One of the Most Thrilling and Mysterious Detective Stories Ever Written.

A Cowardly Blow

By Howard Fielding

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A Delightful Love Story, Breathing Human Interest in Every Line.

AN ITEM OF NEWS.

The little newsboy had the face of an imp, and he must have come up through the floor, as an imp should, by all the best traditions. Surely, the creature could not have squirmed through that tangle of humanity, between Brenda and the door of the car. Yet there he was, standing close against her knees and looking straight up into her face.

Brenda shook her head, but the boy did not move. He continued to hold his papers before her, gazing over them into her face with an unwinking stare.

It was probable that if she bought a paper the boy would pass on, so Brenda laid a hand upon her purse.

"I will take this paper," she said, and she gave the boy a coin.

Presently she stood upon the sidewalk of Broadway, gazing across at the ugly brick front of the opera-house, with a confused notion that it could give her important information, but was perversely refusing to do so.

She merely wished to know where she was, and the familiar scene impressed her as if she had not been there in a long time, and had forgotten. Then her mind became clear. She stepped into a doorway and read once more the item in the paper that the little boy had thrust under her eyes.

At the first glance, one who knew Brenda might have said that the story lay outside her world, and could not interest her. However, it was "good news," and therefore it was printed with the lines very far apart, by way of emphasis, and it bore the marks of haste. Thus it ran:

"Elsie Miller, an actress, living at 148 West Thirty-eighth street, was stabbed by some person unknown in her room this afternoon.

"It is a lodging-house owned and occupied by Mrs. Alice Simmons. Miss Miller had lived in the rear room on the first floor for some months.

"The crime was discovered by a servant, who entered the room and found Miss Miller unconscious on the floor. Doctor A. G. Blair, of 160 West Thirty-eighth street, was hastily summoned, and he pronounced the wound mortal. It is just below the collar bone, on the left side, extending sharply downward within the body and undoubtedly piercing the outer wall of the heart. That Miss Miller should have survived the wound longer than a few seconds is regarded as miraculous by Doctor Blair and other physicians, several of whom, including Ambulance Surgeon Carrington, of St. Winifred's Hospital, were at the house within a few minutes after the discovery of the crime.

"The weapon was a hunting knife, having a long blade and a deer's foot handle. The blade is peculiar, being much thinner than that of the ordinary hunting knife. It was found on the floor beside the body. A servant says that she has seen the knife in Miss Miller's room within the last few days.

"On the table in the room was a letter which may explain the whole affair. The police have it and refuse to divulge its contents, but it is known that the writer is Clarence M. Alden, a broker, with an office on Broad street. He is the only son of the late St. Clair Alden, who erratically disinherited him.

"Miss Miller is a very beautiful girl, tall and of the brunette type. She is 20 years old. She played the part of Nannie in 'The Honeybee,' an unsuccessful comedy, produced in this city, two years ago. Since then her work has not been seen here."

Brenda walked down Broadway to Thirty-eighth street and turned westward. Immediately she perceived the motley crowd which the news of the crime had brought together, and she hesitated. Then, shutting her lips firmly together, she resumed her original purpose.

The house numbered 148, had an air of neatness and the flavor of home, but its privacy had been invaded first by crime and then by all the train that follows it. The door stood ajar, and the two policemen lounging at the head of the steps seemed the chief intruders, rather than the guardians of the place. Brenda, for all that was upon her mind, felt the desecration and shuddered at it.

The policemen, who had been leaning against the railing, stood erect and put their shoulders together as Brenda ascended the steps. They seemed to fill all the space and their heads to tower to the house top. But the thing must be gone through with now, and Brenda gathered all her force.

"I am a friend of Miss Miller," she said. "Please let me go in."

"Nobody can go in now," replied one of the men.

"Is she dead?"

Brenda was framing other questions in her mind, but this one uttered itself.

The policemen exchanged a glance, then one of them replied with a single word, "No." At this moment, there was a stir in the hall. Hearing it, the policemen began slowly to descend the steps. Brenda retreated before them, and not a word was spoken. She was pressed into the edge of the crowd at the foot of the stone stairs, and she remained there while a litter was brought out, on which lay something perfectly still and covered from end to end with a white cloth. It was put into a great black vehicle. A brisk young man, wearing a blue cap, and a grave, elderly man with a long white beard, climbed in after it, and then the somber equipage moved away.

