-room."

A waiter put his head in the door and announced that an automobile was waiting for Colonel Pike.

Pike rose.

"You'll come on as soon as you can?" said Rivers.

"Sure thing!" said Pike, and went out.

Pike's car drew up before the hospital, but Pike made no move to get out. He sat gazing off through the rain, his attitude that of a man listening; listening perhaps with the inner consciousness, rather than the ear.

The chauffeur glanced back at him, got down and ostentatiously opened the door. "We're blocking the road, sir," he said. "There's a general waiting for his car to drive up for him."

Pike came back from whatever regions he had been mentally exploring. "I see," he said vaguely. He got out and finding himself face to face with the general, saluted.

"Still solving Hun cyphers, eh, Pike?" said the general pleasantly.

Pike seemed to wake up. He laughed and grasped the general's extended hand. "Glad to see you, sir," he said heartily.

"Glad to see you," said the general. "Glad you're right again. Rotten luck to get it again just before the armistice."

Pike thanked him.

"Coddington tells me you're going out to the Cape to look after some mines," the general went on. "Wish we could keep you in the army."

"I'd like to stay," said Pike, "but the show's over and a man has to live."

"Of course," said the general. "I understand. The good ones are bound to leave us. Good luck to you."

Pike thanked him and went on toward the hospital offices.

The general's aide looked questioningly at his chief.

"You must know Pike," said the general. "V. C. at second battle of Ypres. Later on in the Intelligence."

"The fellow that worked out the German field code?"

The general nodded. "Amazin' piece of work. Amazin' fellow—plays chess blind-folded and that sort of thing."

While the general was getting into his car

the aide turned and watched the celebrity disappear into the building.

A half-hour later Pike was still sitting in the visitors' waiting-room. He had fallen again into the same vacant, staring-in-space attitude in which he had arrived in his motor-car. A woman in a nurse's uniform bustled in and stood expectantly. Pike roused himself, regarded her doubtfully, rose and bowed.

"You weren't the head nurse here just before the armistice?" he demanded.

"No," she said. "I came in December. Did you want to see Miss Olgivie?"

"Olgivie? Yes, that was the name," Pike said thoughtfully. "No, it wasn't Miss Olgivie that I wanted to see. I wanted to ask her about some one who was here when I was."

"A patient?"

"A nurse."

"Is she here now?"

"I don't know. You see I was deaf and my head was in bandages, and before I could talk they evacuated me to England."

"What ward were you in?"

Pike told her.

The head nurse thought. "Those were all changed in January. The books would show where she was ordered. You'd better go to the adjutant's office."

"There's only one difficulty about that," said Pike. "I don't know her name."

The head nurse laughed. It was a situation not wholly new to her. "Well," she said, "if it's important, Colonel Pike ought to be able to find her if any one can."

Pike waved aside the compliment with a gesture that he had, a sort of jerk of the thumb. He regarded her with a whimsical gravity. "I need advice," he said. "Just how important would you say it was that I should find her?"

Her eyes twinkled. "On general principles," she answered, "I always say 'Don't.' There's enough trouble without looking for it."

"I reckon you're right," said Pike. "A head nurse always is."

They laughed together, shook hands and parted.

As Pike got into his automobile the wisdom of the head nurse's philosophy sank into him. Why run after trouble? He looked at his watch. Rivers's boat had sailed.

"Back to the club," he told the driver.

As he was ordering his lunch a note was brought to him. He tore open the envelope and read: "Just before leaving, received news by telegram that I want to consult you about. Join me in Mount Street as soon as possible. Rivers."

Pike smiled at Rivers's invention. "Well, why not?" he thought. London would be gay. He wanted to see old Rivers before he sailed for Capetown.

At six o'clock the next evening Pike was having tea in Rivers's flat.

"We'll dine at the Ritz," Rivers was saying, "have a go at the Palace; after that the evenin' and the world is ours. That agreeable?"

"Fine," said Pike.

"We're a bit elderly to go and make asses of ourselves," continued Rivers, "but after all, why not? We've all got troubles enough ahead. By the way," he added, "did you find that nurse you were looking for?"

Pike shook his head. "I got my kit, though. What's this that you wanted specially to talk over with me?"

"There's no use starting in about that tonight."

"Shoot!" said Pike. "That's what I'm here for."

"It's a weary tale," Rivers answered. "Old Blaughton's got the flu."

"Well, suppose he has?"

"Good God!" said Rivers sharply, "with both his sons killed, likewise my cousin Bertie, whose father was Blaughton's next younger brother, I'm next, don't you see?"

"You mean you'll die next?"

"Die? No. The bloody thing drops on me. I shall be Earl of Blaughton."

Pike began to shake. "Your troubles are heavy."

"Don't laugh, you silly ass," said Rivers angrily. "Here I am all comfortable, with a tidy little income, ready to settle down in a little box in a huntin' country and get married to a girl I rather like and this thing drops on me. Do you realize what it means?"

Pike was still shaking.

"It means I'm ruined. Blaughton's money goes to his daughters. I get Blaughton castle. I can't sell it, and it costs six thousand pounds a year to keep up."

Pike grew sober. "That is depressing," he said. "Do you like the place?"

"It's a lovely place," Rivers answered. "I was born there, but I can't live in it."

"Why not go to work?" asked Pike.

Rivers gazed at him in scorn. "Go to work!" he repeated.

"Who'd hire me? What am I good for? I need two hundred thousand pounds and I couldn't earn it in two thousand years."

Pike was silent. It was true. Yet Rivers was the man who had crawled three hundred yards over no-man's-land, extricated Pike out of German wire and somehow got him back to the British trenches. "We'll have to look into this," he said thoughtfully.

"For heaven's sake, forget it!" said Rivers. "We're on a spree."

"I don't mean to declare out on the spree," Pike observed cheerfully, "but this Blaughton tragedy interests me. Have you come to any decision as to what you'd better do?"

"Not the slightest," Rivers answered cheerlessly. "I told you I wanted your advice."

"Nobody can advise anybody," said Pike. "There's only one piece of advice that has any value and that is, follow your hunch."

Rivers looked at him mildly. "Follow my what?"

"Your hunch. You poor English nut, don't you know what hunch means?"

Rivers shook his head.

"It's a philosophy," said Pike. "Something tells you to do something or not to do something."

"Rubbish," said Rivers. "I do what I want to do."

"I do too, as a general thing," said Pike, "but that's the best way of putting a copper on the hunch."

Rivers lit a cigaret. "I think I had too much religion pumped into me when I was a boy," he said. "Everything that was pleasant was wrong. I chucked it."

"I never had any religion," said Pike. "I don't know that I'd call following hunches a religion. But according to my idea it's the simplest explanation of life."

Rivers smiled. "It's a pleasure to be taking tea with a man who has an explanation of life," he observed.

"Well, how are you going to explain things like what happened to McTavish?" Pike demanded.

"I don't see that it needs explaining," Rivers answered. "McTavish left his dugout and two minutes later a ten-inch shell dropped into it. There were a great many shells in that neighborhood, also a great many dugouts with officers in them. It is not remarkable that McTavish should have left his dugout, or that it should have been hit. It is certainly no more remarkable than red coming up twenty-one times in succession. Of course, what McTavish says about it," Rivers added, "is of no value. He's a Highlander who sees a banshee almost daily."

"And yet—" Pike began.

"Excuse me," interrupted Rivers, "have you ever personally experienced one of these hunches, as you call them?"

"I've seen a Digger Indian find water when we were lost in the Arizona Desert," Pike answered. "That was the most remarkable thing I ever saw personally, but I'm not sure that my hitting on that code solution wasn't just as extraordinary."

Rivers smiled ironically. "Did it come to you in a dream?"

"No, but it was pretty much the same sort of thing. I was playing Rogers at chess. I was blindfolded. It was his move and I had him all but mated, so my mind strayed off the game, and the next thing I knew I saw that key word in German characters just as plain as I see you."

"Did you know it was the thing you had been looking for?"

"Sure," said Pike. "I beat it back to the office and tried it with some of the wireless messages we had there."

"That is interesting," Rivers observed, "but after all it's no more remarkable than a great many other things the subconscious mind does. You'd been working on this problem for several weeks and suddenly got the answer. There's no reason for supposing that any other intelligence than your own had anything to do with it."

"Only that it's a great deal easier and more reasonable," said Pike.

Rivers shot him an amused look. "My son," he said, "be content with your own amazin' genius and tell me how to make a million dollars or dodge this Blaughton business." He slung his cigaret at the fireplace and rose. "It's nearly seven," he added. "We'd better tub and change, as we're dinin' early."

Pike made no answer but followed him down the passage to his bedroom.

THERE was the usual half-past-eight crowd in the lobby of the Ritz. People coming in to dine; people who had dined going out to the play; people of the old "smart" pre-war London; people of the new-rich munitions set; soldiers, statesmen, famous beauties of both worlds, and all a little feverishly bent on the pleasures of peace.

Rivers turned away from the desk where theatre tickets were sold and looked about for Pike. Presently he marked him down by the entrance, arms folded, regarding the crowd with the unconscious, preoccupied gaze of a zoo lion. As Rivers approached he noted him and passed through the door which the porter opened.

"Depressing news," observed Rivers, pausing outside on the step. "Those beasts have let somebody else have our tickets; thought we weren't coming. Not another stall in the place." His look shifted suddenly over Pike's shoulder. "Turn slowly," he said. "There's an interesting-looking woman getting into a motor-car."

The door slammed and the car began to move as Pike turned. He had an instant's glance at her side face as the light was switched off.

Rivers saw him stiffen in surprise, start impulsively after the moving car, then check himself.

"Friend of yours?" he asked.

Pike laughed dryly. "That's the nurse I was telling you about."

Rivers opened his eyes and whistled. "I wouldn't mind being chased by that woman myself," he observed.

"You didn't notice the car number?"

Rivers shook his head.

"Nut that I am, I didn't, either."

"There was a man with her, wasn't there?"

"I can't be *sure* of it. All I'm sure of is that she was the nurse that got me ready to be evacuated. Why?"

"Oh, nothing!" Rivers answered, "only she doesn't look like the kind of woman who'd be pinning 'chase-me' notes on a wounded blighter's nightshirt. She wouldn't have to."

"Suppose you wanted to find her, how would you go to work about it?" Pike demanded.

Rivers smiled. "Barring hunches, I

should say the best was to sit right here on these steps. There's something odd about London," he went on. "Every time I walk through Piccadilly I meet people whom I last saw at Nairobi or Tien Sien or Sandakan, but I never meet any one that I see at my club. What nationality is that woman?" he added.

"I don't know," said Pike. "I never heard her speak."

"She looks more French than British," Rivers observed; "might be Viennese. Ordinarily I only like 'em blonde, but that clean, scrubbed-looking type of brown, with the blood showing through the skin and soft ungreasy black hair is very attractive. A man can't lay down a hard-and-fast rule about such things," he went on. "Experience with horses and women proves that the good ones come in all shapes, sizes and colors."

"Your views are interesting," said Pike, "but they don't get us anywhere."

"There's nothing you could do about her to-night," Rivers retorted. "Either she's decently married and going about with her own husband or she's not. If she'd wanted to recognize you, she'd have spoken to you as she went out. She passed right by you."

"She didn't see me," Pike answered hotly. "My back was turned."

"Of course she saw you," said Rivers, "saw you first, as you'd say. But that is neither here nor there, old son. The question is, what are we going to do? Shall we drop in at the Empire, or try to find places at one of the less meritorious plays?"

Before Pike answered an officer in uniform came out of the hotel and nodded to Rivers.

"Hello, Tink!" said Rivers. "Pike, you know Tinkham?"

"I think I used to see you at Third Corps headquarters," said Pike.

Tinkham nodded. "Glad to see you fit," he said. "Rotten luck to get wiped again just before the thing ended."

"It might have been worse," Pike mumbled.

"We were wondering what we were going to do till the evening begins," said Rivers. "Those creatures at the Ritz sold our seats at the Palace. Do you want to hunt up a show with us?"

"Can't," said Tinkham. "I'm investigating spooks."

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"You're not bit with that thing?" said Rivers.

"I am not," said Tinkham, "but some of my family are. I'm trying to put a stop to it."

"It ain't that woman in Clarjes Street that my aunt goes to to see about Bertie?" asked Rivers.

"That's the one," said Tinkham.

"She ought to be locked up."

"That's what I think."

"But what can you do about it?"

"I'm going to try to catch her faking and turn her over to the police. Why don't you come along?"

"Pike believes in this thing," said Rivers.

Tinkham turned to Pike. "Do you know anything about this medium business?"

Pike shook his head. "I've never been to one of them. It's interested me, though."

"Don't you believe in it?" said Rivers.

"I don't disbelieve in it," Pike answered. "One doesn't know very much about anything. In principle I'm inclined to accept it, as the diplomats say."

"It's rot," said Rivers. "Mawkish generalities, at two guineas a portion."

"Do you know anything about it firsthand?" Pike demanded. "Ever been to a séance?"

"I went once," Rivers answered, "with my aunt. Bertie Rivers was on the wire telling us he was happy and helping others who had just 'come over.' He was done in at Messines. Most unlikely conduct on Bertie's part, I thought."

"Why don't you come?" said Tinkham. "I've a sitting at nine. I'd really like to have your help. Pelton was coming with me, but he's gone to the country."

Rivers looked at Pike.

"I'm willing," Pike said. "We'll be finished by ten. We can look in at the Empire afterward if you like."

"Well," said Rivers, "I don't mind, but I never could bear Bertie Rivers in life and I don't want him talking to me now he's dead."

"You'll have to bear that," said Tinkham, "as she'll naturally remember you. Pike's the only one of us she doesn't know. That's why it's good to have him along."

"All right then," said Rivers resignedly, "but it's a bad way of beginning an evening."

As they walked down Piccadilly, Tinkham

expounded a plan of action. During the writing he was to take the notes. Rivers was to watch the medium's feet and Pike was to keep an eye out for anything that might turn up. In case there should be materializations, at the word from Tinkham, Rivers was to turn up the gas, Pike to seize the woman and Tinkham the ghost.

Turning into Clarjes Street, Tinkham stopped before one of a row of houses devoted to respectable lodgings and rang the bell. A maid opened the door and showed them into the parlor fronting on the street. It was furnished in a comfortable middle-class Victorian fashion. The window-shades were drawn, as were heavy curtains. A four-legged library table of rosewood stood in the center of the room, under the chandelier, two jets of which were lighted. Four chairs with hair-cloth seats and rosewood frames stood about the table. Glass-fronted bookcases stood on either side of the fireplace, and the walls were hung with engravings popular in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Almost immediately a tired-looking woman, with faded brown eyes and hair streaked with gray, entered from the back room. She received them undemonstratively and seated herself at the table. "Kindly extinguish one burner," she said, "and turn down the other."

Pike, who was the tallest, carried out her instructions. While the room was dim it was possible to distinguish objects and to write in a large hand.

Then the three seated themselves, Tinkham opposite her, Pike on her right, and Rivers on her left.

"With whom do you wish to communicate?" she asked Tinkham.

"Well," he said, "we might begin on Captain Adelbert Rivers if that's agreeable?"

Rivers scowled.

The woman nodded assent. "Put your hands on the table. Rest them lightly. See, like mine," she directed. She closed her eyes for a moment, opened them and held them fixed on the table.

Four or five minutes passed in silence, then the table began to rock softly.

"Is Adelbert Rivers there?" she asked in a weary, matter-of-fact voice.

Pike smiled. It was like a tired telephone operator making a call.

A distinct thump followed, caused by one

of the table legs lifting and striking the floor. Pike looked at Tinkham. Rivers had his eyes under the table. Of course it was a trick, but he failed to see how it was done.

"Have you anything to send through?" asked the medium in the same perfunctory tone.

Another thump.

"One means yes," Tinkham whispered, "three means no."

"Kindly repeat the alphabet and check the letters," said the medium.

Tinkham began, A-B-C. As he came to T there was a thump. He wrote T with the pencil and began again. Laboriously the word "tell" was spelled, then the word "the." At the end of ten minutes he had the words, "Tell the mater everything is ripping. Don't make a fuss. Good-night." After that the table was quiet again.

"Bertie never was garrulous," Rivers whispered.

"Is any one else there?" the woman demanded.

Five minutes passed in silence.

"I don't think we'll be successful," she said wearily. "The conditions seem bad."

"Well," said Tinkham, "we don't wish to trouble you, madam, but I was hoping——"

"Wait," she interrupted.

She threw herself back in her chair, a convulsive movement ran through her body and her eyes closed. A moment later she began in the shrill high-pitched tones of a child: "This is Lucy. There's a man here who wants somebody. He's an elderly man, all browned and sunburned. His hair is gray. He has kind eyes and a nice smile. I see a W., W. for William. I see an L. L. L. LA. LA. S., S-S—Lassiter. Is that it?"

