

CRUCIBLE

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By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

CHAPTER XIV—Continued

Phil smiled happily; and then he turned to Mary's letter, and sobered again; and for a moment he held it in his hands, remembering their last word from Mary with bitterness. He was tempted to destroy this letter unopened; but at last, like one performing an unpleasant duty, he tore off the end of the envelope and drew out the letter inside and began to read.

And at the first words, his eyes widened, and his breath came hissing and he sat up sharply in his berth. The letter was from Paris. Mary had written:

Dear Phil:

Gus Loran killed Miss Wines. He has told me so.

I'll try to tell you just what happened. I think I told you he was here. His wife was getting a divorce. We met by accident; but she seemed fascinated by me. My Argentine and I weren't getting along very well. He's gone back to South America now. I began to realize that Mr. Loran had something on his mind. He was drinking a lot, and looking sick; and then he began to give me presents, pretty valuable ones, and I asked him why, and—he was drunk most of the time of course—he began to talk

be reached soon after dawn—he said nothing to Mrs. Sentry. When she saw his high spirits and asked some question, he said evasively, "Oh, just looking forward to seeing Barbara, that's all!"

They alighted at the Cleveland station, and Dan and Barbara were there to greet them, and Barbara was quick in her mother's arms, while Phil pumped Dan's hand. Then Barbara came to kiss Phil, her eyes dancing; and she linked her arm through his, and Mrs. Sentry and Dan were close on their heels, and they came to Dan's car. Phil, watching Barbara, thought she was becoming beautiful. It had never occurred to him that his sister was beautiful before. He had thought of her as a nice-looking youngster; but now she wore a subtle radiance of glowing eyes and clear skin and steady lips that were strong even when they curved in quick laughter.

Phil said, "Dan, you've made a beauty out of Barb!"

"Old Doctor Fisher," Dan chuckled. "Every treatment guaranteed. A ravishing beauty after three

"But mother, how did you know?"

She smiled. "I am not blind! You and Linda wore it like banners, that day you came back to York."

"And you don't mind?"

"I've minded your not trusting me enough to tell me about it, that's all."

"When will you be married?" Barbara challenged. "Soon?"

Mrs. Sentry said smilingly: "Yes, soon, I hope." And to her son: "I wasn't sure I could—let you go, till we saw Barbara so happy, Phil. At home I had too much the feeling that things were ending; that there was nothing to look forward to. But—things are just beginning here, with Barb and Dan. And you and Linda can make a fine new beginning too."

Phil's throat was full; he thought: This is the time to tell them! He reached in his pocket for Mary's letter. But then Dan came into the room. He came quietly enough; yet his very quiet made them look at him in sudden attention.

Phil saw Dan's face white and set; and Barbara saw Dan's face too, and was in his arms in an swift movement, staring up at him, crying: "Dan! What is it, Dan?"

Dan said in a low tone: "It was the office that called, Mrs. Sentry. They've just had an A. P. bulletin, with—great news! Gus Loran has confessed to the French police that he killed Miss Wines. The Governor says Mr. Sentry will be pardoned at once, will be free today."

Trains are tedious things; but planes move swiftly. Yet to Mrs. Sentry, that day while they seemed to hang motionless in a cloudless sky alive with sunshine so bright she thought it could never be obscured, the swift journey homeward appeared to be interminable.

But it was not. The panorama below them, moment by moment, changed; the mountains beneath them slid behind; new cities far

ahead came quickly into view, and then, distant yet beautiful, the sea . . .

Before they landed at East Boston, Phil had seen Linda waiting, far below. In his arms, held close, her lips tight to his, she whispered only his name, Phil, Phil, Phil, her lips moving against his. And then: "He is waiting for you, Phil. For you all to take him home together. Eli is here with the limousine, and I've my car—"

He rode with her through congested streets to the shabby portals of the prison; and the limousine pulled up behind them. Upon arrival there she said:

"Dan and I will go on ahead, Phil. Just you, whom he loves, to meet him here and bring him home." And she whispered, "But hurry to me, Phil."