"Could I go in?" Brenda whispered to the policeman who had stationed himself beside her. "Can I speak with someone who knows?"

"Knows what?" he replied.

"Whether she will recover, whether she has spoken."

The man looked at her with a ponderous curiosity.

"You wait here," he said. "Give me your name, and I'll see what I can do."

Miss Maclane was affected by a touch of caution.

"No one knows me here," she replied. "My name would mean nothing to them. But you may say that Miss Williams would like to speak with the physician who was called in—a Doctor Blair, I believe."

The policeman began to ascend the steps, but he paused at sight of two men who appeared above. One of them was of medium stature and very heavy, having the build of an ape, with preposterously long arms, which swung aimlessly when he moved, as if they were artificial. He wore the uniform of a police Captain. The other was of a conventional type by comparison—that is, he looked like a human being, and Brenda noticed little else about him. Her gaze was fixed upon the coarse, scarred face of the Captain, brutally cynical and smiling without purpose, like an image hacked out of wood.

The policeman saluted his superior and addressed him in a low voice. Without waiting for him to finish the Captain turned quickly to the man who had come out of the house with him and asked a question which Brenda did not hear. When this man looked at her, Brenda became aware that he was tall and thin, and that he wore a loose gray suit.

"I don't know," said the man in gray, thoughtfully. "I can't be sure."

The Captain descended the steps and lifted his cap with the politeness of a trained animal.

"Miss Williams?" said he. "Yes, indeed. I understand that you are a friend of Miss Miller, the girl that got hurt, and that you'd like to talk to Doctor Blair. This gentleman is Doctor Blair. So perhaps we'd better all go into the house, where we can talk more convenient."

Brenda tried to pass him, but she immediately found herself between the Captain and one of the policemen, by whom she was escorted into the house, the physician walking ahead. Thus they came to a small parlor, opening from the hall to the right.

In the presence of Doctor Blair, whose manner was that of the world wherein she had moved, Brenda regained a part of her self-possession.

"Doctor Blair, she said. "I really don't know why I should have come here. I am not a friend of Miss Miller. I am merely interested in her. Seeing the story of her terrible misfortune in a newspaper by the merest accident, I obeyed an unaccountable impulse and came to this house."

"I AM A FRIEND OF MISS MILLER," SHE SAID.

"An unaccountable impulse," said the Captain in a perfectly meaningless voice, as if he had been an echo.

"I can tell you very little," replied Doctor Blair. "No one knows who committed the crime, nor why it was done—"

"But will she die? Such a young girl, with so much to hope for, and they say she was very beautiful!"

"She was, poor child!" responded the physician. "And that fact may or may not have had something to do with her misfortune. As to her chance of recovery. I greatly fear—indeed, to be frank with you. I doubt whether she is living at this moment."

Brenda was as white as paper, and her hands twined together.

"She has not spoken—" she began, and it was the Captain who replied.

"Not a word," said he. "But shan't need anything from her. We shall get to the bottom of this affair all right."

Brenda turned slowly toward him.

"The name of a gentleman," said she, "an acquaintance of mine, was mentioned in the newspaper account, a Mr. Alden. Of course, it is impossible that he should have had any connection with this wretched crime, but perhaps he knew the young woman and—"

"Yes," responded the Captain, "they were acquainted. And, by the way, perhaps you're familiar with the young gentleman's handwriting. We found a note on the letter head of his firm. Let me see, what did I do with it? Oh, here it is. Perhaps you'd like to glance it through."

He extended his hand, but Brenda did not take the sheet of paper which he offered.

"I could not read this," she said, with a slight shudder. "It was not meant for me."

A faint expression of surprise humanized the officer's face for a moment.

"That don't make any difference," he said. "It'll have to be published. Everybody'll read it."

Brenda glanced at Dr. Blair, who bowed his head.

"In that case," she said, "though it seems an outrageous intrusion—"

"There's no help for it," rejoined the Captain, with a grin, which he used in place of a frown. "We've got to find the person that done this deed, and we've got to make use of this note to do it."

