

CRUCIBLE

© Ben Ames Williams.

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

CHAPTER XI

Mrs. Sentry went to see her husband on the morning after the jury's verdict was returned. Phil drove her to the prison, but she would not let him come in.

"Not this time, Phil," she said, and she was smiling, something in her eyes which he had never seen there before. "Not this time," she repeated. "This is for Arthur and me. A reunion, Phil."

And she got out of the car and walked almost proudly toward the forbidding door; and Phil watched her, wondering at the change in her in these recent days. She seemed increasingly frail; but also she seemed somehow younger, and there was a quality in her countenance he found it hard to name, a sort of translucent clarity, as though all confusion was gone out of her and her heart was quite serene.

When she came out, not long after, she wore radiance. She got in beside Phil, and she leaned suddenly and kissed him and said, "You look as he did when we were young, Phil."

"He set the car in motion. 'How is he?' he asked."

"I left him fine."

He nodded. "Did you make any plans? About the appeal, or anything? Or about buying out Mr. Loran?"

She even laughed a little. She said: "Heavens, no! We just talked about each other." And after a moment she told him, "Phil, everything he said about what happened that night was true."

"I believe him," he assented. "But of course what we believe doesn't help much."

"It helps me much," she confessed. "It helps me. So long as I know—I can manage not to mind so much what others believe. Whatever happens."

They came home thus, and went up to see Barbara; and Barbara watched her mother and seemed in some way to be better suddenly. And the days went on.

It was Mr. Sentry himself who presently assumed the decisive voice in the matter of buying the business from Mr. Loran. Phil and his mother were still uncertain what to do about this, when Mr. Hare came to the house a few days after the trial ended to say that Mr. Sentry had sent for him, had discussed the question.

"I told him Mr. Loran's proposition," he explained. "He feels that the valuation set up by Mr. Loran is too low, and so he believes it is better to buy than to sell."

Mrs. Sentry said: "What about payment? I should not care to buy on anything but a cash basis."

Hare assured her: "That can be managed. I went over it with Mr. Sentry, and later with his brokers. His investments are in good shape."

"I prefer not to see Mr. Loran myself," Mrs. Sentry remarked. "It would be painful to him and to me."

"Of course," Hare agreed. "But I can handle the whole transaction, under proper powers."

She asked, after a moment, "Has Mr. Sentry talked with Mr. Falkran about the appeal?"

"No. Falkran is to see him tomorrow morning."

"Mr. Falkran was here yesterday," she explained. "To discuss it with me. To explain some of the things—" And she said: "I did not always understand him, the technical points. I told him we wished to take every proper measure. But I warned him that we did not want any tricks, evasions, miserable meaningless delays." She asked suddenly, "What do you think, Dean?"

Hare hesitated. "Well, it's possible he might get a new trial."

"Do you feel that Mr. Sentry had a fair trial?"

The lawyer hesitated. "I'm not experienced in criminal cases," he said evasively.

Mrs. Sentry nodded. "I see. You think he did."

Phil urged, "But Mr. Hare, another jury might believe father; might believe it was an accident." Then he was silenced; for the postman had just rung, and Nellie came in with letters for Mrs. Sentry. She glanced at the topmost.

"Oh!" she whispered. "It's from Mary!" And instantly her eyes were fountains.

Dean Hare rose quickly to depart. Phil went with him to the door, and he asked the older man, "What do you think about an appeal, sir, honestly?"

Hare said after a moment: "Well, Phil, there's always a chance. Falkran is clever. But—I doubt if a new trial would help, unless some new evidence turns up. A commutation by the Governor—that's a more hopeful possibility, later on."

And he departed; and Phil went back to his mother and Mary's letter.

Since Mary's marriage to Jimmy Endle, they had had news of her only indirectly, through Mrs. Harry

Murr, who knew everything; and through that encounter with Mrs. Loran, Endle's sister. Phil was bitter toward Mary; but Mrs. Sentry would hear no word of criticism.

"You mustn't blame her, Phil," she insisted. "When a ship is wrecked, people have to—snatch at anything!"

Now he came back into the living-room to find his mother sitting with streaming eyes, the letter in her nerveless hands. She extended it to him; and he read it in slow rising rage.

Dear Mother and the rest of you: Well, I've been following the fortunes of the grand old family name in the home papers. Stout fellows, all of you, to stick with the sinking ship; but even a rat knows enough to leave on such occasions I'm the rat! Sorry, but there it is.

