

CRUCIBLE

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By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

CHAPTER IX
—19—

A strange thing, long in preparation, happened next day to Mrs. Sentry. She might, she thought afterward, have guessed what was to come; might have foreseen it. But she did not. Obedient to her promise to Falkran, she went to the prison to see her husband. She had been awake most of the night, yet she rose in the morning in an almost peaceful mind, and when she met Mr. Sentry it was composedly. They spoke commonplace for a while, till she said at last, her tone curiously gentle:

"My testimony will follow yours, Arthur."

His eyes suddenly widened, as though under the shock of an actual blow. "You! You're going to testify?"

"I must tell them you had no cause to fear me."

He cried passionately: "Oh, don't, Ellen! It's bad enough for me. Falkran can't ask you to do that."

She reminded him gravely: "It is true, you know! When you came to me, long ago—" And she said, almost contritely: "I might have been more generous than I was; but I was young then, not so wise as I am now. I gave you what I could—and I've never been sorry. Only, I am sorry now it was not more."

He said hopelessly: "Falkran insisted that I must—say those things, Ellen. But not you! Please don't! I—can't command; but I beg you—" And he said in a low tone: "I was crazy last summer, Ellen! I must have been. But there had never been any other—if you can believe me."

She started to say steadily that of course she believed him; and she was astonished to find that she could not speak. Her throat was full. She rose in a sort of panic, fighting for words. And suddenly pain seized her every part, every fiber, bone and blood, muscle and sinew, nerve and brain. She was a burning torch of pain!

For something in him, in his word, in his tone, had, incredibly, waked something long asleep in her. She stood above him, leaning down, racked and shaken not for herself but for him, yearning over him, yearning to protect him, yearning to hold him close and hard. She fought to speak; she muttered, "Arthur—"

Then the guard touched her arm warningly. She realized that the man had spoken, even though she had not heard. And she felt her cheek burn bright; and she thought, bewildered, still unbelieving:

"I love him! Why—I love him! Obeying the officer she went toward the door; yet from the door looked back. Arthur was on his feet, pale, wondering.

She smiled at him richly. She went out and away, and felt herself torn in two parts by this separation from him.

The thought that Arthur had been loyal to her through twenty barren years filled her with a clamorous grief, a hopeless despair. She might have given so much, and had so much bliss in that surrender; might have forgotten the pride she had nursed with such blind tenacity, and been herself the richer for forgetting.

In court Monday morning she found that now she could be hurt and feel the pain. When the Assistant District Attorney, Mr. Weldon, began the questioning, she understood that Bob Flood had delegated this duty because Arthur had been his friend. Mr. Weldon was a swart young man with thin lips and a lean pointed jaw that thrust forward like a challenging finger. He began so quietly:

"Now Mr. Sentry, you told the Court on Saturday that you killed Miss Wines?"

"By accident, yes, sir."

"But the gun was in your hand?"

"Yes."

"You had cocked it?"

"Yes."

"You pulled the trigger?"

"It jarred off."

"Oh, it jarred off? I see. Is this the gun?"

"Yes."

"Cock it, please. Now, without putting your finger on the trigger, pound it on the railing of the witness box till it jars off. It is not loaded."

Arthur said: "I suppose so." He was wiping his knuckles with his handkerchief. Mrs. Sentry could see small red spots upon the linen, thought he should use iodine lest the wounds become infected.

She heard Weldon say: "So Miss Wines came to you for help or money or advice, three weeks before you shot her, and you sent her away?"

"Yes."

"Mrs. Sentry sometimes, in her charitable work, helped unfortunate young girls, did she not?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you send Miss Wines to Mrs. Sentry before you shot her?"

"It did not occur to me to do so."

"Did it occur to you that if you did so, Mrs. Sentry might misinterpret your interest in Miss Wines?"

"No. Mrs. Sentry would have known that if there had been anything between Miss Wines and me, I would have told her."

Mrs. Sentry looked straight ahead, proudly, her head high. She felt all the staring eyes that turned to

ward her like the points of lances, from every side.

