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(Vol. 20, p 888, No. 8227)

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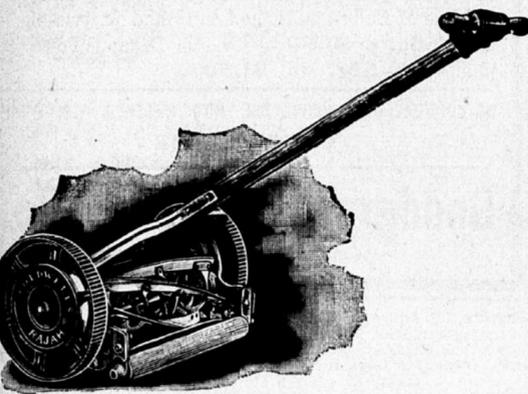
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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—At Troyon's, a Paris inn, the youth Marcel Troyon, afterwards to be known as Michael Lanyard, is caught stealing by Burke, an expert thief, who takes the boy with him to America and makes of him a finished crackman.

CHAPTER II—After stealing the Ombre jewels and the Hutman war plans in London Lanyard returns to America, where he is known as Michael Lanyard, a crackman, and on his trail. On arrival he is installed as a

CHAPTER III—At a dinner conversation between Combs, Morbihan, M. Bannon and Mike, Bannon asks about the Lone Wolf, a celebrated crackman who works alone, puzzles and is only guessed at.

CHAPTER IV—To satisfy himself that Roddy is not watching him, Lanyard dresses and goes out, leaving Roddy apparently asleep and snoring in the next room, then comes back stealthily, to find a girl in his room.

CHAPTER V—The girl turns out to be Mike Bannon, who explains her presence by saying that she was sleep-walking.

CHAPTER VI—In his apartment near the Trocadero he finds written on the back of a twenty-pound note, part of his concealed emergency fund, an invitation from The Pack to the Lone Wolf to join them.

CHAPTER VII—Lanyard attempts to dispose of the Ombre jewels, but finds that The Pack has forbidden the buyers to deal with him. He decides to meet The Pack.

CHAPTER VIII—De Morbihan meets him and takes him before three masked members of The Pack.

CHAPTER IX—He recognizes Popinot, apache, and Werthimer, English mobster, but the third, an American, is unknown to him. He refuses alliance with them.

CHAPTER X—On his return to his room he is attacked in the dark, but knocks out his assailant.

CHAPTER XI—He gives the unconscious man, who proves to be the mysterious American, a hypodermic to keep him quiet, discovers that Roddy has been murdered in his bed with the evident intention of fastening the crime on him, and changes the appearance of the unconscious American to resemble his own, starts to leave the house.

CHAPTER XII—In the corridor he encounters Lucia Bannon, who insists on leaving with him.

CHAPTER XIII—Having no money Lucia is obliged to take refuge with Lanyard in the studio of an absent artist friend of his. He locks her in a room alone and retires to get some rest himself.

CHAPTER XIV—After sleep Lanyard finds his viewpoint changed. He tells Lucia who he is.

CHAPTER XV—Mutual confessions follow. She is Lucy Shannon, not Bannon, and has been used as a tool by Bannon, the crook. The American murderer of Roddy was Bannon's secretary. Both men are members of The Pack and out to get Lanyard.

CHAPTER XVI—Lanyard tells Lucy that he means to reform and she agrees to go with him to return the London loot. A newspaper wrapped in a brick is thrown through the skylight.

CHAPTER XVII—A bullet follows the brick. The paper has an account of the total destruction by fire of Troyon's.

CHAPTER XVIII—Casalot goes with Drinkwater to the library where the murderer was committed, shows him a secret passage he knew of as a boy, and leads the way through it.

CHAPTER XIX—Lanyard burglariously returns the Ombre jewels.

CHAPTER XX—They go to the home of M. Ducroy, minister of war, to return the Hutman papers in return for safe conduct out of France. On coming out Lanyard finds Lucy gone.

CHAPTER XXI—Lanyard turns taxi chauffeur.

CHAPTER XXII—He finds Lucy, who dismisses him, leaving him to think that she is in league with The Pack.

CHAPTER XXIII—Lanyard carries a fare in his taxi.

