

CRUCIBLE

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By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

CHAPTER IX—Continued

Falkran cleared his throat. "Well," he said, "Mr. Sentry stood the cross-examination surprisingly well." And as Dan Fisher moved, the lawyer insisted, smiling: "Of course, for our friends the reporters this was the high spot of the trial, and they made the most of it. But as Mr. Sentry's counsel, I was proud of him."

Mrs. Sentry nodded without speaking. Falkran challenged Dan, "Wasn't that your impression—as a friend of the family?"

Dan started to answer honestly, but he caught Phil's eye with entreaty in it, and said only: "I was too busy taking notes—to think of that side of it. Our job is to report the case, not to decide it." He added guardedly, "But I thought Mr. Weldon shook him once or twice."

Falkran said: "I'm glad to have your opinion. Weldon is of course a skillful cross-examiner, makes every possible effect. It is conceivable that some of the jurors may still be undecided; but Mrs. Sentry's testimony tomorrow will turn the scales our way."

Dan protested, "I don't think you should call her."

"I know," Falkran agreed. "You and all her friends have a natural desire to spare her. That is to be expected. And believe me, Dan, I do not insist. But Mrs. Sentry understands that an acquittal may depend upon her testimony; and of course she wishes to do whatever she can for her husband, no matter what the cost to herself."

Mrs. Sentry watched them both, her face expressionless, saying nothing. Phil came to sit on the arm of her chair, his eyes holding Dan's, dreading what Dan might say.

Dan said, "You claim her testimony may acquit him?"

"I have promised her it will."

"What can she say that will help?"

Falkran hesitated. "Well, Dan," he answered at last, "you heard Mr. Sentry's testimony this afternoon. You understand that the only motive the State can suggest was Mr. Sentry's fear of his wife's attitude. But if Mrs. Sentry testifies that he had no cause to be afraid of her, and that he knew it, then that motive disappears."

There was a silence that extended for long minutes. Dan watched Mrs. Sentry. She sat with her head a little bent.

And she looked at them, at Dan and then at Falkran. Dan stared in quick surprise. There was something in her eyes he could not read; something like serenity. "So I must decide," she said quietly. Then to Falkran: "You wish me to testify?"

"Yes."

Her eyes held his for a moment. Then she said, half smiling, looking up at Phil, "Son, a curious thing has happened to me." The room was very still. "Phil, I have suddenly—fallen in love with your father. He's so alone, so helpless. I must help him." She met Falkran's eyes; she said: "I want to do everything I can. Ask me whatever you wish!"

He came leaping to his feet, smiled that great blustering smile of his. "Splendid!" he exclaimed. "I counted on you, counted on your strength and courage. Be easy, Mrs. Sentry. Your testimony will set your husband free."

She rose to face him; but, on her feet, weakness swept her. She leaned on Phil, said to them all: "Forgive me. I am tired. Phil, will you take me upstairs?"

In the morning Falkran did call Mrs. Sentry to the stand. At her name, she rose and walked steadily to the witness box. She was sworn, and Falkran approached her.

He asked simply, "You are Mrs. Arthur Sentry?"

"I am."

"The wife of the defendant?"

"I am."

Falkran turned, he bowed to the District Attorney, he said, "You may inquire."

And the District Attorney said instantly, "No questions."

Falkran smiled triumphantly; but Mrs. Sentry stood dazed and incredulous. Strong for the ordeal she had expected, this deliverance drained all her strength away. Falkran came to lead her to her seat again.

Through the remaining days of the trial, she listened inattentively, even when Mr. Loran, during the State's rebuttal, took the stand. His testimony was brief. He denied any personal relations with Miss Wines; said he never saw her after her work in the office was ended. He testified that on those days in August when she was out of town, he was fishing in the Maine woods; and he testified that on the night she was killed he went to New York on the 12:30 a. m. train, boarding it at about eleven, and going to bed at once in his compartment. His guide in Maine, and the Pullman porter, corroborated his testimony.

The trial sped; the arguments be-

gan. At half-past three on Thursday afternoon, the jury retired.

To wait for the verdict, Mrs. Sentry and Phil went to a hotel, took a room. At five, and at seven, Falkran telephoned; and at a quarter of ten, he phoned again to assert that the jury stood ten to two for acquittal.

At eleven, he came himself to say that the jury, still unable to agree, had been locked up for the night.

