

## THE MAELSTROM

By Frank Froest

Late Superintendent of the Criminal Investigation Department of New Scotland Yard. (Copyright)

(From Thursday's Daily.)  
Jimmie's temper, held in till now, continued to rise. Whether it was the implication that he was being made Miss Greye-Stratton's catspaw, or whether it was the suggestion that the radiant girl was the willing accomplice of a gang of criminals, he did not stop to analyze.

He was wroth with Menzies because he did not know by intuition what was plain to him—that if she was acting a part it was for the sake of some one else. He regretted now that he was bound not to divulge anything she had told him.

"I guess you're a fool, Menzies," he sneered. "You're barking up the wrong tree."  
Menzies took the handle of the door. "You think so, do you? Well, well let it go at that." He swung open the door. "I suppose the lady told you she was married?"

He spoke casually, as though by an afterthought, but he was quick to observe the change that passed over Jimmie's face.

"That's false," he blurted out, "you've got something at the back of your head."  
The detective swung the door to again and took something from his pocket. "Look at that," he said, and smoothed a sheet of paper before Hallett's eyes.

Jimmie read it over twice, unable at first to completely grasp its significance. It was an attested copy of a marriage certificate between Peggy Greye-Stratton and Stewart Reader Ling.

"She didn't tell you about this, went on the detective levelly. "That may alter your idea that she intends to play straight with you."  
Jimmie was struggling with a tangle of thoughts. "Who is Ling?" he demanded.

"A crook of the crookedest. He ran a wholesale factory for forged currency notes in the United States ten years ago. That was broken up, and he did five years in Sing Sing. He has been at the back of a lottery swindle since he came out, and Lord knows what else. We'd lost sight of him till I happened to get hold of this copy."

"That's the husband of Miss Greye-Stratton."  
"How did you find this out?"  
Menzies puffed reflectively. He had no intention of completely exposing his hand. He was certain that Peggy Greye-Stratton was the woman who had given Hallett the checks and that the latter had deliberately refrained from identifying her. Moreover, he was also convinced that she had told the young man something at lunch, though whether she was, as he affected to believe, using him as a tool, he was not in his own mind certain.

The night he considered, the more he felt that she held the key to the mystery. If only she could be induced to speak. With him, with an official of police, she would be on her guard. Hallett, if he could be persuaded to be the one man who might win her confidence without exciting suspicion. So long as his sympathies remained with her he was unlikely to be persuaded. Therefore, if possible, he sympathized that to be alienated.

"Just common sense," growled Menzies, "ordinary common sense. I learned that she had a wedding ring—though she didn't wear it—sent up to Somerset House to inspect the registry of marriages, and got this half an hour ago." He laid a hand gently on the young man's shoulder.

"Better do as I advise. Anyway, take care of yourself."  
He did not wait for an answer, but moved softly out of the room. He was wise enough to know when to stop. To say more might be to spoil

things. Hallett might safely be left to his own reflections.  
Hallett was a man whose brain as a rule worked very clearly. But now he was confused, and he strove vainly to reconcile reason with inclination. It seemed ages since the episode of the fog, years since he had looked into the pale oval of Peggy Greye-Stratton's face at lunch.

In spite of the convincing proof of the marriage certificate, he could not think of her as a married woman. Anyway, he told himself, if Menzies was right in that it did not follow that all his inferences were right. He had felt the ring of honesty in the story she had told him.

And yet the idea of the detective was plausible enough. He could see where Menzies was dovetailed. If she were stringing him she had been acute enough to tell him a series of half-truths. If she were a willing accomplice, as Menzies supposed, there was no reason enough why she should mislead him.

He had met female adventuresses before—pretty, cultivated women some of them—but he had not been impressed by them as he had been by her. But then the circumstances were different.

He pondered the matter as he drove back to his hotel. Suppose he did accept Menzies's version—and he admitted to himself that there was a considerable weight of probability on that point of view. He could not see why, in that event, he should become an unpaid amateur detective.

The thought of spying on Peggy Greye-Stratton, adventuress or not, was entirely distasteful to him. He had been dragged into the affair entirely by accident. Let the police do their work themselves.