Brenda took the paper and read these words:

"My Dearest Dear: All goes so well that I must send word to you at once. I can't wait till evening, when I may see you, and indeed, dear love, there is some doubt whether I shall be able to quit work before midnight. At any rate, it bids fair to be so late that I should not dare scandalize Mrs. Simmons by calling upon you. So I write this and make bold to put a little money into it—five hundreds. Don't let them frighten you. I remember perfectly that you weren't to touch a penny, but I rely upon the letter that I wrote last evening to knock all your arguments into smithereens. I thought of a lot of points after leaving you, and I cited the best precedents. If a fellow is rich—as I am to-day, thank heaven—he may help his sweetheart to buy her trousseau. If you don't believe it, write to your mother, and while you're waiting for an answer, buy the pretty clothes anyhow. Ah, my beloved—"

Brenda had come to the end of the first sheet. Her face, that had been so pale, was flushed, and her voice was not quite steady as she said:

"I can't read any more. It is dishonorable and unnecessary."

"Ah, my beloved," said the Captain, taking the letter and reading the remainder aloud in a stumbling voice, with half an eye on Brenda all the time—

—"we shall be so happy, youth and love and money and the whole world before us—the summer in Norway, the fall upon the Continent, the winter on whatever Mediterranean shore you like the best, the next June shall find us in Venice and our twelfth honeymoon in the sky. Think of this, sweetest of travelers, whose favorite book has always been the atlas. Think of it as you go shopping this afternoon with your pocket full of money. It is all settled; the chains are broken. We are to be married as soon as your mother can come East to behold the ceremony. And then away to see the world and the shrines of twenty centuries of lovers. My heart and my faith to you. CLARENCE."

In the Captain's mouth these love words had the sound of blasphemies, and Brenda shrank back to the limit of the room with Doctor Blair, who seemed to be scarcely less affected by the desecration.

"The money wasn't found," said the officer, after a brief, shrewd scrutiny of Brenda. "The note was on the table, but none of those hundred-dollar bills that we read about. Come; I'll show you where we found it."

"I don't think I want to go in there," said Brenda faintly. "I am going to the hospital, to see whether I can be of any help to her."

"You'll have to arrange that through the police," was the reply, "and it can't be done until I get some word from there. So I suggest that we take another look at the scene of the crime."

He stepped back from the door, and Brenda passed out of the room, intending to leave the house, but again she found herself between the Captain and one of his men, and again she obeyed an unspoken order, following one of them while the other followed her.

On to-morrow (Monday evening), the second installment of this very interesting story will appear exclusively in The St. Louis Chronicle, as will all subsequent chapters, daily, until the story ends. The St. Louis Chronicle has been improved wonderfully during the past year. It publishes all of the best local and telegraphic news together with delightful features, illustrated by the best artists and half-tone service money can secure. Drop a postal card or call up over either telephone, Bell Main 917 or Kinloch B 1246, and the Chronicle will be sent to your address. All newsboys and news agents sell The St. Louis Chronicle. Out of town readers can send 25 cents for one month's trial subscription prepaid by mail.

THE EATING PROBLEM SOLVED FOR ST. LOUIS VISITORS.

Restaurants of Every Variety, From the Chinese "Chop Suey" Resort to the Fashionable After-Theater Cafe, Throng the Business Center, While There Is No Lack of Boarding-Houses and Stool Lunches.

The question What shall we eat? that ever faces him who must satisfy the inner man at restaurants, is only less difficult to answer than the as persistent conundrum, Where shall we eat?

Anybody who has daily been confronted by these problems knows how serious they are. The man with a wife and a home, who goes to them of evenings, considers only that he is to have supper—or dinner, some are particular which word is used. He has no bother at all as to where he shall eat, and his better half has decided what he shall eat. If he disapprove her selection, at least he has the pleasure of informing her how much better a discrimination he would have displayed in the choosing.

A couple of hundred thousand persons are coming here for the World's Fair dedication, and they will be asking, What and where shall we eat? Many will resign themselves to the mercies of 2,741 boarding-houses of the city and eat—hash. Others will simply find lodgings and seek restaurants.

