

# CRUCIBLE

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By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

CHAPTER IX—Continued

This hurried man upon the stand was her husband, whom she loved. She saw his lips mumble, and felt her own breath short as his was short.

"Now, Mr. Sentry, I ask you to come to the period during which Miss Wines was in your employ. You remember when that was?"

"In July, I think. Perhaps late July or early August."

"She did some work for you personally?"

"She took my letters, on several occasions."

"Her work satisfactory?"

"She made many mistakes."

"But you kept her on?"

"For about two weeks, yes."

"Did you tell Miss Randall her work was unsatisfactory?"

"No. I knew she was temporary."

"You could have had Miss Randall find someone who was satisfactory, could you not?"

"It wasn't worth the trouble for so short a time."

"And you liked Miss Wines?"

"Not at all."

"Why not? She was pretty, young, pleasant, courteous, was she not?"

"I didn't dislike her. I thought nothing about her. She was—part of the office furniture, that's all."

"But—attractive?"

"I suppose so."

"You didn't notice?"

"No."

"Didn't notice that she was pretty?"

Mrs. Sentry sensed what was coming, perceived the trap prepared, wished to cry out in warning. But Arthur stumbled blindly on, into its very jaws. "No," he said.

"Come now, Mr. Sentry, any man must notice a pretty girl, unless there's something wrong with him."

"I don't."

"You don't notice such things, aren't interested in pretty women?"

"No."

The trap closed, the jaws snapped shut. "Then if you don't notice such things, Mr. Sentry, why did you take this mysterious Enid to New Jersey last August?"

She heard Arthur mumble something, shaken, speechless, perceiving too late the pit which his own words had dug for his unwary feet. Questions rained upon him; he answered helplessly.

And Mrs. Sentry wished to cry out comfort to him; to say: It is all right, Arthur!

"Now Mr. Sentry, have you told us, in general, all there is to tell about your various encounters with Miss Wines?"

"In general."

"You had no personal relations with her?"

"No."

"At any time?"

"My only conversation with her on personal matters was when she came to my office three weeks before—"

"Before you shot her?"

"Before her death."

"Ah, yes. I forgot, you do not like that phrase. But you did shoot her?"

"Yes, by accident."

"And arranged things in a way to suggest that someone else shot her?"

"Yes."

"Hoping the police would think someone else had shot her?"

Mrs. Sentry, watching Arthur, saw that he was strung to the breaking point, knew that in another moment his iron control would shatter. And then suddenly Falkran was on his feet, and he and Mr. Weldon were involved in some argument, meaningless to her, yet thrice welcome, since while they argued Arthur could fight back to some composure. She watched him, not listening to them; till suddenly the jury was filing out, and Arthur too, between his guards, his face haggard and drawn.

Mrs. Sentry and Phil did not hear the rest of Mr. Sentry's cross-examination. District Attorney Flood sought them during the noon recess, to urge them to stay away from court that afternoon.

Phil and Linda walked for miles, at a swift striding gait, and at first he talked, bitterly reciting to her his father's testimony, as though it were a relief to twist the knife in the wound. She listened, not commenting, but her hand rested on his arm.

"I don't know why I—tell you all this," he said at last. "You can read it all in the papers. It was—awful!"

"I don't read the papers, Phil," she replied. "And you need tell me nothing; but if it makes you feel better to talk, you can talk to me all you want."

"I couldn't have gone through it this far if I hadn't had you."

"I'm glad. I want it to be so."

"It must be tough on you, though."

"It isn't. It's sweet to think I'm helping."

"Mother's so darned brave!"

"Of course."

"But gosh, Linda, it's awful to hear him saying those things!" And

he cried, "Why, I'd rather think he did it than believe the things he's saying about himself!" He was choking. "Lin, he's my father! Half of me is him!"

"No, Phil! No! You are all yourself." And she challenged, "If you did a rotten, mean thing, would you try to get out of it by blaming it on him?"

"Well, no, I guess not. I'd have to stand it myself."

"Then don't talk so!"

"But it makes me feel—rotten, to think that he has anything to do with me."

"Phil," she urged, "children are born because two people love each other. You were born because your father loved your mother and she loved him; and love is clean and fine and beautiful. Just remember that." And she said: "Besides, boys are always more like their mother, anyway, and your mother is grand! You ought to be so proud of her."

