

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 she 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. Phil, showing the police over the house, finds his strong box forced open and his gun, which only his father knew of, gone. Meanwhile, the police find the stolen money burned in the furnace. Mrs. Sentry sees her husband, who swears his innocence, and tells her he had known of the robbery and murder the night before, but failed to call the police, and came home at 12:30. Phil and his mother are doubtful of Sentry's innocence, but keep silent.

CHAPTER V
—11—

While they were at lunch, a little later, Dean Hare telephoned to say that Inspector Irons had decided to postpone his interrogations, so for the afternoon they were free. Mary was to see Neil Ray when he went off duty; and as they finished lunch, Linda came to propose that Phil go for a drive with her.

"I have to go out to those mills in Norwood to get some homespun," she explained, "and I hate to go alone."

Phil looked to his mother for consent. "Go along," she said. "Barbara and grandmother will be here." So Phil went, and found a measure of peace and forgetfulness in being thus with Linda. But when she brought him home, in late afternoon, he was reluctant to face them all; instead of going directly indoors, he walked around the house. He heard voices by the muddy stream beyond the pergola and went to look down over the bank. Policemen were there in boats with things like hinged rakes, dragging up debris from the bottom of the stream. One of them saw him and spoke quietly to the others, and they all looked up, silently. Phil went back toward the house, trembling.

He found his mother alone. "Mary's dining with Neil," she explained, "and I sent Barbara in to stay overnight with grandmother. Professor Brace called, drove them in." She smiled reassuringly. "So we'll have dinner together, you and I."

"Professor Brace?" he echoed. He remembered warily that the District Attorney had questioned Professor Brace, but he did not say so. "Funny for him to—hang around."

"I suppose he's naturally interested. The scientific mind, you know." Her tone was edged. "We're under his microscope, like insects."

"He introduced himself to the reporters," Phil recalled. "Almost as if he—wanted publicity."

"I see you don't like him either." "Oh—I like him all right."

Dinner was served and they went in; and since they might here be overheard they spoke of other things. Phil talked at random, steadily, fighting down his thoughts; that his father had taken his gun, that his father had tried to burn money in the furnace, that his father was a murderer! He must not let his mother guess his dreadful certainty.

And she, as intent to hide her thoughts from Phil as he was to conceal his from her, helped him keep talk alive; but when they left the table and went into the living-room and were alone, silence crushed them; and Phil noisily lighted a fire, and Mrs. Sentry telephoned old Mrs. Sentry's apartment to say good night to Barbara. She reported to Phil, when she left the phone, that Professor Brace had stayed to dinner with them.

"I suppose he's taking notes," she reflected. "Like that German tutor at the foot of the table in 'War and Peace.' Remember? There's just a paragraph about him, but he's perfectly clear cut, a complete character in your mind afterward."

Phil did not remember. "But speaking of Russians," he suggested, "how about some Russian Bank?" So they played till Mrs. Sentry said at last that they might as well go to bed. The house seemed very big and empty when they went upstairs, and parted for the night.

Later, Mrs. Sentry, still awake, heard Mary come in; but the girl did not come upstairs, so her mother went down, a dressing-gown over her night garments. She found Mary

in the living-room, standing by the hearth, her lips bitten red, her hands twisting.

And Mrs. Sentry tried in an awkward way—they were not a demonstrative family—to take the girl in her arms, but Mary said, "Don't, please!"

So Mrs. Sentry sat down. "Shall we talk for a while?" she suggested. "Or are you sleepy?"

"Sleepy!" The word was fierce with scorn.

"How is Neil?"

"Very sensible!"

Mrs. Sentry said, "I knew he would—help you."

"Oh—help? Of course!"

"He didn't, then?"

Mary said: "Don't worry about Neil! We were practically engaged, but I told him tonight we must forget that. That after all this, I was hopelessly disqualified to be a missionary's wife, even in China!"

Mrs. Sentry waited. Mary said in a flat voice, passionless as ashes, "He agreed with me."

After a while her mother spoke,



"Good Night! I'm Going to Bed."

tentatively. "I wish I could—hold you in my lap, dear, as I did when you were little and were hurt."

"No, thanks. I'm not little any more." The girl stood before the hearth, rigid and still, her eyes fixed, her hands clasped behind her. Mrs. Sentry thought of a martyr at the stake surrounded by flames, burned without being consumed. She began to talk, of casual, healing things.