Tinkham, who had been writing, stopped. "She's got the wrong number," whispered Rivers.

Pike was sitting forward with a queer look on his face.

"Go on!" he said. "Lassiter's right. Take the message."

"That's right," the child's voice continued. "He says there's trouble about something— Oh, yes, about a mine. John must go to New York. He must sail the twenty-seventh on the— I see an S. S-P. It's something like Spart. He says, 'Tell John he didn't kill himself. It was very strange. John must look out. There's dan-

ger. John must find the mine and the money. I see a great deal of money, yellow bars in a little room, a closet. William says find the wax cylinder, it's very important. He says look out for somebody, a man, I can't get the name—the power is weak. That's all. William says he's happy. Good night, John."

The voice stopped. The woman lay back still.

Pike sat staring at her.

"Does this mean anything to you?" asked Tinkham.

"I'll tell you when we get out," Pike answered.

"We ought to do something for this woman," said Rivers.

"It's nothing, they're always like this," Tinkham answered. As he spoke she opened her eyes, sighed deeply and wiped her face with her handkerchief. She lay still for several minutes. Rivers brought her a glass of water from the stand and she sat up.

"I'm tired," she said weakly. "Did anything come through?"

"Yes," said Pike. "It was all right. We'll go now."

Tinkham looked doubtfully at Rivers, who shrugged his shoulders. No palpable trickery had been discovered. They both looked at Pike. Pike made a gesture toward the door.

Tinkham laid the fee on the table, gathered the notes he had taken and they went out.

A taxi passed, slowed down and waited. "Thanks, we're walking," said Rivers. He turned to Pike. "Well," he said, "what did you make of it?"

For the moment Pike made no reply. He was gazing vacantly at the street-lamp.

"Do you know any one named Lassiter?" asked Tinkham.

Pike nodded. "Yes," he said. "I'm John Lassiter."

A low "Good God!" came from Rivers.

Tinkham looked from one to the other. Then he thrust the notes into Rivers's hand and swung off toward Piccadilly. "See you chaps later on," he called back.

IT WAS quarter to ten by the clock on Rivers's mantelpiece. The soft-coal fire had crackled into a blaze. A parrot in a cage, covered with a piece of old embroidery, was mumbling sleepily.

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"You know how it was in fourteen," Pike was saying. He gulped down what was left of his whisky and soda. "An American who enlisted had to be a Canadian and take an assumed name. Well, I became J. B. Pike. As far as I know there isn't a human being in Europe who knew that I wasn't."

"On the face of it, it's certainly extraordinary," said Rivers. "And she was right about the *Spartic* sailing on the twenty-seventh, though any one could have found that out." He tossed his cigaret into the fire and watched it as it caught in the lighted coals. "And yet," he went on, "the possibilities of fraud are enormous. Suppose there should be something in that note the girl pinned on you? Do you see what I mean?"

"I see what you mean," said Pike. "If there's been some funny business one could read some reason into the note, but it doesn't explain what happened in Clarjes Street. The last thing a crook would do would be to put me wise to what was going on. Besides, no one knew that we were going to the woman. We didn't know ourselves till we met Tinkham."

"That's all true," Rivers conceded, "yet it's a hundred to one the thing's a fake; a clever one, I admit."

"It's a good thing to remember," said Pike, "that the best thought of the day put thumb-screws on Galileo for insisting that the earth was round. It was a shock to people to find out that the earth went round the sun; that instead of being the center of the universe it was a speck in one of billions of solar systems. Also it's rather a shock to consider the possibility of our three-dimensional world being at the beginning of things instead of at the end, but there's nothing unreasonable about it."

"That's all right," said Rivers, "but this communicating is a different matter."

"It may be, or it may all depend on the development of a sense that is still rudimentary," said Pike. "There must have been the first time when the pigment spot on the head of the prehistoric saurian became sensitive to light. Prior to that there were no eyes. All living creatures were ignorant of the existence of light, but it was there. Have you ever played this game of willing some one who comes into the room to do something?"

Rivers nodded.

"Well," Pike went on, "it all seems to

me a good deal like that game. Here we are surrounded by unseen intelligences trying to get their thoughts to us, trying to make us go this way or that. For the most part we blunder along dumbly, but every now and then some one gets a flash and then everybody thinks it's a joke or a coincidence or a fraud."

"It's a pretty theory," said Rivers. "But, unfortunately, every time you test it you end up against a faker making two guineas a shot out of it. Where it isn't downright fraud it's mind-tapping. Now, in this case, what did the woman tell you that you didn't know, or might have known? You knew your name; you knew your father was dead; you never had any reason to suppose that he'd killed himself; you say that he'd written you something about the sale of a mine. Now, what is there left?"

"I didn't know that the *Spartic* was sailing on the twenty-seventh——"

"She might easily have known that," Rivers put in.

"I didn't know anything about a wax cylinder. I don't now."

"Well, that's something to be investigated," Rivers admitted. "It may be interesting to be told to go hunting for a wax cylinder, but does it mean anything? Let's go over the matter and see what we have to go on."

"As I told you," Pike began, "my father and I were mining engineers and prospectors. In July, 1914, we were coming to Europe for a vacation. The end of June I was in Idaho; father was in Arizona. We were to meet in New York. A few days before we were to sail I got a wire from him saying I was to go on and he'd meet me in London. He'd run across something big that he'd have to put through before he left. Father was always thinking he'd struck a bonanza, so I didn't lose any sleep about it. Well, I decided to sail, because if I didn't I'd never get him away, and he needed a rest. I got to London on the twenty-fifth of July."

"On the twenty-seventh I got a cable from our lawyer in New York saying father was dead. He'd fallen out of a window at his hotel. I cabled for particulars. The lawyer didn't know anything except what was in the papers. Father was supposed to have gone to the window, had heart failure, and fallen out."

"Did you go home?"

"No. There wasn't anything I could do. Father was dead and buried. Everything we had was either in mining stocks or in cash in the bank to our joint account. Besides, with the war breaking out that week one wasn't thinking much about business. The fourth of August I got a letter from him written from New York the day before he died. It said we were rich, that he had bought an abandoned mine for a few hundred dollars and had uncovered a bonanza vein. He was going to sell a half interest to New York parties for a million and then join me in London. I figured this way. If the money was there, our lawyer would look after it. If the old boy had been having one of his dreams, there was nothing to be done."

"Did the lawyer find anything?"

"Nothing that bore on a big sale. It seems father had telephoned him that he was coming in to see him the next day, that is the day after he died. That was the first the lawyer knew that he was in New York."

Rivers lit a fresh cigaret and smoked in silence. Finally he said: "Suppose your father did find a big mine, suppose he made the sale as he wrote he was going to do, is there any way of tracing the property?"

"There might be and there might not," Pike answered. "If he bought an abandoned mine, he must have got a deed, but there's no knowing whether he would have recorded it before he made the sale. I don't even know what state it was in. If he made the sale and was robbed, they've had four years to cover up their tracks. It doesn't look very promising."

Rivers took the sheets on which Tinkham had made his notes from the table and began looking through them. A few moments later he tossed them on the table again. "I can't say I think very much of this revelation as a guide to stolen treasures," he said. "Apparently a wax cylinder is the key to the mystery, but we are given no hint as to its whereabouts. Why is it the spirits are always doing things half-way?"

Pike laughed. "Are you sailing with me on the *Spartic*?" he asked.

Rivers regarded him quizzically. "Do you think two lunatics would be better than one?"

"It's your chance to make your million dollars," Pike went on.

Rivers laughed.

"I mean it," said Pike. "It's a hunch. You understand, it's fifty-fifty."

"Fifty-fifty?" Rivers repeated.

"Share and share alike. I need your help. If we win, you'll have earned it."

"My son," said Rivers, "all the money that lies at the end of this excursion one will be able to put through the eye of a needle. However, I shall request Roberts to engage two passages on the *Spartic*."

Pike said nothing, but he rose and, standing behind Rivers's chair, placed both hands on his shoulders.

A sudden idea seemed to strike Rivers. "By Jove!" he said. "This won't do, though, will it? You're not J. B. Pike at all. I can't travel with an impostor."

"I was thinking of that myself," said Pike. "However, we'd better keep J. B. going till the end of the chapter. Otherwise I'd never get out of England. All my papers are in his name and my passport will have to be issued to him."

"That being the case," said Rivers, "I may be able to stretch a point. What do you say to bed?"

"You can't make me mad by suggesting bed," said Pike.

"You're getting old," said Rivers. "You're just as relieved at getting rid of this spree as I am."

LATE in the afternoon of the twenty-seventh the *Spartic* worked out of the Mersey in the teeth of a westerly gale. About six, Rivers came down to the state-room where Pike was unpacking.

"She's going to be one of these rollin' arks," he observed. He braced himself and lighted a cigaret. "However, as you Americans say—I shouldn't worry."

Pike regarded him hopelessly. "Should, not shouldn't."

"But there's no sense in sayin' 'I should worry,'" said Rivers.

Pike went on arranging his shaving-kit.

"I've been doing a bit of a scout," Rivers continued. "Found out where we're going to sit. Table seventeen for four. You and I, a chap named Boyd and a female, Adams or Sinclair, or something similar."

"Wonder why they put a woman with us?"

"Give it up. The ship's pretty full, though. We're lucky not to be sandwiched in with a mob. I do hate eatin' at a big mess."

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At seven, while they were walking the deck, the dinner call sounded. They took another turn and went to the saloon.

As they approached table seventeen Pike's gaze fastened on the man already seated. He was a powerfully made man, approaching sixty, prosperous-looking, with deep-set, keen eyes, and an expression of alert good humor. He looked up and nodded.

"I suppose one of you gentlemen is Colonel Pike," he said, "and the other Major Rivers. I've been rubbing at the cards. My name is Boyd. I'm from New York."

They explained themselves and sat down.

Pike glanced at the empty seat. "Our lady," he said, "doesn't seem to have shown up."

"The sea," observed Boyd, "is a state of mind. I've known women that were obliged to disappear with the first turn of the screw. Presumably Miss Crewe belongs to that unhappy category. However, it is blowing."

"Crewe, that's it," said Rivers, as if making a mental observation.

Boyd looked at him curiously but said nothing.

The waiter had appeared with a champagne cooler. "I had some champagne sent me just before I sailed," said Boyd. "It's got to be drunk because it can't be taken ashore. I trust you'll do me the honor to help me?"

"If you put it that way, as a matter of philanthropy—" said Rivers. His eye had caught the label.

"More glasses," Boyd said to the waiter, "and have two quarts ready every night."

"To a prosperous voyage," he said, as the glasses were filled, "and," he added to Rivers, "to the king." He turned to Pike. "Are you an Englishman?"

"Canadian," Pike answered shortly.

"Then," said Boyd, "turn about, we'll have the president, the king and the maple-leaf."

"Not a bad fellow that Boyd," observed Rivers as they went on deck. "1904 Krug is devilish hard to find these days. He tells a good story, too. Business fellow—what?"

"I should think so from what he said."

"Seems inclined to be uncommon civil. We might have fallen in with worse."

Pike made no comment. He stood leaning on the rail gazing vacantly off into the darkness.

"Listening to the fishes?" asked Rivers after a pause.

"You don't get any reaction to this Boyd except that he's a good fellow?" said Pike abruptly.

Rivers looked at him perplexed. "Reaction? What do you mean?"

"You're not one of these people who can tell when there's a cat in the room?"

"Not unless I can see it."

"Neither can I," said Pike; "but sometimes I get impressions. Now, I wouldn't trust Boyd. If I had to bet, I'd bet there was a crooked streak in him."

"I fancy most of these business fellows have crooked streaks in 'em," said Rivers. "But to me he seems an uncommon, straightforward sort of chap. Anyhow, he's nothing to us and his fizz is royal."

They drifted aft to the smoking-room and a moment later Boyd came in lighting a cigar.

"Are you gentlemen bridge-players?" he asked.

"I play a bit," Rivers answered, "but don't ask Pike. I had him for a partner once and he trumped a good ace."

"It's true about the ace," Pike said, laughing.

"Chess is his game," Rivers went on. "He's a marvel; plays three games blindfolded."

Boyd listened with interest. "Chess is supposed to be my accomplishment," he said, "but I can't do anything like that. Still, if you'd like to play?"

"I'd be glad to play," Pike answered, "but you mustn't believe Rivers. I'm fair, that's all."

Boyd ordered chessmen and took a table in the corner. Here Rivers left them setting the board and cut into a four at bridge.

It was after midnight when he got up from the card-table. He went out on deck to fill his lungs with air and found Pike leaning against the rail.

"Well," he said, "how did the chess go?"

"All right," said Pike. "He's not very strong, but he seems to enjoy playing with me. We got the odds straightened out after a game or two and it went better."

"Still think he's a crook?"

"A chicken is made up of light meat, dark meat and feathers," Pike answered enigmatically. "Boyd's got his share of dark."

"Did he try to ring in an extra queen?"

"You can be crooked even at chess, if you want to," said Pike. "It all depends what you're after."

"And what does that mean?"

"It means this," Pike answered. "In the first game, before he was sure I could play, I gave him two chances to mate. He didn't take either of them."

"Perhaps he didn't see them?"

"He saw them. He plays better than the average."

"But what would he have to gain by throwing the match? What is he after?"

"I don't know, but I have an idea that he didn't want to discourage me."

"Kind heart."

Pike laughed. "Your friend Boyd acts to me very much as if he wanted to cultivate my acquaintance."

"Why shouldn't he? You're an attractive young man."

Pike ignored this. "The odd thing about it is that while I think he's a crook I like him," he went on. "He can play chess with me all the way to New York if he wants to."

"You can overdo this hunch business," said Rivers. "They were talking about Boyd at my card-table. He's a member of a reputable firm of stock-brokers, belongs to good clubs and is accounted a thoroughly good sort."

"I'm sure I'm glad to hear it," Pike answered, and the conversation stopped.

Whether Boyd's enthusiasm for chess was genuine or inspired by ulterior motives was still an open question, even in Pike's mind, at the end of five uneventful days. It was only certain that he was an enthusiast. Morning, afternoon and evening, whenever Pike entered the smoking-room Boyd was there, ready.

"You mustn't do this if it bores you," he said laughing. "I'm insatiable. For the last two or three years I haven't played, and I think it's a cumulative appetite that's breaking out like an aggravated thirst."

"Same here," said Pike. "I enjoy it." And he did.

Boyd's play improved with practise. With the odds Pike gave him he had to play his best to win. Between games they talked. Boyd's ideas on Europe's problems of reconstruction were intelligent and well expressed. The man talked well. At times he spoke frankly of personal matters,

yet one thing Pike noted. He never asked personal questions. To Pike, with his first impression of Boyd always in the back of his mind, it seemed as if he overdid his reticence in this respect. There were questions that it would have been proper as well as natural to have asked, questions regarding Pike's personal experience with the war which Rivers's use of his title of "colonel" might well have prompted. If Boyd were making an effort to study him, he was doing it most circumspectly.

When Pike asked himself to what end Boyd could be working if this were his object, he had no definite answer. Toward the end he inclined to the opinion that Boyd, who was evidently a man of large and varied interests, was scrutinizing him with reference to offering him some position that he had to fill. And yet Boyd never sounded him as to his qualifications in any special direction, never even inquired as to his profession.

The sixth day out the succession of gales which had buffeted the *Spartic* ceased and the weather came off fair and calm. Pike put in the evening with Boyd at the chess-board and a little before midnight went to his cabin. He was in bed when Rivers came in.

"You asleep?" began Rivers.

"No," was the answer.

"I meant to tell you something this afternoon, but I forgot."

"Well?"

"You remember that girl I pointed out to you in the motor-car in front of the Ritz?"

"You mean the nurse?"

"Yes. Well, what of her?"

"She's on board."

Pike sat up in his bunk.

"I was coming along the port side and there she was sittin' in the sun in a steamer-chair. Damned fine-looking woman."

"Go on," said Pike.

Rivers looked at him quizzically. "How did you know there was any more to it?"

"Don't be a damned fool."

"Well," continued Rivers, "I went on to what one might call a respectful distance, then I went to the rail and looked around. Who do you suppose I saw come up to her and give her a book?"

"I can't guess."

"Boyd."

"Boyd?" Pike repeated.

"Exactly," said Rivers. "Beholding a

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friend, I went back, nodded to him and was properly presented. You're a sly devil, Pike. I believe you've been holding her hand at odd moments ever since we sailed."

