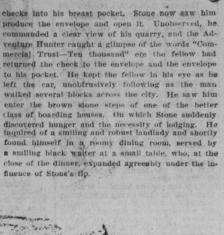
DVENTURE it was that took him out that produce the envelope and open it. Unobserved, I fluence of Stone's tip.





his ear.

"It's 'the biggest puzzle yet," h said 'Yes \$20

000." The Adventure Hunter stopped.

That's a good deal of money to be talking about the said of the sa sociability. The man produced a match and smiled "Yes. It was a good deal of money, as you say," re-

child passed unnoticed. Each look each sastch kanversales was assored by him as micht sol precious metal ha some perfectly adhibest marking.

nothers due north. That night no

bThen suddenly from out of the

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ad served

marked he. "Twenty thousand dollars is a good deal of money any old time in the day. But what I want to know is how a burn like that came to get it? A fellow that was sort of shabby. You'd swear be'd jump

He took energetic whiffs at his strong pipe and

The tool correctly willful at the crossesping shade will be all many flowers the last of the country of the cou

the Adventure Hunter; "yes, there were many nice ant gentlemen-roomers and boarders. That young

"Uncle Henry," Said She in a Strained Voice, "What Is This? Who Is This Gentleman?"

"Money has nothing to do with it," said he, and then hazarded a "leader." "You may have had excuses," said he.

"God knows that I have," vehemently broke in the other.

He paused again, sinking his head in his hand, while Stone, moved by the pitiable agitation of the man, waited for what he would say.

The Banker's Confession.

"Yes, I took the money represented by those checks from this bank," said Thompson after a little while."

"It was a matter of bleadready. I treat a little while."

"It was a matter of bleadready. I treat a little while."

Three men were grouped in the furthest corner of the room, whose lettering proclaimed it an investment agency. Stone's fellow lodger stood rolling a cigar about in his mouth. Another man sat in a revolving

widen, but caught no feantest warmth from the frostiness of his winter eye.

Stone regarded him a moment through the letter slit of the door. Stone's eyes were narrow with concentration, his forehead was seamed in thought. That face was familiar, Where had he seen it?

"We've got to have it," the man was saying. He was obviously the leader. "We can make a fortune out of the stock if we've only coin enough to play it. We've held back all for this play. Fifty thousand more on margin should mean a million dollars. That bluffer Thompson's got to come up. He can do it. Why, in the West".—

Stone stood un suddenly with an eager face, which

Paris.

The three men looked at bim sharply. Into the face of the shabby man came a sudden flushed consciousness as there came to him the knowledge of who this

"Why, what the"—— he began, with a quick, apprehensive look at the grim fellows, which spoke the latter's leadership more clearly than could any word.

Confronting the Band.

"What do you want here?" commenced the latter, without a hesitation, to the Adventure Hunter.
"This—this investment agency," commenced Stone, with a suggestion of smilling and surprised embarrassment. "Do—do I see the gentlemen?"
"What do you want?" repeated the grim man, more harship yet.

"What do you want?" repeated the grim man, more harshiy yet.

"A-a little matter," said Stone; "if you don't mind I'll close the door. Thanks."

The harsh man rose forbiddingly. His two companious stood behind him, obviously waiting for his lead.

The creases come with checks, and his heard the notes of laughter, harsh as a raven's creak 1 want the letters and the check, said Stone un-hesitatingly.

"I want the letters and the check," said Stone un-hesitatingly.
"Oh, yes, we'll give them up we sure will give them up. We'll give them up to the cashler when the time for cashing comes. But you know where you're going to be then, don't you? You've come to the wrong shop, Mr. Amateur Detective. You think we're afraid to kill you, E suppose. Why I've seen the time"." I know "said Stone simply. "Thet's just what I

I know," said Stone simply. "That's just what I "I know," said Stone simply, "That's fust what I wanted to say. You're not in some lonely mountain now where everybody's terrorized. You're in an office building, and the law is very, very close to you. You know you left ends when you killed—but never mind; it's the checks and letters I want, Mr. Man, or you'll be held on this blackmailing charge till we get your record about that case I told you about—you know the one I mean."

Stone was listening intently for the least sound while he watched the blackmailer's face, stark with murder.

night adventure that draws men from city commanded a clear view of his quarry, and the Ad and country, from the peaceful talk of the venture Hunter caught a glimpse of the words "Com freshe to bleak places where men shout and mercial Trust-Ten thousand' ere the fellow had strike and where blood is shed; adventure that returned the check to the envelope and the envelope onely seas that the thirst for action may be sated left the car, unobtrusively following as the man bud the beringe of life fulfilled. Valentine Stone felt the pulse of adventure beating enter the brown stone steps of one of the better nervous, alect, tense, vigilant, he walked through the discovered hunger and the necessity of lodging. He inquired of a smiling and robust landlady and shortly to draw from their pavements the thing of mystery found himself in a roomy dining room, served by he knew somewhere stalked thefe—the mystery he a smiling black waiter at a small table, who, at the close of the dinner, expanded agreeably under the inhad so often found and to which his strange instinct