Democratic Watchman.

Bellefonte, Pa., September 25, 1931.

IT'S UP TO YOU

You can take advice while the taking's good,
As to things you shouldn't do, things you should
But this must always be understood
(It's knowledge from wisdom's shelf)
That the final word as to what you do
And whether you choose the false or true
—You've got to decide yourself!

In luck or trouble that fortune sends.
You may have plenty of loyal friends,
Who boost you on in your aims and ends,
And help you to fame and pelf;
But when you come down to the old bed rock,
Your friends may cheer and your foes may mock,
It is you alone that will bear the shock,
You must stand the gaff yourself!

The world may smile or the world may frown
May strive to lift you or keep you down,
But whether you climb to high renown
Or stay on the bottom shelf,
The crucial battles you cannot share,
Alone you do, alone you dare,
Each mortal's cross is his own to bear,
And it's up to you—Yourself!

By Berton Braley

THE GIRL IN THE 5TH FLOOR BACK.

Except for her disarranged but none-the-less decorative head, the girl who occupied the rented room under the eaves was not visible to the naked or any other sort of eye this April morning. The rest of her sixty-two inches, clad in gay and colorful pajamas, was decorously obscured under drab bedcoverings. And that was quite as well, considering that a strange young man was about to walk into her room—and her life also.

She lay there, staring straight up at the discolored ceiling, and considered her immediate past, her unpalatable present and her impenetrable future, with no enthusiasm.

"I suppose," she mused, "I was an idiot to run away. Now, of course, everybody knows I'm guilty." The perverse, provocative line of her mouth twisted defiantly, mockingly. "As if anybody ever doubted it!"

To the lady who had rented her the room—and anybody who called Mrs. Moriarty anything but a lady would get at least a verbal smack in the eye—the girl had given her name without hesitation.

"Miss Jones—Jane Jones," she said, her eyes a shade challenging.

The girl's name was not Jane Jones, however. And the lady to whom she had paid four dollars in advance for the room under the eaves suspected as much. But then, Mrs. Moriarty, having run a lodging house in Boston's South End for twenty years, never trusted anybody.

"If you want my opinion," Mrs. Moriatry had assured her second-floor front the night before, "there is something funny about the fifth-floor back."

Of course, she did not mean the physical proportions of the room, somewhat diminished by the presence of a huge water tank, part of the house's antiquated plumbing system. Nor did she refer to the furnishings which were, in Mrs. Moriarty's opinion, all that anybody could expect for four dollars a week.

"'Beggars,' she would have said, 'can't be choosers.'"

And anybody who couldn't afford more than four dollars a week for a room came in that class, so far as she was concerned.

The second-floor front—the occupant, again, not the room—was a large blonde. By bottle, that is rather than by birth. By day she functioned as a saleslady; one of those goddesslike creatures who wither ordinary people.

"What do you think is the matter with her?" she had asked.

"I don't know," Mrs. Moriarty had confessed. "But I'll keep an eye on her." And, apparently, a nose as as well. Because, "She didn't go out to dinner and she didn't cook in her room, either. I smelt around the hall to make sure."

The pseudo "Jane Jones" would have smiled wryly at that. She hadn't eaten the night before, because—

"Because I'm saving my pennies, all forty-two of them," she might have explained in the half-mocking, half-defiant tone that was the index of her attitude toward the world. She was only twenty-two but, like Mrs. Moriarty, she no longer trusted anybody.

Of course, she might have pawned her smart suitcase or her toilet set. But she didn't know how, and would have been afraid to if she had. They might, for instance, notice the initials and guess what the "'J. J.' stood for. To the girl in the fifth-floor back nothing was preposterous; anything could happen. It had become a weird and fantastic world.

"If," she had assured herself, when she had decided upon flight and had assumed a new name, "there is anybody in these United States who doesn't konw the name 'Janice Judson' it's not the reporters' fault."