"So you refused to help Miss Wines before you shot her?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I was afraid—"

"Oh, yes. I remember, you told us. You're a very fearful man, are you not? Just as Uriah Heep was a very 'umble man? Are you also a humble man, Mr. Sentry?"

"Not particularly."

"On the contrary, you're rather proud, aren't you?"

"No."

"Aren't you proud of your honorable ancestry?"

"Well, yes."

"Of your old established business?"

"Yes."

"Of your personal success, your social standing?"

"Yes."

"Of your family?"

"Yes."

"And yet you say you're not proud?"

"In that sense I suppose I am."

"In what sense are you not, Mr. Sentry?"

"Well—haughty."

"Oh, you're not haughty?"

"No."

Mr. Weldon nodded. "Now you said a while ago that you were afraid; and that because you were afraid, you did not help Miss Wines before you shot her."

"Yes."

"Were you responsible for the fact that she so desperately needed help from someone?"

"I didn't see her till after the shot."

"Now Mr. Sentry, you saw Miss Wines three weeks before you shot her—"

Mrs. Sentry could no longer hear all that they said. She heard only " . . . you shot her?" " . . . you shot her?" " . . . you shot her?" as a tag to every question. She heard: " . . . three weeks later, you shot her?" And then: " . . . three weeks before you shot her?"

She saw, at a final question, Arthur's lips move, but no sound emerged; she could see that he was trembling, felt her own limbs tremble as though in sympathy. It seemed to her that she suffered in her own flesh the torment Arthur here endured. The protective numbness which had prevented her from feeling her own suffering could not now save her from feeling his.

Mr. Weldon suggested, "I did not hear what you said."

Arthur cried wretchedly, furious—

"When you pulled the trigger, did you mean to shoot whoever was there?"

"No."

"But you fired in anger?"

"No."

"Put it this way. You were angry when you fired?"

"Yes."

"At what mark did you aim?"

"No mark. I couldn't see anything."

"This man who bumped you. He bumped you into the wall?"

"Yes."

"Which wall?"

"The right-hand wall, as you come up the back stairs, opposite my office door."

"Then he was on your left?"

"Yes."

"You knew where he was?"

"Yes."

"Did you shoot at him?"

"No."

"You shot straight ahead along the corridor, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Did you hear the testimony in this court that when you—pardon me; that at the moment of Miss Wines' death, the pistol was touching her coat?"

"I tell you it was an accident."

"Did you hear that testimony?"

"Yes."

"Pressing against her coat?"

"Yes."

"When, by accident, in the dark, the bullet emerged from the muzzle of the gun you were holding and smashed through Miss Wines' heart, did you feel the muzzle of your pistol touch anything?"

"No."

"Press against anything?"

"No."

"After the shot, what did you hear?"

"A man running down the stairs."

"Didn't hear Miss Wines cry out, or fall?"

"No."

"And you say you didn't see her?"

"No."

"How far had you come from the head of the stairs before you shot Miss Wines?"

"By accident."

"So you say."

"I was about opposite my office door."

"And yet the muzzle of the pistol was touching her?"

Mr. Sentry retorted, "So you say!" Mrs. Sentry winced for him. That effort to be nonchalant, derisive; that echoing of Mr. Weldon's own words had about it something pitiful, like the trembling lower lip of a hurt child trying to be brave.

Even Mr. Weldon seemed to feel this; he spoke almost gently.

"Pardon me, Mr. Sentry. Not so I say! So the expert evidence says! Yet her body lay beyond your office door?"

