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killed one of the most valuable minds in the sciences would have been lost. It would have been nothing less than a catastrophe." He paused and settled back in that position which was so familiar to at least two of his hearers.

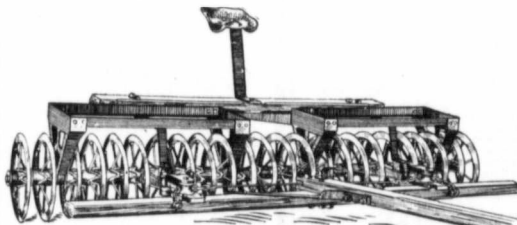
"When I got the telephone call," he resumed after a moment, "it told me several things beyond the obvious. The logic of it all—and logic, gentlemen, is incontrovertible—was that some man was in danger, in danger even as he talked to me, that he had tried to reach me, seeking help, that the first interruption on the wire came because perhaps he was being choked, and that the second came—the shot which wrecked the instrument—as a desperate expedient to prevent further conversation. The scene was quite clear in my mind.

"The wire was dead then. Central didn't know the number. There was no way to get that number save by the tedious process of testing the wires in the exchange, and that might have taken days. It took only two hours or so fortunately; but I got the number at last from which I was called; that is, I got a wire which was inexplicably dead, and assumed the rest. The number of that wire was forty-one-seventeen. The records showed the street and number of the house where it came from. Therefore I went there. Before I went I took the precaution of calling up police headquarters to see if any report of a murder or attempted murder or anything unusual had come in. Nothing had come in. This fact in itself was elucidating, because vaguely it indicated that I had been called, rather than the police, because—well, perhaps because it was not desirable for the police to know.

"Well, as I explained, I searched the house; and by the way, Mr. Mallory, I don't know if you know the advantages of always holding your dark lantern as far away from your body as possible when going into dangerous places; because if there is danger, a shot, say, the natural impulse of the person who shoots is to aim at the light. Incidentally this precaution saved my life in the cellar, when I feigned death. But I'm going a little ahead of myself.

"I found telephone number forty-one-seventeen, and there was a heavy coat of dust on the receiver. Obviously it had not been recently used. The line was dead, it is true, but the instrument was in perfect condition. There was no sign of a bullet mark anywhere round or near it. If the bullet that was fired had killed the man who had been using the line, it would not have deadened the wire; therefore instantly I saw that the line had been tapped somewhere; that this instrument had been cut off from it, and the instrument which was demolished was the one on the branch wire.

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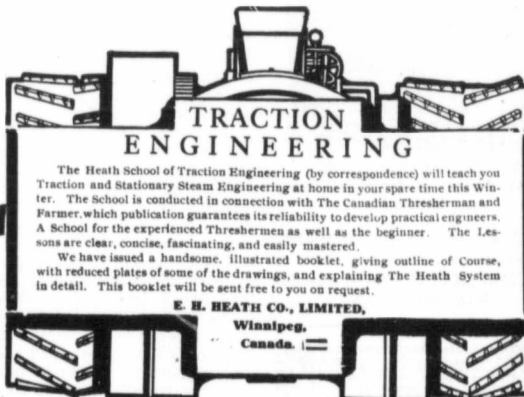
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