To be a Judson in the little New England town where she had been born was to be somebody. To have, in brief, that prestige that comes from power and pride of ancestry and to become a target for the envy of those who lack both.

They had christened her "Janice," that being her great-grandmother's name. But she, being of this generation, had inevitably been rechristened "Nicky."

She was that sort of a girl and she looked like that sort of girl. Precisely the type to be condemned by all the Mrs. Moriartys in the world, on general principles. In fact, Mrs. Moriarty had so condemned her less than a month ago.

"If you want my opinion," Mrs. Moriarty had said to the second-floor front in March, "that younger sister, the one they called Nicky, murdered them both."

They had been discussing the murder mystery of the moment. Mrs. Moriarty had a nose for news. She craved a daily diet of such headlines as she had found in her paper that March morning. This had read:

Bride and Groom Mysteriously
Slain on Eve of Wedding

No detail had escaped her, and if the police had considered it a mystery, Mrs. Moriarty had not. She had her suspicions from the first and they soon became strong enough to convict.

"I would send that Nicky to the chair in a minute," she had told the second-floor front.

And Mrs. Moriarty didn't mean maybe, either.

Nevertheless, in spite of all her experience with human depravity, it had yet to occur to her that even a young and brazen murderess would have the nerve to hire a room from her.

All that Mrs. Moriarty knew, this April morning, was that it was eight o'clock and was high time for any decent, self-respecting person to be up and about.

This morning had already brought her one of those insufferable injuries fate visits upon even the most virtuous and vigilant of lodging-house ladies. The colored woman who came in by the day had announced the disaster.

"Plumbing done gone bust," she had grinned.

But then, it was not her plumbing. Nor was it Mrs. Moriarty's lodgers' plumbing.

"They throw anything they want to get rid of down the pipes," Mrs. Moriarty bitterly assured the plumber when he appeared.

It was not the plumber's plumbing, but he managed to look sympathetic. He was a young and lithe plumber; the sort of plumber that might have quickened something in her, had Mrs. Moriarty been younger. But she was not to be so quickened nowadays.

"Where are your tools?' she asked.

Mrs. Moriarty believed that plumbers never brought their tools.

"In the car," he replied. "Where's your plumbing?"

"You get your tools, and then I'll show you my plumbing.'

The young plumber grinned. He had met Mrs. Moriarty, as a type, before. "I've got about half a ton of the finest first-aid-to-plumbing equipment you ever saw in the car outside," he retorted equably. "But I'm not going to lug it all in here until I find out what the trouble is."

"You do as I say," snapped Mrs. Moriarty, "or I'll call your boss."

"You are talking to him right now," he said. "Bill McMasters, in person. I hopped over because all the other men are out on jobs and your call soundeed like an S. O. S. If it isn't—'

It was. Mrs. Moriarty accepted defeat. "You might as well look at it so long as you're here,' she snapped.

The look at it was to carry him upward to the room under the eaves where, in addition to Nicky, the tank that fed the plumbing supply was lodged.

"There's a girl in there," explained Mrs. Moriarty. "She isn't up yet, but it's time she was.'

Upon that her lips set uncompromisingly. Even her knock was perfunctory, the merest matter of form. There was, she knew, no key on the other side of the door. There never was, if Mrs. Moriarty could help it.

"What is it?" demanded Nicky, and if there was the snap of irritation rather than the tremulo of alarm in her inquiry, there was a reason.

Four days before, at two o'clock in the morning, she had slipped out of the house in which she had been born. At the station she had boarded a train for New York. This she had done many times before, although never at that hour. And all the public notice previously taken of her departure had been a squib in the Newfield Enterprise. Such as:

Janice Judson, known to her many friends as "Nicky," left for New York Thursday, to shop and take in some of the new plays.

The sort of personal that no one outside of Newfield could conceivably be interested in.

