

CRUCIBLE

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CHAPTER XIII—Continued

"Phil," Linda said, "I shan't see you today or tomorrow. You will be with your mother. You won't want me."

He assented: "Yes, Barbara and I will be with her."

She said, "But you'll feel me with you?"

"Yes, Lin."

She did not kiss him, nor touch his hand; only their eyes met firmly, met and held and clung.

Then Phil went down by those back stairs up which his father had come on that October night months ago; and he took the car and drove home. Barbara was there with his mother. Mrs. Sentry was sitting quietly in the living-room, her hands limp in her lap, a curious deep peace in her eyes. Barbara and Phil stayed with her, talking in low tone, till lunch was announced. But afterwards Barbara caught Phil's eye; and Phil moved with her through the hall toward the door.

"I've got to get out of doors for a while, Phil," she said desperately. "I can't stand it. She's so—still. Almost as though she were happy, were—waiting for someone. It scares me."

He hid his own fears. "Sure, run along!"

"I'll be back," she promised; and he returned into the living-room and Mrs. Sentry asked, "Has Barbara gone somewhere?"

"Just for a walk," he said, and she nodded silently, thinking: Mary is gone, and Barbara is gone, and soon Arthur too will go, and there will be only Phil and me. Phil and me. Just two. There were five of us, but now there are two. Phil seems tired. I am tired, dreadfully; tired and old. They will shave Arthur's head. I mustn't think of it, of that; not concretely. I mustn't scream. I must help Phil.

And she began to talk to her son, almost happily. Somehow the afternoon passed. Barbara returned, but she stayed upstairs, writing to Dan, till dinner-time.

At dinner, Mrs. Sentry tried to eat, but the first mouthful choked her. She could not swallow it; the utmost compulsion of her will would not make the muscles of her throat do their task. Phil, she saw, ate readily, easily, rather more rapidly than his usual habit was. He urged her to drink a cup of tea.

"I'm afraid it would keep me awake," she said, and then smiled at the absurdity of that. Awake? Would she ever sleep again? After tomorrow night, Arthur would sleep with a shaved spot, on his head. She resented that shaved spot, as though it were a desecration of the dead. His hair was still so plentiful and thick; no hint of baldness anywhere. Where was the spot they would shave? On his brow? The top of his head? Phil saw her shudder, and rose and took her arm.

"Let's walk in the garden, mother," he said.

She went with him submissively. Barbara watched them go, but made no move to follow them. They strolled around the house arm in arm, past the garage and the tennis court to the pergola, and sat down there; stayed there talking quietly together, careful now to avoid silences, since into silence, just as dreams come in sleep, hideous thoughts come crowding.

Presently it was dark, and she asked, "What time is it?"

"Almost ten."

"I suppose," she decided, "we had better go in."

When they came in, Barbara was gone. Gone to bed, perhaps, Phil thought; and he turned on all the lights in the living-room, till he banished every shadow.

She asked: "Is it cold, Phil?"

"Would you like a fire?"

"I'm—sort of shivering."

He set logs burning on the hearth; and it was hot and he perspired. He thought tomorrow would be long; and he thought he would have to be early at the office Monday morning. Monday was apt to be a busy day.

"Warmer now?" he asked.

She sat down on the low bench in front of the fire, hugging her knees, watching the flickering flames. She had heard or read that when during an electrocution the current was thrown into the body of the doomed man, all the lights flickered—as these flames were flickering—and were for a moment dimmed, and she thought of this now, but she said calmly:

"We'll lie in the sun and rest," he said.

She thought of all those men in the prison yammering and howling and screaming, and then she remembered reading somewhere that nowadays there was a special wire to carry the electricity to the chair, not connected with the prison circuit at all, so that the prisoners did not see the lights dim; and she wondered about the lights in the room where the chair was, and whether they would go dim, and whether any of the witnesses ever screamed when that dimness came to shadow what was happening.

"I should like that," she agreed.

"The hot, bright sun."

Phil said: "And we'll go fishing for flounders, or maybe off shore, for cod. That's always fun."

Men sitting in straight chairs, she thought, around a small brick-walled room, all side by side, except that one chair was set by itself, facing the others.

She said: "Sit here by me, Phil."

He sat down on the bench close to her. "And we'll take long drives," he said. "Back through the woods,

some word, and then the little man volunteered, "Mr. Hare told me I'd better come see Mr. Sentry."

"Mr. Hare?" She spoke like a parrot, without inflection.

"Ysee," the old man explained, "I got this here from Mr. Hare, the first of June." He fumbled in his pocket, produced a shabby, soft, worn old leather wallet, searched among its contents, found what he sought at last and extended it to Linda. It was a check for \$250, signed by Mr. Hare, as Trustee. Linda looked at it without touching it, and the old man said:

"I might have wrote a letter, but I ain't much hand at writing, and I knowed likely I'd git up t' the city before long; so I kep' it and cal'lated to see Mr. Hare when I come."