It was in this mood that he arrived at his hotel and repulsed the newspaper man who were still blockading the entrance. He wanted to be alone. He went up to his private sitting-room, and there it was that a note was brought to him. He tore it open absently and glanced at it mechanically. But at once his interest was aroused. It had been scribbled in pencil, apparently in haste.

"I am in trouble. For God's sake, come and help me. I don't know to whom else to appeal. Call at 149 Ludford Road, Brixton, as soon as you can, but alone. Ask for me. There was no signature, but Hallett needed none. He had never seen Peggy Greye-Stratton's writing, but the small, neat characters were beyond doubt to him. His resolution to stand aside was already being put to the test. He swayed the note in his hand while he recalled Menzies's warnings. He was an important witness. Already one attempt had been made to secure his silence. Was this a trap?"

Yet, on the other hand, if the girl was being used to secure his silence, she could not know that he had changed his decision to stand by her. She must suppose—the conversation at lunch would have made her believe—that he had allied himself on her side. No; the letter was certainly genuine.

He impressed the address on his memory, and, tearing the letter into little bits, dropped them into the waste-basket. Then he searched in his kit-bag till he found, at the bottom, a small automatic revolver and a packet of cartridges. He loaded the weapon carefully and dropped it in his jacket-pocket.

He had no idea where Brixton was, but a study of a street map gave him its location. He did not want to have to ask questions. He had come to have too much respect for Menzies's methods in following up a trail for that. For the same reason when he went out into the

## SIDE TALKS

By Ruth E. Cameron

"If you can force your nerve and brain and sinew To serve your turn long after they are gone, And so hold on when there is nothing in you Except the will, that says to you, 'Hold on.'"

—Kipling.  
The other night I heard some people talking pityingly about a woman who has completely broken down under the strain of overwork and family illness.

"She has gone all to pieces," said one, "had to give up completely. Doesn't take any interest in anything. It shows what a terrible strain she was under."  
"We ought to do something for her," said another.

"I've sent her some flowers." "Maybe she could go out in my machine some pleasant day." "But They Forgot The Woman Who So the talk ran, full of pity for the woman and of eagerness to do something for her because she had gone all to pieces.

Which was right and kind. But all the time I had a deeper pity in my heart for someone they never mentioned. And that was her sister who had gone all to pieces. The two were under similar strain, illness in the family, financial worries, overwork in business.

And one went all to pieces. While the other held on to herself with an iron hand and simply wouldn't let herself go to pieces.

Strand he turned abruptly in his walk once or twice.  
The little book of maps issued by the Underground Railways helped him on his next course. He went into a tube station and looked for Hampstead. At Leicester Square he changed for Piccadilly Circus. There he changed for Kennington Oval.

By the time he emerged into the sunlight he was satisfied that if there had been any shadowers on his trail he had thrown them off.  
He had selected the Oval Station because the map had shown him that the district lay on the verge of Brixton. He was about to take a taxi when his eye caught the label on one of the big electric cars swinging by.

He jumped aboard.  
Ludford Road proved to be a quiet road of small houses buried away at the back of Brixton Town Hall. It was a street that might very well have been inhabited solely by moderate-salaried city clerks—retired, unobtrusive and semi-detached villas, with neat squares of gardens behind iron railings. It was a street of mystery.

Hallett walked to the door of No. 149 and pressed the bell. It opened promptly, revealing a plump, pleasant-faced little woman with streaked eyes and a strong mouth. Jimmie, whose right hand had been gripped round the automatic in his jacket-pocket, removed it hurriedly and lifted his hat.

"I wish to see Miss Olney, if I may," he said.  
The woman shook her head. "You have made a much mistake, but believe that that name lives here," she said, and Jimmie's last shred of suspicion vanished. If the note had been sent for a trap there was evidently no anxiety for him to be disturbed.

"Pardon me, Miss Greye-Stratton, I should have said, My name is Hallett."  
She smiled and flung the door wide. "Oh, yes. She is expecting you. Will you come in?"  
Jimmie passed into the narrow little hall and the door shut.