This time, however, she had shifted to a train for Boston at Springfield. In Boston, she had taxied to a hotel and registered as "Jane Jones, of New York." That was against the law, but none the less wise. For that afternoon the papers carried the inescapable headline:

Nicky Judson Flees Her Home

And such is the power of the press that nobody needed to be told who Nicky Judson was, or what home it was she had fled.

"Oh why," Nicky had summarized defiantly.

No definite charge had ever been made against her. She had been questioned repeatedly by police officers, state detectives and reporters. A picture of her taken four years before—and fortunately, before she had begun to let her hair grow in again—had been widely published.

"And I'd like to murder whoever dug it up," Nicky had told her intimates.

This had been in the beginning before Willie Johnson, the town's man ol all works, had jumped into the limelight with his story. Willie was another whom Nicky could have murdered when that appeared.

Afterwards, she realized that she hed been suspected from the first. She came to that realization when a state detective said abruptly:

"There is a rumor around town, Miss Judson, that you were extremely jealous of your sister. That you had not spoken to her for some weeks."

The implication had momentarily stunned her. Then: "Are you suggesting that—that I gave them cyanide?" she had demanded.

"Of course not," he had assured her hastily. "I am just trying to get at every report and rumor."

"I have told you everything I know," Nicky had said. "I did not commite the murder.' That had proven unwise, for it gave the newspapers another headline:

Sister of Slain Bride-to-Be
Denies Guilt

Nicky had set her teeth on that. If the authorities would only come out into the open! But the only legal step so far had been the report of the coroner's jury:

We find, therefore, that Breckenridge Tyler and Mary Judson met death by cyanide of potassium at the hands of a person or persons unknown.

The jury of her peers— the Mrs. Moriartys of this world—rendered a different verdict. Even in Newfield.

"If I stay in the house it's because I'm guilty and afraid to meet anybody's eyes," Nicky had informed herself, with that flippancy that she wore like armor over every other emotion these days. "And if I don't stay in the house it's because I'm just brazening it out."

No member of her family had known that she was going, nor did they know where she was. She had started with fifty dollars and a fantastic idea that she might find work. How fantastic that was she now knew.

"Have you had previous experience?" she had been asked, again and again.

Nicky hadn't. And when she might have landed, the stumbling block had been, "Of course we require references."

So there was no reason why she should be up at eight o'clock. Life had become a nightmare; she had the wit to realize that unless the murder were fastened upon someone else she would live and die under a shadow. And also had the wit to suspect that no search was being made in any other direction.

If, as was possible, a police officer stood outside the door she didn't give a darn. She had reached the point.

But it was Mrs. Moriarty who entered. The way she always entered, without waiting for an invitation.

"The plumber wants to look at the plumbing," she informed Nicky.

"The plumbing?" echoed Nicky.

"The tank—over in the corner," explained Mrs. Moriarty.

Nicky's eyes went back to the ceiling. "Well, let him," she said.

The etiquette of the situation did not, obviously, worry her as it did Mrs. Moriarty. In Mrs. Moriarty's opinion no decent, self-respecting girl would want a plumber to come into her room while she was in bed. Just why, Mrs. Moriarty could not have said, but she ached to argue it. But not, she abruptly remembered, while she was paying a plumber for standing around.

"Come in," she directed Bill.

Bill came in, a bit abashed. But he paid no attention to Nicky. He examined the tank. Then:

"The ball is out of order," he announced. "You need a new one but I can fix this one so it will carry on. I'll get a special wrench I carry."

He departed, leaving Mrs. Moriarty.

"I think you had better get up and get dressed," said Mrs. Moriarty austerely.

"Do you?" Nicky replied, as one who is not interested.

"No self-respecting, decent girl—"

"What makes you think I am, anyway?" suggested Nicky.

"I don't," snapped Mrs. Moriarty. "I knew the minute I set eyes on you there was something wrong with you. And I'll thank you, Miss, to leave my house. I don't intend to—"

"You forget," said Nicky, "that I paid you four dollars for the week."

