

**TODAY'S MYSTERY STORY**  
By PHILIP FRANCIS NOWLAN

**Yesterday's Mystery Solution**

**SUPER-NATURAL** phenomena did not enter into Harvey Hunt's scheme of things. The possibility in the case of "Called to the Grave," that Mrs. Pettigale had died from heart failure induced by excitement suggested itself to him at first, but he discarded it in view of the peculiar import of the medium's words when the dead Silas Pettigale was supposed to be speaking through her lips. "I want you, Letitia. I need you. Come with me."

To many these words meant simply that the spirit of the dead man simply claimed his mate in death as in life. To Harvey Hunt it meant that Letitia, the medium, knew the woman who would have a motive in the fact that Winton Pettigale was the old lady's heir, and Winton Pettigale was a fanatical believer in her powers, which the old lady was not.

The hissing sound meant to Harvey Hunt only the rush of escaping air or steam—where there was a register in the ceiling. The matches that had so promptly become extinguished when Winton Pettigale stooped indicated the presence of a smothering gas near the floor. And Letitia had cried, "Wait! Wait!" and saw Winton lighting those matches.

It was a case of murder. An accomplice of Letitia had placed over the cylinder of a heavy, odorless, poisonous gas. Descending like a column of water, it had engulfed the woman sitting below, and spread over the floor of the room where it did not interfere with the respiration of the others. Opened doors and windows and a draft were all needed to allow it to flow silently, unsuspected out of the house.

LXXXVI  
Can you pick the murderer?

**A Box of Matches**

FOUR days after Jerry Brale, the notorious gambler, disappeared, they

found his body in a presumably vacant room of a cheap hotel on the waterfront. Under that pressure which the city detectives knew how to exert on the proprietors of such places the manager at last agreed to talk, though his two days' silence had given those he indicated as the killers a total of six days. For Jerry Brale had been murdered.

Brale had been struck down with a piece of angle iron, which had crushed deep into his skull. The angle of the wound showed the murderer had been facing him. Apparently the struggle was brief, for there were no other marks of violence upon the body except that produced by the same weapon upon his right arm between the wrist and elbow. This blow had bruised the flesh badly and crushed through the skin as well. The body was slumped down in a corner back into which the man had fallen in recoiling from the blow.

The proprietor claimed to know nothing of the murder, and this seemed likely, inasmuch as the body had lain in the room for four days. His story was that on the night of the murder Brale and two other men had come to his place and asked for a private room, where there was no danger of their be-

ing overheard, as they had important business to talk over. He had given them a room in a section of the building that was little used, and had paid no further attention to them. About fifteen minutes later the party left. He didn't remember seeing Brale go through the lobby, but supposed that he had been with the others. His back was half turned at the time, and he was talking to two other men. He was not concerned, because Brale and the others had paid him for the room in advance.

The men he named were "Nifty" Jim Mallour and "Willie" Hagner, both of them known to the police as slippery and successful criminals who usually turned their hands only to comparatively "safe and profitable grafts." Investigation showed that neither of these men had been observed around his customary haunts since the night of the murder.

It was nearly six weeks before they were picked up, one in New Orleans, and the other by federal authorities in Des Moines, and were extradited to face the charge of murder.

But the police struck a snag when both men confessed. Each told exactly

the same story, detail for detail, except that each accused the other of being the man who struck the blow. The motive simply had been anger. Brale had "insulted" one of them, and in a rage this one struck him down. The deal they had been talking over was an illegal one, of course, but it was only in prospect, and furnished no motive. But which man should be sent to the electric chair, and which one sent to the "pen" for a comparatively light term? One was lying and one was telling the truth. Each was a powerful man, capable in both physique and temperament of having struck the blow.

At the request of Detective Sergeant Reagan, who was in charge of the case,

Harvey Hunt agreed to attempt a solution of the mystery. He simply asked Reagan to bring both men into the room. "Now, gentlemen," said the criminologist, with just a hint of sarcasm in the word, "this is likely to be a long and grueling session. You might as well sit down and be comfortable. Smoke?"

Yes, both would smoke. Hunt passed his cigarette case to them, and then a box of safety matches. With an air of nonchalance Mallour reached for the box and with his left hand struck a match and lighted his cigarette, tossing the box to Hagner with a sneering smile. Hagner, Hunt observed, used his right hand to light the match.

"That settles it, Reagan," said the criminologist, turning to the detective. "Mallour's the liar and the murderer. Aren't you, Nifty?"


"Nifty Jim's" jaw fell. His face went white. "Yes," he admitted thickly. "How did you know?"

"Thanks for the admission," smiled Hunt. "It probably would have been difficult to convince a jury by my flimsy stratagem, but your startled confession obviates the necessity. It was very simple. I knew it because—"

But can you tell how Hunt knew Mallour was the murderer? The answer will appear tomorrow. (Copyright, 1921, by Public Ledger Co.)

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