Mrs. Sentry's senses blurred again; the world was dizzy chaos. Question and answer ran together, conjuring up tragic details which blended into a sinister whole. The huddled body, Arthur, turning it over, picking up the dead girl's hat, putting it over her face. Taking off his glove to feel for her pulse; putting it on again for fear of fingerprints . . . Mrs. Sentry seemed to herself for a while to be in that bare, dingy corridor outside her husband's office; that naked, windowless place like a tomb. To be there with him, and the dead girl on the floor; and he was crouching, looking fearfully over his shoulder, peering, darting in stooped posture cravenly. Mercilessly Mr. Weldon made him go over and over every detail of the scene; till she saw Arthur's face streaming, heard Mr. Weldon say: "I see you are flushed, perspiring. Do you find it warm, Mr. Sentry? Would you like a window opened?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)



"Now Mr. Sentry, You Saw Miss Wines Three Weeks Before You Shot Her—"

Bones of Soldier of the War of 1812 Recall Epidemic in Detroit Army Camp

The pestilence which broke out among the American troops stationed at Detroit in the War of 1812 was recalled recently by the unearthing of part of the skeleton of a man at Fort street and Cass avenue.

The bones were discovered just three feet beneath the sidewalk at the northeast corner of the intersection by a police signal crew which was digging a hole for a traffic light standard, says the Detroit News.

The site was just west of old Fort Shelby and was the scene of a temporary cantonment for the troops of Gen. William Henry Harrison. Lack of sanitation was the principal cause for the epidemic which brought death to nearly 700 of Harrison's small army, according to "The Story of Detroit," written by the late George B. Catlin, librarian of the Detroit News.

Lack of burying space in the city's cemeteries and fear of the spread of the disease caused the burial of many of the dead within the confines of the cantonment.

The epidemic, which closely resembled Asiatic cholera, broke out

largely because the ground surrounding the encampment was marshy. Poor drainage conditions made proper sanitation difficult, thus exposing the troops to the rapid spread of the disease.

The situation was further complicated by a shortage of food. With hardly enough provisions available for the townsfolk, the quartering of General Harrison's troops soon produced famine conditions which threatened to defeat the American campaign in this district.

Revere Silver

Revere was the greatest early American silversmith. At nineteen he took over his father's business. Most of the Revere silver in existence was either of his manufacture or made under his personal supervision. The design was based on English Georgian style of the Eighteenth century, characterized by greater simplicity of decoration and beauty of proportion than is usually found in English work. Revere silver is equal to the best plate of any country of that period. The tea and coffee sets are among the finest examples of any period of the silversmith's art.



CAUSE ENOUGH

"Archimedes," read the school-boy, aloud, "leaped from his bath shouting, 'Eureka! Eureka!'"

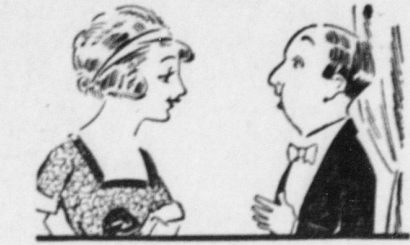
"One moment," said the teacher. "What is the meaning of 'Eureka'?"

"'Eureka' means 'I have found it,'" said the boy.

"Very well. What had Archimedes found?" questioned the teacher.

The boy hesitated, then ventured hopefully, "The soap, sir."—Atlanta Constitution.

JUST A SUGGESTION



Percy—I've quite a—aw—desire to write poetry, Miss Keen; but I can't decide on th—aw—form, doncher know.

Miss Keen—Hasn't blank verse suggested itself as the most suitable, Mr. Sapp?

Providing for Emergency "Now," said the fussy woman, entering the taxi, "I wish you to be extremely careful. When you come to a crossing wait until the police tell you to go on; and if the streets are slippery drive very slowly."

"All right, ma'am," replied the driver, "and in case of an accident, which hospital would you like to be taken to?"—Stray Stories Magazine.

We Catch On

Friends at the club were complimenting the judge on his having been in a stooping posture at the time a missile whizzed over his head during an election riot.

"You see," remarked the judge, dryly, "had I been an upright judge, it might have been serious."

Not Guilty

The inspector was examining the class.

"Who drove the Israelites out of Egypt? You," he said, pointing to a boy in the corner.

"'Twasn't me, sir," replied the boy. "I only came back from the country last week."