I've got a sinking ship on my own hands, but there will be plenty of salvage. After we left home, we honeymooned as far as New York, and by that time, being mutually bored, were ready for company. Picked up half a dozen oh such congenial spirits, and a hundred cases of ditto, tried Jamaica.

Phil read, and his face was like ice. He crumpled the stiff note-paper in his hand and strode toward the fireplace, without looking at his mother, without speaking; but she said quickly: "No, Phil. You didn't read the last page."

Phil looked at her then, saw again her tears; but he saw too that they were not tears of anger, nor even of hopeless grief; and he smoothed out the wrinkled paper and read on the other side, like a belated postscript:

Mother, when I was little and terribly hurt, I'd run to you, crying, and kick your shins awfully, and then feel better. Remember? You never seemed to mind, seemed to understand.

He read these lines two or three times, and some faint understanding came to him. He said, half-repenting, "You want to keep it?"

"Yes."

"Going to write to her?"

"Just a line," she said. "Just three or four words. That's all she wants, all I can give."

He left her with the letter in her hands, smoothing it across her knees, stroking it almost caressingly. As he passed through the hall, he heard her deep inhalation, as though it were hard to fill her aching, empty lungs.

Mary was gone, he thought; lost to them. And Barbara too? She no longer showed a temperature every night and morning, yet except when Dan was with her she seemed weak and weaker, as though her life were draining slowly away. Phil went up to her now.

He found her lying relaxed, flat on her back, her legs straight, her hands at her sides; and near her head the clock ticked, ticked. The room was very still, and Phil looked at her and thought she was asleep, and then she spoke, as she sometimes did in her sleep, in almost natural tones.

She murmured, "—bite off my tongue."

Phil, remembering Doctor Maiton's instructions, asked softly: "Why? Why, Barb?" He came near her, sat close beside her.

"I won't tell!" she murmured. "I

won't tell! I'll bite off my tongue!" "You don't have to tell anything, Barb dear."

She said, in a dull fashion: "I don't want to go to sleep. I dream if I sleep. I'm not asleep, not asleep."

"No." "They can't make me tell." "Of course not, Barb."

She whispered, eyes tight closed: "But I saw him, saw him that night, down there. Mr. Flood knows I know, and he'll try to make me tell."

"It's all right, Barb." "I can't tell if I can talk, can I?" She smiled in a sly, secret fashion.

"Asleep, Barb?" He was leaning near, close beside her, close above her, close protecting her. "It's all right, Barb."

"No," she said. "No, I'm thinking."

"What are you thinking?" "If I can't talk, they can't make me, can they? Because if I did, it

would kill him. And he didn't do it, Phil!"

Phil touched her brow to see whether she was feverish. Her head was cool, yet at his touch she moved convulsively, like one awakening. Her eyes opened and she saw him, and she said quickly: "I wasn't talking. I wasn't talking. I can't talk."

"You're talking now, Barb. You're all right."

"Oh!" she whispered. "Was I?" "Yes," he assured her. "You were talking as well as anyone."

"I heard myself," she admitted, and she said: "Phil, I'm better! I'm better, Phil!"

"You're fine," he told her. His own heart was pounding; he was glad for the drawn shades, the shadows in the room, so that she could not see his excitement. "You can talk, Barb. You can talk now."

"Yes," she said, wonderingly. "I can talk. Why, I am talking, Phil. I heard myself talking in my sleep."

"You're not asleep now. You're talking now." His pulse raced with the thought: She is better, better! "I can talk to mother!" she cried.

"Phil, I can talk to mother!" "Yes, to anyone."

"To Linda?" "Yes, of course."

"To Dan?" "Yes, to Dan."

He saw color suffuse her white cheek. "To Dan," she whispered. "To Dan, to Dan." Murmuring, her

eyes drooping. "Dan . . . Dan . . ."

And quietly, she was asleep. Phil saw her breathing ease to a regular and even beat. When he could leave without awakening her, he went in haste to tell his mother; and to telephone jubilantly to Doctor Maiton.

The doctor was delighted. "Fine!" he cried. "She may sleep twelve hours, twenty-four; but she'll wake as good as new."

He was almost right. Barbara slept till noon next day; and when she woke, she spoke easily and naturally. On the second day she was able to sit up; on the third, to get out of bed.

But before that, another thing had happened to bring them something like peace. Mr. Falkran saw his client; Mr. Sentry directed him not to appeal.

After it had been determined to buy out Mr. Loran, Phil accepted the decision almost gratefully.