Pike had kicked back the bedclothes and was sitting crosswise in the upper berth, his legs hanging over the side. "Why have you buttoned this up all day?" he demanded.

Rivers's eyes met those of his friend. The banter had gone out of them. "To tell the truth," he said, "I wanted time to think. It's damned odd."

Pike made no comment.

"You get a so-called spirit message," Rivers went on, "telling you to sail in a certain ship and hunt for a stolen treasure. The first man you meet excites your suspicions. Now a woman who you think sent you a warning note turns up traveling with the man. It all fits together. Spirit communication seems proved."

"What are you driving at?" said Pike.

"Just this," said Rivers. "Something strange is undoubtedly going on and Boyd is mixed up in it; but the first round goes against the Clarjes Street woman. I mean by that we don't have to bring spirits into the explanation just yet."

Rivers paused and lit a cigaret. "This evening," he continued, "as we came out from dinner I tipped the second steward a sovereign. Boyd's Krug, I dare say. I said, 'Steward, you've made us very comfortable; glad you put us at the same table with Mr. Boyd.' He looked a bit taken back at that. 'I can't claim credit for that,' said he. 'Mr. Boyd came aboard the morning we sailed and gave particular directions that you and Colonel Pike were to be seated with him.'"

Pike whistled softly.

"Thus," said Rivers, "instead of being supernormally induced to sail in the *Spartic*, for the purpose of meeting Boyd, it appears that he sailed in her for the purpose of meeting us."

"Have it any way you like," said Pike dryly. "Do you know what relation the girl is to Boyd?"

"He introduced her as his niece. Odd that he's never mentioned her. Still——"

Pike rolled back into the bunk and pulled the bedclothes over him.

"I say," said Rivers, "aren't you overdoing this Olympian calm? I don't mind

saying for myself that I was thoroughly well surprised. What do you think of it?"

"I'll tell you to-morrow," Pike answered.

Ten minutes later Rivers shut off the light and was presently asleep, but when Pike last looked at his wrist-watch with the luminous dial it was quarter past three. He had done some thinking in those three hours.

At nine the next morning Pike was on deck. It was one of those cloudless, glittering days that follows periods of storm. The swell had fallen with the wind. The offshore gulls from the western continent had picked them up and were wheeling overhead. Pike stationed himself on the starboard side, under cover of a ventilator, and watched the companionway. A little before ten he saw Boyd come out and glance about, looking for him doubtless, then go aft along the port side to the smoking-room. As he expected, Boyd appeared again shortly and made the circuit of the deck. Pike could have touched him as he passed. For the time being Boyd was a man he wished to avoid. Boyd passed but the once and Pike knew that he had gone back to the smoking-room to set the chess-board and wait.

A quarter of an hour later a woman emerged from the companionway with a rug over her arm. She stood for a few moments gazing off to sea. It was the woman who had nursed him at Boulogne; the woman he had seen enter the limousine at the Ritz. There could be no doubt about it. There was the same amazing, golden skin, with the color shining through; the same high-bred features; the same rather haughty carriage of the little head on the supple body. As she moved, it brought back the pictures Pike had in his mind of her passing through the ward. She had never seemed tired. Always the easy, gliding step of youth, and a frame perfectly put together, always the grave, whimsical smile, the ready lighting up of her gray eyes. And there was the same original bloom still with her that Pike had lain and thought about at Boulogne, betokening emotional depths that had never been stirred. There was no doubt it was she.

She filled her lungs with the tonic air and turning to the port deck disappeared from view. Pike gave her three minutes to get settled in her chair, then followed. As he approached, he saw a book lying open in her lap. Her gaze apparently was fixed on



"The switch I find under the desk. And here"—he rose and swung back the engraving from the wall—"is evidently the receiving mechanism."

the sea. He raised his hat and said, "Good morning!"

A pair of gray eyes met his steadily, without surprise, without resentment, but equally without recognition. "Good morning!" she answered.

In his forecast of the interview that he had planned, Pike had anticipated a number of varying possibilities, but not this. If she were an actress, she was amazing. If she were not acting, an extraordinary mistake had occurred.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I took you for a nurse who was at the hospital

at Boulogne just before the armistice."

"I was there as a nurse at that time."

"I was a patient in your ward, Lieutenant-Colonel Pike."

The name seemed to mean nothing. She smiled gravely. "I'm sorry," she said. "You see there were so many."

"I wonder if I could recall myself," Pike suggested. "Head in bandages, couldn't hear, couldn't talk, one of the last cases the night before the armistice."

She shook her head regretfully. "You're sure it was I?"

"Yes. There was a subaltern in the next

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bed who was blind and you used to read his letters to him."

A flash of recollection came into her eyes. "A boy named Cobham. I remember. And you were in the bed next?"

"Toward the door."

Her brows knitted in the effort of memory. "There was a double amputation there, but that was in early October. You must have taken his place."

"I came in the tenth. For nearly three weeks you fed me with a tube."

"I begin to remember now," she said, but without conviction. "It's strange, isn't it?"

He smiled. "I'd hardly say that. There are people who make absolutely no impression on me." He saw her glance shift as if something behind him had attracted her attention, and the next moment he felt a touch on his arm.

"I've been searching the ship for you," said Boyd. "Thought you'd gone overboard. So you've deserted me for my niece? Can't say I blame you."

"He says he was one of my patients at Boulogne," said the girl, "and I can't remember him. Isn't it awful?"

"Rather awful for me," said Pike.

Boyd stood smiling. "Well," he said, "are you going to play chess or continue as an exhibit for identification?"

"I think my best chance is chess," Pike laughed. "We can go on with the identification later." He lifted his cap and bowed.

The girl met his eyes boldly with an inscrutable challenging look and he turned and followed Boyd. Before they reached the smoking-room half a minute later, Pike had made a decision. The girl was acting as well as Boyd. The explanation was that Boyd was the man, or one of the men, who had robbed his father. The girl had written the note and had afterward repented of it. He had no proof, but he was certain of it. It was a hunch.

The chess-board in the corner was ready with the pieces set, as Pike had anticipated. They sat down and Pike began mechanically to play. When Boyd's eyes were fixed on the game, Pike studied him. Doubtless when Pike's eyes were on the board Boyd was in a similar fashion studying him. Behind the wall of bone that was Boyd's skull were registered mysteriously the things that

Pike wished to know. It was possible that the same thought was in Boyd's mind regarding Pike's own cranium. Boyd must want to know how much Pike knew, how much he suspected; how much his father's papers had furnished a clue to the transaction of the mine. He could imagine Boyd's perplexity. The fact that for four years he had taken no steps to trace his father's property would raise the presumption that he was ignorant of its existence. Yet Boyd was taking no chances. He had ferreted out his presence in the army under the name of Pike and once the war was ended had picked up his trail again. It indicated the magnitude of the stakes he was playing for, not only treasure but reputation and liberty. Presumably Boyd knew that his plans had been laid to go to South Africa and had been content. Then suddenly he had taken passage for New York. Consternation had seized him. Boyd, who was certainly no mere agent, had taken the case up himself.

All this Pike could reconstruct as he moved the pieces on the board before him, but where did the girl come in? On the face of it she was a confederate. But his theory that she had written the note and then repented of it seemed far-fetched. Why should she have warned him in the first place? It was possible, of course, that the note was not hers. In that case who did write it and pin it to him? What would have been the motive? But for that matter, if the note had indeed been written by Mary Crewe, what was her motive? Thus the inquiry led around in circles.

So also the question of her refusal to recognize him. It was unlikely that a woman could have nursed a man as she had nursed Pike for three weeks and have utterly forgotten him four months afterward. If she were Boyd's confederate, why had she warned him? If she were not, why had she pretended to forget him? A hopeless tangle it seemed, yet the explanation of her actions must be bound up in the explanation of Boyd's, and that was the matter in hand. He had one thing in his favor: Boyd probably had no suspicion of Pike's suspicion of Boyd.

A plan of action began to shape itself. He must take chances, but the chances he resolved to take involved no serious consequences if he lost. Sooner or later Boyd must discover that he was on the trail of the

treasure even if at present it were only his surmise. What harm could come of his assuring Boyd on that point? It would have the advantage of misleading Boyd as to Pike's suspicions of him, and he would get Boyd's reaction to the narrative. Besides, he could tell Boyd the truth, yet not necessarily the whole truth. It ought not to be difficult, for this was what Boyd had come aboard the *Spartic* to find out.

He was roused from his meditations by Boyd's quick and triumphal move of his queen across the board. A glance showed the situation. Pike smiled. "That's mate, all right," he said. "Time for another?"

Boyd glanced at the clock. "I doubt it," he answered. "Besides, I'd rather enjoy my victory. You'd beat me next time. Great game, chess."

"It is," said Pike, "yet I fancy you business men have a better one."

"Business is absorbing," Boyd admitted. He looked thoughtfully at the ash on his cigar and broke it off in the ash-tray.

"Aren't you a business man?"

Pike smiled inwardly. It was the first personal question that Boyd had ever asked. "No," he answered casually. "I was a mining engineer. I suppose I still am for that matter, but nearly five years of war puts a man out of things."

"I've got some mining interests in Mexico," Boyd said thoughtfully. "You're not looking for a job?"

"No, not just at present," Pike answered. His gaze strayed off through the open window over the waste of glittering sea. "I've got rather a curious problem ahead of me," he said, bringing his eyes back to Boyd. "I'd like your advice."

Boyd was putting the chessmen back in the box. "All right," he said, "you shall have it." He went on replacing the pieces.

"Well," said Pike carelessly, "what would you do if you had a gold-mine that had disappeared?"

Boyd looked up at him and laughed.

"I'm not joking," Pike answered. "Just before the war broke out my father wrote me that he had struck a rich vein in an abandoned mine that he had bought. It was so remarkable a proposition that he sold a half interest for a millions dollars. He died immediately afterward, suddenly, and when his estate was settled there was no trace of

the million, no trace of the half that he retained, neither the original deed nor anything to certify ownership of it."

"But the people he sold to ought to know about the original deed," said Boyd.

"But I don't know who they are," said Pike.

Boyd never batted an eyelash. "That of course complicates matters," he said thoughtfully. "Still there are two obviously possible explanations. The lawyer who settled the estate might have made away with it, probably did, if it's as you tell it. Then, of course, there's the possibility that your father might have sold the remaining half as well. You say he died suddenly about that time. He might have sold and never have written you about it."

"But in that case," Pike said, "oughtn't the money for it to have been in his estate?"

"I should think so," Boyd answered. A startled look had come into his eyes. "Do you mean it wasn't in his estate?"

"Not a dollar of it. The million dollars he got for the half that I know he sold vanished like the mine."

Boyd's jaw dropped. He sat staring at Pike, amazement, surmise, apprehension in his eyes. It was not acting. Pike was sure of that. The man had heard something that he had not known, had not suspected, something that frightened him. A moment later he had himself in hand again.

"That is very extraordinary," he was saying. "Who was the lawyer that settled the estate?"

"I have absolute confidence in the lawyer," Pike answered. "Besides conceding that he might have forged a transfer of the deed, how could he have got away with the check?"

"Just what do you mean?" Boyd asked.

"If my father sold a half interest for a million dollars," Pike answered, "he must have received one or more checks for the amount. Now if he had been robbed after his death no bank would have cashed them with a genuine indorsement, let alone a forged one. If he had been robbed before, he would have notified the bank to stop payment."

"Suppose he had been paid in securities," said Boyd, "government bonds?"

Pike shot him a quick look and Boyd's eyes shifted. "I never thought of that," Pike said.

"It would have simplified things for a crooked lawyer," said Boyd.

"Not very much in this case," said Pike. "My father had a safe-deposit box. He never would have taken a million dollars' worth of negotiable bonds to a hotel with him. That box was opened in the presence of officials from the surrogate's office and there were no bonds there."

"If he died at his hotel, as you suggest," said Boyd, "the hotel servants might have robbed him."

"That too is improbable, for the reason that the police had to break in the door of his room. They took charge of everything in his effects. They turned over nearly a thousand dollars in cash, his watch and valuables. It's unlikely that they would have taken a packet of bonds or a deed to a mine even if such things had been there, for it would have been a million to one that an inquiry would have at once been made for them. But if they had been dishonest they might very well have taken his cash and watch; and they didn't."

Boyd puffed at his cigar, his brows knit in perplexity. "I judge from what you say that your father died in his room at this hotel?" he said.

"He died in the street," said Pike shortly. "He fell from the window."

"Heart failure, I suppose. One of my best friends went that way. Such things are very shocking."

"Well," said Pike after a silence, "if you had a problem like mine ahead of you what would you do?"

"I'm damned if I know," Boyd answered. "It's the most extraordinary story I ever heard. I want to think about it before I volunteer advice. By the way," he added, "if you knew all this in 1914 why did you never do anything about it before?"

"There was a war that began about that time," Pike answered. "Besides," he added confidentially, "there's a good deal that I have done. There's a friend of mine in the West, who, I believe, knows the mine that my father bought. Once I find out in whose name it stands the investigation will be simplified."

"Yes, that ought to help a good deal," said Boyd. He sucked nervously at his cigar and rang the bell. "I'm going to have a drink," he announced. "Make me a dry

martini," he said to the waiter. "What will you have, Pike?"

Pike shook his head. "Nothing, thank you. I think I'll get a breath of air."

"Wait a minute," said Boyd insistently, "and I'll go along with you. You know, Pike," he went on, "that story you've just told me has taken hold of me in an unaccountable way. I didn't suppose a thing like that could happen in these days."

"I don't think these days are very unlike any other days," Pike answered.

The cocktail came. Boyd gulped it down and rose. "Let's have a look at the market," he said. "The wireless ought to be up."

They walked forward, past Miss Crewe. Her eyes were on her book. She made no sign as they passed, and Boyd seemed unconscious of her.

He led the way into the companionway where the ships' notices were posted and put on his glasses.

"Steel up two and a half points," he observed. "Market's strong. You'll make money buying anything." He murmured half a dozen quotations, reached the news items. "Clémenceau calls on President Wilson." His eye ran down the mimeographed paragraphs. Suddenly he swung around, his face ashen and drawn, his hand clutching for the rail.

Pike's first thought was "a stroke." He slipped his arm about him. Boyd did not fall. He stood perhaps ten seconds, speechless, his mouth twitching, his eyes staring. In those moments Pike saw the man age visibly. Then he gathered himself.

"Andrews was my partner," he said thickly. "It's a bad shock. I'll be all right presently." He shot Pike a hunted look and made his way uncertainly down the stairs, turned to the left and disappeared.

Pike turned to the bulletin and read:

"Silas W. Andrews of Andrews, Boyd & Hopkins, bankers and brokers, was instantly killed yesterday as the result of a fall from the window of his apartment on the fourteenth floor of the Medora. In September, 1914, T. F. Hopkins, the junior partner, was killed as the result of a similar accident."

PIKE was standing motionless before the bulletin as Rivers came down the companionway.

"Any news in the great world?" he asked.

"Clémenceau has called on Mr. Wilson," Pike answered.

"Thanks," said Rivers. "That girl's on deck," he added. "Have you seen her?"

Pike nodded. "She doesn't remember me. Are you policing for lunch?"

"Yes."

"Come on then." Pike led the way in silence.

"What do you mean, she doesn't remember you?" Rivers demanded.

Pike laughed dryly. "What I say. I'm one of these colorless personalities that makes no impression."

"Does she admit she was in the hospital?"

"Yes. Remembers a subaltern in the next bed."

They had reached their stateroom. Rivers sat down on the bunk and lit a cigaret. "Did you ask her about the note?"

"I did not."

Rivers pondered. "It looks as if she were playing the game with the uncle?"

"It does."

"But why should she have written you the note?"

"I'm not sure that she did."

"We can settle that," said Rivers. He produced a letter from his pocket, took it from the envelope and handed it to Pike.

"Dear Major Rivers," it ran, "you are good to invite me to perform and to choose my own weapons, but the sad truth is I have absolutely no parlor tricks. If you were giving a Wild West show, I might give an amateurish impersonation of Annie Oakley. At a concert my place must be in the audience. Yours sincerely, Mary Crewe."

"How did you get that?" Pike demanded.

"Entertainment committee. I wrote asking her to volunteer for the concert. Compare it with yours."

Pike took the note from his wallet. "It's the same writing," he said. He gave it to Rivers, who studied the two documents.

"Yes," he said. "It doesn't need an expert. Well," he added, "what do you make of it?"

"I can't make anything of it. Can you?"

"Let's see the envelope," Rivers asked.

Pike handed it to him. It was of cheap, smooth paper with the address typewritten: "Lieut.-Colonel J. B. Pike—Personal. (To be opened by him when he is able to read.)"

"I wonder why she typed the address?" he muttered.