"So there will be no verdict till morning," he said. "A verdict in less than first degree, or a disagreement, is possible; but I expect acquittal. I will give odds that tomorrow night Mr. Sentry will sleep in his own bed! You can go home and rest easy."

Mrs. Sentry and Dan went down in the elevator, out to where old Eli waited with the limousine, and so came home.

CHAPTER X

Mrs. Sentry woke next morning wearily, from sleep that had brought no repose. While she dressed, she thought: I must hurry, hurry. Perhaps already the jury has decided. I must hurry, hurry to be there. Her breath was short; it was a conscious effort to fill her



She Swayed Toward Him, and He Held Her Close.

lungs; and within her body there seemed to be a crawling, writhing knot, as though her nerves were in actual physical motion like the tentacles of an octopus.

She came downstairs bravely; but while they were at breakfast Dan telephoned to urge them not to come to court. "It can't possibly do any good now, you know," he reminded Phil. "The thing is settled, one way or the other."

Phil, returning to the table, repeated this advice. Mrs. Sentry cried instantly: "No, Phil! No. I must be there, must do everything I can."

"Being there can't do any good, mother," he reminded her. "When the jury does come into court again, they will have decided. The sight of you can't change them."

She looked at Phil acutely. "That means you think they will convict him? Find him guilty?"

"Gosh, no!"

"But Phil, if there's any least chance of his acquittal, I must be there. There to—take him in my arms." She colored like a girl.

He put his arm around her. "I'll be there," he promised. "To bring him home. If he can come. If he cannot—then for you to be there would just break you down. And be miserably with your strength, mother. Keep it to spend when it will do real good."

It may have been two hours before he came home. Mrs. Sentry had waited in a surface calm, consulting with cook about meals before she went upstairs to sit with Barbara. When she heard the car, she descended, slowly, holding to the stair-rail, walking carefully. Each step was a voluntary action that required to be planned and with the utmost caution carried through.

She met Phil in the front hall, so that his back was to the light and she could not see his face clearly. Nevertheless she saw that he was alone. So no word from him was necessary.

She swayed toward him, and he held her close.

He said in a low tone, evading the direct statement: "Mr. Falkran wants to see you, to discuss the appeal. I told him to wait, to come in a day or two."

So she knew; and after a moment she shivered suddenly, as a sleeping dog shivers to keep warm, and she felt him stiffen into a frozen rigidity and knew he was afraid for her; so she freed herself, and smiled to reassure him.

"I'm all right, son," she said.

"But I shall lie down for a little while. I'd rather be alone just now. You might go sit with Barbara."

He nodded, assenting; and they parted in the upper hall. When he came into Barbara's room, she turned her head on the pillow to look at him, and he thought how thin she was, her eyes lustrous, her lips pale; and he thought, almost grateful for this task to do: Barbara needs me. We've left her too much alone. I must be with her now.

And he sat down on her bedside and held her thin fingers tight in his, and felt them cling and tug. She croaked something, some question; and he said:

"Yes, Barb, old girl. And now we've got to—help mother, take care of her. That's our job, yours and mine."

She muttered: "Yes; mother." This was one of those days when she could manage half-formed syllables, could make herself intelligible in brief phrases. Then after a moment she said, in a sudden passion, her voice a husky croak:

"But he didn't do it, Phil!"

Phil nodded automatically, more to content and quiet her than in assent.

He stayed a long time with Barbara; and she lay watching him,

and one of you stay with her. If she tries to talk, answer her; get her to confide in you. I could come myself; but she has been afraid of me, afraid of being cured. It had better be one of you, whom she trusts."

"You think she'll be all right?"

"Try," the doctor repeated, and drove away.

Phil did not at once return indoors. He stood under the porte cochere for a moment, thinking of Barbara; and then he realized that even without an overcoat, he was comfortably warm. The sun shone, there was no wind, and the air had promise in it. He walked at random down the drive to the street, noticing without emotion how the shrubbery was broken where curious children or adults like ghouls had broken off souvenirs; and old Eli had neatly clipped the ragged ends and touched them with paint to protect them against decay. Here and there he saw buds swelling; and returning by the other side of the drive he noticed in a sunny corner crocuses just bursting through the sod. March was well begun. Four months till July. In less than four months, the week of July 1 would have come—and gone.