"That makes no difference."

"Oh, yes, it does," Nicky assured her. "Try to put me out."

"I will call a policeman," stated Mrs. Moriarty, quivering with rage, "and—'

Bill interrupted her. "There's a coal man downstairs with a couple of tons of coal," he informed Mrs. Moriarty. "At least he says it's a couple of tons but it looks short to me. You'd better—"

He did not finish. Mrs. Moriarty was already on her way downstairs.

Nicky, no longer chaperoned, let her eyes go back to the ceiling. Bill was obviosuly being ignored. But he did not feel abashed.

"Do you suppose she was ever anybody's mother?" he ventured, referring to Mrs. Moriarty.

Nicky glanced at him just long enough to suggest utter disdain. "Would you mind concentrating on the plumbing?" she suggested coolly.

"The plumbing is functioning—was before I started downstairs," he assured her, as coolly.

"Then what are you doing here now?" she demanded.

Bill grinned. It was one of the nicest things he did. "I just came back to see if you would be interested in a job. Because if you are, I can put something in your way. Not much—eighteen or twenty a week. It might tide you over, though."

"Tide me over what?" demanded Nicky.

"Temporary financial stringency," he assured her audaciously.

"What makes you think—"

"Oh, I heard what your charming landlady said about you just now—and I guessed the rest. You are out of a job, aren't you?"

Nicky hesitated. In a way she was. "Yes, she began, "but—"

"Okay, then," he broke in. "I'm offering you one.

It was preposterous, fantastic. But then life was preposterous, fantastic.

"Do you really need somebody?" demanded Nicky. "Or is it just—"

"Charity? Well, I'm doing nicely, thank you, but I haven't reached the point where I can indulge in phlanthropy. I've got an ad in the morning papers. If you want the job—"

"But you know nothing about me. And I haven't any references."

"Sounds bad," he admitted. 'But you've got a nice voice—just the sort of voice I need in my business. Something that will soothe the savage beast when its owner calls up to ask why Bill McMasters hasn't appeared on the job yet. And I can keep the cash register padlocked," he added, with a wider grin; "and I don't think you'll walk off with any of the bathtubs or other fixtures I have on display. So we'll waive recommendations. That is, if you're interested."

Nicky was. Yet: "You haven't even asked my name," she reminded him.

"Does that matter?" he replied.

"Rather," she assured him. Her eyes met his directly. "I'm known here as Jane Jones but my name is—is Janice Judson. Perhaps you've heard of it."

She saw at once that he had.

"You mean—" he began.

Nicky nodded. She could not speak. She felt that if he turned aside, withdrew his offer that—well, what would be the use, anyway?

He didn't. "Good Lord!" he said, his voice warm with sympathy. "The newspapers have certainly crucified you. I've—" He broke off short. Mrs. Moriarty was returning. "Here's one of my cards," he added abruptly. "Come around as soon as you can."

He turned to confront Mrs. Moriarty. "You're fixed for the moment," he informed that lady. "But it's only a temporary job. I don't guarantee it."

"How much is it?" demanded Mrs. Moriarty in a tone that suggested battle.

"One and a quarter."

"It didn't take you fifteen minutes," protested Mrs. Moriarty.

"If you'll forget the fifteen minutes, and remember that I've come from the shop and have to return there; that I've put my expert knowledge at your service, you'll find the charge reasonable, perhaps. And if you don't I'll leave the tank just as I found it, and you can try your luck elsewhere."

To Mrs. Moriarty and to Nicky as well, it then became apparent that Bill McMasters was basically a darn good business man, whatever his temporary lapses into altrusim might suggest.

Nicky was even more convinced of that before the day was ended. Bill was at the phone waiting for a connection when she entered his office just before ten.

"I'm not going to try to describe your duties in detail," he said, "but you watch me and I think you'll find out what you can do to help out. If you'll put your hat and coat in the closet there."

