

CRUCIBLE

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By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

SYNOPSIS

Barbara Sentry, seeking to sober up her escort, Johnnie Boyd, on the way home from a party, slaps him, and attracts the attention of a policeman, whom the boy knocks down. As he arrests him, Professor Brace of Harvard comes to the rescue and drives Barbara home. On the way they see Barbara's father driving from the direction of his office at 12-45, but when he gets home he tells his wife it is 11:15 and that he's been playing bridge at the club. Next day Sentry reports his office has been robbed and a Miss Wines, former temporary employee, killed. The evening papers luridly confirm the story, and Sentry takes it hard. Mary, elder daughter, in love with Neil Ray, young interne at the hospital where she works, goes off to dinner at Gus Loran's, Sentry's partner, with Mrs. Loran's brother, Jimmy Endie. Mr. and Mrs. Sentry call on old Mrs. Sentry, and Barbara, alone, receives Dan Fisher, reporter, who advises her not to talk. Phil Sentry, son at Yale, is disturbed at the possible implications and suspicion of Miss Wines' absence from her rooms for three days during August. He goes home to help. Sentry is arrested and booked for murder. Dan Fisher explains the evidence against him—that the robbery was a fake, the safe opened by one who knew the combination, changed since Miss Wines' employment there—that a back door key, a duplicate of Sentry's, was found in the girl's purse, and that Sentry, too, had been away those three days in August. Brace calls, and backs up Barbara in her denial that Sentry could have done it, because of the discrepancy of time between the slaying and their seeing Sentry on the road.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

"Arthur was always losing keys," Mrs. Sentry assented, and realized with a faint shock of terror that she had spoken of her husband in the past tense, and then, with a deeper tremor, that Hare seemed not to have noticed, as though it were natural for her to speak of him so.

She said hurriedly: "I hear the girls coming downstairs. Let's not talk about details, Dean!" Her eyes met his for a moment, held his; and his after a moment were lowered, as though some word had passed between them.

Phil argued, "But just the same—" Then he stopped as Barbara and Mary appeared in the doorway.

"Morning, children," Mrs. Sentry said lightly. "Sleepy-heads!" Barbara saw Dean Hare; she cried: "Oh, have you seen father, Mr. Hare? When will they let him come home?"

"I'm afraid not right away, Barbara," he confessed. "You know, these things take time."

"But they know he didn't do it!" Barbara insisted.

"Well, of course we know—" "They know it, too!" the girl urged. "I told Mr. Flood—"

Mrs. Sentry spoke quickly, almost desperately. She knew what Barbara was about to say; that Mrs. Sentry had come home on the night of the murder at a quarter of one. But if Barbara said that, Dean Hare would know Arthur had lied to him. She fought instinctively to protect Arthur from that discovery.

"Sit down, Barbara, Mary," she said. "After all, there's breakfast to be eaten, our routine to go on."

Barbara insisted: "But mother, I—" "Barbara!"

Barbara sat down, puzzled by her mother's manner; and Mrs. Sentry thought, amazed at herself: I'm like an ostrich, hiding my head in the sand, trying to pretend, to blind myself— She said: "We've got to keep our heads, our sense of proportion. We must go on eating, for instance!"

Mary said in a low tone: "Must we? Pretend nothing has happened? We won't fool anyone but ourselves."

Mrs. Sentry ignored her. She asked the lawyer, in polite and empty tones, as one makes conversation with a strange dinner partner, "How's Olive, Dean?" Olive was Mrs. Hare.

"She wants to come over this afternoon—if you'd like."

"Of course!" "Of course!"

Mary said grimly: "I'm surprised she's willing to. I expect most people—" Barbara cried, furiously: "Mary! You talk as though you thought father really did it!" And she said: "We must all go see him, right away! We'll all go together."

Mary said, "I want to see Neil!" She added, "This—he and I must decide what to do."

The doorbell rang, and Oscar went to answer it, and Phil followed him into the hall. Mrs. Sentry suggested: "Ask Neil to dinner, if you—like, Mary. Or to tea?"

Mary hesitated, nodded; then Linda Dane came in with Phil. "Mother said it was too early for me to come," she confessed quietly. "She's coming a little later, Mrs. Sentry. But I didn't want to wait. I knew you'd be up."

"There's nothing to see!" Mary told her coldly. "We're not a side-show!"