In Danger

"You admit, then," said the magistrate, "that you stole the pig?"

"Yes, your worship," replied the defendant.

"Well, there has been a lot of pig-stealing lately, and I am going to make an example of you, or none of us will be safe."

Keeping Busy

Mistress (to butler)—Why is it, John, every time I come home I find you sleeping?

Butler—Well, ma'am, it's this way, I don't like to be doing nothing

You May Believe It

Joke Editor—Gimme a sentence using the word "eclipse."

Office Boy—Every time the joke editor sees a joke, "eclipse" it for his column.—Washington Post.

Easily Satisfied

Policeman—You can't come through here, lady. This is a one-way street.

Indignant Lady—But I want to go only one way.

Never Slips

Mrs. Green—Does your husband lie awake at nights?

Mrs. Black—Yes indeed, and in his sleep, and often during the day.

Serious Question

Old Maid—Oliver, I wouldn't slide down the bannister like that!

Oliver—Wouldn't you, Miss Prim? Then show me how you'd do it!

NO POTATO BUG



Near Sighted Bug (looking at red and yellow striped mandolin)—Great scott, that's the granddaddy of all bugs.

So It Is

Betty—Have you heard that Bobby isn't going to print The Whizzer any longer?

Jane—Dear me, that's dreadful! Betty—They've decided it's just long enough as it is.

The Hard Way

Oliver—It only took me eight sittings.

Betty—What? Having your portrait painted?

Oliver—No. Learning how to skate.

Sun Down, Accidents Up

When the sun goes down, traffic accidents go up. More than 60 per cent of all fatal traffic accidents occur at night, the National Safety Council reports. Since about a third of the driving is done at night, it estimates, the number of traffic deaths per mile is about three times as great at night as during the daytime.

In the past seven years, night accidents have increased 60 per cent in rural districts, the report says, and only 17 per cent in cities. Adequate lighting and divided highways tend to reduce headlight glare and accidents, the council said. Some states are experimenting with new reflector buttons placed along the side of the road to show the alignment of the highway on curves, hills and other hazardous places.

ACTS FAST TO BRING RELIEF FROM COLDS

This Simple Way Eases Pain with Amazing Speed



1. To ease pain and discomfort and reduce fever take 2 Bayer Tablets — Tablets in 1/2 glass of water . . . gargle.

2. If throat is raw from cold, cross and dissolve 3 Bayer Tablets in 1/2 glass of water . . . gargle.

Use Genuine BAYER Aspirin—the Moment Your Cold Starts

The simple way pictured above often brings amazingly fast relief from discomfort and sore throat accompanying colds.

Try it. Then—see your doctor. He probably will tell you to continue with Bayer Aspirin because it acts so fast to relieve discomforts of a cold. And to reduce fever.

This simple way, backed by scientific authority, has largely supplanted the use of strong medicines in easing cold symptoms. Perhaps the easiest, most effective way yet discovered. But make sure you get genuine BAYER Aspirin.

15 FOR 12 TABLETS 2 FULL DOZEN 25c

Work Is Never Vain
No work truly done, no word earnestly spoken, no sacrifice freely made, was ever in vain.—F. W. Robertson.

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, 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 vitality to enjoy life and assist in easing jittery nerves and disturbing symptoms that often accompany change of life. WELL WORTH TRYING!

What to Remember
Friendship consists in forgetting what one gives, and remembering what one receives.—Dumas.

HEADACHE?

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. So mild, thorough, refreshing, invigorating. Dependable relief from constipation, biliousness, tired feeling, upset stomach, indigestion, and all ailments associated with constipation.

Get a 50c box of N.R. from your drug store. Make the test—then if not delighted, return the box to us. We will refund the purchase price. That's fair. Get N.R. Tablets today. N.R. TO-NIGHT

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CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

▲▲▲ Have you anything around the house you would like to trade or sell? Try a classified ad. The cost is only a few cents and there are probably a lot of folks looking for just whatever it is you no longer have use for.