The connection was made and he began speaking. "Oh, yes, Mrs. Montgomery. I appreciate that perfectly—Well, why not give me a chance to bid? Same fixtures, same specifications—Of course, I understand; you want to be sure—Thanks awfully."

He hung up and turned to Nicky. "That was an old customer," he explained. "I've done odd jobs for her for some time. Now she's building a new house and wants green bathtubs and purple shower baths and—"

The phone shrilled again. "Larry? Wait a minute." His eye ran over penciled memoranda attached to the phone. Then: "Thirty-two Mayfair Street—diamond ring in sink trap," he announced.

He hung up, turned back to Nicky. "That is to be one of your duties—assigning men to jobs. Instead of having them come all the way back to the shop when they're through with a job I have them call up, and if anybody has phoned in the meantime from that neighborhood I shoot them off in that direction. Saves time and reduces costs both ways."

He glanced up at a man in overalls who appeared in the doorway. "Come in, Sam," he directed, "and meet Miss Jones. She's going to handle office detail from now on." To Nicky he added as Sam shambled in, "Sam's my right-hand man—boss when I'm not here."

"Please to meetcha," stuttered Sam.

Nicky liked him, overalls, awkwardness, grizzled head and all. As, miraculously, she liked the office and its activities.

Or perhaps not so miraculously, after all. It gave her a sense of solid ground under her feet, a chance to forget Newfield for the moment.

She hated Newfield, that tight, narrow little New England town that her ancestors had had so much to do with. The Judsons had owned everything almost—the village water supply; the gas plant Nicky's grandfather had built—and what they did not own they dominated.

"Believe it or not," Nicky had told her intimates at finishing school, "but at home we still use gas just because my grandfather built the gas works and fought to keep electricity out."

"How quaint!" one had commented.

"You mean how darned inconvenient," Nicky had corrected. 'Electricity did get in after my grandfather died and every house has it except ours—just because he made Father promise he'd never wire it."

And that was what it meant to be a Judson of Newfield. To have money enough to live anywhere, but to live in a house built in the 'seventies that was architecturally a horror; to be able, if one chose—as Nicky certainly didn't—to point out the Judson Memorial Library to visiting friends; to have a car of her own, but never to be able to use electric curling irons at home.

"But when I'm home," Nicky had added, "the things the neighbors say about me are enough to make my hair curl anyway. But I refuse to let them cramp my style." To which she might have added that Newfield was a challenge to every perverse caprice her youth could invent. "And," she confessed in all sincerity, "it bores me to death."

The office did not bore her. Bill was in and out of it, always on the go, a galvanic, dynamic, graceful figure in his overalls. His men—he employed eighteen in all—both liked and respected him. They, too, drifted in and out, conscious of her, she knew—admiringly so.

Noon came and Bill paused at her desk. "I'm starting you at twenty," he announced, "and paying you the first week in advance."

Before she could thank him he was gone. And hard-boiled though Newfield considered her, something tightened in her throat. "He is sweet!" she thought. "He knows I'm broke."

Eventually five o'clock came, with the men finishing up. Nicky lingered. She had no idea what her hours were and did not care.

At half past five Bill loomed over her desk again. He had changed from overalls and it was evident that his tailor was well chosen.

"I wonder if you will go to dinner with me," he said. "I know that sounds awfully crude but—well, I want to talk to you and I don't get much chance around here. You—you won't misunderstand?"

"Of course not," said Nicky.

How could she? He was going to ask her about the murder. She felt it in each of her two hundred bones.

He had a car outside; a good car. He helped her in, swung in himself.

As he drove he talked about many things and when finally he stopped his car, its headlights illumined a stretch of harbor and ships at their moorings.

"I hope you like fish," he said. "This place is famous for it."

The restaurant was actually built on an old fish wharf, he explained. The atmosphere had been preserved; even the electric lights were set in old ship lanterns.