Mrs. Sentry protested, "Mary!" But Linda said: "It's all right, Mrs. Sentry. I know how you all must feel; but—I didn't come to be curious, Mary. Please don't feel I'm prying. We've always—at least, Barbara and Phil and I have always been such good friends."

Barbara said, "Darling!" And Phil said, "Good kid, Lin!" Dean Hare rose to go, and he nodded to Phil so that the boy went with him to the car.

"Phil," he suggested then, "don't let your sisters or your mother go to see your father yet. Not today. I shouldn't even go myself, if I were you. In a day or two, yes; but just now he's terribly shocked. It would distress any of you to see him; and I think it would be harder for him to—keep his self control."

"Gosh! I suppose so," Phil agreed, shakily. He urged, "I want him to know we're—with him, though!"

"I'll tell him," the attorney promised. But then Mrs. Sentry came to the open door. "Oh, Dean," she called, "will you arrange for me to see Arthur, let me know when I'm to come?"

Hare looked to Phil for support; but Phil said, "I know it will do him good to see mother, Mr. Hare." And the lawyer surrendered.

"Very well," he agreed. "If you—"

Oscar came to summon Mrs. Sentry to the telephone. "Mr. Loran calling," he explained. She departed, and Hare said doubtfully: "I still think it's a mistake, Phil, for her to go. Mr. Loran came

He said: "Mrs. Sentry wants to see Mr. Sentry this morning. I'll be with her. Could you hold off on the questions till this afternoon?"

Irons reflected: "Well, the Grand Jury's sitting, and the D. A.'s idea was to give them the evidence we've got, tomorrow." He looked at Hare. "I understand you and Mr. Flood agreed not to arraign him before?"

"Yes." Irons looked at Phil apologetically. "It was hunch, as much as anything, when I booked him," he confessed. "But the D. A. got some stuff last night, and—I'll want to have all the dope I can get, for the Grand Jury."

"Of course," the lawyer agreed. "But this afternoon will do, to—ask your questions. Suppose I meet you here at two."

Phil, listening, felt himself shiver; his teeth pressed hard together to keep them quiet. There was something in their tones deeply terrifying. He was almost relieved when Dean Hare drove away, and he himself was left with Inspector Irons.

When Hare departed, the other men who had come in the police car approached, and Irons introduced them to Phil. Inspector Hays, Sergeant Kane, Officer Regan. And the Inspector suggested then,

ters looking to him for strength, Phil himself was stronger. His grandmother had come downstairs; they were all in the living-room. Phil explained what the Inspector wished to do, suggested they stay where they were. Inspector Hays and Sergeant Kane went toward the kitchen. Regan had remained outside. Inspector Irons and Phil went upstairs.

Phil suggested, "If there's anything special you're looking for, I might help you."

Irons hesitated. "I don't want to—put anything over on you," he said gently. "I told Mr. Hare I wouldn't ask you any questions unless he was here."

Phil colored. "We've nothing to hide!" he protested.

"Sure, I know," the Inspector agreed. "But I'll just look around. I want to see everything. Whose room is this?"

"Mine," said Phil. The Inspector nodded; he opened the drawers of the chiffonier, the desk, the closet, the recess under the window seat where Phil kept rods and fishing gear.

Phil, looking over the other's shoulder, saw something there; a japanned metal box with a combination lock. And the cover of the box had somehow been forced open! His thoughts went racing. . . . In the summer after his Freshman year, at a dude ranch in New Mexico, one of the cowboys had given him an old single-action .45 revolver, with cartridge belt and holster; had told him that the weapon had been taken off the body of a man killed in a gun battle, years before. Phil brought it home; but because Mrs. Sentry was afraid of firearms, he never showed it to his mother or his sisters, kept it here in this locked box. Only, he had showed it to his father. His father had known it was here. . . .

Irons picked up the box, now empty, and he held it to his face and sniffed at it. The old holster had been heavy with grease and oil. Phil remembered the rich smell. He heard himself now, saying hurriedly: "That's my old tackle box. Used to keep a couple of reels in it, in leather cases." The Inspector did not turn. "I forgot the combination, had to break it open with a—"

He tried to think what tool his father might have used. "With a chisel," he said, and repeated: "Couple of reels, and some bass plugs—" "Must have been hard on the chisel," the Inspector commented, and turned, the box in his hands, and looked at Phil. Phil saw sympathy and understanding in the older man's eyes, and was sick with fear. Then Sergeant Kane said from the doorway, in an intent tone: "Hays wants you, Inspector. Down cellar."

