

sleep. His worked-up mind had lost its balance. Now its rational processes weakened. He saw in the writing of the letter an amazing piece of effrontery. He was in a wild perspiration through anxiety. He marveled how he had ever had the audacity to leave that letter.

"I'll get it back. It's the wrong way. I've made a dreadful mistake!" he fumed and fussed, and he got up and dressed himself.

The disordered light in which Hoyt now viewed the circumstances made him eagerly anxious to recover the letter. He hurried along the silent street, almost utterly deserted. As he neared a vacant lot next to the home of Eva he dodged from bush to bush.

As he stole in and out among the shrubbery on the side lawn of the house he stumbled over a bundle lying on the ground with a force that sent it hurtling in among some thick shrubs out of sight.

"A bundle of washing," he decided, and paid no more attention to it except to recognize that the bundle had something hard wrapped up inside of it. "Clothespins, I suppose," he soliloquized. "Now for the letter box and the letter itself. I shall feel relieved when I get it back in my possession once more. Eva would just have laughed at me. I'll stop making a ninny of myself. She'd never have me."

Hoyt ascended the steps and reached the letter box. He strove to lift its cover. It was in vain.

"Locked!" he muttered. "Letter still in? Yes. That's lucky," for, shifting the outside plate, he could see a white object beyond. "Well, I've just got to get back that letter! My combination tool knife—it's all right," and he drew the article from his pocket and opened its screwdriver blade.

"There's no other way," decided Hoyt, and he proceeded to unscrew top and bottom fastenings of the letter box. He would have to carry it

away with him to break it open, but in his present desperate mood he heeded no destruction.

The box rattled as he stole down the steps. Hoyt uttered a low chuckle of exultation. Then suddenly two figures dashed from the shadows.

"He's a daring fellow, coming back a second time," spoke a gruff voice; "but we've got him!"

"Here, unhand me!" ordered Hoyt, struggling in the firm grip of two pairs of stout hands.

"You keep quiet, or I'll give you a stunner!" growled the other of his captors. "Jim, ring the bell and tell Mr. Walters we've found one of the burglars."

"Burglar? I'm no burglar!" shouted Hoyt. "What does all this mean?"

"What does that mean?" demanded his captor, kicking aside the mail box which Hoyt had dropped.

His comrade had rung the bell. In a few minutes Mr. Walters came to the door, his wife behind him, Eva a shrinking third, all in attire hurriedly donned.

"Mr. Walters," the man said, "we haven't got a clew to the men who broke in here nor the stuff they took, but we just got this fellow on the porch there, stealing your letter box; see!"

"Why!" exclaimed Eva, as the porch light was turned on, "it's Mr. Hoyt!"

"I declare!" exclaimed the astounded Mrs. Walters.

Just then Hoyt began to gather his wits, recognizing the two men as village officers. There had been a burglary earlier in the evening, it seemed, and he had come around at a moment when the officers were prowling in the vicinity.

"Why, here's a mystery," observed Mr. Walters, picking up the mail box. "I don't understand why Mr. Hoyt should steal a mail box. Ah, there's a letter in it."

"Yes, sir. It's mine. I—I left it by mistake, sir. Please restore it to me!"