"She sure is!"

"Well, then," she cried, "you see?"

He grinned a little. "You're grand

at home this evening?" he asked. "Sure."

"I want to talk to you. In about an hour?"

"Yes."

"Right," said Dan. Back at table, Phil told his mother Dan was coming.

"So is Mr. Falkran," she said. "He telephoned before you came home." She added steadily, "I am to go on the stand in the morning."

After dinner Phil went up to speak to Barbara, to tell her Dan was coming, to see her eyes brighten at that news. Yet he thought with a cold terror how weak and ill she seemed.

When Dan arrived he came up to join them, and touched Barbara's hand, smiling, his manner greatly reassuring; and he spoke in calm, undisturbed tones. She watched him hungrily, seemed stronger for his presence. But presently Dan said, too casually:

"Phil, I've never seen your room. What sort of quarters have you got?"

Phil, understanding, led the way into his own room, and closed the

door behind them. "I'm pretty worried about Barbara," he confessed. "There doesn't seem to be anything the matter with her, and yet she doesn't get any better."

Dan said sympathetically: "She's punch-drunk; just as though she'd taken a right hook to the jaw. It's been tough on your mother and you, but it's a lot worse on her. She'll pull out of it, though!"

"I suppose so."

"Where's your mother?"

"Downstairs. She's expecting Mr. Falkran."

"Is she going to let him put her on the stand?"

"Yes."

Dan spoke in scornful anger. "Blast him!" He turned sharply on Phil. "You've got to put a stop to that, Phil," he said earnestly. "You mustn't let her do it."

"He's told her she can—help father." And he said suddenly: "Dan, I believe my father. I think it was an accident."

Dan lighted a cigarette, strode across the room and back again.

Not looking at Phil, he asked, "See tonight's paper?"

"Only the headlines."

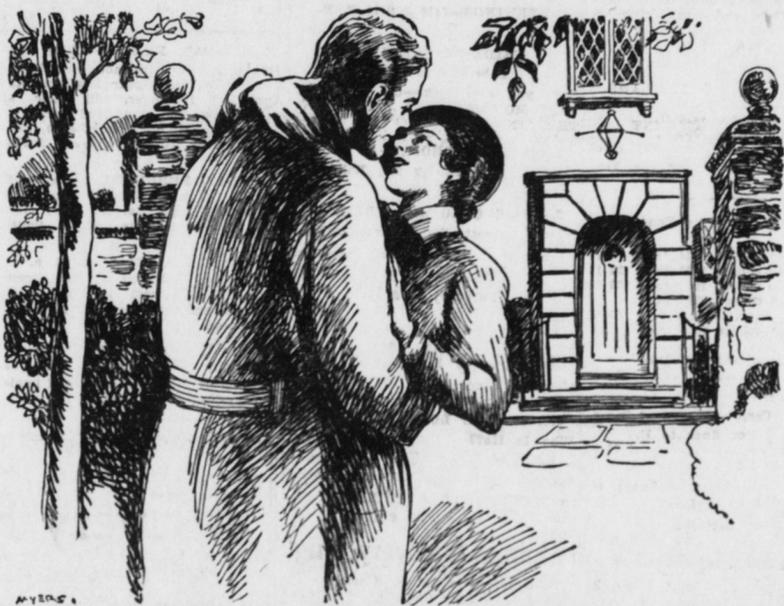
"Well the less you read the papers from now on, the better." He came close to Phil, touched the other's arm. "Get your chin up, Phil," he said gently.

Phil's lips were dry. He wet them painfully, and tried to speak, and could not, and Dan said: "I don't blame you for believing him. But the jury won't. He's done."

Phil tried to shake his head, to deny. "Of course anyone looks bad under a tough cross-examination," Dan admitted. "And Weldon was plenty tough. He poured it on; and your father couldn't take it, Phil. Weldon snarled him all up." He gripped Phil's arm hard. "The only chance is that Weldon overdid it, made the jury sorry for him." And he said, "But—even if he gets a break—you've all got to get ready to go on living, black this all out, forget it."

"What did he say?" Phil asked huskily.

"It was more the way he looked, and acted," Dan explained. He



"With All My Love for Always, Phil," She Whispered.

yourself, you know, Lin. Grand to me. I don't see why."

She looked up at him serenely. "Because I love you, Phil."