The week of July 1! The Judge's phrase slid like a snake through the dulled channels of his mind. He walked out toward the garage, of which the doors stood open, and saw the cars there. The old limousine which was Eli's pet and pride. The depot wagon which he and Barbara were apt to use. The roadster which his father had driven that night. The limousine and the roadster had low number plates, three digits in the one, four in the other; one of the mild forms of ostentation in which he knew his mother took a secret pride.

He went in to look at the roadster; and he stared at it with a rooted physical distaste. He made a sudden decision to be rid of it. Eli came in from the garden, and Phil started to speak to him and then remembered that he would have to shout, because Eli was deaf; and if he shouted, his mother, even in the house, might hear. Instead, he took an envelope from his pocket and wrote on it orders for the old man to drive the roadster into the country, find a dealer somewhere who would buy it at any price, then surrender the number plates, give them up for good and all. He realized as he wrote that the plates had been renewed since his father last drove the car; but the number was the same, had been the same each year since before he himself was born. Get rid of them!

Eli read the instructions, and he nodded his assent, silent as always. Phil took the registration, endorsed the report of transfer of ownership in blank, scribbled a note giving Eli authority to sell the car. He brushed his hands together in a deep relief and turned away, and it did not occur to him till years afterward, looking backward on these months, that the moment was a milestone. It was the first time in his life that he had ever made a concrete decision involving definite action on an adult plane and carried the action through. He thought in later years that his own maturity dated from that moment when, almost without consideration, he assumed the headship of the family.

He left Eli and went out past the tennis court, littered with last year's dead leaves, the remains of a drift of snow still persisting in one corner; and he stood in the little summerhouse above the muddy stream on which stained and rotten ice still persisted, and looked down where his father that night had thrown the gun.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

High School Drivers Take Toll; Traffic Deaths Up 130 Per Cent in Eleven Years

Motor car drivers of high school age are involved in ten times as many fatal accidents, per miles driven, as the driver of forty-five to fifty years, according to an analysis of road accidents published by the American Magazine.

"Furthermore, the high school record has been getting worse," the magazine states. "In the last 11 years there has been a 25 per cent decrease in traffic deaths of children five to nine years old, and only a slight increase in those ten to fourteen. That is, the safety campaigns to teach children to watch out for themselves in the streets are having their effect. But in the ages of fifteen to nineteen, the high school age, there has been in this same period an increase of 130 per cent in traffic deaths. The reason is obvious. Fifteen is about the age when children begin to drive."

Pointing out that this age of greatest danger is also the best age for teaching motor car operation, the article urges wide extension of such work as that now being done by Arnos Neyhart, former professor of

Industrial Management at Pennsylvania State College, who is heading up a national program for training high school students to drive. Nearly 200 high schools are now using this plan of instruction, and this summer between 60 and 70 colleges will have courses for high school teachers in the technique of teaching automobile operation.

"Ultimately," the article predicts, "a motor car for teaching driving, or a fleet of such cars, will be as much a recognized part of the equipment of any progressive high school as is today the kitchen equipment in the domestic science course or the tools in the manual training shop, and a driving course will be required before graduation from a high school."

Early Study of Sunspots

The ancient Chinese saw sunspots and speculated about their significance. Fritz figured sunspot epochs back to 300 A. D. But it was not until invention of the telescope in the early Seventeenth century that study of spots was possible in a scientific manner.

CAP AND BELLS



AND THAT WAS THAT

Jenkins was stout, with large, broad feet, and although several pairs of shoes were shown him he refused them.

"I must have square toes," he explained to the assistant.

The young man sighed wearily.

"But square toes are not stocked now, sir," he explained. "Pointed toes are fashionable this season."

Jenkins gave him an angry stare.

"That may be," he retorted, "but I happen to be wearing last season's feet."—Safe Driver.

Saving His Money

A man from Aberdeen was asked to join a newly formed anti-tipping society.

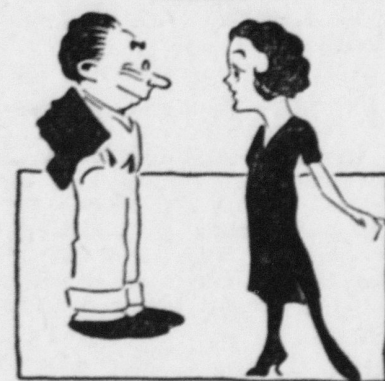
"We consider that tipping is a degrading custom and have formed a society to put a stop to it," explained the membership seeker.

"Ay, I'll join," said the man from Aberdeen gladly.

"That's fine. The subscription is 25 cents a year."