"Some people called this afternoon," she said. "Mrs. Harry Murr, bulging with questions she wanted to ask and didn't quite dare. And Mrs. Furness brought Miss Glen. You could see her memorizing every stick of furniture, every picture on the walls, to use in her next novel."

The girl cried: "Mother, don't! How can you stand it?"

"And that young professor, Mr. Brace, dropped in," Mrs. Sentry persisted. "He took mother and Barbara to town."

"You're driving me crazy!"

Mrs. Sentry sighed wearily, surrendering. "I'm sorry about Neil, Mary. Yet—if he couldn't—stand the gaff, isn't it a good thing to know?"

"No it isn't!" Mary cried. "What does that matter, if you love a man? What does it matter if he's weak, a sniveling coward, a drunkard, a thief?" Her eyes widened. "Even a murderer," she whispered. "You go on loving him just the same."

And she cried: "Oh, why is love so deep a part of women, mother? Why can't we be reasonable, sensible!" She spat the word. "Like men!" And suddenly, seeing the older woman's face, she stopped, said then curtly: "Good night! I'm going to bed." The still room ached when she was gone.

When Mrs. Sentry came downstairs in the morning, Mary had departed, leaving no message; and the older woman felt a deep concern that was half despair.

But she hid it from Phil. They stayed at home, together and yet each alone. Phil wondered whether his mother knew that the Grand Jury might act today; he thought of a group of strange men, in a secret room somewhere, hearing evidence against his father, and trembled as though he were ill. He thought his mother might suggest that they go again to see his father, and knew that he himself had no strength to face the older man and to pretend he did not know what he did know. But his mother did not make the suggestion; and after lunch they drove in to see old Mrs. Sentry, and heard newboys shouting the name of Sentry, and Mrs. Sentry shivered at last and said with a weary smile:

"I think we'd better stay at home hereafter, Phil."

On the homeward way—Barbara returned with them—they heard newsboys calling late editions, and one bawling youngster jumped on the running-board when they stopped for a traffic light to thrust a paper before their eyes. A headline, inches high, "Sentry Indicted." Mrs. Sentry closed her eyes, and the light changed, and the car leaped ahead.

At home a knot of people scattered from the entrance to the drive, gaped at them as they drove in. Phil saw that one woman had broken off a branch of rhododendron, and he thought bitterly: For a souvenir!

Indoors, Barbara asked in a shaken whisper, "Mother, what does 'indicted' mean?"

Mrs. Sentry said, "Hush, darling!" And she asked, "Do you know where Mary is, whether she'll be home to dinner?" She felt cold as iron. Barbara shook her head.

"I think Mary's rotten!" Phil said angrily. "We've got to—stick together!"

"She's pretty unhappy, Phil."

She tried to tell herself: He did not do it! Of course, he had lied to her about the time, that night, knowing she was too sleepy to recognize his lie; but naturally he would lie, after that dreadful moment at the office when he found the dead girl. Found her dead! Mrs. Sentry clung to that thought stubbornly, insisting to herself that Arthur did find the girl dead as he had told her, refusing to remember the panic in his eyes, refusing to remember his tone when he reiterated his assertion that Miss Wines was dead before he found her. Found her dead, he said; and was afraid, and left her and came skulking home.

And Mrs. Sentry hoped suddenly that he would not tell the District Attorney that story of chance discovery and craven flight. Anything was better than that shame. She thought that if he did not speak they might find some woman—any woman—to swear that he had been with her during the hours when the murder occurred. That crime at least would be robust, masculine; not weakly cowardly . . .

But of course anything, any story true or false that could be made credible, was better than to see him convicted of murder. If that happened, she could never lift her head again. The pride she lived by was worth fighting for. Even with lies! Linda came in as they finished dinner, and Mrs. Sentry welcomed her, and proposed a rubber of bridge. She clung to Linda's friendly loyalty. Linda agreed; but Barbara would not:

"I'm sorry," she said, trying to smile. "I'm afraid this is my evening for—letting go." Her tones were tremulously brave. "If you don't mind, I think I'll slip off by myself and cry for a while."

She darted away. Phil would have followed her, but Linda said softly: "No, Phil. Let her go!"

They heard Barbara's door close, upstairs. Mrs. Sentry rose and they went into the living-room, and talk ran somehow, and a little after nine, a car grated on the drive.