Phil nodded, his eyes blurred so that he could not see. Of little value he remembered little save the strong grasp of his father's hand. Then they were in the limousine, Phil on one of the small seats, half turned to face Barbara and his father and mother in the seat behind. They crossed the bridge above the murky railroad yards, and Phil saw how pale his father was. But beyond, driving beside the river where the sun shone clear, Phil thought: It will not take long.

And he thought: We are all very silent. And then he nodded, understanding. There was too much to say; and yet there was nothing that was not already being said by Barbara, her hands tight clasped on his father's arm; by Mrs. Sentry pressed close against her husband's side.

They crossed the river, passed familiar corners. Soon now they would be at home. And Linda would be waiting . . .

Phil turned in his seat to face forward, he turned to look ahead.

(THE END)

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Among Bothersome Dusts, Silica Said to Be Cause of Disease Known as Silicosis

Dust is never a pleasant thing to breathe, but some dusts are far worse than others. Coal dust, for example, may color a miner's or coal heaver's lungs as black as night, but it rarely does anything more serious, states a writer in the Chicago Tribune. On the other hand, the repeated inhalation of freshly ground silica dust (silica is a general name for the compound that makes up sand and quartz), frequently results in a disease known as silicosis, characterized by an extensive scarring and destruction of lung tissue.

This disease has come to be recognized as a serious industrial hazard. Since sand and quartz are obviously quite nonpoisonous as found in nature, the fact that they are more dangerous than other dusts when finely ground, led to the suspicion that silicosis was a result of some hitherto unrecognized property of silica.

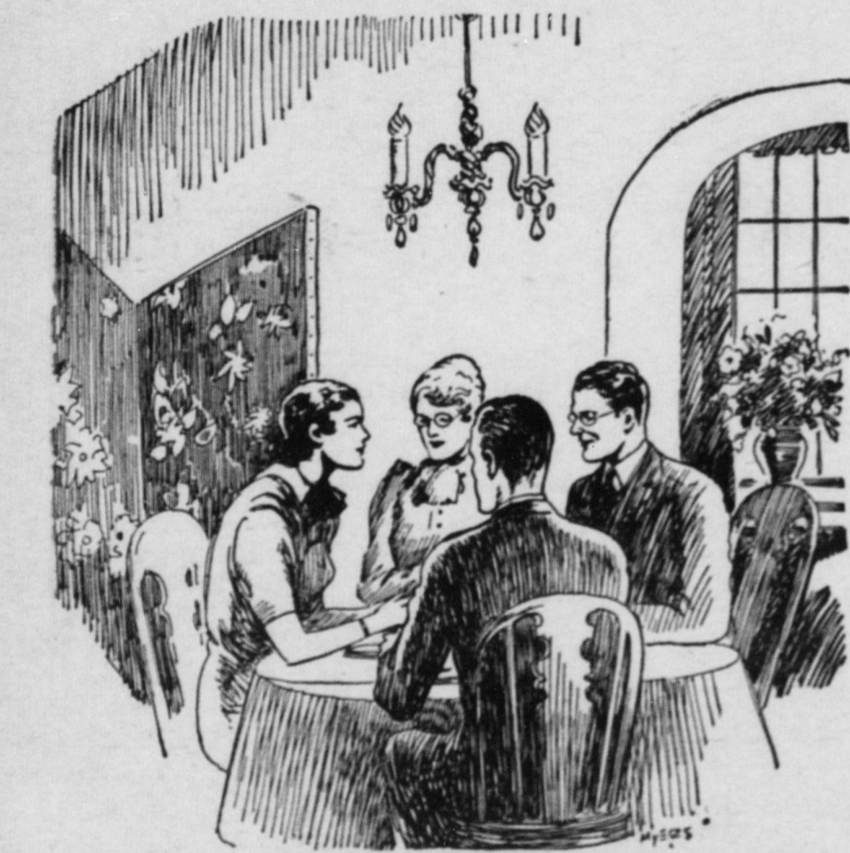
Tests on rabbits appear to have shown that the danger can be greatly lessened if the silica dust is mixed

with a trace of metallic aluminum dust.