Linda said hurriedly, "Wait a minute, please." She went into Phil's office, closing the door behind her. The old man stood turning his hat in his hands, looking wistfully around. The other girls began a pretense of work again.

Then Linda came back and said in a low tone, "Come in, please." She

held the door open, closed it behind him. He looked around Phil's office, saw no one.

"He ain't here?" he said.

"Mr. Sentry has gone home," she explained. "But I am his secretary, so I can handle—whatever it is you want."

"Well, it's this," the old man told her after a moment, and extended the check again. "Mr. Hare sent it to me, and he said it was from Mr. Sentry, the other one. Said there'd be another check every month right along."

"Yes?"

"Well, I don't want it," Zeke Wines told Linda gently.

"Mr. Sentry wanted you to have it."

"I know. Mr. Hare told me all about that in the letter. But I never lived off my gal long as she was alive, and I don't aim to now."

And he said apologetically: "Not that I hold anything ag'in the young man here. Nor ag'in anybody, for that matter. Folks git twisted into a net sometimes, and they thrash around any way to git out. I've see fish do the same. Never blamed 'em."

"It would make Mr. Sentry—young Mr. Sentry—happy to think he was helping you."

He said gravely: "Like as not,

But I dunno why I should go out of my way, do something I don't want to do, account of him."

"I see," she assented. "You're right, of course. I didn't understand. I'm sorry." She took the check from his hand. "I am to destroy this, not let Mr. Hare send any more?"

"Thank'ee kindly."

"I'm sorry you had to bother to come here."

"That's all right," he said. "I never was here before. I—kind of hankered to come." He looked around the room. "This's where it happened, ain't it?"

"Just outside the door there," she said, after a moment. "In the hall." She passed him and opened the door. "Out here," she said.

"She'd be'n in here, hadn't she?"

"Yes," Linda fought to hold her voice steady. "But—they found her outside in the hall."

He came slowly toward her as though to step through the door; but on the threshold he paused, half-turned, set his shoulders against the jamb to which the door was hinged. "Dunno as I need to look," he said in a low tone. He stood with his head a little lowered, staring straight ahead, not speaking. The silence seemed to Linda long. She was numb with sorrow for him; scarce heard him when he spoke.

Yet what he said was like a crash of thunder. "Guess here's where the bullet hit, ain't it?" he asked, and pointed, and looked at her inquiringly.

Linda after a paralyzed moment said hoarsely, "What?"

"Right here," he repeated. "The bullet hole."

And he extended his hand. He touched, she saw, the brass latch plate set on the door jamb and designed to receive the tongue of the lock. Her knees wavered, but she mustered enough strength to go toward him, almost staggering; to look where he pointed. She bent down, the better to see.

The latch plate had an opening in it, rectangular, perhaps an inch and a quarter from top to bottom, something over half an inch across. Inside this opening there was a recess where before the plate was set the wood had been chiseled out to make a slot into which the bolt slid home. But there was more. There was a round hole in this raw wood, not very deep, somewhat discolored; and Linda, leaning close, saw that the edge of this round hole was marred as though a knife blade had been inserted there to serve as a pry, to pry something out.

Old Zeke Wines said in a low tone, "Bullet must have gone right through the hole where the bolt goes, never even touched the sides, lodged in the wood there."

"Yes," said Linda. Her voice rose. "Yes, yes. Yes, it did!" she cried, loudly, her voice almost shrill.

For one phrase was ringing in her thoughts, over and over. Barbara's words: "If father didn't kill her, there'd be another bullet, somewhere."

And Linda thought: There is! There is! But no wonder we didn't find it! In the shadow, and it's dark here by the door. You can't see it even now unless you peer in through the lock. How sharp the old man's eyes must be.

"Well, thank'ee, Miss," said Zeke Wines meekly. "I'll bid you good day."

And he would have moved away. But Linda came to life; her thoughts began to clear. She caught his arm. "No," she said eagerly. "Don't go. Please! Wait. This is important. This—"

(TO BE CONTINUED)



WHOSE AFRAID?

Mrs. Smith was particularly fond of reminding her husband that the silver was hers, the piano was hers, and the furniture was hers, and Smith was getting tired of it. One night Mrs. Smith was awakened by noises downstairs. She shook her husband, relates Pearsons London Weekly.

"Henry," she said hoarsely. "Get up. There are burglars downstairs." "Burglars!" echoed Smith, wearily. "Well, let 'em burgle. There's nothing of mine down there."

High Praise
An American woman who spent last summer in Europe tells of her efforts to say "thank you" to a waiter who had been particularly helpful.

"As I passed him the tip I started to say 'Thank you' in German, revised it with a bit of French, added a little Italian, and—well, in the midst of my floundering, imagine my chagrin when the waiter suddenly interrupted.

"Madame, you're doing swell."



He (exaltingly)—I feel I could put all the world under your feet! She—Sir, permit me to say the size of my feet would not permit the carrying out of your ambition by any means.

Nice of Them
A woman had gone to Scotland for the first time in her life. On her return to London she expressed herself as quite surprised at the comparative civilization of the north.