It was Mary. She came in without laying aside her hat. Mrs. Sentry realized that the car had not gone away, and she was cold with fear of what Mary would say. The girl was flushed. Mrs. Sentry saw, incredulously, that she had been drinking. When Mary spoke, her tones were louder than usual, harsh, defiant.

She said to Linda, curtly. "This is a family council, Linda." She added carelessly, "Oh, stay if you like, of course."

Phil protested: "Hey, Mary, don't talk like that! What's the matter with you?" He exclaimed, "You're drunk!"

She laughed derisively. "If I'm not it's not for lack of trying." And she asked Linda: "Going? All ashore that's going ashore! The ship's sinking!"

Linda said quietly: "No, Mary. I'll stay."

Mrs. Sentry felt desperately that she must speak, must do something. Her heart was full of a great compassion; but old habit of repression bound her tongue. "Mary, you're not yourself!" she said sternly.

"Myself?" Mary laughed in a shrill way. "Myself? Who am I? Who are you? Who are any of us?" And she said furiously: "Oh, I thought I knew! I thought we were so secure, and settled, and decent, and good." Her laughter rang madly. "Decent? Good? No decent, good people will ever speak to us now."

"Mary!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Sensitive Springs Spun From Quartz; Tiny Threads Give Precise Measurement

Quartz, which looks like glass and is a sort of glass, is the last material most of us would use to make a spring. But the scientists in the General Research laboratories find nothing but quartz will do for springs in making precise measurements, says a writer in the New York Times.

Steel springs rust; quartz springs don't. Steel springs are affected by changes in humidity; quartz springs are not. Steel springs begin to lose their temper at about 250 degrees Centigrade (482 degrees Fahrenheit); quartz springs never lose their temper except at temperatures not attained in ordinary practice.

A quartz spring has a sensitivity of one milligram. In other words, it can detect a difference of weight as little as one 28,350th of an ounce. And it always snaps back, after stretching, to exactly the original point of rest.

Suppose it becomes necessary to measure the amount of moisture absorbed by cotton or cellulose. The cotton is suspended at one end of the spring and the weight of the sample determined by the stretch of the spring. By introducing more and more water at varying pressures it becomes possible to deter-

mine just how much moisture cotton can absorb.

Making a quartz thread is something of a fine art. The first step is to spin a fine thread no more than six one-thousandths of an inch in diameter. This is done by heating a fused quartz rod to more than 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit and pulling threads from the rod. The threads are measured by calipers. All within a quarter of a mil of the desired six-mil size are saved. (A mil is a unit used to measure the diameter of a wire. It is equivalent to a thousandth of an inch.)

The final step is to place the thread in a long brass trough which leads to a mandrel (technical term for a drum of the right diameter). As it passes over the mandrel the thread is heated to 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit. The mandrel makes two revolutions a minute. After cooling, the coils are ready for use.

Castle of Merry Old Soul
At the old Roman town of Colchester, in Essex, England, tradition places the castle of "Old King Cole" of the nursery rhyme. Many visit the Eleventh century castle because it has the largest keep of any castle in England.



GETTING OVER IT

Pat was being shown over a new house by the estate agent, who was, perhaps, a little more inclined to candor than some of his tribe.

"I think I must tell you," said the agent, "that there is one drawback to this house. It is very close to the railway, and you may be disturbed at night by the trains. Still, I'm quite sure that after two or three days you'll get used to it and not notice it."

Pat thought for a moment, then said: "Sure, an' ye needn't worry. Oi'll sleep at me brother's the first three nights."—Answers magazine.

DON'T BELIEVE SIGNS

Mike was going to Dublin for the first time, and his friend Pat was giving him a few hints on what to do and where to go in the big city.

"What do I do when I go to the zoo?" asked Mike.

"You be careful about the zoo," advised Pat. "You'll see foine animals if you follow the words, 'To the lions' or 'To the elephants,' but take no notice of the one, 'To the exit,' Mike. It's a fraud, and it's outside I found myself when I went to look at it."—Dublin Evening Mail.

STEAM-ROLLED



"Welcome home, Bob, I suppose your European travels broadened you?"

"Well, as they flattened me completely, no doubt I've gained in breadth."

Our Censorious Civilization

"Why do people find fault with a mistake and so seldom encourage good deeds?"