Pike shrugged his shoulders.

Rivers examined the note again. It was written on a slip of rough-finished note-paper of good quality.

"I wonder," thought Rivers, "why she tore off the bottom third of the sheet? One writes on half-sheets. One doesn't usually tear off a third. Do you mind if I keep these notes for a bit?" he asked.

Pike nodded. "I've been having a session with Boyd," he observed casually. "With some reservations I told him what we're after."

"The devil you say?"

Five minutes later Pike had finished narrating the conversation over the chess-table.

"That's interesting," said Rivers. "You're satisfied Boyd didn't know that your father got the purchase money?"

"I'm sure of it."

Rivers inhaled cigaret smoke and thoughtfully blew it out again. "Still," he said, "I don't see that it materially alters the situation."

"It seems to me that it does."

"Why?"

"Because Boyd knows now that he has been double-crossed by his own crowd."

"But that isn't going to make him blow the thing."

"I wouldn't be surprised. Boyd may have been acting in good faith as far as my father was concerned. Of course there's something crooked going on, but I doubt if that has anything to do with the robbery of my father. Unless I miss my guess, Boyd at this moment is worrying about something more serious than my being on the trail of the mine."

"And that?"

"And that," said Pike, "is something that is a matter for speculation. All we know is that the day my father sold the mine he fell out of a window; that the following autumn Hopkins, Boyd's junior partner, fell out of a window, and that yesterday Boyd's senior partner, Andrews, fell out of a window."

Rivers gave a low whistle. "You say yesterday?"

"It came in the wireless."

"Has Boyd seen it?"

"We read it together, ten minutes ago."

Everbody's Magazine, July, 1921

Rivers looked Pike in the eyes. "What does it mean?" he asked.

"Don't know. Judging from appearances, Boyd doesn't know either."

The lunch-bugle sounded. A few minutes later they went in to lunch. Boyd was not there; neither was Mary Crewe.

As the meal drew to a close, the ship's doctor came in. On the way out Pike made a detour, stopped and spoke to him.

"How is Boyd getting on?" he asked.

"He's quiet," the doctor answered. "I've given him an opiate. Do you know what happened?"

"He read the death of his partner in the wireless," Pike answered. "He seemed to take it hard."

"He acts like a man who's had a bad nervous shock," observed the doctor. "At first I thought he was in for a stroke, but I guess he'll come through."

"Is there anything I can do?"

The doctor reflected. "Not just at present. He'll be dead to the world for a couple of hours. If he needs some one to sit up with him to-night, I'll let you know. You might stop in and see Miss Crewe, though," he added. "She might want something. She's in the room next, 214."

Pike went on deck and found Rivers standing by the rail in the sun. "I'm going to do a little scout work," he said. "From the doctor I gather Boyd is pretty thoroughly doped."

"Want me?"

Pike shook his head. "It's a gum-shoe job. You'll be playing cards, I suppose?"

Rivers nodded.

"If I get anything, I'll look in on you." He filled his pipe, lit it and crossing to the other side of the ship paced the deck for ten minutes. Then he knocked out the pipe against the rail, stowed it in his pocket and headed for the companionway.

A minute later he was standing before the door of stateroom 212. There was no one in the corridor. He put his ear to the door and listened. Presently he made out the sound of measured breathing. He tried the door softly. It gave. He pressed it inward an inch or two and through the slit he saw that the connecting door to 214 was closed. He went in.

Boyd was lying on his back in the bunk, his eyes closed, his mouth open. The

room was in semi-darkness, for the shutter was drawn across the window.

Pike made a hurried inspection of the stateroom. He noted a leather dispatch-case hanging from a hook on the partition wall. The key was in the lock. He crept softly to it, opened it and drew out a packet of papers.

The light was too dim to read by. He considered the chances, then stealthily slid back the shutter a few inches. A slit of light illuminated the end of the room away from the sleeper. Pike waited a few moments. Boyd gave no sign that he was sensible to the light.

In an elastic band were a dozen letters and cables folded lengthwise. The paper on top was a cable. He drew it out and opened it. The message, addressed to Boyd at his London hotel, ran: "Informed that P. has applied for demobilization. Get in touch with him. If he comes home, advisable to sail with him. Tax situation growing acute. Must decide shortly regarding shipment of bars. Feltner."

Pike reread the message, photographing it into his memory. He replaced it methodically and drew out the letter that came next. He was turning to get the light over his shoulder when he stumbled clumsily over Boyd's boots. The sleeper stirred. Pike watched him breathless till he settled again. He waited still another period, his attention directed toward the cabin next. As he stood thus he noticed a white object on the floor. He bent and picked it up. It was a woman's handkerchief. A scent of violet reached him.

He thrust the scrap of embroidered lawn into his pocket and unfolded the letter. It was written in pencil and the handwriting was difficult. "Dear Harry," it began, "the situation is constantly growing more complicated." The next word was illegible. He moved cautiously nearer to the window. Suddenly he stopped. The handle of the door behind him was being softly turned.

He thrust the papers into the dispatch-case, swung around and found himself looking into the muzzle of a Lueger pistol held by Mary Crewe.

"You!" she exclaimed in a whisper. Amazement was in her eyes.

"Yes, I."

"What are you doing?"

"Put that thing down and I'll tell you."

"Go out; instantly!" she commanded.

"I'd rather explain first," he answered.

Her gray eyes blazed with anger. "Don't dare to speak to me. Go out!"

With a sudden lunge Pike seized the pistol. She struggled to wrench it free. Then Pike, throwing his free arm about her, bore her through the doorway into her cabin.

As he crushed her to him her fingers released their grip upon the weapon. For a moment she lay passive in his arms, her head upon his shoulder. He dropped the pistol on the bunk and set her down upon the couch opposite. Then he backed away and closed the door into Boyd's cabin.

"You and I must have a show-down," he said in a low voice. "If you'll answer my questions, I'll tell you what I was doing."

She was leaning back upon the couch pillows, limp, her eyes closed, her bosom heaving. As he waited, she became calmer, at last opened her eyes.

"In the first place," he said, "what made you write me that letter in the hospital and then forget me on the ship?"

She closed her eyes again.

"There's no use stalling," he said. "I know you wrote it. Why not be sensible?"

She opened her eyes. "What are you talking about?" she demanded.

"You know what I'm talking about," he answered patiently. "You take care of me in the hospital. You warn me that I'm being watched in an anonymous letter—"

"Anonymous?" she broke in.

"You thought it was anonymous. I know now you wrote it."

She gazed at him in wide-eyed amazement. "You say I wrote you an *anonymous* letter?"

"That's what I said; and until Rivers showed me the letter you wrote him I couldn't be sure that it was you. But I'm sure now."

She gazed at him perplexedly. Then a light seemed to break upon her. "Will you let me see that letter?"

"Later; Rivers has it just now."

Suddenly she covered her face with her hands. Her body began to shake, whether in suppressed laughter or sobbing Pike could not tell. He diagnosed it as hysteria

and stood nonplussed. He had no experience with hysterical women.

At last she gave a long sigh, uncovered her face and sat up. Something more than a change of mood had come about. She seemed to have taken on a new personality as she might have donned a new mask, a personality buoyant, confident, whimsically authoritative.

"Well?" said Pike.

There came a muttering from the next cabin. She listened and sprang up.

"He's awake," she whispered.

"Oh, Mary!" Boyd called weakly.

"I'm coming," she called.

Pike slipped out by the door into the corridor. He made his way on deck and began to walk.

A half-hour later he was stopped by Rivers as he was passing him deep in thought.

"Cut out for a rubber," Rivers explained. "What luck?"

"Rivers," said Pike, "either I'm crazy or that girl is." Omitting certain details he told his story.

Rivers listened with a curious look in his eyes. "Getting that Feltner telegraph was a stroke," he commented irrelevantly.

"But that girl!" said Pike. "Can you make anything out of it?"

Rivers regarded him doubtfully. "I've got to go back to the card-table," he said. "Talk it over with you later." And he went off.

When Rivers went below to dress for dinner, he found Pike completing that ceremony. "I've been thinking about the girl," he said. "You say she seemed to get over her anger?"

"She seemed to," said Pike. "It beats me. I'm going on deck."

A Lueger pistol lay on his bunk. He opened his kit-bag and dropped it in.

"Have you unloaded that thing?" asked Rivers.

"No, but it's all right," Pike answered. "The safety-lock is on. No one is going to monkey with it," and with that he went out.

When the door closed, Rivers opened the bag and took out the weapon. He pressed the spring and drew out the magazine and examined it. It was empty. Then he threw back the ejector. The firing-chamber was empty, too. He threw the safety

lock, pointed it at the floor and pulled the trigger. The mechanism snapped harmlessly. With that he replaced the pistol in the bag and completed his toilet.

NEITHER Boyd nor Miss Crewe appeared at dinner. Pike talked little and Rivers devoted himself to his food and to the Krug. As they finished, Pike went over to inquire of the doctor about Boyd. A moment later Rivers passed out of the dining-room and headed for stateroom 214. He knocked, a voice answered "Come in," and he entered.

Mary Crewe was sitting on the couch reading a book, with a dinner-tray before her.

"I beg your pardon," Rivers began.

She started and looked up. "I thought it was the waiter," she exclaimed. "Won't you take the chair?"

"Can't stop," said Rivers. "Thanks awfully. How is Mr. Boyd?"

"Doing very well," she answered. "He had some milk and has gone to sleep again."

"You ought to get a bit of air," said Rivers. "Come on deck with me. We'll walk."

"Suppose he should wake?"

"He can ring the bell for the steward. But he probably will sleep."

She considered. "I'll go," she said. "I do need air." She rose, put on a little toque of fur and threw a golf cape over her shoulders. Reaching the deck, she set off at a rapid pace with Rivers at her side.

They were beginning on the second turn when Rivers protested. "I can't keep this up, you know. I'm a frail creature. Besides I want to talk to you."

She laughed and slowed down. "I'm not sure that I want to be talked to," she said.

"I dare say not," he answered, laughing, "but I've got a serious question to put to you."

"Well?"

"Well," he repeated, "exactly what is the meaning of this pistol performance?"

"Well, really!" she exclaimed. She looked at him in astonishment real or assumed.

Rivers laughed. "Don't let's worry about good manners. You've been through war as we have. Let's talk man-fashion."

She said nothing and Rivers went on. "You see, Pike has told me about his bur-

glary; ridiculous, of course, but what was the idea of holding him up with an empty gun?"

"Did he know it was empty?"

"No, and he doesn't now. But the point is, if you wanted to protect your uncle's papers why didn't you ring the bell for a steward?"

"I suppose it was silly," she answered, "but I saw a strange man's arm through the slit in the window. I supposed it was some one stealing. I hurried down-stairs. I didn't think out what I was doing, but I got the pistol out of my bag—you see I was brought up on a ranch—and then to my amazement I found it was Colonel Pike."

"I should think, then, it would have been natural to have asked him to explain instead of refusing to listen to him."

"I don't think I care to discuss that," she said stiffly. "Besides, there wasn't *anything* to explain."

"You don't mean you considered it natural for Pike to be going through your uncle's papers?"

"I knew he was in the British Intelligence. I supposed it was his business."

"But why should he be prying into your uncle's affairs?"

"For the reason that they pry into everybody's affairs. For the same reason that they went through his baggage at the hospital. They want to know what every one is doing."

"So that's what your note meant?"

"Naturally."

"How did you find out that his luggage had been searched?"

"One of the orderlies told me."

"Do you know who did it?"

"They said it was a man in a Red-Cross uniform."

"I see," said Rivers. "Now, I'm going to tell you that Pike hasn't been in the British Intelligence for ten days. What he was doing in your uncle's cabin is entirely a personal matter."

She looked at him, mystified. "What do you mean?" she demanded.

"I'm going to tell you, but there's something we've got to get straightened out first."

"But I must know what this all means!" she exclaimed with a note of alarm. "Why should Colonel Pike be going through my uncle's papers?"

"And I must know," said Rivers, "why you pretended not to remember him?"

"Really, Major Rivers," she said, "I think that is purely my affair."

"But it isn't. There's more to this than you realize. However, I believe I know why you did it." He put his hand in his breast pocket and drew out the two notes. "Let's move on to the light," he said. She followed.

"Now this is the shape your letter was in when Pike received it." He handed her the bit of note-paper and the typed envelope. "You see why it was anonymous when he read it. The signature has been torn off with the address you doubtless gave him, the original envelope destroyed and this typed one substituted."

She looked at him dumfounded. "Who did it?"

"I don't know. Presumably a jealous nurse. But you can understand now why Pike never wrote you. He made a trip to Boulogne to find you. As he didn't know your name, he failed."

He paused, but she said nothing and he went on. "Now, you see, my dear Miss Crewe, there has been a very natural misunderstanding on your part. You had a right to assume that Colonel Pike had ignored the service you did him and the opportunity you gave him to communicate with you. Your resentment was justifiable, but you realize now that it was based on a misapprehension of the facts. From what Pike told me I gather that you guessed the truth as soon as he spoke of your note as anonymous."

"What did he tell you?"

"Oh, he said you were inscrutable, baffling, utterly mad."

She turned away from the light and Rivers fancied that he heard a nervous laugh.

"But you don't understand," he went on, "how important it is to have this misunderstanding straightened out. We must know where you stand. Are you a friend or an enemy?"

"Why should I be an enemy?" she answered. "What is the matter anyhow? What is there between Colonel Pike and my uncle? You can't ask me to go blindly into taking sides against my uncle."

"I am not asking you to take sides against your uncle. He is in a peculiar

and difficult position, perhaps a dangerous one. Our motive is interested, but we want to extricate him if it is possible."

"But you must see that I can't decide blindly."

"I suppose not," he said. He paused and looked at her thoughtfully. "I'm going to trust you," he said at last. "I'm going to tell you the whole story."

He began with his meeting Pike in Boulogne when Pike first showed him the anonymous note, went on detailing the circumstances of the visit to the Clarjes Street woman, told of the message purporting to come from William Lassiter, the father, and the facts known to the son to which it related. Then he recounted the decision to sail on the *Spartic*, the steward's evidence of Boyd's having arranged their seating, the course of Pike's relation with Boyd and the effect of the news of Andrews's death upon him. She listened, breathless, till he finished. "What an extraordinary story!" she said.

"It's certainly that," said Rivers.

After a moment's silence, she asked: "What does Colonel Pike think about it?"

"He thinks there is some kind of conspiracy which robbed his father and of which your uncle is a prospective victim."

"Does he think his father and my uncle's partners have been murdered?"

"I fancy he does."

"What do you think?" she demanded.

"I don't know what to think," he answered. "I'm trying to keep an open mind. But you see now why Pike went through your uncle's papers."

"Did he find anything?"

"He had only begun when you appeared. However, there was a cable which seemed to indicate that a man named Feltner was directing the thing."

"I never heard my uncle speak of any one named Feltner," she said. "However, that isn't strange. He never talks to me about his business. The fact is," she added, "I really know my uncle very slightly."

"How is that?" he asked.

She told him briefly. Boyd was her mother's brother. He had come from California as a boy and settled in New York. She had been born on her father's ranch in Arizona where Boyd had visited them when she was a child. Her mother had died

when she was nine and her father in 1912. Since her mother's death, till she passed through New York on her way to Europe to study music, she had not seen Boyd. When the war broke out she went as a nurse with the English. In January after the armistice Boyd had written that he was coming to London on business and proposed that she meet him and go home with him. So practically all her acquaintance with him was the fortnight she had spent with him in London before they sailed. He had urged her to make her home with him in New York, and until conditions abroad became more normal she was planning to do so.

"Well," said Rivers, "you see the situation. We've got to get to the bottom of this thing. Whether there's been murder, whether there's a room full of gold, I don't pretend to say, but it's reasonably certain that there was a mine and that Pike's father was robbed and that in some way your uncle is mixed up with the persons who robbed him. Now, I don't ask you to spy on your uncle. In one sense this is no affair of yours. You were brought into it by chance, just as I was, but I suppose you realize that it was your uncle's agent who went through Pike's kit at the hospital."

"I suppose it was," she said slowly.

"Of course that hasn't really anything to do with the main question, but it has brought about a very unfortunate misunderstanding with Pike."

"I should think that could be set right."

"It can be if you'll do it."

He waited, but she said nothing, and he went on. "I don't want to butt into personal matters, but the fact is it's rather serious. Pike is all upset. He's not the kind that talks, but I began to suspect the way he felt, even in Boulogne when he went off to look you up at the hospital. When he saw you that night getting into the motor in front of the Ritz, I was sure of it. After you had pretended not to remember him I was doubly sure. Pike is in love with you."

She stood motionless. Rivers thought he heard her quickened breathing.