The dissolution of the partnership was arranged to take place as of April 1. During the interval before that date, Phil went daily to the office. Mr. Loran, as he had expected, received him with restraint. Phil saw that Loran, too, had suffered from the ordeal they had all endured; and when their first talk of business matters was done, the boy said apologetically:

"Mr. Loran, I want to tell you. Mother and I didn't know—what was going to happen at the trial. I mean, about mentioning you."

"Forget it," Mr. Loran told him. "Damned lawyer's trick, that's all; to throw mud at random and try to make it stick. Falkran knew that. Just dragging a dead herring across the trail." And he said: "I'm going out of town tomorrow. Be back April 1 to clean up the whole thing here. You can be learning the ropes. And of course, Miss Randall has been here nearly twenty years. She could run the business alone if you let her. You'll get along."

Phil had his misgivings; but when after the first of April he took full charge, matters went—to his own surprise—very well. On routine matters, Miss Randall could advise him; and the momentum of the business would carry it for a while. There were resignations, but none that were sufficiently important to cripple the organization. And those major decisions, in which a mistake in judgment might have proved costly, did not crowd upon him.

But despite this, his world was suddenly awry. From the day the papers had been signed, he saw little of Linda. She sometimes came to the house, and he had glimpses of her; but she never stayed long, and Phil missed her, and one evening told her so.

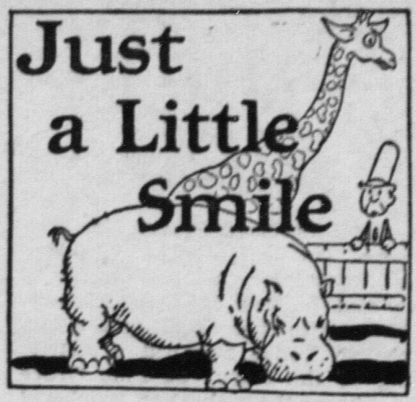
"I don't blame you, of course," he said reluctantly. "After all, you've given us a lot of time, been wonderfully generous. I can understand that you have other things—"

She smiled secretly. "I'm very busy just now, Phil," she admitted.

He had, during April, other concerns. Three times he saw his father, going to the state prison with Mr. Hare. It was necessary for Phil to acquaint himself with every detail of the family affairs. In lieu of a will, Mr. Sentry made deeds of gift; and arrangements were concerted to meet gift or inheritance taxes without a sacrifice of assets. Also, he set up a trust for Mr. Wines, the father of the dead girl, so that the old man's remaining years of life might be secure.

At the end of the third occasion, all was done; and then, under the guard's eye, Phil and his father bade each other good-by.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



UNANSWERABLE

A teacher was giving a lesson on the circulation of the blood. Trying to make the matter clearer, he said: "Now, boys, if I stood on my head the blood, as you know, would run into it, and I should turn red in the face."

"Yes, sir," said the boys. "Then why is it that while I am standing upright in the ordinary position the blood doesn't run into my feet?"

A little fellow shouted, "Cause yer feet ain't empty."

Poor Visibility

Jimmy's father took him to Sunday school for the first time one Sunday and on the way home, in order to find out if the youngster had learned anything, he asked:

"Jimmy, who killed Goliath?" "I dunno," said Jimmy. "I was sittin' on a back seat and couldn't see."

ON SITDOWN STRIKE



Newspaper Publisher—Haven't we any murder stories today?

Foreman—No sir, no one's been killed.

Newspaper Publisher—Confound it! What's the matter with those thugs, anyway.

How Refreshing

Three old maids, all deaf, were sightseeing atop a Chicago bus. "Is this Webster?" asked one.

"No, it's Thursday," replied the second.

"So am I," cried the third. "Let's get off and get a drink."—Prairie Farmer.

In Demand

Father—Yes, my son went out west several years ago to make his fortune.

Friend—And what is he worth now?

Father—I don't exactly know; but six months ago the authorities were offering \$1,000 for him.

The Link

"What's that piece of string tied round your finger for, Bill?" "That's a knot. Forget-me-knot is a flower. With flour you make bread, and with bread you have butter. This is to remind me to buy some pickled onions."—Winnipeg Free Press.

Hm-m!

Suitor (to prospective father-in-law)—I'd like to have your daughter's hand, sir.

Prospective Father-in-Law—What is your profession, young man?

Suitor—Why, I'm an actor, sir.

Prospective Father-in-Law (irate)—Well, get out before the footlights.—Wall Street Journal.