CHAPTER X.  
No. 149 Ludford Road.  
With the satisfied feeling of a man who knew he had earned his salary, Weir Menzies betook himself homeward. As he boarded the taxi electric car at the corner of Westminster Bridge he automatically shut out from his mind all thought of Greye-Stratton.

He had ceased to be Weir Menzies, chief inspector of the criminal investigation department. He was Weir Menzies, Esquire, of Magerfontein Road, Upper Tooting, who, like other gentlemen of business, left his business worries behind him at the office.

He ate his dinner while Mrs. Menzies, a motherly little woman, who never asked and never let us know the latest domestic gossip. He added his own quota. He was afraid that Browns, the new butcher in the High Street, was not doing too well. As he pushed his chair back and lit a cigar Mrs. Menzies seized the opportunity to tell of a calamity.

"Bruin's been in mischief. He dug a big hole under that Captain Hayward rose to-day."  
This news roused Menzies. He kicked off his slippers and began relacing his boots. "That dog! I'll bet he's ruined it. We'll have to chain him. Ring the bell and ask Nellie for a candle, will you, dear?"  
Candle in hand, he led the way to the garden, muttering discontentedly as he cast its glow on the damage.

He raised his voice. "Bruin's here, Bruin!" and a heavy bob-tailed sheep dog came lumbering over the lawn. Weir Menzies regarded him sternly and pointed an accusing finger at the hole.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded. "You wicked, wicked dog." Bruin sprawled with down-cast head, his whole attitude one of penitence and shame. "Where's the whip?" asked Menzies. "Go fetch it."

Reluctantly, with slow step like a boy sent by his schoolmaster for a cane, Bruin recrossed the lawn, returning in a few seconds with a dog whip between his teeth. He covered white Benzies administered a couple of light blows—blows so light that they were rather symbolic of disgrace than actual punishment. His master slipped the whip into his pocket.

They Deserve a Shining Reward. In every community there are a few brave souls who are making that supreme sacrifice—enduring to the point where further endurance seems impossible and they long to let themselves go—and then taking a fresh hold on themselves and still enduring.

And to my mind there are no heroes or heroines in all the world who deserve a more shining reward. When one lets oneself go to pieces one immediately becomes the centre of the stage. Cares are removed from one's shoulders, and the world is plunged into one's wounds. People who haven't paid any attention to one before become sympathetic and pitying (witness my friends and their flowers and autos). One ceases to lean on one's own strength and leans on the strength of others.

Like Laying One's Aching Bones to Bed.  
It is like giving in to an illness with which one has long been struggling and relaxing one's weary aching body in bed.

It is the natural, the human thing to do when the strain becomes too great, just loose the bonds of self control and stop trying to be a responsible being.

And it is the super-natural, super-human thing to do, to take a fresh hold on oneself and simply refuse to let oneself go to pieces.

If there are any gradations of Heaven, an upper and lower paradise, I know where such people will go.

"Now go and see that the house is safe."  
The dog, now that retribution was over, slipped away. Detectives, for all their profession, are no more immune from burglary than ordinary mortals, but Menzies had little fear of his house being looted while Bruin was abroad.

To and fro over the house he trotted, noting open doors or whistles till they were opened by the maid, and inspecting windows and fastenings with an intelligence almost uncanny. By the time he had finished his inspection Menzies was in his own room. The dog trotted in, sat on his haunches and made a low crooning noise in his throat.

"All correct, eh?" said Menzies. "Good dog. Go to bed."  
He himself was asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow. Yet it seemed to him that he had not been asleep five minutes when the deep boom of the dog's bark and an insistent ringing of the bell aroused him. He looked at his watch as he slipped out of bed. It was four o'clock. He had slept seven hours.

He shivered as he shuffled downstairs in his slippers and opened the door.  
"Why, it's you, Congreve," he exclaimed. "What's the matter? Come in."

Too wise a man to say anything at an open door with a taxi-driver within earshot, Detective Sergeant Congreve (graded first-class at headquarters) followed his chief into the dining-room and Menzies switched on the light. "The lady's come back?" he interrogated.

"No, sir. I wouldn't have worried you for that. It's Hallett. He's gone, too."  
Menzies muttered a little complimentary service in a low voice, because Mrs. Menzies was probably awake.