Silica is a compound of the elements of silicon and oxygen, and the atoms of these elements are so arranged on the surface of freshly broken silica that the oxygen atoms possess a small but definite part of the combining power of free element.

Presumably this is responsible for the fact that freshly ground silica is more soluble than other forms of the material. This in turn suggests that the deadly effect of silica dust is the result of its actually combining chemically with the lung tissues, and not of mere mechanical irritation.

If this were true, the way to denature silica dust would be to bring it in contact with something that had a greater affinity for oxygen, so that the latter would be completely saturated before it had time to attack living tissue. Theoretically, aluminum should have such an effect, and tests with it have borne out these predictions.



"It's Been Fun. Perfect. I Shouldn't Have Wanted It Any Other Way."

about some great wrong he had done me, and about making amends.

This went on for weeks, and he's been sort of crackling up all the time. I asked him questions, but he'd shut up like a clam. But when my husband left me, he got maudlin and wept about what was happening to me, and blamed himself, and finally, night before last, he begged me to forgive him and I asked for what, and I finally got it out of him.

He had Miss Wines in Maine in August. The guide lied for him. And he says she tried to blackmail him, and his wife was already threatening to drive away and collect big alimony, and he was scared. Then Miss Wines sent word to him to meet her in the office that night at half-past eleven. He was going to New York, anyway; and he decided to try to scare her so she would let him alone. He had a pistol he had carried in the War, and he took it to scare her with. He says he took out the magazine, thought it was empty. He got on the New York train and put on his pyjamas over his clothes and called the porter and told him he was going to sleep, and then slipped off through another car, and went out a different gate, and went to the office and she was there.

She'd stolen father's key, he says. He offered her the money there was in the safe, and she said she wanted a lot more than that, and she said she was going to tell Mrs. Loran, and started out. And he jammed the pistol against her back as she passed him in the doorway, thinking it was empty, intending to scare her, and it went off.

She took two or three steps and fell; and he saw the empty cartridge rolling across the floor and picked it up, and then ran to her and called to her to get up, and saw she was dead. And he heard someone on the stairs and turned on the lights, and when father came, in the dark, he jumped past him down the stairs and ran. And he saw father's car and started to drive away in it, and realized he had turned into a one-way street and might be arrested for that, so he left it there and hurried back to the station and sneaked on the train. No one saw him.

So, Phil, I went to the American Embassy here and told them, and they got it all again. They are going to arrange things so they can hear everything we say, in case I can get him to go over it all again. I'll try, Phil. They say just my story isn't enough to prove it. Maybe you'll have heard from the police before you get this. I read about father's commutation; and even if I can't get Mr. Loran to talk again, this may help to get father pardoned.

It's too late to help me. But maybe it will help make up for my deserting you all. Anyway, it's all I can do.

Mary.

months of marriage, or your money back."

Then they were stowing themselves in the car, and Phil saw that it was new, and thought Dan must be prospering, and wondered what their home would be like. It was an apartment, he knew; and when they were arrived, the apartment, though small, proved to be reassuringly sunny and comfortable, and the furniture could not be objected to.

Phil saved his great news, relishing the anticipation of their great happiness. Barbara, through breakfast, did most of the talking, only appealing to Dan for corroboration now and then, relating her arrival in Cleveland when she came to join Dan, and the first days in a hotel when, while Dan was at work, she sought for apartments, till she had a list for his inspection; and how they moved in here with nothing but twin beds, a few towels and some linen, and so began house-keeping.

"So first I furnished the kitchen," Barbara explained. "Just buying each day the things I actually needed. And then the bedroom; and then I began on the living-room. After I had things picked out, Dan would go see them before I decided. And I made all the hangings myself, by hand. I'm as good a sempstress as Miss Simpkins right now, mother. And when we had everything in, I began to monogram our linen—Why mother! You're crying!"