He walked for minutes without speaking, nor did she speak beside him. But he said at last: "I know it, Lin. I've tried to pretend I didn't, but I do."

"I don't mean to—bother you about it, Phil," she said, and laughed a little. "I know you've too much else to do to love me very much just now. But that's why I'm sticking around so much. So that when you do find time—"

"I never can, Lin," he said in a low tone. "Never will. I'll never marry anyone, now."

"Never's a long time!"

"I know it."

"Let's wait and see."

"No, honestly," he urged. "Please, Lin, you've got to get the idea out of your head. Probably you ought to stay away from us."

"Can't," she said lightly. "Barbara needs me." And she said: "Besides, it's none of your business how much I love you—yet. I'm not asking for anything. I haven't even asked you to kiss me. Come on, it's almost dark. Time to be heading for home."

By a corner where they turned toward the house, a newsboy shouted: "Sentry Tells Love Life! Read all about it!" He waved a paper, headlines screaming.

Phil stopped uncertainly; but Lin drew him past and on, and she saw his eyes dulled as though with a sudden thought; and she asked, "What is it, Phil?"

He looked at her in a dazed way. "Why—Lin," he said, slowly, almost incredulously, "I just realized something."

"What, Phil?"

"I just realized that I believe him. I mean—about its being an accident. I don't believe he meant to kill Miss Wines at all."

"Bless you, dear," she murmured. They were at the entrance to the drive. She stopped him. "I'm not coming in, Phil," she said. "I'll be over in the morning to stay with Barbara while you and your mother are gone. But here, my dear, whether you want it or not. You need this!"

She tugged his head down, kissed him.

"With all my love for always, Phil," she whispered, her eyes shining. He stood still, watched her walk away.

During dinner, Dan Fisher telephoned to speak to Phil. "Going to

heard a car stop in front of the house, crossed quickly to the window to look out. "It's Falkran," he said. "Let's go down. Come on."

And without waiting for an assent, he opened the door. They descended together as Nellie admitted Falkran. The lawyer saw the reporter and said guardedly, "Oh, hullo, Dan."

Dan nodded. "Did Mr. Bettie see you?" he asked crisply. "About putting Mrs. Sentry on the stand?"

"Yes," Falkran spoke pompously. "But of course I cannot allow the newspapers to tell me how to conduct a case."

"Oh, don't make speeches to me. I'm not the jury."

Mrs. Sentry said, from the living-room door: "Good evening, Mr. Falkran." He turned toward her, with that smile so confident and reassuring, and took her hand. "Ah, Mrs. Sentry."

Phil and Dan followed him. Dan remained standing by the hearth; the others sat down. And Mrs. Sentry asked, "Well?"

Lecturer Advises College Students When and How to Do Their Worrying

A plea for "constructive worrying" was voiced recently by Dr. David Seabury, of New York, in a lecture at Union college, writes a Schenectady (N. Y.) United Press correspondent.

Ordinary worry, Doctor Seabury said, is caused by fear in control of the imagination. The way to avoid this habit, he advised, "is to seek the center of the problem, let the person control the thinking processes, and think straight."

Warning against resisting or resenting difficulties, Doctor Seabury advocated forcing the mind to digest one's problems, thereby starting constructive action to correct or accept the situation.

He maintained that a negative attitude allows fear to enter the mind with the subsequent result that the mind becomes unable to cope with the problem.

"With fear intoxication," he explained, "the brain is partly coagulated or unfit for thinking."

Also, he added, problems should be correctly judged and handled according to their importance.

To solve worrisome problems, Doctor Seabury urged "deliberation, discrimination, decision and determination" in coping with the difficulties.

He concluded his lecture by advising:

"Never worry in bed; never worry when depressed; never worry until you know enough facts to do something constructive; never do another person's worrying; never worry about what someone else thinks you should do; never worry when angry; set a time limit on worry talks; never dump your worries on someone else."

**Familiar Misnomers**

The camel's hair brushes used for fine art work are not made of camel's hair, but of the fur of Russian and Siberian squirrels, says a writer in the Commentator. The lead in lead pencils is graphite, a form of carbon, and has no relation to the metallic element. Catgut, used for stringed instruments, is the intestines of sheep and occasionally horses, but never of cats. Tortoise shell comes from the Caretta imbricata which, properly, is a turtle. Cuttlefish isn't a fish, it's a kind of octopus, which is a mollusk. The famous rice paper used by the Japanese and Chinese for their paintings is manufactured from the pith of a small tree. Whalebone is not bone at all, but baleen, a horny substance growing in the mouths of some species of whales.