"That's awkward," he said at last. "I ought to have kept him under observation, but I guessed I could rely on the people I let us know. I didn't want to have to arrest him for putting any more of our men on the sick list, but I wish I'd taken a chance now. He'd have been safer for us if he had let himself under lock and key. What's the point?"

"He came back yesterday afternoon, went to his room, where there was a note waiting him, and went out without saying anything. He has come back. The hotel people rang me up an hour ago, and I went round there. I found the note." He shook an envelope on to the table pinning it there down on the board. And a shower of torn fragments of paper fell. "I didn't wait to put it together. I came straight on here."

The chief inspector became unpleasantly conscious that his pyjamas were an inadequate protection against the bite of the cold. "I suppose this means that I've got to turn out," he grumbled. "I seem to get all the jobs where there's no rest. It's enough to make a man turn it up and take a cottage in the country. Have a go at that note, Congreve, like a good chap, while I go and get some clothes on. Wait a minute and I'll get you a drawing board and a packet of pins."

There is method in piecing together a torn letter as in other things. Congreve worked quickly on the rules of common sense, finding first the fragments which the square edges told him were the corners and pinning them down on the board. With these fixed points he was easily able to reconstruct the note, and he had it ready and a copy written out for Menzies by the time he was dressed.

"It looks as if the girl had got him," he commented as he passed the copy over to the chief inspector. "Anyway, there's an address."  
Menzies laid the copy down on the table. "That's something," he agreed cautiously. "But it looks to me as though we're right up against it, old man. Somebody'll have to stand from under when you make it come. Who do you mean of it?"

(Continued in Saturday's Issue.)

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## Good Night Stories

BETTIE AND THE BUTTERFLY'S WINGS

One morning Bettie wandered through the garden. She spied two gauzy wings among the daisies. Thinking it a butterfly, Bettie tipped up to peep at him. There was no butterfly there, only a pair of wings swung from the daisy blossom.

Bettie thought it queer to see wings flying alone that way, and when she laughed a squeaky voice mocked her. Then a funny little brownie popped his head from the flower, and Bettie asked him where the butterfly was to whom the wings belonged.

"Oh, this is a way station. Butterflies who go on long journeys change their wings every so often, so we have these pieces to supply them with fresh wings," replied the brownie.

"Oh, I wish I were a butterfly!" exclaimed Bettie, looking at the wonderful wings.

"Well, I can't change you into a butterfly, but I'll lend you this pair of wings if you'd like to fly with me," said the brownie.

Bettie said she would, and the brownie touched her and she grew very small. He fastened the wings to Bettie's shoulders and she flew to a daisy blossom.

"Stay close to me so you won't get lost," said the brownie, and he soared into the air.

Bettie followed him and thought it perfectly lovely to flit from flower to flower, stopping for a sip of honey from every blossom-well.

When Bettie grew tired they settled on a bush in a lovely garden to rest. Bettie was very proud of her beautiful wings and folded them around her so she could see them better. She was busy admiring them that she didn't hear the footsteps that came down the path, and before she could fly away a net flapped over her head and held her a prisoner.

The brownie, seeing what had happened, made the wind blow off the hat of the man who held the net, when he reached to get it the brownie quickly touched Bettie with the daisy petal, and she grew smaller and smaller.

"Squeeze through the threads," shouted the brownie.

Bettie lost no time in obeying, and flew to another flower.

"Just my luck!" said the man with the net. "That was the finest specimen I ever saw. Had a face on it," and he made a dive at Bettie, but the brownie caught Bettie up just in time to keep the net from falling over her again.

"Hurry!" whispered the brownie. "If he ever gets you he'll stick a pin through you and put you on a card."  
Bettie shouted.

"That's my uncle—I'm not afraid. He chases butterflies looking for new specimens. It would be fine to play a joke on him," said Bettie, and when the net hovered above her head she sat very still. The brownie changed her back to her former size, and when the net fell over her head her uncle shouted.

"Oh, Bettie, I didn't know you were among the daisies, and he lifted the net and away he ran."  
"Well, if that's the kind of a life it is to be a butterfly then I don't care to be one," said Bettie.

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