Mrs. Sentry said through tears: "It's all right, Barbara. I was just being sorry for myself because I missed sharing all that fun with you. I should have been here, helped, done most of it." She spoke to Dan. "I'm afraid your bride didn't come to you as well equipped and prepared as she should have been, Dan."

Dan grinned. "I haven't any complaint," he declared. "But maybe it was hard on Barb."

"You idiot!" said Barbara gently; and to her mother: "It's been fun. Perfect! I shouldn't have wanted it any other way."

Mrs. Sentry looked toward Phil, and suddenly her eyes twinkled. "I'll do better by you and Linda, Phil," she promised; and Phil's heart leaped, and Barbara cried delightedly:

"Phil! You and Linda? Honest? Oh, that's grand!"

Phil could not speak, staring at his mother. Barbara was kissing him hard and happily, and Dan was shaking his hand, and then the telephone rang in the hall, and Dan went to answer it, and Phil said shakily:



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CAP AND BELLS

URGENT

A distinguished bishop, while making a journey by rail, was unable to find his ticket when the inspector asked for it.

"Never mind, bishop," said the official, who knew him well, "I'll get it on my second round."

However, when the inspector passed through the coach again the ticket was still missing.

"O, well, bishop, it will be all right if you never find it," the inspector assured him.

"No, it won't," contradicted the bishop. "I've got to find that ticket. I want to know where I'm going."

—Stray Stories Magazine.

No Hurry

"My daughter wants a roll of No. 120 camera film."

"Regular or verichrome?"

"What's the difference?"

"The verichrome is a much faster film than the regular, but it is five cents higher."

"Give me the regular. My daughter has plenty of time."

READY TO GO

Artist—I'm sure, madam, I shall never be able to reproduce the wonderful coloring of your face.

Subject—That's easy—you'll find plenty of it in my compact.

Under Par

Pa—Well, son, how are your marks?

Son—They're under water.

Pa—What do you mean, under water?

Son—Below "C" level.—Royal Arcanum Bulletin.

Literal

Lawyer (paternally, to client anxious for divorce)—My dear young lady, occasional tiffs are bound to occur in your married life. But think of the joy to be got out of it.

Client—Exactly. Get me out of it.

Cautious Encouragement

"So you never find fault with your wife's cooking?"

"I should say not," answered Mr. Meekton. "When my wife condescends to cook I say everything I can to encourage her!"—Washington Star.

Narrow Escape

"That teacup you broke yesterday can't be matched anywhere, Mary!"

"Oh, aren't I lucky, mum? I thought I should have to buy a new one!"

Another Tyrone Power.

Teacher—Andy, write: "I'm a bad boy," on the blackboard and sign your name 100 times.

Andy—Oh, just an autograph hound, huh?

Brave Boy!

Oliver—Last night, I heard a burglar. You should have seen me going downstairs three steps at a time.

Betty—Where was he—on the roof?

Special Delivery

Teacher—Can you think of two words that contain over a thousand letters?

Oliver—Yes, ma'am. Post office.

Took No Chances

"Won't you take the sleeping powder the doctor prescribed, Maria?"

"Yes—but you won't get the front-door key."

USE SOFT PEDAL

Masseur—Yes, sir, as I said before, sir, your skin is very unsightly.

Patron—Well, you needn't rub it in!

Slow Motion

Mrs. Horner—To whom are you writing that letter, Andy?

Andy—To Professor Wotasnuzzle.

Mrs. Horner—Why are you writing so slowly?

Andy—He can't read very fast.

Precocious

"I want a box of powder for my sister, please," said the angel child.

"The kind that goes off with a bang?" asked the jolly old chemist.

"No, clever, the kind that goes on with a puff."

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QUICK QUOTES

PREPONDERANT SENTIMENT

"AFTER one hundred and fifty years, notwithstanding expansion of territory, enormous increase in population and profound economic changes; despite direct attack and subversive influences; there is every indication that the vastly preponderant sentiment of the American people is that our form of government shall be preserved." — Charles Evans Hughes, Chief Justice of the United States.

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DOAN'S PILLS