APOLOGY

A pantomime chorus girl introduced her young man to another chorus girl, with the result that he transferred his affections, says London Tit-Bits magazine. The aggrieved girl gave her rival a piece of her mind in a letter which read: "You Heartless Creature—You knew very well we had been going about together for six months. Wait till I lay my hands on you, you good-for-nothing bleached blonde. I'll scratch your face, pull out your hair, and throw things at you. Yours truly, L—B—"

"P. S. Please excuse pencil."

Just Too Bad!

The old lady entered the butcher's shop with the light of battle in her eyes. "I believe that you sell diseased meat here," she accused the butcher.

"We do worse," blandly replied the shopkeeper.

"What do you mean, 'worse'?"

The butcher put a finger to his lips.

"The meat we sell is dead," he confided in a stage whisper.—London Answers magazine.

NAUGHT, DOUBLE NAUGHT

He—Wonder why it is that lovers always whisper sweet nothings to girls?

She—Because they're the least expensive things they can whisper.

**Dog's All Right**

A dog-lover had presented a puppy to a friend who called up in a few days, all distress and excitement.

"O," she wailed, "Skipper has chewed off the corner of our best Oriental rug. What shall I do?"

"Never mind," answered the dog-lover, soothingly. "If it's real Oriental the colors won't harm him."—Philadelphia Inquirer.

**Too Much**

Mrs. Jones—This is too bad. Jones—Why, what's the matter?

Mrs. Jones—We'll have to give up sending things for that woman to launder. She's dishonest. This week two towels we brought back from our hotel are missing.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

**Began in Time**

Mrs. Seall—The bride nearly fainted during the ceremony, and had to be supported by her father until it was over.

Mrs. Knowall—Yes, and now I hear that her father is supporting both of them.

**Prompt Action**

Mr. White—I have tickets for the theater.

Mrs. White—Good, I'll start dressing now.

Mr. White—Yes, do. They're for tomorrow night.

**Move On**

Mr. Jones—Good night! Out of gas right here in the middle of traffic!

Mrs. Jones—Well, you can't stop for that now; here comes a cop.

**So It Appears**

He (bragging about ancestry)—Yes, my father sprang from a line of peers.

Bored Listener—Did he drown?

**HER LITTLE TRICK**

First Wife—How do you make your husband pony up?

Second Wife—Accuse him of not having horse sense.

**In the Family**

The teacher wrote on the margin of little Betty's report card: "Good worker, but talks too much."

Betty's father wrote on the opposite margin when it was returned: "Come up some time and meet her mother."—Hartford Courant.

**Cheering!**

"Doctor, shall I have to remain in bed long?"

"If your temperature keeps as high as this, I don't think so."—Stray Stories magazine.

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Uncle Phil Says:



**How Patient We Are**

A public problem is rarely solved until it becomes unbearable.

"Don'ts" that one gets at home are nothing like the "take thats" one gets from the world.

When a man asks a favor and deserves it, he is often more diffident about it than the asker who deserves nothing at all.

**Left and Right Needed**

When a married couple or a pair of shoes are exactly alike, they fail to make a fitting pair.

The widow's mite was not her spare cash, hence its value.

Two men, when they first meet, size each other up. Wouldn't it be fun to compare notes frankly?

Mark Twain Wished to Put Reporter at Ease

When Mark Twain was in Europe, a reporter called upon him by appointment. Mark was at ease in bed.

"Mother came into the room," relates Mark's daughter, Clara Clemens, "to announce the reporter's arrival, and said to her husband:

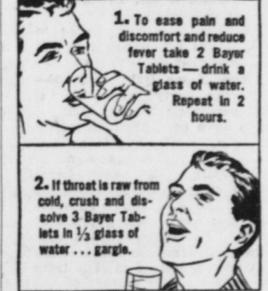
"'Youth—the pet name she had given him—don't you think it will be somewhat embarrassing for the gentleman calling to find you in bed?'"

"Very deliberately came the reply: 'Why, if you think so, Livy, we could have the other bed made up for him.'"

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