This in rough is the situation they will face: Last November Directory statistics showed that there were 511 restaurants in the city. Now the number probably is nearer 550. In character they range from the hole in the wall, where for 5 cents is served doughnuts and coffee—"like mother used to make"—to the pretentious establishment which charges fabulous prices.

Those who serve coffee "like mother used to make" are largely in the majority. Coffee like mother used to make always comes in a large, unbreakable cup, under which is an equally bulky saucer. It ever is exceedingly black coffee, and tastes as if mother made it during her maidenhood and then, as occasion required, "het it up."

COFFEE IS NOT LACKING.

St. Louis is well fitted out to furnish coffee like mother used to make, to any dedication crowd—a million, if need be. It is considered possible that some inconvenience in obtaining quarters may be experienced. But everybody who comes to this city April 30 may rest assured that there will be coffee of this brand for each and all.

He that starts out to investigate the resources of St. Louis in the matter of restaurants, will discover many things at the expense of his digestion. There are American restaurants, German restaurants, French restaurants, Jew restaurants, Italian restaurants, Chinese restaurants and restaurants plebian and aristocratic.

Choose!

Of the restaurant aristocratic it is unnecessary to speak—Tony Faust's, McTague's, the principal hotel restaurants, and the new ones, which are daily opened in preparation for the World's Fair trade. They vary a little of course in atmosphere. Faust's is a bit German. McTague's is, well—Irish. All seem labeled with a distinctly American motto: "You put up the coin and we deliver the goods."

Of the restaurant plebian little need be said. The customer pours his coffee into his saucer and drinks it from that. He eats his potatoes with his knife. Everything is plain. Dishes and food correspond to the pocketbook of the customer. Yet, often the edibles are substantial and good.

"HOP ALLEY" EATING HOUSES.

The Chinese restaurants are in the savory section of the city, known as "Hop Alley." They face on Eighth street, beside the well known alley. One is on the second floor of a ramshackle red brick building, and bears the simple sign, "Yin Foo." The other opens upon the street and the proprietors go so far as to advertise it to be indeed a "restaurant."

In bib and tucker, after coffee and red wine, dreaming of a land far away.

YOUTHS WHO HAVE THE COFFEE AND CIGARETTE HABIT.

ANTONI PIERI
ITALIAN RESTAURANTEUR.

THEODORE VINCENT
HE TALKS AND SIPS
"GOLD HEELS"

The Oriental gentlemen who preside over these places are not especially communicative. A labored conversational effort resulted only in a seemingly cabalistic reply which was, "Wah."

"Can't you understand English?" he was asked.

"Not velly so much."

"Chop suey!" one of our party then exclaimed.

That was more to the point. Our host became at once very active, and finally produced this extraordinary Chinese hash. If you have not tried it, you will doubtless enjoy doing so. Whether once will be enough is another question.

The Italian restaurant is a rarity in St. Louis. Over at Ninth and Locust streets, however, Antonio Pieri runs what he claims is the only genuine Italian eating place in this section of the country. Pieri, a very tall individual, with an astonishing mustache, also operates a barber shop and saloon. You can find your way back through barber shop and saloon into the restaurant.

PIERI IMPORTS HIS SPAGHETTI.

Pieri avers that he does what few others in town do—imports all of his spaghetti and macaroni, and that his cook makes ravioli and rosatti in true Italian style. Pieri's delicacies all are flavored with garlic. It is a relish which seems to appeal strongly to the majority of his customers, but undoubtedly it is one of the things to appreciate which education is required. Garlic is not especially agreeable to the average American palate.

The characteristic of the Jew restaurant is the absence of pork from the bill of fare and the substitution of goose grease for lard. Several such are in the downtown section of the city. One of the most popular is on St. Charles street near Sixth.

The patrons are not all Jews, since many others, regardless of religion, dislike the use of any form of pork in cooking. The difference in the taste of the food from that served in other places is not easily discernible. Outwardly the Jew restaurant is the same as any other, and many patrons of long standing often are not aware of the peculiarities of the place in which they eat daily.

FRENCH COOKS ARE SCARCE.

It is a general custom to have the bill of fare very full of French, but French cooks are scarce in St. Louis. Of genuine French restaurants there are but two. The one located downtown, in what is termed the "Hotel de Paree," is most generally known. But out on Olive street, near Eighteenth, is the "Establissement Francais." There, also, is Monsieur Theodore Vincent, the proprietor.