"What do you want me to do?" she said uncertainly.

"Why, of course I don't know what your idea of old Pike is," he answered, "but if you were a man—" he stopped.

"Well?"

"If you were a man, the only thing you could do as a gentleman would be to tell him that you love him and marry him to-morrow."

An exclamation escaped her. For an instant she stood gazing at him open-eyed, then with a peal of laughter she turned and fled down the deck.

Rivers finished his cigaret and made his way to the card-table in the smoking-room.

Toward midnight he went below and found Pike lying dressed in his bunk, with a book. "Bridge go well?" he asked.

"Moderate," Rivers answered. He caught a glimpse of Pike's book in the mirror over the washstand. It was upside down. "I've been having a talk with Miss Crewe," he observed.

Pike said nothing.

"I've been arranging that she marry you to-morrow."

Pike laid down the book. "Don't be an ass!" he said.

"I'm not an ass," Rivers replied mildly. "I've gone over the whole thing with her. Very embarrassing, of course, but had to be done. Well, the important fact is, that she didn't say 'no.'"

"Look here, Rivers," Pike began angrily, but Rivers stopped him.

"You can't quarrel with me, old son. I'm telling you the truth. The girl was vexed, and quite right too. You see, that note was signed and had an address when she pinned it on you. Some curious swine opens it, cuts off signature, address and friendly messages, types new envelope and gives it to you. Result, misunderstanding and ill feelin'."

Pike was sitting up in bed. "Rivers," he said, "are you making this up?"

"Now, I ask you," Rivers answered plaintively, "am I intellectually capable of making this up? Besides," he added, "and there was a change in his tone, 'you're rather a friend of mine—what?'"

The next moment he experienced what he had not experienced since his lower-form days at Eton. His hair was tousled and profaned by sacrilegious hands; also he was seized, lifted and dumped on the couch.

"I say! I say!" he protested, but it was to the empty air, for Pike had grabbed a cap and dashed out.

Rivers lay for a time laughing softly. Then he arose, polished his hair with his

brushes and proceeded to undress. When Pike came in that night, or what happened when he met Mary Crewe the next day, Rivers never knew.

A little after ten the next morning he and Pike had come face to face with her as she emerged from the companionway. She was self-possessed as usual, but he saw her color rise.

"How is Mr. Boyd this morning?" Pike asked stiffly.

"Much better, thank you," she answered.

"Glorious morning," observed Rivers, and went on.

An hour later he cut out for a rubber and coming aft found them by the rail, discussing the league of nations.

"Well," he said pleasantly, "anything new?"

"We've passed two ships," said the girl.

"Did you ever breathe such air?" said Pike. "I never did except in Arizona."

And that was all that was vouchsafed Rivers. "Virginal natures very complex," he thought; "can't be hurried." But Pike thenceforth was himself again, and from that he argued that some sort of *modus vivendi* had been established.

THE next morning Boyd was again reported better. At lunch a waiter handed Pike a note. He read it and passed it to Rivers. "Can you come to my cabin at two o'clock?" was all it said. It was signed "Boyd." Rivers passed it back. "I wonder if he's found out that his dispatch-case has been tampered with?" he said.

"I don't know that it matters," said Pike.

At two o'clock Pike knocked at the door of 212.

Boyd's voice called "Come in!" and he entered. He found the sick man sitting on the couch. He looked white and older. The lines in his face had deepened, but for the rest he seemed to have recovered his cheerful confidence of manner.

"Well, Pike," he said, "I'm ashamed of myself. The news about Andrews gave me a shock that knocked my digestive apparatus. The doctor tells me I've been eating too much."

"They say most of us dig our graves with our teeth," observed Pike.

"I'm going on a diet as soon as I get

ashore," Boyd went on, "but I didn't get you in here to hear about my diseases. I want to talk about your affairs. That story you told me interested me, Pike."

"It's a curious yarn," Pike observed.

Boyd glanced about him furtively. "Oh, Mary!" he called. There was no answer.

"Take a look in the next room, do you mind?"

Pike opened the door. The cabin was empty.

"Thanks," said Boyd. "She said she was going on deck, but I wanted to make sure. Well, to go on: this surely is a small world, Pike. Here you tell me this story, a chance acquaintance, mention no names, and yet it happens that I've heard about the transaction, enough about it to be pretty sure it's the same one. Extraordinary, isn't it?" He forced a laugh.

"Sure extraordinary," said Pike. "Have you heard enough to know that I am William Lassiter's son?"

"I inferred that," Boyd said cautiously. He paused as if turning over in his mind how to begin.

"Well," said Pike at last, "this is of course a piece of luck for me. You ought to be able to tell me who bought the half-interest."

"Possibly I could do that," Boyd answered, "but first there are one or two points that I want cleared up for my own satisfaction. You see," he went on, "as far as I knew, the whole deal was on the square. Your father sold and these other parties bought. Now, you tell me that your father never got the purchase money. I can't charge these other parties with bad faith till I'm sure about that."

"Is it your understanding, Mr. Boyd, that these other parties bought the whole mine?"

"That is my understanding. Half of it was sold to—well, call it a syndicate, and one member of the syndicate bought the other half on his own account. You don't know anything to the contrary?"

"Only that my father wrote he was selling half and holding half. He might have changed his mind after he wrote."

"He might. Still the main question is what became of the money. Whether your father sold all or part, some one got away with what was paid him."

Pike nodded.

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"Now, I can get in touch with the man who acted for the syndicate, who paid the money. He may be able to give you some lead. Your father may have told him what he was going to do with it; something about his intentions. I want you, on your part, to investigate your New York lawyer. Find out if he's made a lot of money in the past few years, whether his manner of living has changed."

"But as I told you before," said Pike, "my father never could have cashed the checks. If he had banked them, they would have been there after his death."

"But I happen to know they were cashed," said Boyd. He gazed at Pike with an anxious questioning look in his eyes.

"Then you must have seen his signature on the vouchers?"

Boyd was silent. Then he burst out; "Hell, what's the use of beating about the bush. I had a quarter interest in a half. I've got a canceled check for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars with your father's signature on it, and no bank would have paid it unless it was genuine."

"Well, then," said Pike, "how do you account for the disappearance of the money?"

"I can't account for it; but several things may have happened. In the first place, your father didn't cash the checks himself. He bought bonds. He endorsed them over to a certain party for government bonds."

"How do you know that?" asked Pike.

"I tell you I have a voucher with your father's endorsement on it to a certain party. It was an unusual endorsement, for it recites the consideration, United States bonds at the market price for the amount of the check."

"You mean," said Pike, "that when my father endorsed the check over he gave a receipt for government bonds for the amount of the check?"

"Exactly," said Boyd. "It ran like this: 'William Lassiter. Pay to So-and-So for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth of United States bonds at market this day.'"

"Why do you suppose he wrote a receipt on the back of a check that was to go back to you? Why wasn't a receipt to the party you call So-and-So sufficient?"

"I presume," said Boyd, "that this party in question wanted to protect himself

against any suspicion that he hadn't paid our money over. As I remember it, he said that your father told him he was off to Europe and wanted to invest this money in government securities till he got back. This man had some large blocks that he wanted to get out of, so he turned them over to your father. It saved broker's commissions for both of them."

"Was he the man who bought the other half-interest?"

"He was," said Boyd. "I don't mind telling you that. After the deal was closed he told your father that he had another million in government bonds and asked him if he didn't want to close out his entire interest in the mine. Your father thought about it and decided to sell. Then he executed another deed, and went off in a taxi with the bonds wrapped up in a big brown-paper parcel. What he did with them I don't know. If he took them to his hotel——"

"Take two millions in government bonds to his hotel!" exclaimed Pike. "You didn't know my father! We lived in a country where a man was likely to be murdered for two hundred."

"Still, it's a possibility; it's got to be looked into," Boyd insisted.

"How would you propose to look into it?"

"Investigate the lawyer. Investigate the circumstances surrounding his death. There must be police records. Find out if any one could have been in the room with him when he had his accident."

"There was no suspicion of foul play."

"No, there wasn't, but look here, Pike——" Boyd hesitated, his mouth twitched, and Pike saw the look come into his eyes that was there when he read the news of Andrews's death. "Doesn't it strike you as queer that Hopkins, Andrews and your father all should fall out of high windows?" His voice had dropped to a hoarse whisper.

"Were Andrews and Hopkins in the syndicate?"

"Yes."

"On the same terms as you?"

"Yes."

"Then there's somebody else with a fourth interest in the half?"

Boyd nodded. "It was the man I haven't named, who bought the other half."

"Hadden't you better tell me who it was?"

"I can't give you his name to-day. I haven't the right. I've got to see him first. I've got to consult with him. There's something unusual about the situation. It doesn't concern you."

"If it has anything to do with the reason for your going through my papers in Boulogne I should say it did concern me," said Pike.

Boyd forced a laugh. "Well," he said, "there's really no reason why you shouldn't know. You're going to be declared in on the deal. I'm not going to stand for having you robbed no matter who did it. There's enough to go round."

"Well?"

"It was this way," Boyd went on. "The original idea was to incorporate the mine, issue stock and put it on the market. The reports of our expert had borne out your father's claim. It was a big property."

"Was your expert in the syndicate?"

"It was Hopkins. He was a mining engineer. The firm specializes in mining securities. Well, after we got the property, Hopkins went out again and did some more exploring. He pushed down into the vein and struck ore that was—good God, man! it wasn't ore at all; it was solid gold! It lay like native copper in the Calumet and Hecla. Well, then the idea was to skim the cream by hand, so to speak. Of course it was just a pocket, but Hopkins was afraid to hire men to take it out, so for six or eight months we worked it ourselves in shifts of two and sent the gold back East."

"By express as silver concentrates, I suppose."

"No, by motor-car. Well, this cement gold held on and the first thing we knew we'd chiseled out a sum that frightened us. We were all paying pretty fair income taxes and it seemed as if we might declare a private dividend on this pocket stuff without hurting the government. Then came the war and the excess-profits tax and the increase of the income tax rates, and none of us wanted to turn in more than half in taxes."

"Well, the idea was suggested that as long as the pocket held out we'd keep the gold in a pool and we signed a paper among ourselves, making a sort of tontine pot out of it. If any one died before we divided, his share went to the rest. No executors were to be let in on it."

"Whose suggestion was that?"

"I don't remember," said Boyd shortly, "but if I did I wouldn't tell you now."

"And then Hopkins fell out of a window," said Pike as if thinking aloud, "and then Andrews, and now you're wondering who's going to be the next?"

Boyd made no answer. He wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

His face had grown ashy white. "What do you think about it?" he asked hoarsely. "Your father, Hopkins, Andrews—it's a damned strange coincidence."

"I don't know what to think," Pike answered. "I don't know your other partner, the one who bought the other half interest."

"It couldn't be him," Boyd answered emphatically. "That isn't what I mean. It isn't a case of murder. How could it be? You can't throw a man out of a window and leave no traces of a struggle."

"It wouldn't seem so."

"No, it couldn't be that," said Boyd tensely. "I don't know what to think. But Pike"—he hesitated—"do you suppose there could be something we don't understand, call it a hoodoo or something, you know what I mean, something that follows this gold? I'm not a superstitious man, Pike; I'm a hard-headed business man, but there's something hellish about this and it gets my goat."

"You haven't had any desire to jump out of a window?"

"Not I," Boyd answered. "I want to live. I've got everything to live for. But so had Andrews, so had Hopkins, so had your father. You might say it was a bad conscience," he went on, "but what is holding out on the government? That wouldn't have troubled Andrews nor Hopkins. It doesn't trouble me. If the government wants to collect on the bullion, let them find it. It's up to them."

"That's hardly the conventional way of looking at the income tax," Pike observed.

"Well, it's my way. My conscience is clear, so was Andrews's, so was Hopkins's. Besides, there's your father. He hadn't held out. Why should he have done it?"

"We don't know that he did. They said he went to the window to open it and had heart failure."

"They said that about Hopkins. Probably they're saying it about Andrews," Boyd replied. "I don't believe in it."

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Pike was gazing vacantly at the window. There was a long silence. "Boyd," he said at last, "you'd better tell me who the other partner is."

"I can't do that till I have had a talk with him," Boyd answered. "You must realize that?"

"Is it Feltner?" asked Pike.

Boyd started. "No, it isn't Feltner," he answered doggedly. "What made you think so?"

Pike looked him in the eyes. "That's for me to say when you've laid your cards on the table, Mr. Boyd."

There was a long silence. Boyd wavered. Then he brought his fist down with a crash. "So help me God, I can't do it now!" he blurted out. "It wouldn't be square. But I will later on. Pike, on my word of honor, you're going to be taken care of. I'm going to run this thing down and all that you're entitled to you're going to get. By God! you shall have my share! I want to get out. I don't like it, Pike. I'm no coward, but this has got my nerve. You can't tell me it's a coincidence."

"I'm not trying to tell you it's a coincidence. I'm asking you to tell me the name of the man who has profited by it."

"But that's impossible."

"Have it your own way then."

"Now, look here," said Boyd. "We'll dock to-morrow forenoon. By to-morrow night I'll know what I'm talking about. Perhaps I'll know what your father did with the bonds. You dine with me to-morrow night and we'll have a show-down." He held out his hand and Pike took it.

Toward four o'clock, in their cabin, Pike was recounting to Rivers the features of his interview with Boyd. As he finished, Rivers mechanically lighted a fresh cigaret.

"Odd idea, that of Boyd's about the hoodoo," he said reflectively.

Pike gave a shrug to his shoulders.

"You don't believe in it?"

"Certainly not. I believe it's murder."

"But as Boyd observed," said Rivers, "you can't throw a man out of a window without making a fuss."

"That's a detail," Pike answered. "A question of technique."

"Well," said Rivers, "I dare say to-morrow night we shall know a good deal more than we do now. We can be thankful that the fear of God has been put into

our friend Boyd. You don't think he'll back down?"

"No," said Pike. "I think Mr. Boyd will come across with everything he has."

They docked next day at eleven in the forenoon.

"Dinner at eight," said Boyd. They were saying good-by on the pier. His cheerful, confident manner had come back. His step was brisk. He slipped his arm through Pike's and drew him aside. "You'll see the lawyer?" he whispered.

"I'm going there now," Pike answered. "Rivers is going up-town with the baggage."

"Good," said Boyd.

Rivers looked on cynically as Pike said good-by to Mary Crewe. "Like an old married man," he thought. "He'd better look out, though." He caught a gleam in the girl's eye.

A clerk from Boyd's office appeared. He had a pull with a customs official and had been admitted to the pier. Boyd gave him his keys, and the custody of his niece and the luggage and went off in a taxi to Wall Street.

Shortly afterward Pike made a similar transfer of responsibility to Rivers and went to the offices of Amos Langford, counselor-at-law.

It was on the stroke of five that afternoon that Pike reached the hotel and came in on Rivers lolling in an arm-chair before a tea-table.

"Any luck?" asked Rivers.

"On the whole, yes," Pike answered. "Langford had copies of the minutes of the police investigation in his files. They were what I wanted to see."

"Do they prove anything?"

Pike shrugged his shoulders. "It seems that father had a room on the twelfth floor. It was on the street and there was no fire-escape. The fire-escape was at the end of the hall. That is to say, there was no means of ingress or egress except through the doors.

"The room had a door that connected it through a closet with the suite to the west, but that door was bolted on father's side. The people in the suite were the Bryce Appletons of Boston, everything that is respectable. The door into the hall was also bolted on the inside. It had to be broken down to get in. No one could very well have

thrown him out the window, bolted those doors and gone out through one of them."

"There was no possibility of getting from window to window?"

"There was no cornice or ledge according to the evidence and there was a stretch of eight feet before there was anything to hold on to."

"But that knocks the murder theory," said Rivers.

"It would seem to, as far as he is concerned."

"His effects were taken charge of by the police?"

"Yes; they turned his cash and jewelry over to Langford with the rest of his things."

"And there were no bonds?"

"There were no bonds, but after Langford showed me the inventory that he receipted for to the police I asked him if he was satisfied that everything found in the room had been entered in the inventory. He said, 'Yes, everything except a big brown-paper parcel.' The police had opened it and found it full of folded newspapers. It was just so much waste-paper, so they threw it out."

Rivers gave a low exclamation. "Boyd's bundle of bonds—what?"

"It might be."

"But no sane man would have been taken in that way."

"That trick isn't so hard to turn," said Pike, "but you never could make me believe that my father would take what he thought was a fortune in negotiable securities to a New York hotel, especially as he already had a safe-deposit box at a downtown bank."

"Still, it's a possibility," said Rivers. "In any case it puts it up to Boyd's excellent friend."

"Unless the police took them," said Pike. "That's a possibility too."