CHAPTER XXIV—The fare turns out to be Werthimer, who advises him to "ware" Bannon, and proposes to join forces with him. Lanyard refuses.

CHAPTER XXV—Lanyard is unsuccessfully attacked by The Pack.

CHAPTER XXVI—He determines to re-steal the Ombre jewels and again enters the Ombre house.



He Lingered There in Trembling.

considerable obstacle; a penknife expeditiously removed the old, dry putty round one of the small, lozenge-shaped panes, then dislodged the pane itself; his hand through this opening readily found and turned the latch; a cautious pressure created an opening between the two wings wide enough to permit the passage of his body, and—he stood inside the library, refastening the latch.

He had made no sound and, thanks to thorough prior acquaintance with the combination of the safe, he needed no light. The screen of circular af-

forded him all the protection he required; and because he meant to accomplish his purpose and be out of the house with almost inconceivable swiftness, he didn't even trouble to explore the household—beyond a swift and casual survey of the adjoining salons.

The clock in the reception hall chimed the three-quarters as he enounced himself between screen and safe and grasped the combination-knob.

But he did not turn it. That mellow music died out slowly and left him unstartling in the silence and gloom, his eyes staring wide into blackness at nothing, his jaw set and rigid, his knitted forehead damp with sweat, his hands so tightly clenched that the nails bit painfully into the flesh of his palms, while he looked back over the abyss that yawned between the Lone Wolf of tonight and the man who had, within the week, knelt before that safe in company with the woman he loved, bent on making restitution of his theft that his soul might be saved through her faith in him.

He closed his eyes to shut out the accusing darkness, and knelt on unstartling, save as he shuddered now and again with the sickness of a strong man rent in the conflict of man's dual nature.

Minutes passed without his knowledge in the crisis of that struggle. But at length he grew more calm; his hands relaxed, the muscles of his brow smoothed out, he breathed more slowly and more deeply, his set lips parted and through them a profound sigh escaped, whispering through the stillness.

A great weariness was upon him as he rose slowly and heavily from the floor and stood erect, no longer the slave of self, but its master, free at last and for all time from that ancient evil which so long had held his soul in bondage.

And then, in that moment of victory, through the deep hush reigning in that house, he heard the sound of an incautious footfall on the parquetry of the hallway.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Meeting by the Safe.

It was a sound so slight, so very small and still, that only a supersubtle sense of hearing could have distinguished it from the confused multiplicity of almost inaudible, interwoven sounds, that go to make the slumberous quiet by night of that essentially animate organism, the human habitation.

Lanyard, whose training had taught him how to listen, had early learned that the nocturnal hush of one Louise is to be differentiated from that of another as readily as the respiration of two sleepers may be discriminated. He knew that every house had its singular cadence, its own gentle movement of muted but harmonious sounds wherein the introduction of alien sounds produced instant discord.

Now, in the muted voice of this vast mansion, he had detected a little flutter of discordance, sounding a note of stealth—such a note as no move of his own since entering had evoked.

And while Lanyard stood at alert attention the sound was repeated from a point less distant. This new intruder was moving through the salons to the library.

In two swift strides Lanyard left the shelter of the screen and ensconced himself in the recess of one of the tall windows, behind its heavy velvet hangings.

That movement could have been timed no more precisely had it been rehearsed. He was barely in hiding when a shape of shadow slipped into the library, paused beside the massive desk and raked the room with a powerful flash-lamp.

Its initial glare struck full and dazzlingly into Lanyard's eyes as he peered through a narrow opening in the portiere.

When at length his vision cleared the other was kneeling in turn before the safe—or, rather, rising from a kneeling position there, for more light was needed, and this one, lacking the patience of his studious caution, turned back to the desk, seized the electric reading lamp and transferred it to the floor between the safe and the screen.

But even before she had put down the lamp Lanyard had recognized the woman; before the swift flood of light followed the dull click of the switch he knew that she was Lucy Shannon.

He felt dazed, half-stunned, suffocated—much as he had felt with Gregg's fingers tightening on his windpipe that week-old night at Troyon's.