Irons nodded. "Right," he said. With the broken box under his arm, he followed Kane.

Phil followed them. Irons once looked back, as though to bid him stay behind; but he did not speak. In the cellar, Inspector Hays stood by the furnace. The furnace door was open. The fall had been warm, these last few days unseasonably so; and there had been here no recent fire.

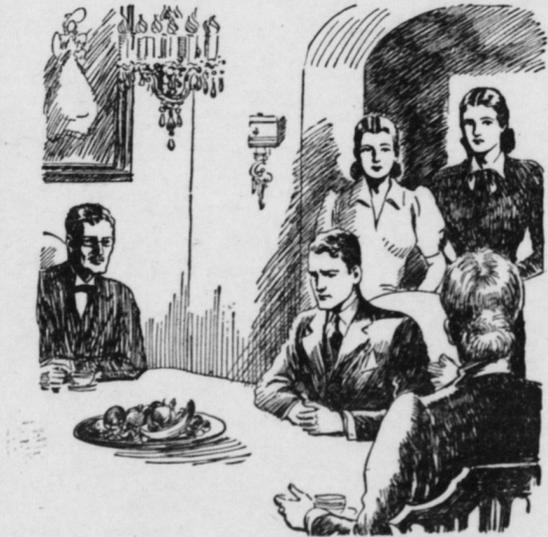
Irons went toward the other Inspector. Hays said quietly, "See if you see what I see."

He turned a flashlight's beam into the fire box of the furnace. Irons stooped to look in. After a moment he stood up.

"Close the door easy," he said crisply then. "Close the draughts. Any air might make the ashes crumble or muss them. I'll get Peters and Knobbe right out here. They can handle it."

Phil touched his arm. "What is it, Inspector?" he asked.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



"Morning, Children," Mrs. Sentry Said Lightly.

last night while I was there. He was just back from New York. Your father almost broke down, just talking to him. Mr. Loran was sympathetic, of course, and loyal, and dignified at the police; but—it does no good to take that attitude. The police aren't to blame." He hesitated, said then, "We have to face the fact that there's a lot of circumstantial evidence against your father."

Phil said explosively, "You know darned well my father wouldn't kill anyone!"

"It's not a question of knowing. It's a question of proving."

Then he turned, for a police car came up the drive. Reporters on duty like guards at the entrance trotted after it; and Dan Fisher was among them. The police car stopped behind Dean Hare's; but Dan came along to where Phil and the lawyer stood, and he said in a low tone:

"Sentry, if you and Mr. Hare are interested, Flood waited outside last night till Professor Brace came out, questioned him."

Phil nodded, only half hearing, staring at the police car, from which officers alighted. Fisher asked softly, "Who was the young lady who came in a few minutes ago?"

"One of my sister's friends."

"What's her name?" Phil hesitated, but Dean Hare said, "Phil, the best rule with reporters is, if they're going to find out anyway, tell them."

Phil nodded ruefully. "I suppose so. She's Linda Dane."

Fisher said, "Oh! I know her brother, Joe." Someone else demanded, "Not engaged to her, are you?" Phil shook his head, coloring with anger, and Inspector Irons alighted from the police car and said to the reporters:

"All right, boys, outside. Give these folks a break. I'll see that you get anything that you ought to have."

They obeyed him, moved away, and Dean Hare asked: "Anything new, Inspector?"

"I want to have a look around inside," the Inspector explained. "If that's all right?"

"Of course."

"And I might ask some questions. I suppose you'll want to be in on that." He added, as though apologizing for his own forbearance, "It's not the way I usually handle things, but the D. A. says to keep you in touch as we go along."

The lawyer nodded. "Thanks"

"Mr. Sentry, you want to show us around?"

"Glad to," Phil agreed.

"I'd like to have a look at the garage."

Phil led the way, watched the Inspector note the cars, study the garage. "Chauffeur sleep up above?" he asked. Phil nodded. Old Eli was burning leaves by the tennis court, and they went that way. Irons asked the old man:

"You usually hear a car come in at night, do you?"

Eli said, "Hey?" And Phil explained: "He's pretty deaf. You'll have to talk louder. But he wouldn't hear anything at night. Takes an earthquake to wake him."

Eli demanded querulously, "What you say?"