"Care for lobster?" he asked when they were seated, and when Nicky nodded, added, "Then that's our dish."

His reason for bringing her was not referred to until they had finished their dinner. Then his eyes met hers. "I'll make this as brief as possible," he promised. "I hate to bring it up at all but you will have to face it sooner or later. That landlady of yours looks as if she'd manage to worm the secret out of the Sphinx."

"She won't get anything out of me," said Nicky.

"But she may put two and two together—and get six or eight. Whereas I—well, I'm wondering if I can't put two and two togehter in some way that may help you out."

"I doubt if anybody can help me."

This he preferred to ignore. "Your sister," he said, 'was to be married to some man who—"

"'Who," broke in Nicky, "was at one time all but engaged to me, if you believe all you hear."

"Was he?" he asked.

"No," said Nicky.

"You—weren't interested?"

Nicky didn't dodge. "Oh, some; at first. He was an eligible—one of the Breckenridge Tylers of Philadelphia. I met him there and brought him back to Newfield. Trophy of the chase, I suppose. And"—her lovely lips twisted—"was, according to town gossip, promptly jilted. Which supplies a motive."

She didn't want to talk to him so, yet couldn't help it. He was touching raw places.

"I don't agree that it's a motive," he said. "Of course I can see where you wouldn't care for the gossip."

"I didn't," she admitted. "Would any girl?"

He hesitated, as if considering a question.

"And I—I wasn't on particularly good terms with—with Mary," Nicky added recklessly. "Sisters aren't always. We often squabbled. But—"

She stopped there. If he chose to convict her—and she knew how damning the facts were—then let him. She would make no professions of innocence, withhold no damning detail.

"In fact," she added defiantly, "she did rather rub Breck in."

He let that pass. "They were to be married on—"

"March twelfth," she supplied, that being one date she'd never forget.

"And on the afternoon of March eleventh he came to the house, and he and your sister were together in the living room. Your mother knocked on the door and there was no answer. She opened the door and found them both—dead. She called your family physician, who said death was due to cyanide of potassium taken in some liquid. Yet nobody believed it was suicide."

"Mary was not the sort to commit suicide," Nicky assured him, "and neither was Breck."

"And so," he commented, "it became a murder mystery."

"But not so much of a mystery, at that," gibed Nicky. "Surely you saw Willie Johnson's story."

"Tell me what you think about Willie Johnson," he suggested.

"I wouldn't dare to," said Nicky. "But doesn't his story—that he 'happened' to look in the window and saw me giving Mary and Breck something in glasses—make it less a mystery?"

"I have a feeling that isn't true," he said quietly.

"Glasses such as he described were found in the pantry," Nicky reminded him. She let her eyes meet his and shrugged her pretty shoulders; then added, "What's the use? Isn't the evidence too damning?"

"The police don't seem to think so. At least—"

"They haven't arrested me—yet?" she supplemented. "Anybody in Newfield will tell you why. They'll tell you that money and political influence are protecting me. That it just shows that a Judson can get away with anything."

"Tell me something about the house," he interrupted. "I read somewhere that it had never been wired for electricity; that you still use gas."

Nicky explained that.

"I'd like to see that house," he told her when she had finished.

"I never want to see it again," said Nicky.

He reached out and for a second let his hand lie over hers. A swift sympathetic, heart-warming gesture.

"You're a wonder," he said. And then, as if astonished at himself added, "I wanted to get the story straight from you."

"But it's all been published. What more could I add?"

"Enough to set me thinking," he retorted. He grinned. "As a detective, I'm a good plumber, you see."

Nicky didn't at all. But he had risen and stood ready to help her into her coat. A few minutes later they were back in his car headed toward Boston. He did not refer to the murder again.

"I hope I haven't bored you stiff," he said, as he deposited her at Mrs. Moriarty's door.

"You've been," Nicky answered impulsively, yet very sincerely, "about the nicest man I ever knew!"