Vincent considers that he is more than a cook; that he is an "artist." Vincent has had a varied career. Consequently, to Vincent's is a good place to go if it is real French cooking you are seeking, and if you would enjoy hearing the proprietor expatiate upon his art and relate his adventures.

Vincent has been a steward or chef in almost every part of the world. He began in France. His education was continued in various parts of Egypt. Later he was steward to a party of engineers who were working upon the Suez Canal. Subsequently he was employed in the same capacity at the Panama Canal.

"I make good monee in Panama," he said, "until sie all went bust."

When "they all went bust" he headed for New Orleans. After abiding in the Southern city a while he became again restless, and traveled around the world several times as steward upon ships. Finally, some four years ago, he was attracted to St. Louis.

"Now," he tells, "I give St. Louis the real French cooking."

Vincent declares that no customer can stump him. Any French dish, he maintains, he can provide. For his own consumption and for sale to those who appreciate, he has innumerable French delicacies. If you make a particularly good impression upon him, and he is in a good humor, he may invite you to partake of "gold heels."

VINCENT'S FAMOUS "GOLD HEELS."

"Gold heels" is a very sweet, perfectly white liqueur in which float thousands of tiny golden leaves. This drink has another name in four sections, all French, but "gold heels" suits it best. It seems charged with gold dust, and has a very peculiar taste. Of its effects Vincent will say only that it is "somesing fine," and will coat the stomach with gold. The leaf is a rare aromatic herb.

The German restaurants are too numerous in St. Louis to require any extended search to find them. St. Louis is too well filled with good Germans to be lacking in this respect. Among the minor eating places are scores in which the cooking is distinctively German. Among the larger everybody is familiar with Faust's and Nagle's. Each of these latter is, it may be said, more or less Americanized. It is claimed for "The Louisiana" that it is the most truly German of the bigger places.

Certainly, August Ratz, proprietor of "The Louisiana," takes the place among the German restaurateurs that does Vincent in his class. Ratz is affable and seems rather to enjoy conversing at length with his customers. It is worth while to ask him how Bryan Snyder and a party of railroad men kidnaped him.

Of the wholly American eating-houses, how many there are and how familiar they are! From the lunchroom, where food is handed customers on the rapid-fire principle, to the cafe where you linger and acquire the coffee-and-cigarette habit. In the first are the roaring waiters.

"Beef steak!"

"One!" (batter cakes).

"Apple dumpling!"

"Steak on two, have 'em well!"

Shouted orders in a kind of code which we finally get accustomed to, but which at first is hard on the appetite.

NECESSITY FOR TIPPING.

In the second are the obsequious waiters who "roar" only when you forget to tip them. The necessity for tipping seems on the increase. If you stand out against the custom you will do better to change your restaurant daily, else you will get scant consideration.

The middle-class American restaurants have girls for waiting on table. Herein a wide difference of opinion apparently has sprung up among the proprietors. It is noticeable that at a large restaurant on Washington avenue are nothing but plump girls. In another on Olive street are tall girls, mostly brunettes, while across the street are a collection of diminutive waitresses, nearly all blondes. When asked as to the inwardness of this state of affairs the proprietors denied any premeditation, but it is interesting to consider whether plump, tall, short, blondes or brunettes prove the best attractions to customers.

In Olive street are almost one-tenth the total number of restaurants. Here may be found nearly all the types mentioned above, save the Italian and the Chinese. If you were to start west on Olive, take a meal in every restaurant, and eat three meals a day, you would be occupied fifteen days.

Counting the 550 restaurants, with a total capacity each of fifty persons a meal, 27,550 could be accommodated. Allowing for the 2,741 boarding-houses and the 127 hotels, no fears need be entertained as to the ability of the city to provide food for whatever crowd the dedication brings here.

FOR INDIGESTION.

Eupepsia Tablets produce the necessary digestive fluids to restore the process of digestion. One tablet before meals will digest what you eat. A cure guaranteed or money refunded. At all first-class druggists or direct for 50c. Send for free sample and treatise on stomach derangements. Eupepsia Chemical Company, 322 Clark avenue, St. Louis, Mo.—Adv.