"What's your impression of the lawyer fellow?" asked Rivers after a silence.

"I think he's straight," said Pike. "As soon as he saw the situation he said, 'The first thing I've got to do as your lawyer is to investigate Amos Langford's accounts since 1914.' He ordered a clerk to bring in his books and vouchers and we went through the whole bunch."

"Of course," said Rivers, "that doesn't definitely prove anything. He might have another set of bank-accounts."

"That's what he suggested," Pike answered. "It's another possibility."

His gaze wandered off into space. One of his "absent from the body" spells, as Rivers called them, was coming on.

"I dare say all these questions will clear up after we've had our talk with Boyd," observed Rivers.

Pike nodded vaguely. A troubled look came into his eyes. Suddenly he sat up with a start. "I don't know why," he said, "but I have a feeling that Boyd is going to lay down on us."

"He's in too deep," said Rivers.

"I know, and yet I'm anxious."

Rivers got up to look for matches.

"What do you say to a bit of a walk?" he suggested presently. "Good thing before dining."

Pike assented and they went out.

They turned down Fifth Avenue and walked in silence. The up-town tide of traffic was at the flood. Crowds of hurrying shop-girls, stenographers and clerks poured out of the tall buildings. The line of heavily loaded busses lurched and crawled northward through the sea of vehicles.

"Extraordinary thing, this civilization," observed Rivers, "and the most extraordinary thing about it is that it doesn't mean anything. A jolly little fleet of bombing-planes and where are you?"

"Well, for one thing," said Pike irrelevantly, "we're approaching the Waldorf bar. It's five years since I've had an American cocktail and you, you benighted alien, have never had one. With the dry wave coming on there's no time to lose."

"Naturally, if you feel that way about it," said Rivers, and they turned in.

As they came out through the lobby they passed the news-stand on the right. Suddenly Pike was aware that Rivers had dropped behind. Glancing back he saw him paying for an armful of newspapers. He picked up his change and came on with his habitual unhurried calm.

"I happened to notice this pink chap as we passed," he said, and handed Pike an *Evening Telegram*. "Rather sudden—what?"

THE flaring headline that met Pike's eye was this: "H. S. Boyd Falls Fourteen Stories—Banker and Broker Instantly Killed—Third member of Firm to take Death Plunge."

Pike lowered the paper. His gaze rested for a moment on the impassive countenance of Rivers. Then without speaking he crossed the corridor, entered the Turkish room and stationing himself by one of the Thirty-third Street windows began to read the news story. Rivers followed.

"At ten minutes to four this afternoon," the account ran, "H. S. Boyd, of the firm of Andrews, Boyd & Hopkins, fell from the window of his office on the fourteenth floor of the Seneca Building to the street. Death was instantaneous. Nassau Street was crowded at the time and a passer-by who declined to give his name narrowly escaped being struck by the falling body. Identification was immediately established by papers in Mr. Boyd's pockets and the police notified the employees in the firm's offices."

"Mr. Boyd had arrived from Europe on the *Spartic* this morning and on leaving the ship had gone directly to his office. Since three o'clock, according to statements of the office force, he had been in his private office occupied with business of the firm. So far as known, he had seen no one since that time. About three-twenty-five Charles Z. Stimson, the office manager, knocked at the door, but received no answer. He was under the impression that he heard Mr. Boyd's voice in conversation, but presumed that he was speaking on the telephone. About quarter to four o'clock Raymond L. Sibelius, a step-brother of the deceased, called and asked to see Mr. Boyd. The office boy knocked, but received no answer and reported that Mr. Boyd was engaged. This was pursuant to a standing order that when Mr. Boyd did not reply he was to be reported 'engaged.' Sibelius waited till nearly four and then asked that his name be sent in."

"The telephone operator called Mr. Boyd, but the call was not answered, and Mr. Sibelius was informed that Mr. Boyd had probably left the office by the door opening into the corridor. Mr. Stimson then opened Mr. Boyd's office and the room was found empty. A moment later a policeman entered and announced the accident. Sibelius and the office manager went at once to the street and confirmed the identification."

"On the assumption that Mr. Boyd's death was the result of accident, it is supposed that he had been opening the window

and losing his balance pitched out. No motive for suicide can as yet be assigned, though it is believed that the recent death of S. W. Andrews and the death two years ago of Thomas F. Hopkins, Mr. Boyd's two partners, both by falls from high windows, may have temporarily unbalanced his mind."

Rivers finished first, folded the paper under his arm and lighted a cigaret. A moment later Pike was gazing at him with a troubled look in his eyes.

"Poor devil!" he muttered.

"This window thing is getting a bit thick," said Rivers.

Pike nodded. "I was afraid of it," he said vaguely. "But not so soon."

"It's a surprise to me," observed Rivers. "He didn't seem the kind of chap to go off his head. Our murder theory is knocked."

"How knocked?"

Rivers looked at him in surprise.

"You think," said Pike, "these four men just happened to end the same way; coincidence?"

"I don't think anything of the sort. I think the reasonable view is that Hopkins, Andrews and Boyd worried themselves into it. In a sense Boyd's idea of a hoodoo was right. They were in a deal that was crooked and it got 'em. They went insane and killed themselves."

"And my father?"

"His case hasn't anything to do with the others. Either it was an accident or he killed himself. If he went back to the hotel and found that the bundle of what he supposed to be securities was only waste-paper, it might very well have unbalanced him."

"If you believe the Clarjes Street woman——"

"I don't believe her," Rivers broke in. "I don't understand it, but I believe it's a fraud. It must be. The manner of your father's death," he went on, "possibly suggested the window method to Hopkins. That's the only connection."

Pike was gazing vacantly into Thirty-third Street. "No," he muttered, "the murder theory is established."

"Keep your head, man!" said Rivers sharply, "or you'll be diving out of a window yourself."

"That's a possibility for both of us."

"But Pike!" Rivers cried with a vehemence unusual with him, "how in God's

name could this chap Boyd have been murdered? Assuming this newspaper report is substantially accurate, it's an impossibility! Suppose somebody had come in by the door leading into the corridor. Wouldn't Boyd have made a howl at the first sign of violence?"

"A sock full of sand could have prevented that," Pike answered. "But it wasn't a sock full of sand. I don't know what it was, but I'll get it," he went on as if thinking aloud. "Good God!" he exclaimed. "Do you see where the wax cylinder comes in?"

"No," said Rivers, "I don't. Do you realize Miss Crewe is at Boyd's house?"

"Of course," Pike answered absently. "Come along. We must go there. Get a taxi."

FROM the butler's manner in admitting them Rivers gathered that the news had not yet reached Boyd's household.

"I think Miss Crewe is in, sir," the man volunteered. "I'll take your names up." He ushered them into a reception-room and disappeared.

Pike, abstracted and silent, began to pace a strip of Oriental carpet.

The clock on the mantel-shelf ticked monotonously. A minute passed, then another, and then Rivers heard a light step and turning was facing Mary Crewe.

"There's some rather serious news," he began.

"I know," she said steadily. "They telephoned from the office. I've said nothing to the servants. I knew you'd come."

"Mary," said Pike abruptly, "do you know whether your uncle sent any wireless telegrams from the ship?"

"He sent one yesterday in code," she answered, "shortly after you visited him in his cabin."

"Do you know to whom?"

"It was to a man named Dawson."

"And the address?"

"The address was the firm's, Andrews, Boyd & Hopkins."

Pike nodded thoughtfully. "I must go," he said. "Rivers will stay with you. Don't go out. Don't see any one except the servants unless Rivers is with you." He looked at his watch. It was five minutes past six.

She made no question. "Do you wish to

make a search for papers? I can arrange it, but we must be quick. His stepbrother, Mr. Sibelius, is coming."

"He took his dispatch-case to the office," said Pike.

"Yes, I noticed that."

"I doubt if there would be anything here. Besides I must go."

"Very well," she said. She seemed to understand his abstracted manner. "You will come back?"

"As soon as possible, or telephone." He went out, found his hat in the hall and let himself out. Once in the street he walked rapidly toward Lexington Avenue.

At twenty-five minutes to seven Pike emerged from the Rector Street subway station. He oriented himself, crossed Broadway and turned into the empty cañon of Wall Street. Where an hour before the tide of jostling humanity was at the flood his tread rang through silent, lonely spaces. He began to fear that he had come too late. He turned north at Nassau Street and a few moments later entered the towering office-building where Andrews, Boyd & Hopkins had conducted their business. One elevator was still running. It bore him swiftly to the fourteenth floor, sank again and disappeared. He crossed the hall to a lettered door and softly tried it. It was locked. He had expected that. He put his ear close to the glass. From some inner room came the muffled ticking of a typewriter. The sounds came halting and irregular as if some one unfamiliar with the machine were painfully picking out the words.

Pike smiled, straightened up, and knocked sharply. There was no response, but the ticking ceased. He knocked again. The knocking reverberated through the empty corridor, but within there was no stir of life.

He waited another interval, then called sharply: "Is Mr. Dawson there?"

Shuffling steps began to approach the door. A querulous voice called: "The office is closed. Who is it?"

"Colonel Pike," was the answer. "It is important that I see Mr. Dawson."

The door opened a crack and an old man in the alpaca jacket of a bookkeeper peered through. "Are you Colonel Pike?"

"I am; you are Mr. Dawson?"

"Yes," was the answer. "What do you want?"

"I am a friend of Mr. Boyd's. I crossed

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in the ship with him. I want to talk with you."

The door opened and Pike went in.

"Mr. Dawson," he said, "this is a very sad business and in a manner which I will explain I have an interest in it. Before we have our talk, if possible, I wish to see Mr. Boyd's private office, the room where he was this afternoon."

"You can see it," the old man answered.

At the end of a tortuous passage between ground-glass partitions he opened a door.

A Bokhara rug covered the floor. Three leather-covered chairs set in a semicircle faced a flat-topped desk. Behind this stood a swing-chair. On a coat-rack in the corner hung a summer overcoat and a black derby hat.

On the desk lay the dispatch-case that had hung from the hook in Boyd's cabin. It was unlocked. Pike examined it. It was empty.

On the wall space behind the desk-chair hung a large engraving of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. For the rest, the pictures were a dozen or more prints of old New York.

"Nothing has been done here, I suppose?" said Pike.

"Nothing, except that the window on the right has been closed."

Pike crossed to the window, glanced out, turned back and seated himself in the swinging desk-chair.

"You've been a long time with the firm, Dawson?" he asked.

"I was with them when they started business, twenty-two years ago," the old man answered.

"And as I understand it you stood in rather a confidential relation to Mr. Boyd?"

"That's true."

Pike's hand had been furtively searching the surfaces under the desk top. Suddenly his fingers closed upon a small object.

"Mr. Dawson," he said, "yesterday Mr. Boyd sent you instructions by wireless. You were told to have a certain apparatus installed, last night."

"Yes, sir."

"The switch I find under the desk. And here—" he rose and swung back the engraving from the wall, "is evidently the receiving mechanism."

The old man nodded.

"Does any one in the office know but you?"

"I don't see how they could," Dawson answered. "It was put in at night. The receiver is under my desk in my private office. I keep it locked."

"Good," said Pike. "Now, Dawson, do you know with whom Mr. Boyd expected to use this apparatus?"

The old man shook his head.

"Could you guess?"

"I have no idea."

"Yet you know," Pike continued, "that there was some one in with him this afternoon, some one that he must have admitted through the door into the corridor."

"Yes, I know that."

"And you have no idea who it was?"

"No."

"Mr. Boyd must have spoken to you about the dictagraph when he came to the office this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir, he asked me if it was installed and in working order. Then he said, 'Dawson, you understand how to keep the machine fed with fresh cylinders. As the records are made, put them away in their boxes and forget about the whole matter!'"

"And that was all?"

"No, sir, he said if anything should happen to him I was to deliver the records to Colonel Pike. 'You can get his address from my niece, Miss Crewe,' he said. Those were the last words he ever spoke to any one in the outer office."

"So you knew who I was?"

"If I hadn't, you wouldn't have got in."

Pike smiled. "Suppose we see what you've got recorded. I fancy you were typewriting them off when I knocked."

"There is only one sir, only part of one," the old man answered.

"One may be enough. Sure you don't recognize the visitor's voice?"

Dawson shook his head. "They come out like squeaks; both of them, but of course Mr. Boyd's voice I know."

"And what they say, can you make anything of that?"

"It's nothing I know anything about."

They passed out and entered a partitioned-off space furnished with desks and typewriters for four stenographers. On a stand by one of the desks stood the office phonograph with a cylinder upon it, a third

of it scored with the lines of the recording needle.

Pike gazed at it. Here at the end of an ocean-wide trail was the apparent verification of that message that had come unsought and unexpected through the woman in Clarjes Street. He adjusted the ear-pieces. "Set the thing going," he said.

Dawson swung the needle back to the beginning and threw the switch. Rough, scraping sounds assailed his ears, then words came abruptly in a metallic, insect-like voice:

"I'm sorry you used his name but we won't discuss that now. There's one thing that I want to get straightened out, and straightened out right away."

It was Boyd speaking. There was no doubt.

A grinding pause, then a second voice, toneless, mechanical, metallic as the first.

"What's that?"

"About the money that we paid over. It seems that none of it was found in his estate."

"You've got your voucher with his endorsement on it. I told you at the time that he bought a block of my bonds and endorsed your checks over to me. What he did with the bonds I don't know. All that concerns us is that we gave him the bonds."

"No, it isn't."

"What's the matter?"

"A good deal's the matter. We've got to face a show-down."

"Well, we'll have a show-down then! I've got all the receipts."

"I wish you'd let me have them."

"I will to-morrow."

"I want 'em to-night."

"I can't go into this matter now. I told you that when you telephoned and asked me to come in. I've got an appointment up-town at half-past four."

"Did Lassiter say anything to you about where he was going to keep his securities?"

"I don't think he did. Anyway I don't remember. Does the boy know it was I who made the payments?"

"He doesn't know anything about you, not yet; but I wish you'd get those receipts for me to-night."

"I tell you it's impossible to-night."

"You'll let me have them in the morning?"

"Yes, indeed." There was a grinding

pause. "Say, Harry, did you ever see anything like this?"

Another grinding pause. "What is it?"

"Do you see the pearl light in it? Hold it this way. Now look."

The soft, hissing buzz of the mechanism went on but no more words came: Boyd had thrown the switch.

Pike stopped the machine and took out the ear-pieces.

"Can you make anything out of it?" asked Dawson.

Pike made no answer. He was gazing off across the typewriters to the ground-glass partition beyond. The revelation which Boyd had planned to have recorded had never been made. There was only this commonplace request for an explanation and the wholly natural promise to produce the papers in the morning. The visitor was on intimate terms with Boyd. He called him "Harry" as he turned to go and showed him some curious trifle with a pearl light in it. And save for the fact that the unknown speaker was identified as the surviving partner in the mine, that was all.

"Dawson," he said at last, "what time was this record made?"

"It finished at twenty minutes to four, sir. I heard the buzzing of the machine stop and I looked at my watch."

"No one heard or saw any one leaving the private office by the corridor about this time?"

"No, sir."

"And you have no idea who Mr. Boyd's visitor was?"

"No, sir, I might say I could make out Mr. Boyd's voice because I know it, but for the other—" he shook his head.

Pike rose. "You'd better say nothing about this. I'll see you again in a day or two."

"Yes, sir," said Dawson.

Five minutes later, with the typewritten transcript in his pocket, and carrying in his hand the cylinder in its wool-lined box, Pike again was threading the desolate cañon of Wall Street.

Those insect-like voices were sounding in his ears. As Dawson had said, there was no doubt about Boyd's. Despite its metallic tonelessness it was his. But the other? It was a distinctive voice with a cold, sardonic resonance which the mechanical reproduction but muted. And as Pike pondered it began to seem that he had heard the

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voice before. "Imagination," he muttered, yet the impression clung, waking haunting echoes that linked themselves to nothing.

The night-blue sky spread overhead suffused with the glow of the city's lights. A single star gleamed faintly. Again there came on Pike that awareness of something nebulous stirring in the depths of his consciousness, a subtle pressure as of some mind exerting its will to transmit thought. He stopped, gazing vacantly at the star. Then a policeman stepping from the shadows approached him and he went on toward the subway. The experience had passed, and he took the train northward struggling with his perplexity.

As they came into Forty-second Street Pike looked at his watch. It was quarter to eight. He realized that he was hungry. He got out, made his way to one of the cheap restaurants, ordered he knew not what and ate. A half-hour later the Madison Avenue street-car set him down at Boyd's street. He turned east, reading the house numbers. Toward the middle of the block a series of darkened doorways made him lose count. With his head turned toward the row of houses watching for lighted numerals he suddenly found himself in the path of a man apparently as abstracted as himself. He stepped aside, muttering an apology. The man faced about. Under the light of the street-lamp they looked at each another and the man passed on. For a moment Pike gazed after him, then continued eastward. The third house was Boyd's and he mounted the steps.