Irons nodded. "Skip it," he decided. He crossed to the pergola, looked down at the water just below them here. Two ducks sunning themselves on the bank waddled into the water and swam warily away.

"All right," said the Inspector.

"Let's go in the house."

Indoors, with his mother and sis-

Captive Balloons Are to Help Defend English Cities Against Air Raiders

In a recent lecture, Air Commodore J. G. Hearson partly lifted the veil of secrecy surrounding the balloon barrage scheme, in which a large number of captive balloons will add to the protection of cities against air raiders, says the Illustrated London News.

Each balloon is handled by a lorry-winch with a crew of ten. Toward the end of the World War "balloon aprons" were used in the defense of London. They were formed by tethering four or five balloons in a line and stretching a network of wires between them.

The balloon barrage of today is not in the form of "aprons" but consists merely of the cables by which the balloons are held captive. At first sight, such a defense may appear rather diaphanous; but, if simple calculations are made, it will be found to be far more effective than many might imagine.

Assuming that the span of the wings of a bomber is 70 feet, and that that bomber passes through a network of balloons tethered at 100-yard intervals, there is about one chance in four of the aircraft hitting a cable

and one chance in two if it makes an "in-and-out" passage, a formidable risk which no attacker could afford to continue taking if the cables are lethal; that is, capable of destroying any airplane coming in contact with them.

The cables are so thin that they cannot be seen from a traveling airplane, even by day and in fine weather.

The role of a balloon barrage is to deny passage to aircraft below the barrage height over the defended area; thus driving the attackers to an altitude at which they can be dealt with by anti-aircraft fire and interceptor fighters.

Best Words to Indicate Letters

In spelling a word over the telephone Reader's Digest gives the following list of words as the best to use to indicate the various letters: A as in Alice, B as in Bertha, C as in Charles and so on through David, Edward, Frank, George, Harry, Ida, James, Kate, Louis, Mary, Nellie, Oliver, Peter, Quaker, Robert, Samuel, Thomas, Utah, Victor, William, X-ray, Young and Zebra.



VARIED VIEWS

Two friends met in the street. One of them had had his arm broken in a motor accident, says Stray Stories magazine, and was carrying it in a sling.

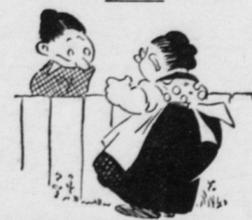
"Say," said the first, "it's too bad about your arm! How long will you have to carry it in a sling?" The injured man shrugged. "There's a slight difference of opinion about that," he replied. "My doctor says two weeks—and my lawyer says 12!"

As You Were

A Scots actor came to London and took lodgings. With his morning cup of tea the landlady sent up two thin slices of bread and butter. He complained.

The next day she sent up three slices, but still he complained. The third day, says London Tit-Bits magazine, she cut a loaf in two, put a quarter of a pound of butter on each slab and sent that up. When he came down she asked defiantly: "Bread and butter all right?" "Aye, no' so bad," the Scotsman replied, "but ye've gone back to two slices."

KNOWS THE ANIMALS



Native—When you lived out West were you ever hemmed in by a pack of wolves?

New Neighbor—Well, I kept a boarding-house out there!

Never Say Die

A small boy was trudging along dejectedly in the grip of a policeman. In his arms he carried a football. There had been a broken window and trampled flower-beds.

A group of his pals stood on the street corner. He tried to keep a stiff upper lip as he passed them. "What did you do, Fred?" asked his pals.

"Oh, nuttin'," he replied, casually, "they've just asked me to play for the cops."—Boston Transcript.

Knew Herself

Youth (by the sea)—You little thought a week ago that you'd be sitting on a lonely seashore with a man then unknown to you.

Maiden—Oh, yes, I did.

Youth—But, dear, you didn't know me then!

Maiden—Of course not, but I knew myself.

Time to Wear Crape

Traffic Cop—Say you, get going—what's the matter with you? Polite Driver—I'm just fine, thank you, but I think my engine's dead.

Prospects

Parent—So you want to marry my daughter. What are your prospects? Suitor—Well, I've a wealthy uncle, a bachelor, aged 65, who has just taken up flying.—Stray Stories magazine.

Not on His Uppers

"Pa, what is an optimist?" "An optimist, my son, is a man who figures that when his shoes wear out he will be back on his feet."

More or Less

"You say you once sang in the opera house? What was the aria?" "Eight thousand square feet."