"Och, in that case I'm thinking it'll be cheaper for me to tip!"—Stray Stories magazine.

HOW SHE MEASURES



"Hubby, dear, you don't know how much I love you."

"Well, how much? A hat or a fur coat?"

Truer Pose

A farmer, visiting his son at the university, took the boy downtown to have his photograph taken. The photographer suggested that the son stand with his hand on his father's shoulder.

"It would be more appropriate," remarked the father, "if he stood with his hand in my pocket."—Rural Progress.

Passing the Buck

The judge fixed the prisoner with a stern eye. "Is there any reason," he demanded, "why a sentence of five years at hard labor should not be imposed upon you?"

"Golly, your honor," protested the prisoner, "I don't know any. Ask my lawyer—that's what I'm paying him for."

Fixed Process

Dick—I say, Jim, what is the Order of the Bath?

Jim—Well, as I have experienced it—first the water's too hot; then it's too cold; then you're short of a towel; then you slip on the soap; and, finally, the telephone rings.—Des Moines Register.

And That's That

Teacher—Have you read the outline for today?

Johnny—No.

Teacher—Have you read the topics?

Johnny—No.

Teacher—What have you read?

Johnny—I have red hair.

By a Pole?

The brand-new doctor's assistant was retyping his records when she came to this . . . "shot in lumbar region."

"Lumbar region?" she pondered. Then—"Oh, yes!" and wrote down, "shot in the woods."—Washington Post.

SURE, SURE



Upholsterer—This handsome chair, madam, should be finished in morocco.

Mrs. Nurich—Gracious! Must it be sent that far?

Very Careful

Doctor—Have you taken every precaution to prevent spread of contagion in the family?

Rastus—Absolutely, doctah, we've even bought a sanitary cup and we all done drink from it.

It Would Be Tough

Mose—Ah sho' is glad Ah wasn't King Solomon.

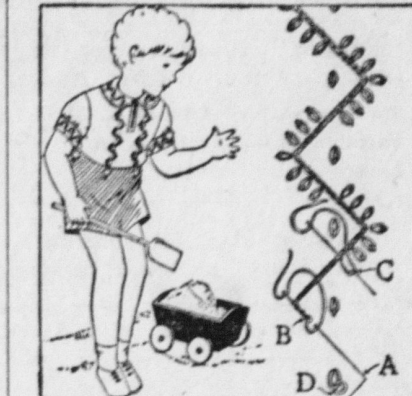
Rastus—Whaffer yo' has dat 'pinion?

Mose—Huh, huntin' up washin's foh one wife keeps me plenty busy.

A Bit of Embroidery For Small Son's Suit

By RUTH WYETH SPEARS

DEAR MRS. SPEARS: Those pages of embroidery stitches in your Book 2 have interested me greatly. I can never remember from time to time how to do even feather stitching. It is ingenious the way you show how to make each kind of stitch, and I turn to your book often. I have a small son now four and a half years old, and have always enjoyed making his clothes and trimming



them with little touches of embroidery. Do you think he is too old for this? B. H.

You still have a year or so if you keep the suits smart and boyish. I am sketching an embroidered trimming idea for you here. The thread should match the color of the trousers. Mark an outline for the embroidery with pencil as at A. Work over this with tiny chain stitches as at B; then make larger chain or loop stitches as at C and D.

Mrs. Spears' Sewing Book 2, Gifts, Novelties and Embroideries, contains 48 pages of step-by-step directions which have helped thousands of women. If your home is your hobby you will also want Book 1—SEWING, for the Home Decorator. Order by number, enclosing 25 cents for each book. If you order both, a crazy-quilt leaflet with 36 authentic patchwork stitches will be included free. Address Mrs. Spears, 210 S. Desplains St., Chicago, Ill.

Chap Found Swankin' It Required Some Effort

Sir Cecil Fitch on his trip to Hollywood told the story of a chap who suddenly got rich somehow. One day a piano was delivered at his cottage. A neighbor said on seeing it arrive:

"You're fair swankin'. But you won't keep that long, mark me!"

The very next day the newly rich chap wheeled his piano out on a hand cart and started down the road.

"Ho, ho!" laughed the neighbor as he saw him. "I told you you wouldn't keep it long."

"Shut yer face, fool," said the other. "I'm off to take me first lesson."

OUT OF SORTS?

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Love's Reflection For love reflects the thing beloved.—Tennyson.

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