The butler admitted him. "They're just finishing dinner," he said. "Will you wait in the library?"

A wood fire burned low in the fireplace. Pike drew up a chair. He had hardly seated himself before Rivers came in.

"Miss Crewe will be down directly," he said.

"Everything all right?"

Rivers nodded. "Just before seven Feltner called."

Pike rose.

"He and a fat young gentleman named Gordon appeared with a quantity of white roses."

"You saw them?"

"Yes. They asked to see Miss Crewe and she had them shown in."

"Well?"

Rivers smiled significantly. "They were much shocked. It was a visit of condolence. They only stopped about five minutes."

"What sort of impression did Feltner make?"

"Strong chap, mentally, physically. Tall, spare, rat-like eyes, black mustache, well turned out, a man about sixty."

There was a rustle of silk and Mary Crewe came in.

"Rivers has been telling me about Mr. Feltner's visit," said Pike. "What do you make of him?"

"It's hard to tell," she answered. "It's not a sympathetic personality."

"Did he seem to have anything on his mind?"

"I should say he was upset. He said the news had upset him. He told us my uncle had been one of his best friends. He had known Mr. Andrews and Mr. Hopkins."

"He didn't discuss the case?"

"He said it was very terrible," said Rivers, "the three of them all going the same way, and very strange. That was all."

"He didn't mention having seen Mr. Boyd this afternoon?"

"No."

"Well," said Pike, "some one was with Mr. Boyd as late as twenty minutes to four, perhaps later."

"How do you know?" asked Rivers.

"I got the wax cylinder. It's a dictaphone record."

Rivers looked at him incredulously. "You mean that Clarjes Street business has come off?"

Pike jerked his thumb toward the paste-board box on the table.

"The devil!" said Rivers.

Pike told of his visit to Dawson and gave them the typewritten transcript of the record.

They read it together under the reading-lamp.

"I don't see that this thing in itself amounts to much," said Rivers.

"It proves this," said Pike, "that the unknown partner in the mine was with Boyd not more than ten minutes before he fell out of the window, that he came in and went out by the private door on the corridor. It is significant that up to the present he has not thought fit to make his visit known."



Rivers was standing by the corner of the table looking dully ahead of him. Sibelius moved toward him, called sharply and made a downward pass with his hands.

"But there is no proof that he is trying to keep his visit secret. He might not have heard of it till after the office had closed. There would be no point in his rushing up here to Miss Crewe."

"A man who knew Boyd well enough to call him 'Harry' would have been pretty certain to have heard of it, and unless he had some reasons he would have been likely to communicate with some member of the family."

"He may already have communicated with Mr. Sibelius," said the girl.

Pike smiled. "It's possible. By the way, you were expecting Mr. Sibelius when I left. What did he have to say?"

"I haven't seen him," she answered. "He telephoned that he had been detained. Haskins says that he came while we were at dinner, but when he heard there was some one with me he wouldn't stay. He said he'd phone later."

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"Well," said Pike, "the question is who was with your uncle just before the end. Was it the man who sent the cable, was it Feltner—or some one else?"

"Can one recognize the voices on the record?" asked Rivers.

"That is what I was coming to," said Pike. "You've heard Feltner talk." He looked at his watch. "Some up-town hotel must use one of these machines for dictation. Of course I could call on Mr. Feltner, but the easiest way——"

"I ought to be able to recognize his voice," said Rivers. "It was distinctive."

"Let's get a taxi, then, and settle it. We'll be back," he said to the girl, "perhaps in half an hour. You won't see any one?"

"No," she answered and smiled.

Pike took the box containing the cylinder and they went out.

MARY put wood on the fire, drew up a chair and tried to read. A half-hour passed. The fire burned low again; she put on another stick. A clock struck ten. They had been gone an hour. She rose, a little anxious. For something to do she thought to ring for mineral-water. Then she heard voices in the hall. The door opened and they both entered.

"I'm sorry we were late," said Pike. "We had a long chase."

"You found one?"

"We found one," said Rivers.

"Taking the cylinder out of the box," said Pike, "I dropped it. We have the pieces."

She gave a little cry.

"We'll have to get along without it," said Pike. "It's a pity. I'll have to see Feltner, that's all, and then bluff."

"But suppose it was he that was with my uncle, what can you do about it?"

"That's the difficulty," said Rivers. "Assume he admitted that he was there, there's nothing to prove that he sandbagged your uncle and dropped him out of the window. We don't know about the Andrews and Hopkins cases, but we know he couldn't have been in the room with Pike's father."

Pike said nothing. He had dropped into a chair and was sitting with his abstracted, far-away look.

"Why don't you go to Mr. Sibelius," she said, "and tell him the whole story? If any one knew about my uncle's affairs it would be apt to be he."

"Your uncle never would have told him about the mine and the tontine arrangement," said Rivers.

"He might have. I've only seen him once," she went on. "He dined with us when I was stopping with my uncle on my way to Europe, but he made an impression on me. He's a remarkable man. My advice would be to tell him the whole thing. Even if he didn't agree about its being murder, he surely could help in getting back the mine and the bullion."

"What does he do?" asked Pike.

"I think he used to be a lawyer. He's evidently rich, for he collects books and pictures."

"Does he live near by?"

"No; in Brooklyn."

"Did your uncle talk about him as if he saw a good deal of him?"

"I don't recall his talking about him very

much one way or the other," she answered, "but I have the impression that he was on very good terms with him. You see they grew up together. My grandfather Boyd married his mother when he was a child. She only lived a few months and then my grandfather married my grandmother. Uncle Henry was their first child. Sibelius lived with them till he grew up. After that I don't know; I, believe, though, that he only came to New York twelve or fifteen years ago."

"Unless he knows about the mine he couldn't help much," said Pike.

"But I believe he'd know," the girl insisted. "He's eccentric, but he's a very intelligent man. I know my uncle trusted him."

"How eccentric?" asked Rivers.

"He's a strange-looking creature, always wears blue goggles and a weird fringe of white beard."

"I met a man with a beard like that," said Pike "as I was coming in this evening, but he had no goggles."

"He was here just before you came," she said. "I dare say at night he doesn't wear the goggles."

"Well," said Pike, "it may be the best thing to do. Under the circumstances, perhaps it's the only thing."

The telephone on the table beside him rang shrilly. He leaned over and picked up the instrument.

"Yes, this is Mr. Boyd's house," he said. "Yes, she's here. Who is this, please? Just a moment—" He turned to the girl.

She looked at him and started. "Is anything wrong?"

"No," said Pike slowly. "Mr. Sibelius wants to speak to you." The voice of Sibelius was the voice on the record.

She shot him a questioning look and went to the instrument.

"Yes, I'm all right. Yes, Haskins told me. I'm sorry you didn't wait. Major Rivers was with me. He and Colonel Pike were on the ship with us. Are you getting any rest? But you must get some sleep." The conversation went on for a minute or two, then gave signs of drawing to an end. "Will you hold the line a moment?" she asked. She turned to Pike, covering the transmitter with her hand. "Have you decided?"

"Yes," Pike answered. "Ask him if he'll see me to-morrow morning."

She turned back to the telephone. "Colonel Pike is here. Uncle Henry talked to him about some matters on board ship. He wants to know if he can see you to-morrow. Any time, morning or afternoon. Yes, that will do. I'll be in all day. You might telephone when you are coming. Take care of yourself. Good night." She hung up. "He'll see you to-morrow morning at half-past nine," she said.

Pike was standing, gazing into the fire. "If Sibelius is the man I passed in the street with the white beard," he said, "I've seen him before."

"Where?"

"In New Mexico, years ago."

"Do you think he'll remember you?"

"No. He was on the stage; I was in the audience. He was lecturing."

"I never knew he had been a lecturer," she said.

Pike looked at his watch. "I think we ought to be going," he said to Rivers. "Mary ought to turn in. This has been a hard day."

"I'm not tired."

"You ought to be," he answered. "Besides, we've got some thinking to do. We've got to present our case to Sibelius as well as possible. At present it's like a picture-puzzle, with some of the most important pieces missing. We've got to guess somewhat exactly how Mr. Feltner fits in."

"But you must get some sleep, too."

"Don't worry about that," he answered. They said good night and left. As they reached the sidewalk Rivers filled his lungs with air and looked up at the star-sown heavens.

"Glorious night," he said; "suppose we walk."

"Good idea," Pike answered, and they turned west toward Fifth Avenue.

IT WAS three o'clock the next morning when Rivers waked with a start. He dreamed he had been shot. He sat up and listened with relief to the motor that was back-firing in the street below. Then he consulted his watch, composed himself and was about to pull up the bedclothes again when he noticed a thread of light under Pike's door. Pike must have fallen asleep with the lights on. A second thought told him that this was unlikely. It wasn't the kind of thing Pike would do. A vague fear

that the room was empty began to prey upon him. He wanted to call out, but something held him back. He was afraid.

The glimmer of light shone steadily. At last he got out of bed and made his way over the carpeted floor to the door. He listened, but heard nothing. Instead of opening the door his hand searched for the keyhole and closed upon the key. He drew it out noiselessly and, kneeling, peered through the hole.

At the centertable under the blaze of the chandelier Pike was sitting upright. His eyes were bandaged. His hands lay upon the table as if he were playing chess, but there was no board, nor pieces. Only the box, with pieces of the cylinder, stood upon the table.

Rivers watched wonderingly. He began to understand. Pike was putting together the puzzle, inventing the missing pieces, reconstructing the picture out of his inner consciousness. Pike's own theory of his achievement with the German cypher Rivers had never accepted. He held that Pike possessed phenomenal powers of abstract thought. Where others could follow a problem for minutes, Pike kept on for hours, framing one solution after another till the right one came. Yet now he began to doubt his own conviction. Pike faced him. The glaring light showed his large features relaxed and calm. There was the passivity of sleep rather than the intensity of prolonged mental effort. He was a man waiting, a sensitive receiver for what might come, rather than a seeker.

Rivers rose and crept back to bed with a sense of having witnessed strange phenomena. Conceivably that mysterious sub-consciousness of Pike's was extending its antennæ into a plane where friendly intelligences could feel it with the information that it sought. At all events he was jolly glad that Pike was alive and sitting there.

When he next waked the sun was streaming into the room. Pike had drawn the curtains and was standing by his bed. "It's eight o'clock," he said.

Rivers sat up. "What were you doing in there all night? I waked about three, saw the light under the door. You gave me a scare—thought you'd gone out of the window. Then I used the keyhole and saw you sitting up, blindfolded."

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"I seem to get things better that way—as if I were playing chess."

"Have you got any new ideas?"

"You'll see when we tell it to Sibelius. We've got to hurry. Order me some breakfast. I've got to shave."

He was back again, dressed, in half an hour, and began to eat. As he finished his coffee he looked at his watch. "We ought to be starting," he said. "Have you got a gun?"

Rivers shook his head. "Are we going on to Feltner's?"

"It's a possibility." He disappeared into his own room and came back with Mary Crewe's automatic.

Rivers took the weapon gingerly. "I hate these things," he said. "However, this one is empty."

"Empty?"

"Did you never find that out?"

Pike took the pistol and examined it. His great frame began to shake. "I ought not to be allowed loose," he said. "Come on, we'll be late."

Half an hour later the taxicab stopped before a large, rather shabby brownstone house in the Prospect Heights district of Brooklyn. Pike led the way up the steps and rang the bell.

A well-turned-out man servant opened the door. "We have an appointment with Mr. Sibelius," said Pike. "Major Rivers and Colonel Pike."

The man ushered them into the drawing-room and disappeared.

Rivers gave an exclamation as he glanced about the room. "Look at the things this old creature has collected!"

"Are they any good?"

"Any good? My dear man, every single thing is a museum piece. Look at his pictures! There's a Bordone; that's a Tintoretto; there's a Bellini. Look at the Louis-Quatorze chairs and the cabinet!" His rapturous examination was cut short by the return of the man servant.

"Mr. Sibelius will receive you in the library," he said. He led them out through the passage to a large room built out over the back yard and running the thirty-foot width of the house. Through the south windows the sun streamed in, showing the walls lined to the ceiling with books in fine bindings, old or new. A full-length portrait of a Venetian grandee, another Bordone,

hung over a fifteenth-century fireplace. Rivers saw no more, for the master of the house, seated behind a large Venetian table used evidently as his work desk, had risen and was advancing.

In spite of his grotesque beard and goggles the man gave an impression of great force. He had the long mobile face of an actor. The skin was smooth. He seemed much younger than the beard would indicate. Even masked with the blue lenses his eyes seemed keen and searching.

"I see you have an appreciative sense of the Venetians," observed Rivers.

"A great people," he answered shortly. He seated them ceremoniously and returned to his place behind the desk-like table.

"Have you seen Mary this morning?" He spoke to Pike.

"I called her on the telephone about eight," Pike answered.

"She was well?"

"She seemed to be."

There was a silence.

"I understand," said Sibelius, "that you knew my stepbrother on the steamer; that you wish to discuss some matter that concerned him."

"That is it exactly," said Pike. "You see it happened," said Pike, "that I was with Mr. Boyd when he read the wireless bulletin of Mr. Andrews's death. He was greatly unstrung. Subsequently he made certain confidences which I think should be brought to your attention."

"I see," said Sibelius.

"It is possible, of course," Pike added, "that he may have communicated with you directly, but I assume from the newspaper account that you reached his office too late."

Sibelius nodded.

"Stated baldly," Pike continued, "Mr. Boyd was in fear of his life. He believed that both Hopkins and Andrews had been murdered."

"This is a somewhat startling announcement," said Sibelius.

"It is; yet, surely, Mr. Sibelius, you can not have considered this sequence of tragedies without some disquieting speculation."

"To be quite frank, Colonel Pike, I have indulged in not a little disquieting speculation. I am far from accepting the hypothesis of accident. But on the other hand, the

possibility of murder has never occurred to me."

"What then is your theory?"

"It is purely a theory," Sibelius said slowly, "but it seems likely that my stepbrother and his partners have been the victims of some outrageous blackmail. Some scoundrel has obtained a hold upon them and has hounded them to suicide."

"You have no knowledge of any facts to support this?"

"As I told you, it was only a theory, but at least it is possible if not probable."

"Whereas you consider the hypothesis of murder impossible?"

"My dear sir," said Sibelius, "what my stepbrother may have based his suspicions upon, in the case of Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Andrews, I do not know. At one time he believed or stated that he believed that Hopkins killed himself. But consider the facts in his own case. He was alone in his office, the door locked, his office force within call. I myself was sitting outside within thirty feet of him. Assuming that an assailant might have entered through the door on the corridor, a man does not submit to being thrown from a high window without resistance. There were no signs of a struggle, no noise, no outcry."

"But suppose there was no assailant present at the time of the murder?"

Both Sibelius and Rivers regarded him blankly.

"Do you imply some mechanical device?" asked Sibelius.

"This crime was committed in a very extraordinary manner," Pike replied, "and by a very extraordinary criminal, but there was no mechanical device."

"Are you entirely serious?" asked Sibelius.

"Entirely."

"Colonel Pike," said Sibelius, "I was not aware that you had come with a theory of your own. It is evident that your intentions are the best, but even so, you can hardly expect me to listen patiently to this kind of nonsense."

"Nevertheless," said Pike, "I am going to ask you to listen. It is possible that in five minutes I may be able to arouse your interest."

The gaze of the two men met. "Suit yourself," said Sibelius.

"As I have said," continued Pike, "this is an unusual crime, committed in an unusual

manner. To make its nature clear it is necessary to go back some years. About fifteen years ago, I believe it was during the winter of 1904, I attended the public performance of an itinerant mesmerist in Albuquerque."

An ironic smile parted Sibelius's lips. "You are going back," he observed.

"This man, who styled himself grotesquely 'The Great Diavolo,' continued Pike, ignoring the interruption, "possessed hypnotic powers of an extraordinary nature. Twice during his performance, as he called for volunteers, his glance caught mine, and it was with difficulty that I fought down the impulse to rush to the stage."

"Are you preparing to tell me that Mr. Boyd was hypnotized and commanded to throw himself out of the window?"

"Exactly that," said Pike.

Sibelius laughed. "Really, Colonel Pike, this is fantastic. You must know that such a thing would be impossible. I have made some study of the literature of hypnotism. The books unanimously lay down the proposition that a hypnotized subject will *not* obey suggestions contrary to the instinct of self-preservation."