"It's due to natural requirements of our civilization," answered Mr. Chuggins. "A traffic cop, for instance, is out to arrest reckless motorists. He wouldn't be any good at all if he put in his time running around to compliment cautious drivers."

Observation

The witness was on the stand during an important trial.

"You say," thundered the defense attorney, "that you saw the two trains crash head-on while doing 60 miles an hour. What did you say when this happened?"

The witness shrugged. "I said to myself," he replied, "this is a helluva railroad!"—New York Mirror.

Among the 'Mizzen'

The captain of a sailing vessel was questioning a rookie sailor regarding his knowledge of ships and the sea. After repeatedly receiving wrong answers, in desperation, he asked:

"Where's the mizzenmast?"

"I don't know," replied the seaman. "How long has it been mizzen?"

IN PLAIN VIEW



"It was love at first sight, eh?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you marry her?"

"The second sight was a close-up."

Modern Idea

"How did Tom manage to get so much of his uncle's estate?"

"He married his lawyer's only daughter."

A Friendly Warning

"I realize I owe a lot to my country," declared the orator.

"Not too much of that, mate," whispered a sympathetic voice. "You're not the only one that has not paid his income tax."—Providence Journal.

O. K. Then

Husband—So you think there are times when it is permissible for the husband to kiss the cook, eh?

Wife—Yes, darling, when the wife is doing the cooking.

Crochet This Set and Tot Will Be Delighted



Pattern 6224

She'll be proud as a peacock to wear this set so why not delight her with it? Made of sport yarn, it's mainly single crochet (which gives it a firm body) with picots for decoration. The muff is a combined purse and muff—very grown-up and stylish! Pattern 6224 contains instructions for making the set shown; illustrations of it and of stitches used; materials required.

To obtain this pattern, send 15 cents in stamps or coins (coins preferred) to the Sewing Circle, Household Arts Dept., 259 W. 14th St., New York, N. Y.

Ask Me Another
A General Quiz

The Questions

1. What does the phrase "by and large" mean?
2. Who are the Jukes?
3. What is a consanguineous marriage?
4. In writing the international distress call signal S O S, are periods used after the letters?
5. Which country is known as the "Pearl of the Antilles"?
6. Why is a book called a volume?

The Answers

1. Comprehensively, on the whole.
2. The Jukes are a celebrated family of imbeciles and criminals to whom students of heredity have given this fictitious name.
3. Marriage to a person who is related to you.
4. No. The letters were chosen merely for their simplicity, and do not represent words.
5. Cuba—the largest and richest of the West Indian islands.
6. Egypt developed papyrus, which was then rolled and tied. This accounts for the word volume, which comes from the Latin word meaning to roll.

CONSTIPATED?

Here is Amazing Relief for Conditions Due to Sluggish Bowels. **Nature's Remedy** is a natural, all-vegetable laxative. It is non-habit forming, invigorating, dependable relief from all biliousness, bilious spots, tired feeling, nervousness and moody spells. Without Risk. Get a 50c. box of NR from your druggist. If you are not satisfied, return the box to us. We will refund the purchase price. That's fair. Get NR Tablets today. **NR TO-NIGHT**



Mad Lover

A man of sense may love like a madman, but not as a fool.—Rochefoucauld.

How Women in Their 40's Can Attract Men

Here's good advice for a woman during her change (usually from 38 to 42), who fears she'll lose her appeal to men, who worries about hot flashes, loss of pep, daisy 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 in calming jittery nerves and disturbing symptoms that often accompany change of life. WELL WORTH TRYING!

WNU-4 47-38

That Nagging Backache

May Warn of Disordered Kidney Action

Modern life with its hurry and worry, irregular habits, improper eating and drinking—the risk of exposure and infection—throws heavy strain on the work of the kidneys. They are apt to become over-taxed and fail to filter excess acid and other impurities from the life-giving blood.

You may suffer nagging backache, headache, dizziness, getting up nights, leg pains, swelling—feel constantly tired, nervous, all worn out. Other signs of kidney or bladder disorder may be burning, scanty or too frequent urination. Use Doan's Pills. Don't help the kidneys to get rid of excess poisonous body waste. They are antiseptic to the urinary tract and tend to relieve irritation and the pain it causes. Many grateful people recommend Doan's. They have had more than forty years of public approval. Ask your neighbor!