For an instant he experienced real difficulty about breathing and was conscious of a sickish throbbing in his temples, while the pouring in his bosom was as the tolling of a great bell. He stared, swaying like a man who has been struck a heavy blow.

In one breath he swore it could not, and knew it must, be she.

The light, gushing from the opaque hood, made the safe door a glare, and was thrown back into her intent young face. Even so, he would have recognized the sharp silhouette cut by her lithe, sweet body against the glow, the poise of her head, the carriage of her shoulders, the gracious bosom rounding her tailored coat.

She was all in black, even to her gloved hands—no trace of white or any color showing on her person but the fair curve of her cheek below the

mask and the red of her lips. And if that were not enough, the intelligence with which she attacked the combination and the confident, businesslike precision that distinguished her every action proved her an apt pupil in that business.

His thoughts were all weltering in misery and confusion. He knew what this encounter meant, appreciated that it explained many things he would have thought questionable had not the strength of his infatuation forbade him to consider them at all; but in the pain and anguish of that moment he could entertain but one thought, which possessed him altogether—the thought that she must somehow be saved from the crime she contemplated.

But while he delayed, shrinking from the necessity of discovering himself to her, it was made clear that she had become sensitive to his presence.

He had made no sound since she entered, had not even stirred; but somehow she had divined that someone was there, in the recess of the window, watching her.

In the act of opening the safe—working the combination from that very sheet of paper on which he had made memoranda of its sequence—he saw her pause, freeze to a pose of attention, then turn to stare directly at the portiere behind which he was concealed. And through an eternal second he watched her kneeling there, so still that she seemed not even to breathe, her gaze fixed and level, wait-



"Lucy—you—"

ing for some sound, some tremor of the drapery folds to confirm her suspicion.

When at length she stirred it was to rise in one swift, alert movement. And now as she paused with her slight shoulders squared and her head thrown back defiantly, challengingly, he knew she knew he was there.

As if without will of his own, but drawn irresistibly by her gaze, he stepped out from hiding.

And since he was no more the Lone Wolf, but now a simple man in agony, with no consideration for their situation, with no thought for the fact that they were both housebreakers and that the slightest sound might raise a hue and cry upon them, he took a faltering step toward her, stopped, flung forth a hand with a gesture of appeal, and stammered:

"Lucy—you—"

His voice broke. He waited. She didn't answer other than to recoil as though he had offered to strike her, and she commenced to retreat, wearing a look of utter grief and wretchedness, until presently the table stopped her, and she leaned back against it, as if glad of the support.

"Oh!" she cried, trembling—"why—why did you do it?"

He might have answered her in kind, but self-justification passed his power. He couldn't say: "Because tonight you made me lose faith in life itself, and I thought to forget you by going to the devil the quickest way I knew—this way!"—though that was true. He couldn't say: "Because, a thief from boyhood, habit proved too strong for me, and I couldn't withstand temptation!"—for that was untrue.

He could only hang his head and wretchedly confess: "I don't know."

As if he hadn't spoken, as if she hadn't heard, she cried again. "Why—oh, why—did you do it? I was so proud of you, so sure of you—the man who had turned straight because of me! It compensated. But now!"

Her voice broke in a short, dry sob. "Compensated?" he repeated stupidly.

"Yes, compensated." She threw back her head with a gesture of impatience. "For this—don't you understand?—for this that I'm doing! You don't suppose I've come here of my own accord?—that I went back to Bannon for any reason but to try to save you from him? I knew something of his power, and you didn't; I knew, if I went away with you he'd never rest until he had you murdered, if he had to follow you round the world to do it! And I thought if I could mislead him by lies for a little time—long enough to give you opportunity to leave France—I thought—perhaps—if I could overcome my terror of him—I might be able to communicate with the police, denounce him."

She hesitated, breathless and appealing.

At her first words he had drawn close to her; and all their speech was couched in muted murmurings, barely more than whisperings. And this was quite instinctive, for in the passion of that meeting both had been carried beyond considerations of prudence, their most coherent thought being that now, once and for all time, all misunderstanding between them must be done away with.

And now, as naturally as though they had been lovers always, Lanyard possessed himself of her hand.

"You cared as much as that!" he said. "I love you," she declared tensely—

(To Be Continued)

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