

short pencils. At sight of these Shartle whistled.

"What you got?" queried the detective, all attention.

"Ever see pencils like those before, Murph? Notice how thick the leads are."

The detective looked very profound.

"Looks as if the guy did considerable writing, doesn't it?" suggested the reporter. He examined the two letters, which were on ordinary notepaper; sniffed them, held them up to the light, decided that the writing was disguised—written with the left hand, perhaps—and finally took his leave.

Routed out of bed at his home the sleepy night watchman, mollified by a couple of good cigars, described the suicide. He was a tall man with a long, white face, he said. Yes, he was sure he could recognize the fellow again. Had they found the body yet?

"No, not yet," said Shartle dryly and went back to the office.

Hulett nodded cordially as he entered the private sanctum and closed the door behind him.

"I want to congratulate you on your excellent work this morning," he smiled. "Mr. Conboy told me about it. What was in those letters again?"

Shartle pulled the clipping from his pocket. "*Mes chers amis les journaux,*" he read. "*Je vous assure que c'est tres amusant vous voir parcourir la ville ainsi cherchant l'auteur de ces affaires mystereuses des semaines passes. Je n'ai pas besoin de ce butin; amusez-vous avec. Votre bien devoue, Quelqu'un.*" '11 p.m.' refers, of course, to the time of writing."

"I'm afraid my French is rather rusty," suggested the other.

"My dear friends the newspapers," translated the reporter. "I assure you that it is very amusing to see you run around the city like this hunting for the author of these affairs mys—these mysterious affairs of the past weeks. I have no need of this—er—this junk; amuse yourselves with it. Very devotedly yours, Somebody."

"And every single word is English," commented the chief admiringly. "How about the other?"

"He says, 'to give you some more amusement, here is an address.'"

"But the reference to myself?"

"Well, he says he doesn't like you."

"H'm. Now, who in thunder could it be?" Hulett wondered. "And you have a plan to discover his identity?"

"It's simply this: The man is deeply interested in secret writings, else he wouldn't have evolved this. If I read his character aright, he prides himself on his ability to solve them."

"Now, we'll publish a fairly difficult cryptogram ourselves with an offer of a prize to the man who can read it. If Mr. 'Somebody' doesn't bite I'll cheerfully refund the prize money."

"But where will we get a cryptogram?"

"That's easy," laughed Shartle, "I can fix you one in a few minutes."

Hulett looked up with an odd expression and the reporter flushed.

"I know what you're thinking, Mr. Hulett," he said earnestly, "but I'm not the man, upon my honour. It isn't so difficult to make or unravel ciphers as most people suppose."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Shartle. It did look a little odd, though, you must admit. But how are you going to establish the fellow's identity if he does reply?"

"There won't be any difficulty about that," said the reporter, and explained.

The cryptogrammatic message was published next day as having been sent in by a mythical correspondent, and \$25 was offered for its solution. The following morning Shartle was called into the chief's sanctum.

"Here's your man, all right," said Hulett, tossing over a letter. "You certainly have vindicated yourself, Mr. Shartle."

The reporter looked eagerly for the name and whistled, wide-eyed.

"Jimmy Marquand, of all people under the sun!" he gasped. "I had no idea he was back in Syracuse. But what was his idea of making all this commotion? I'm afraid it's too much for me."

"I believe I understand," said Hulett musingly. "When Marquand came back

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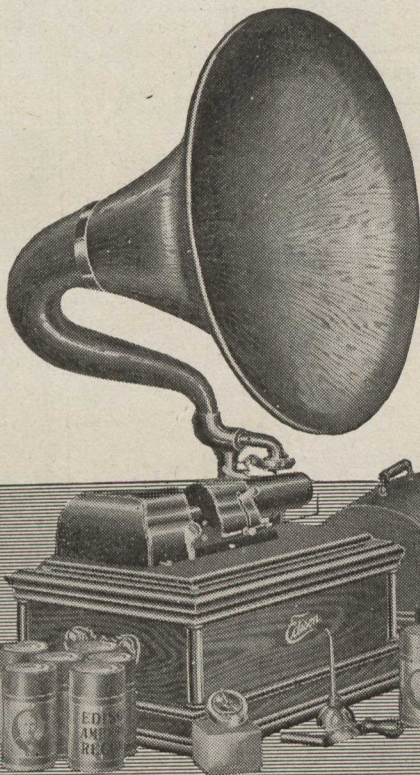
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