ON THE UP AND UP



"Do you always meet your bills?" "Yes, sir! I ain't one o' th' kind that sneaks out the back door when the collector comes—not even when I ain't got a cent!"

Half Measure

Wilfred—You wouldn't want a little boy punished on account of something you said, would you? Minister—Certainly not.

Wilfred—Then if you mention cookies while you're here, you'd better thank mother for two dozen instead of the dozen I brought you.

Tests

First Mosquito—Why are you making such a fuss? Second Mosquito—Whoopee! I just passed the screen test.

CLASSIFIED DEPARTMENT

CHICKS

ROCKS, REDS, & BR. CROSSES hatched from selected Blood-Tested Breeders. MILFORD HATCHERY, Milford Road nr. Liberty Rd., Pikesville, P. O. ROCKDALE, MD. Pikesville 26-R.

OPPORTUNITY

MAKE MONEY MAILING LETTERS. Big three way money making Business Profits unlimited! Send for Free circular. Standard Service, 5230 Herman St., Dallas, Texas.

HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONS



Broken Glass.—Use a wet cloth or dampened absorbent cotton to pick up broken glass. Even the tiniest bits will adhere to it. For safety, discard cloth and all.

Vinegar Cures Rust.—Don't waste time trying to clean rusty articles with emery paper! Place them in a jar of ordinary vinegar, leave for a couple of days, and you will find that they are quite free from rust. . . .

Repelling Mice.—The smell of peppermint is most obnoxious to mice. A little oil of peppermint placed about their haunts will soon make them look for other quarters.

TRUE!

"Like lemons, Luden's contains a factor that helps contribute to your alkaline reserve. I prefer Luden's." EDNA RIGGS, Lecturer, Los Angeles. **LUDEN'S MENTHOL COUGH DROPS 5¢**

Above Ourselves It is vanity to want to be superior to someone else; it is wisdom to want to be superior to ourselves.—Joseph Fort Newton.

How Women in Their 40's Can Attract Men

Here's good advice for a woman during her change (usually from 35 to 52), who fears she'll lose her appeal to men, who worries about hot flashes, loss of pep, dizzy spells, upset nerves and moody spells. Get more fresh air, 8 hrs. sleep and if you need a good general system tonic take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made especially for women. It helps Nature build up physical resistance, thus helps give more vivacity to enjoy life and assist calming jittery nerves and disturbing symptoms that often accompany change of life. WELL WORTH TRYING!

Source of Progress And from the discontent of man the world's best progress springs.—Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

LOST YOUR PEP?

Here is Amazing Relief for Conditions Due to Sluggish Bowels. **Nature's Remedy** If you think all laxatives are alike, just try this all vegetable laxative. It's the matter with you? Refreshing, invigorating. Dependable relief from acid indigestion, bilious spells, tired feeling when associated with constipation. Without Risk get a 24c box of NR from your druggist. Make the test—then if you're not delighted, return the box to us. We will refund the purchase price. That's fair. Get NR Tablets today. **NR TO-NIGHT** ALWAYS CARRY IT WITH YOU. **QUICK RELIEF FOR ACID INDIGESTION**

Good Thoughts Live Good thoughts, even if they are forgotten, do not perish.—Publius Syrus.

The crying of children is sometimes an indication of WORMS in the system. The cheapest and quickest medicine for ridding children or adults of these parasites is Dr. Peery's "Dead Shot" Vermifuge. 50c a bottle at druggists or Wright's Pill Co., 100 Gold St., New York, N.Y.

Strangers Honor and ease are seldom bedfellows.—Thomas Fuller.

Watch Your Kidneys!

Help Them Cleanse the Blood of Harmful Body Waste

Your kidneys are constantly filtering waste matter from the blood stream. But kidneys sometimes lag in their work—do not act as Nature intended—fail to remove impurities that, if retained, may poison the system and upset the whole body machinery. Symptoms may be nagging backache, persistent headache, attacks of dizziness, getting up at night, swelling, puffiness under the eyes—a feeling of nervous anxiety and loss of pep and strength. Other signs of kidney or bladder disorder may be burning, scanty or too frequent urination. There should be no doubt that prompt treatment is wiser than neglect. Use Doan's Pills. Doan's have been winning new friends for more than forty years. They have a nation-wide reputation. Are recommended by grateful people the country over. Ask your neighbor!

DOAN'S PILLS