"Our English customs are spreading rapidly," she said. "Even in a little town like St. Andrews they have a nice golf course."—Pearson's Weekly.

Poor Elizabeth
Two little girls who could not have been more than 12 at the most were discussing plans for a party.

"I'm inviting only couples," said one of them, with great dignity. "But I'm facing quite a problem with Elizabeth. She hasn't got a boy friend—you know, she's only eight."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Simple Test
Professor—I am going to speak on liars today. How many of you have read the twenty-fifth chapter of the text?

Nearly every student raised his hand. Professor—Good. You are the group to whom I wish to speak. There is no twenty-fifth chapter.

Quantity Price
"Don't you think, doctor, you rather overcharged when Johnny had the measles?"

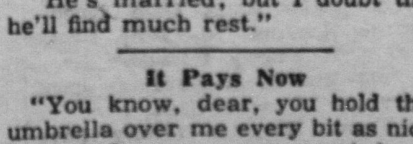
"You must remember, Mrs. Brown, that includes 12 visits." "Yes, but you forget he infected the whole school for you!"

Voice That Told
Voice over the telephone to schoolmaster—Please, Alfred Jones will not be at school today, because he is in bed sick.

Schoolmaster—Very good; but who is this speaking? Voice—My father.

Not That Slow
"Are you a messenger boy?" asked the near-sighted man of a boy in the street.

"No, sir," was the indignant reply. "It's my sore toe that makes me walk so slowly."—Royal Arcanum Bulletin.



"So he's married for the rest of his life?" "He's married; but I doubt that he'll find much rest."

It Pays Now
"You know, dear, you hold that umbrella over me every bit as nicely as before we were married. In fact, you are even more careful."

"I have to pay for your dresses now."—Minneapolis Journal.

The Weather Again
Election Agent—That was a good long speech our candidate made on the farming question, wasn't it? Farmer—It wasn't so bad; but a couple o' nights good rain wud done a sight more good.

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TIPS to Gardeners

Give Flowers a Break

DON'T put an added burden on your flowers by asking them to grow in conditions to which they are not suited. Flowers are like races of humans. Some thrive in warm, moist climates. Others, through the centuries, have become accustomed to intensive cold.

Certain flowers, for instance, may be grown successfully in comparatively cool, semi-shaded locations. If you have such spots in your yard, don't plant your zinnias or petunias there.

Any of the following will prove more satisfactory, according to Harry A. Joy, flower expert: Annuals—balsam, clarkia, coleus, nasturtium, pansy, calendula and vinca; perennials—English daisy, campanula, columbine, myosotis, sweet William and viola.

If you live in drouthy sections or if your flower beds are on well-drained soil in full sun, try the following: Annuals—abronia, ageratum, alyssum procumbens, arctotis, calliopis, candytuft, cosmos, four o'clock, lupin texensis, petunia, portulaca, sunflower, verbena, and zinnia; perennials—coreopsis and hollyhock.

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Old Practices
The world is very old; it must profit by its experience. It teaches that old practices are often worth more than new theories.—Napoleon I.

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Omnipresent Duty
A sense of duty pursues us ever. It is omnipresent, like the deity.—Daniel Webster.

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 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.

DOANS PILLS
You may suffer nagging backache, headache, dizziness, getting up nights, leg pain, 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. Doan's 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!

Merganser Family of Ducks Destructive; Found to Be Menace to the Trout Streams

The three members of the merganser family of ducks can well be named "wild fowl without a friend." No one cares to fight their battles for protection. Despised by the duck hunters, considered by epicures as unfit for food, condemned by fishermen as a menace to our trout streams, the merganser ducks, called useless, destructive and predatory, are seriously threatened with the death penalty, notes Albert Stoll, Jr., in the Detroit News.

The thousands of conservation officers and fish culturists throughout the United States have been empowered to destroy mergansers if they appear to be destructive to fish life. There will be few so deputized who will refrain from "shooting on sight" the first merganser coming within range of the gun.

Those who are on intimate terms with these birds, and know of their food habits, seem to agree that they constitute one of the greatest enemies of our brook trout. They remain in their northern habitat until ice completely covers even the smallest pot hole or open expanse of river water, feeding continually upon whatever fish life these waters may furnish. Unlike other species

of ducks, their appetite never appears satisfied.

The examination of the stomach contents of an American merganser killed on the Boardman river proved that this bird had just partaken of a ten-inch rainbow trout for his breakfast. This is not unusual. It is surprising how large a fish the merganser can swallow with but little effort.

Possibly a thinning in the ranks of the merganser is justified, but it is a certainty that ornithologists will not countenance their complete extermination.

Famed Tower of London
Not one, but many towers compose the famed Tower of London. Normans built the fortress on the ruins of another fort constructed by Julius Caesar's legions. It has served since as the royal palace, a prison, and, finally, as sort of an historical museum and resting place for the crown jewels. Until 1834 it also housed the royal menagerie.

Though many persons believe it still is an impregnable fort guarding London, its chief weapons are ancient swords and armor of historical value.