Logical

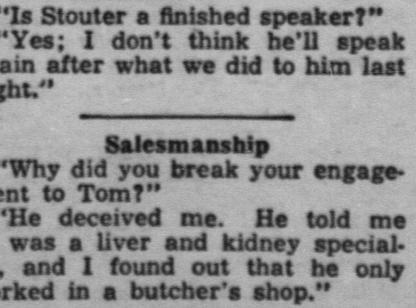
Little Gloria has been learning her letters from an illustrated book which has the picture of an animal to "stand" for each letter. The other day she was reciting the alphabet very glibly, and when she came to the end, she intoned, "W, X, Y, Zebra."

Comes Extra

Mistress (engaging cook)—But I'll be assisting you in the kitchen. Would you be wanting the same wages?

Cook—No mum. Two dollars more.—Hartford Courant.

OUT OF THE PICTURE



"Is Stouter a finished speaker?" "Yes; I don't think he'll speak again after what we did to him last night."

Salesmanship

"Why did you break your engagement to Tom?" "He deceived me. He told me he was a liver and kidney specialist, and I found out that he only worked in a butcher's shop."

Change at Last

Boarder—Hey! I found a nickel in my hash!

Landlady—Yes, I put it there. You've been complaining about the lack of change in your meals.—Prairie Farmer.

CLASSIFIED DEPARTMENT

POULTRY
BRED FOR PRODUCTION: Ducks
RAISED FOR PROFIT: Chickens
SOLD BY QUALITY: Turkeys
STARTED CHICKS: Poultry
MILFORD HATCHERY
Pikesville F. O. - Rockdale, Md.

TIPS to Gardeners

Making the Garden Pay
VEGETABLE gardens are grown to provide fresher, more nourishing food for the family, and to conserve on food bills. Therefore, crops must be wisely chosen and systematically planted.

According to Walter H. Nixon, vegetable expert, the most important vegetables considered both for food value and garden space required are: Beans, cabbage, carrots, beets, squash, tomatoes, onions, peas and spinach.

To get the most from garden space, plant two crops of spinach, one in spring, the other in late summer. Plant Chinese cabbage and parsnips about midsummer in space occupied earlier by beans, radishes and peas. Make successive plantings of carrots and beets for a steady supply of small tender roots.

Plant bush beans and beets on both sides of tomato rows. When tomatoes need the space, those earlier crops will have been pulled and used.

Corn can be worked into the garden plan even though there is not such space. Plant spinach or beets or green onions between rows of slower-growing corn. Then grow pole beans (cornfield beans) to climb on the corn stalks.

Black Leaf 40 KILLS LICE
JUST A DASH IN FEATHERS... OR SPREAD ON ROOSTS

The End Counts
If well thou hast begun, go on; it is the end that crowns us, not the fight.—Herrick.

A Three Days' Cough Is Your Danger Signal

No matter how many medicines you have tried for your common cough, chest cold, or bronchial irritation, you may get relief now with Creomulsion. Serious trouble may be brewing and you cannot afford to take a chance with any remedy less potent than Creomulsion, which goes right to the seat of the trouble and aids nature to soothe and heal the inflamed mucous membranes and to loosen and expel germ-laden phlegm.

Even if other remedies have failed, don't be discouraged, try Creomulsion. Your druggist is authorized to refund your money if you are not thoroughly satisfied with the benefits obtained. Creomulsion is one word, ask for it plainly, see that the name on the bottle is Creomulsion, and you'll get the genuine product and the relief you want. (Adv.)

The Ablest One

The winds and waves are always on the side of the ablest navigators.—Gibson.

Don't Sleep When Gas Crowds Heart

If you toss in bed and can't sleep from congestion and averted GAS BLOATING remember this: To get quick relief you must get DOUBLE ACTION. You must relieve the GAS. You must clear the bowels. Adierka is just what you need because it acts on the stomach and BOTH bowels. Adierka is BOTH cathartic and carminative. Carminatives that warm and soothe the stomach and expel GAS. Cathartics that quickly and gently clear the bowels of waste matter that may have caused GAS BLOATING, sour stomach, sleepless nights and indigestion for months. Adierka relieves stomach gas almost at once. Adierka usually acts on the bowels in less than two hours. No waiting for overnight relief. Adierka does not grip, is not habit forming. Get genuine Adierka today. Sold at all drug stores.

A Long Lesson

Life is a long lesson in humility.—J. M. Barrie.

That Nagging Backache

May Warn of Disordered Kidney Action
Modern life with its hurry and worry, irregular habits, improper eating and drinking—its risk of exposure and infection—throws heavy strains 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!

DOAN'S PILLS

These Advertisements Give You Values