Mrs. Moriarty did not hear that naturally. But she did hear Nicky enter. "Just as I expected," she commented to the second-floor front. "Sleeps all day and up all hours of the night. I'll see that she marches at the end of this week.

The second-floor front was not interested. "Did you see," she asked "what the papers said tonight about the girl that murdered her sister and her beau? They think she is hiding in Boston."

"Boston?" echoed Mrs. Moriarty. And then she quickened like a hound that has caught a vagrant scent. "I wonder—"

In the room under the eaves Nicky sat on the edge of the bed. It was as chill as the tomb there yet she felt—well, curiously warm. She was thinking of Bill McMasters and what he had said to her. And then she thought of the shop and of the reporters she had eluded.

"If they will only let me alone for a little while," she thought. "If I can just stay on, get my breath."

She had not seen the afternoon papers. The second-floor front had and was exhibiting one to Mrs. Moriarty. The latter read:

Believe Nicky In Hiding Here

Bill had seen that just after four o'clock. In one way it was none of his business. Yet he had felt that he didn't want Nicky to see it.

In his own room, this April night he sat considering what she had told him. He had a hunch—possibly a wild one, he admitted—but he was going to play it and at once.

"Because," he mused, "'Mrs. Moriarty will see that headline, too—and she strikes me as a Sherlock Holmes of sorts herself.'

That hunch, at least, was correct.

"I have a mind to call the police," Mrs. Moriarty was saying.

"But there's no warrant out for her," protested the second-floor front.

"Well, there ought to be," announced Mrs. Moriarty. She was momentarily balked. Just the same, "I'll put it up to her in the morning. And if, as I suspect, she is that Nicky Judson—"

The program she visioned was further postponed, however, for Nicky arising at seven the next morning was out of the house before Mrs. Moriarty realized it.

"But she left her things behind her," the latter informed her colored hand-maiden, who had already been told there was a murderess in the house, "so she'll be back—and I'll be ready for her."

'Laws sakes alive!" the colored lady exclaimed, rolling her eyes. "Ain't you afraid she may be desperate?"

Mrs. Moriarty scorned the suggestion. But actually Nicky was just that—desperate! She had bought a paper on her way to breakfast and discovered that the reporters were back on the scent.

All that remained was to explain to Bill, promise to repay him and then return to Newfield to face the pack again. "Because," she reasoned, facing the situation honestly, "if the reporters find me—and they will—they'll be all over the place. They won't give me a chance to work, or anybody else."

But Bill was not in the office when she got there.

"He must have been in early," explained Sam. "He left a note saying that he's gone out of town to inspect a job. He says he hopes to be back sometime this afternoon.

Nicky felt sunk. "But—but I wanted to give notice,' she protested. "I've—I've got to leave at once."

"Leave?" echoed Sam, astonished. "But, good grief, you can't go without seeing the boss! Why, he'd give me fits if I let you go, miss. He was saying yesterday how you took hold. He said you were just the girl he'd been looking for."

Nicky wavered. The tribute was a thrill through her.

"'Besides," added Sam, "I know he counted on your being here. He left a note for you; instructions, I guess."

Nicky turned swiftly to her desk. She found the note and set her fingers at the envelope. Sam watched. While:

Dear Miss Jones (read Nicky):

I'm leaving you and Sam in charge today. I know you can handle the office end perfectly. Don't worry about anything.

Perhaps, in case you have seen the papers, I'd better warn you that the reporters are on your track again. If they locate you before I get back tell Sam to take the biggest wrench he can find and clean them out.

Don't worry. Just remember what I said—that as a detective, I'm a darned good plumber.

Yours very truly,
Bill McMaster

Nicky read it twice and then became conscious of Sam's anxious scrutiny.

"I'll stay until he comes back anyway," she promised, folding the note.

But she knew, in her heart,

(Continued on page 3, Col. 4.)