"I shall tell you what I saw," Pike answered. "You can draw your own conclusions. The performer began with the usual demonstrations. A subject was told that a walking-stick was a rattlesnake; that a piece of ice was a live coal. A cowboy friend of mine was handed an old envelope and told that it was a thousand-dollar bill. It was obvious that his delusion was complete."

"A man might be given waste paper and accept it as government securities?" put in Rivers.

"Exactly," said Pike.

Sibelius smiled.

"The performer went on to another class of phenomena," Pike continued. "He set two carpenter's saw-horses about five feet apart and parallel one with the other. He then took four subjects, hypnotized to rigidity, and laid them on the trestle, their heads resting on one and their heels on the other. On these he laid four more crosswise. He then took a third four and piled them across the second tier. After that he vaulted to the top of the pile and stood for a minute or more bowing to the audience. He called this the 'human log-pile.' As you

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can see, the bottom men were each supporting upward of three hundred and fifty pounds. Now, the strongest of these men in a normal state could hardly hold himself in that position for thirty seconds, let alone support a weight. It would seem to me that submission to three hundred and fifty pounds on one's stomach while stretched three feet above the floor is at variance with the instinct of self-preservation. But the next act is more directly in point.

"The performer assembled the same dozen men whom he had used in his human log-pile. He directed them to go to the gallery back of the seats. 'Now,' he said, 'you are a mill-pond held back by a dam. In just three minutes that dam will go out, the stream will rush down through the stage-box and tumble down in a cataract to the stage.'

"He took out his watch and explained to the audience the curious time-sense of hypnotic subjects. An order given to do a certain thing hours afterward is obeyed to the second. Well, in exactly three minutes those twelve men came rushing down through the box and dived head first to the stage, a matter of ten feet. Now the point is, that one man broke his shoulder-blade, though this was not known till the next day, when the professor had left town."

"Extraordinary and very interesting," said Sibelius, "and, one must admit, somewhat at variance with the view usually held by scientists. But, granting, for the sake of argument, that a hypnotized subject might be made to hurl himself from a window, what reason is there to suppose that anything of the sort has taken place?"

"We are coming to that——"

"I do not wish to interrupt," Sibelius broke in. "I am naturally more interested than you in unraveling the mystery of my brother's death, if there is a mystery, but as a lawyer I must ask for something in the nature of evidence rather than reminiscence. Have you any facts that prove a crime? As must be obvious, Colonel Pike, all motive for murder is utterly lacking. If I have been correctly informed by my stepbrother, his chief heir is Miss Crewe. She is the only person who could benefit by his death. If indeed, as I suggested, there had been blackmail, the motive for murder is conspicuously lacking. A dead man is of no use to a blackmailer."

"The motive for all three crimes," said Pike, "was robbery."

"You believe you can prove this?"

"I know that I can."

"Pray proceed, Colonel Pike," said Sibelius. He leaned back in his chair.

"I must lay the facts before you in my own way," said Pike, "and I must ask your indulgence if I resort again to reminiscence. The man whose demonstrations I have described was no ordinary mountebank. He was a man of education, of ambition, of an inflexible will, and as bereft of moral sensibility as a man may be. He began to ask himself why he should employ his extraordinary powers to make a precarious living. Whether he had studied law before he began his career as a mesmerist I do not know, but I know that about fifteen years ago the 'Great Diavolo' disappeared. About the same time a very extraordinary man opened a law office in New York."

"Do you imply that this particular hypnotist is involved in the death of my stepbrother?" Sibelius demanded.

"Be patient a moment longer," Pike answered. "On his becoming established in New York through the introductions of a relative, he endeavored to cultivate rich clients rather than general practise. I infer that he succeeded. Several of these clients are now dead and their estates on being settled were smaller than might have been expected. Meanwhile the lawyer grew rich."

"As a precaution against being recognized as the itinerant showman several changes were instituted. As 'the Great Diavolo' he was smooth shaven, with a strong, well-modeled jaw and chin. As the lawyer he wore a grotesque beard which with chemical assistance was prematurely white. The hypnotist had been notable for his eyes, eyes so unusual that the average man felt uncomfortable when they turned on him. The lawyer had developed an eye trouble which necessitated his wearing blue goggles—in public. It is probable that none of his clients ever saw his uncovered eyes but once."

Sibelius raised his hand. "I think this farce has gone far enough," he said quietly. "You have played your little piece with effect, Colonel Pike, but has it got you anywhere?" He removed his spectacles.

Rivers, who had been watching him breathlessly, averted his eyes.

"I should say that we were on the way," said Pike.

"Let us see," said Sibelius. He tapped the desk thoughtfully with an ivory paper-cutter. "It is possible that you could prove that Sibelius, the lawyer, had once been a traveling hypnotist. Well what of it? I deny all your implied charges. I do not even admit that Sibelius was ever the person you have described as the 'Great Diavolo.' The burden of proof is on you. You may note in passing," he added, "that I am waiving my right to 'virtuous indignation.' We are men of at least average intelligence; it is better to discuss the matter reasonably."

"That would be my idea," said Pike.

"Well," said Sibelius, "assume for the sake of argument that everything you imagine were true; what can you do about it?"

"In this state they electrocute," said Pike.

Sibelius laughed. "I like frank people; Colonel Pike, you and I are anachronisms in this soft-spoken age." His eyes strayed to the portrait over the fireplace and a strange melancholy came into them. "But to come back to our muttons," he said, straightening himself in his chair. "Pike, you are wasting your time—and mine. Let us do something mutually profitable. Will you inspect my collections? Will you stay to lunch? I have some excellent Chablis."

"I am afraid our engagements will prevent," said Pike.

"Then without offense, gentlemen, I must tell you that I am somewhat occupied this morning." He rose.

Pike remained seated.

"As you please," he said. He resumed his chair. "This must be dull for Major Rivers. If he cares for the morning paper——?"

"No thanks," said Rivers in a matter-of-fact tone.

"You can see," said Pike, "that from my point of view it is merely a question of how to proceed. As a layman I should prefer the opinion of a lawyer before submitting my evidence to the district attorney."

"I quite understand," said Sibelius. "If my professional opinion is of value to you, it is at your service."

"I shall be brief," said Pike. "Motive, of course, is established by the tontine

arrangement by which the mine passed to the ultimate survivor. Boyd explained that to me himself."

Sibelius tapped the desk sharply with his paper-knife. "Conversation with a dead man, Colonel Pike—inadmissible as evidence. Proceed."

"The robbery and murder of my father is of course a separate crime," Pike continued, "but the attending circumstances would be relevant as establishing motive."

"Correct," said Sibelius, "if such evidence exists."

"Boyd's voucher exists," said Pike, "there is also testimony as to the packet of waste-paper slips which my father accepted as bonds."

Sibelius smiled. "Naturally I am ignorant of what you are talking about, but what do they prove? The voucher is a receipt for two hundred and fifty thousand dollars' worth of government bonds delivered by Sibelius to Lassiter. Would a jury believe that a man would write such an indorsement on the back of a check without actually receiving the bonds?"

"It might if it had previously been shown that Sibelius had made a man accept an old envelope for a one-thousand-dollar bill."

"Moonshine," said Sibelius. "Any district attorney would tell you so. No prosecuting officer would have the face to take such a case to the grand jury."

"Possibly," said Pike, "but we are only beginning. There is the packet of letters and cables sent by Sibelius under the name of Feltner. Aside from their bearing on the conspiracy they show that Sibelius used the name of Boyd's friend to cover his activities. It is circumstantial evidence, but it is significant."

"You have those letters?"

"Only copies. As you must know, the originals were taken yesterday afternoon from Boyd's office."

"Don't say, 'as I must know,'" Sibelius objected. "I know nothing. I am hearing the brief of your evidence as your lawyer. If you believe the letters you speak of bear upon the murder of Henry Boyd and you can show that they were in reality sent by Sibelius, though signed 'Feltner,' you could probably get the copies introduced. But they would carry no more weight than your personal testimony. If you were a district attorney would you rely very much on such

a packet of copies made by an interested witness?"

"Still," said Pike quietly, "you must remember that all this is to be taken in connection with proof that Sibelius was closeted with Boyd a few minutes before his death."

Sibelius' eyes contracted to points. "I believe the facts show that Sibelius was in the outer office at that time," he said.

"The testimony shows that Sibelius came into the outer office about three-forty-five and inquired for his stepbrother. It is important, as you can see, for it establishes the fact that Sibelius pretended not to have seen Boyd since his return."

"Nor had he!" cried Sibelius harshly. "I'll tell you that emphatically."

"We are coming now to that," said Pike. He drew from his breast-pocket a document, half a dozen sheets in thickness, and unfolded it deliberately.

Rivers from where he sat could see that the top sheet was blank.

"To refresh your memory, Mr. Sibelius," Pike went on, "I will read extracts from that last conversation which you had with your stepbrother." He slipped the blank sheet off and placed it at the back of the pile. He did likewise with the second, giving the impression of a somewhat lengthy document. He then held before him the typewritten transcript which Dawson had made.

"Boyd is speaking," he began. "He says, 'I'm sorry you used his name but we won't discuss that now. There's one thing that I want to get straightened out right away.'"

Pike paused and added, "You see the reference to the Feltner signature?"

Sibelius sat motionless, his face an evil mask.

"To continue," said Pike. "Sibelius asks 'what's that?'"

"Boyd—'About the money that we paid over. It seems that none of it was found in the estate.'"

"Sibelius—'You've got your voucher with his indorsement on it. I told you at the time that he bought a block of my bonds and indorsed your checks over to me. What Lassiter did with the bonds I don't know. All that concerns us is that we gave him the bonds.'"

Pike paused again.

"Well?" said Sibelius.

Pike rose. "Did you ever see anything like this?" He stepped to the table and took from an ash-tray a crystal ball the size of a marble. "Do you see the pearl light in it? Hold it this way! Now look!"

Sibelius held up his hand. "Dictagraph, eh?" A bitter smile parted his lips. "Well, Colonel Pike—" He broke off and sat gazing vacantly before him.

The silence lengthened.

"I suppose I'm through," he said at last. "You've been too many for me, Pike. The game is over." He leaned back, his hands dropped in his lap. As the silence drew out Pike became aware that his right hand was stealthily opening a drawer. He sprang forward, flanking the desk on the left. At the same instant Rivers covered Sibelius with the automatic. They saw then that he was endeavoring to uncork a small brown bottle.

Pike was on him and had his wrist. For a moment he struggled, then suddenly relapsed into his chair.

"Why not?" he said looking up into Pike's face. "There's nothing to be gained by scandal."

"All that is true," said Pike, "but you're in too much of a hurry. You forget I want the mine or the purchase money."

"I suppose that is reasonable," Sibelius muttered. "I can't give you the money. I haven't got it. As for the mine, it stands in your father's name. For our own reasons we never recorded the deeds. They are in the safe-deposit vault with the bullion. What terms will you make?"

"Give me a bill of sale to the contents and an assignment of your lease of the vault. In return you will have your bottle and till four o'clock to use it. If you fail, we call in the police."

There was a silence. Then Sibelius nodded. "I agree," he said.

Ten minutes later the documents were drawn, signed and witnessed by Rivers. Sibelius called up the manager of the trust company and explained the transfer of the lease of the vault.

"And now the keys," said Pike.

Sibelius pressed the button on the table and the butler came.

"Robbins," he said, "go to my room, please, and bring down the two keys that are on a ring in the right-hand drawer of my dressing-table."

The man went out. As he closed the door behind him he left it ajar. Pike flashed a suspicious glance at Sibelius.

"Robbins is of an inquiring turn of mind," said Sibelius. He rose as if to close the door, but Pike anticipated him. He went without haste, satisfied himself that the man was not there and shut the door again. The thing had taken fifteen seconds at most. As he turned back into the room he saw Rivers moving toward Sibelius like a sleep-walker, with the automatic pistol in his hand.

No word was spoken. Spellbound Pike watched the dumb show. Sibelius had the pistol. He advanced, tense, crouched forward, a faint smile on his lips. Six feet distant he pulled. The hammer snapped harmlessly. He recoiled a step, drew back the bolt mechanism and aiming carefully pulled again.

"It's empty," said Pike.

Sibelius stood gazing at him, weighing the chances of a hand-to-hand encounter. Hate and despair, the blind will to live prompted it. Reason showed its futility. Suddenly he dropped his hands. His arms hung inert. The pistol slipped to the floor.

"You'd better wake Rivers up," said Pike.

Rivers was standing by the corner of the table looking dully ahead of him. Sibelius moved toward him, called sharply and made a downward pass with his hand. Rivers blinked, yawned, looked about and sat down.

Pike picked up the pistol and slipped it into his pocket.

A moment later the man servant entered, delivered the keys to Sibelius and withdrew.

Sibelius thoughtfully handed them to Pike. "This one is apt to stick," he said.

Pike took the keys and slipped them into his trousers pocket. Then he placed the little bottle on the table beside a bowl of roses. "I think we understand each other," he said.

Sibelius nodded. "I have till four."

"Exactly," said Pike. He bowed, turned to Rivers and beckoned. Rivers rose and followed him out. The taxi in which they had come was waiting at the curb. Pike gave the driver his directions and they got in.

"What happened?" asked Rivers as the cab started. "I felt as if I had been asleep."

Pike told him. After that they were silent again.

They crossed the Brooklyn bridge and turned down into the financial district. The vehicle stopped in front of the Atlantic Trust Company and they went in. No difficulty was raised. The lease of the vault was formally transferred to John B. Lassiter. The official rang for a messenger and they were conducted down to the vaults. The custodian used his master-key and withdrew. Pike inserted one of the duplicate keys that Sibelius had surrendered and the door swung open. They passed in and Pike switched on the light.

Rivers was the first to speak. "It's here," he said.

Gold bars in canvas bags lay piled on the floor. Pike opened one and dumped the contents.

They stood gazing at the treasure. "There's your Blaghton castle!" said Pike at last.

Rivers surveyed it thoughtfully. "It's odd," he muttered. "I always thought if I suddenly got a pot of money I'd be elated."

"I'm afraid that's life," said Pike with a dry laugh. "We don't live on gold bars. Come on."

THE French clock in the reception-room of Boyd's house struck one with the muffled tone of a far-away bell. Pike paused. He had finished telling the story of the morning.

"And there you are," he said.

Mary Crewe was silent for a time. Then she rose with a restless impulse, replaced a spray of freesia that was drooping from the vase and stood with her back to the fireplace. "How do you account for it all?" she said. "I don't mean what happened this morning, but the whole thing?"

"I don't account for it," Pike answered.

"But what do you think? What is your theory of it? You must have believed in the message that came through the Clarjes street woman."

"It seems to me something very simple, entirely natural. One wants to help one's friends. Suppose I was a blind man crossing the street. You see a motor-car bearing down on me. You take my arm and guide me to the sidewalk."

"But you assume that they are all alive and about us."

"It would be strange if they were not."

"Perhaps," she said. "And when you seem to listen and have things come to you?"

"That is only what every one does who creates anything. Somewhere all knowledge must exist. It is only a question of opening the channels to let it through. Perhaps," he went on, "the mind is evolving as millions of years ago the eye evolved. At first it was but a speck of pigment, dully sensitive to light. Perhaps the mind which to-day may open uncertainly small pores to the thought which fills the universe will develop a receiving organ. It is all reasonable. There is fundamentally no mystery about it."

She made no answer.

"There is only one mystery," he went on, "that I can not imagine being solved by a better knowledge of physics, or by more highly organized perceptions."

"And that?"

"The insoluble mystery is you," he replied. "You are the answer to everything John Lassiter wants in this world and the next. Why is it?"

She stood facing him with her grave eyes fixed on his. Her breath was coming fast, but she smiled. "I suppose," she said, "it is because you are a very foolish and a very lovable man, John."

"Don't you think it is about time to be foolish?" he asked. He rose and went toward her.

"I am sure of it," she answered.

The Nymph to Her Mortal Lover

By Mary Stewart Cutting

WOULD you clasp me once more, dear,
 Lover, O Lover, come soon!
 For I will vanish from here
 At the full of the moon.

I go, ere the summer's flood,
 Into the beckoning gloom.
 I am here now the roses bud
 But not when the roses bloom.

You may glimpse me then in the breeze
 That blows at dawn from afar,
 Or hear me in murmuring trees,
 Or see my smile in a star,

But you can not hold me close!
 You never can feel me speak
 In the warmth of the joy that grows
 With your cheek against my cheek.

When we cling to kiss, and part
 Only to kiss again,
 I will mean no more to your heart
 Than does the falling rain.

The path through the wood shines clear—
 O Lover, come to me soon!
 For never again may I await you here
 Ere the full of the moon.