

TODAY'S MYSTERY STORY

By PHILIP FRANCIS NOWLAN

Yesterday's Mystery Solution

IN THE case of "The Aberfoyle Vault," Harvey Hunt was convinced that such a perfect mechanism as that which he had devised could not be broken by accident. Yet no attempt had been made to break into the vault, when the operatives of the protective agency arrived there. Nor was there any sign that the electric system had been tampered with anywhere along the line to the agency headquarters.

This presented two problems. What caused the alarm, and why was it raised? Hunt argued there must be some ulterior purpose in alarming the bank Aberfoyle. If the thieves could break through the cordon of protection around the vault as it was organized, would they alarm Aberfoyle? Evidently they couldn't and the purpose of the alarm must be to cause some changes in the protective arrangements.

Hunt found his clue in the changed arrangements. In the assignment to the banking house of three special guards from among the Valton operatives. These three, he deduced, must be the prospective burglars. The theory was verified by the fact that the electric line had not been tampered with outside the agency headquarters, and that it would have been very easy for a trusted employe somewhere inside the agency building to short circuit a wire momentarily in order to give the alarm.

From the construction of the vault Hunt knew that nothing short of a bomb would open it in time for the yeggs to make a get-away, for they could only wait on five minutes or so. The use of a bomb would mean that they would have to leave the building before it blew up for their own safety, and rush back in to loot the vault.

These were the reasons Hunt searched for a bomb and rendered it harmless, and waited outside the building, confident that the men would rush out and give him the chance to take them unawares. He had asked Aberfoyle to get rid of the regular watchman to save that man's life, for he knew such desperate yeggs would not hesitate at murder. The move, which apparently played into their hands, rendered the whole proposition easier for Hunt.

LXXXI
Can you solve this problem?

After Midnight
HARVEY HUNT picked up the telephone. The voice that came to him was the voice of that County Detective Adsell.

"Say, Harvey, if you haven't anything to do this afternoon come on out here to Branchtown. Got a murder case without a single clue. Looks mysterious—the kind you like, you know—besides I'd just as soon have your valuable advice anyhow."

"All right," said the criminologist, "on condition that you don't drag me into the line of fire. I don't want to get a reputation among the police departments for 'butting in.' If you'll just let me act in advisory capacity I'll be glad to come out. What time does the train leave?"

Adsell met him at the station.

"I'm on my way to interview a chap named Boller," he said. "So I won't take you up to Kidder's house right

away. Come along, I'll tell you all about it as we go.

"Amos Kidder is one of this town's wealthiest citizens. Some time last night he was shot through the head. Mounted patrolmen passing the house just happened to glance in and see the body lying by the open safe. I got up there right away with the doctor, and have succeeded so far in keeping the whole business dark. Nobody knows old Kidder's been killed yet but the doc and myself, the chief and a couple of boys on the force. May he'll make our quarry careless and not hurry so if he thinks it isn't discovered yet. But I got a line that may lead to something after I telephoned you. Talking to the woman across the street. She remarked Mr. Boller turned in Kidder's gate about 12:30 last night. At least she thought it was Boller. Couldn't be sure. Well, Boller's one of the town's respectable citizens. Had a great many business dealings with Kidder, so I thought he might know if the old boy had been expecting any visitors. Here's Boller's place now."

The man they sought was just coming down the steps.

"You were pretty good friend of Mr. Kidder's, weren't you, Mr. Boller?" began Adsell. "Well, I've got a bit of bad news for you. He's dead. Been murdered. I'm afraid."

"What?" said Boller, astonishment and grief in his tones. He appeared dumfounded.

"Yes," went on Adsell, "and since you called on him last night I thought

with Ed Bracefield. You can call him up if you like."

"Nevertheless there are some that say you killed Kidder, Mr. Boller," said Harvey Hunt, to the astonishment of Adsell. Boller turned on Hunt in apparent amazement.

"I don't know who you are, sir," he said, "but if you say I shot Amos Kidder you are a confounded liar, sir. In the first place I have never owned nor purchased a revolver, as may be easily ascertained. In the second place, as you heard me explain to Adsell here, I spent the entire evening with a man named Bracefield, and he will verify this if you take the trouble to ask him. When you have done so I will accept your apology for the insult, sir!"

"Why no, of course no one seriously suspects you, Mr. Boller," Adsell cut in. "I just thought if you had seen him last night you might know whether he was expecting any other callers and—"

But Harvey Hunt had seized the man's arm, and pulling his arms sharply back, handcuffed them behind his back.

"There Adsell," remarked the criminologist, "that case is settled for you. I'll appear as witness, of course, if he doesn't confess. All you have to do now is to take in Bracefield as an accessory."

"But—but—stammered the astonished county detective.

"What, don't you get it yet?" laughed Hunt.

Do you get it? How did Hunt know

PYTHIANS SHOW GAIN IN N. J.

Reports in Convention Indicate Order Added 1200 Members in 1920

Atlantic City, Feb. 17.—Reports showing substantial increases in membership last year and sound financial condition of the various lodges in the state were submitted at yesterday's session of the annual convention of the Grand Lodge, Knights of Pythias of New Jersey. The order in New Jersey has a membership of about 20,000, a net increase of more than 1200 over 1920. All of the lodges are free of debt. The Glee Club of Colanths Lodge, of Bridgeton, entertained the delegates and their friends last night.

G. Howell Mutchler, of Belvidere, will be the next head of the order. He will succeed Carl L. Walters, grand chancellor, of Perth Amboy, who is presiding here. Other unanimous nominations for the annual election tomorrow are: Grand vice chancellor, Fred A. Pope, of Somerville; grand prelate, Elmer J. Carl, of Bridgeton; grand master of arms, Henry J. Lohse, of Newark, and grand inner guard, Walter Loucks, of Paulsboro.

There are five candidates for the position of grand outer guard, which office

is regarded as a stepping stone to the chancellery. Nominations for this post include: Harry Unger, of Newark; Henry G. Conover, of Adelphi; Simon Fish, of Newark; J. K. Hackett, of Kearney, and Raymond Anderson, of High Bridge.

Champagne for Wedding Seized

Buffalo, Feb. 17.—A basket of champagne intended to be served at a wedding party here last night was seized by the police as it was being carried into a hotel where the wedding ceremony was to be performed. The man who

was carrying the wine was locked up on a charge of violating the state liquor law, but was later released in \$500 bail.

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Note: Entries must be received in this office not later than Sat., P. M., Feb. 19th. Write your name and address plainly. Also your phone number (if any). Winner will be announced in next Thursday's Evening Public Ledger.

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- *American Insulation Co. 2 buildings
- *Columbia Carpet Mills. 1 building
- *R. H. Hood & Co. 1 building
- *Link Belt Co. 1 building
- *Harry C. Aberle Mfg. Co. 1 building
- *Moss Rose Mfg. Co. 1 building
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*These represent repeat jobs or 71% of our total 1920 work.

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