POOR DOCUMENT

MC 2034

ROSE ROYAL - - By McCulloch Williams.

Mallibone whistled as he laid down the letter, then knit his brows thoughtfully for the space of half a minute. It was a clerky letter, indeed quite commercial in aspect, typewritten, without spot or blemish, upon decent plain, white paper, with a date line, but no address. Even the signature, Rose-Royal, was machine made. But that astounded him far less than the contents of the sheets. He glanced at the envelope. It matched the paper to a nicety. The address was typewritten, but the segregating "Personal" had been put on in a bold black script, evidently by afterthought. The postmark was so blurred he could make nothing of it, but by the receiving stamp, which was fairly legible, he made out that it had come in on an early morning train. Since it had been written only the day before, the writer must live reasonably close to the city.

Between the lines he caught, subtly, the atmosphere of afternoon, though there was nothing definite of time or place—no mention even of when his own letter had been received.

He had dispatched the letter in a sudden exalted moment and thought of it afterward with sick qualms. In between the qualms there had been a quick and lively interest. Would it be answered? Was there really a Rose-Royal—a personality attuned to the verse whose cadences had seemed somehow the echo of his heart-beats? He had tried hard to keep himself out of his note—to make it frankly impersonal and wholly literary. How ill he had succeeded; this other letter bore witness:

"You would fit very ill 'In Elfland,'" it said. "Evidently you believe in things still—you must, to believe me a poet. In Elfland let me tell you, young sir, belief is horribly in the way. Belief is the root of the impossible—which Elfland refuses to know. Moreover there is another bar—you write of your 'silvering temples'—which is disingenuous—all the epistle simply reeks with youth. I confess I should be better pleased with it if it also reeked with youth's fine enthusiasm. You try to be nicely critical—to render reasons for the faith that is in you, as if you felt the faith needed apology and excuse.

"Not so comes the true worshipper to the shrine. Confess, you wrote because you fancied that in the Elf-girl I had painted my own portrait. If only you had thought right. But this is a world of contraries. On the whole, though, I would not have it otherwise. The contraries are what give zest and tang to living. Moreover, they redeem so much. Who of us would not accept the port and semblance of a cook along with the true lyric touch? Mind—I am not saying I am dowered with either. Imagination may run riot as to my charms or my lacks. You may even reason about me as it pleases you, deducing from my pen-name, by help of that wonderful rule of contraries, that I am neither royal nor in the least a rose."

There was more in the same vein. The writer had a genius for slipping lightly from the general to the individual, and back again. But the dominant note was a calmly flippant philosophy, wholly untouched by sentiment, therefore wholly apart from Rose-Royal's verse. There was further a suggestion of finality, infinitely galling.

Mallibone would not have deserved the name of man had he been willing to let the matter rest where it was. He would write again—as before, through the magazine that was Rose-Royal's favorite medium of expression. But meantime he would take counsel of another woman, the gayest and simplest of heart among all he knew.

He found her next day throned high in a laden cherry tree. She pelted him furiously with big black-red cherries by way of greeting, and showed no inclination to come to his level.

"You climb up—I can't climb down before people," she said, rocking luxuriously on her big branchy bough. "Besides, I really do need a protector. The wood-peckers are so bold, and so saucy they snatch cherries right from under my hand. Plagues! They ought to be satisfied with those on the far limber tips—the very best of all—the sweetest, the ripest—and clean out of my reach."

"Birds, like men, are lazy," Mallibone said, scrambling awkwardly up the tree. "The tip-cherries must be gathered flying or not at all. It is a lot easier to peck from a comfortable perch. I quite agree with Master Red-Head," seating himself as he spoke, and beginning to devour the blackest fruit within reach.

The girl, Allison Muir, shook a small stained fist at him, but her eyes twinkled—her own mouth was full.

Aunt Jack was going to make me a cherry cobbler," she said, trying to speak mournfully, "but now—there's no hope of it. And we shall have for desert is—biscuit and molasses. I tell you now, so you needn't stay to dinner—unless you want to."

"I do want to stay—I also want a cherry pie," Mallibone said decidedly, taking off his straw hat. "Indeed, I can't do without it," he went on smiling. It is the one possible refutation of your charge that I am a greedy pig. That absurd basket of yours will not hold half a pieful—I mean to take Aunt Jack a heaping hatful to help it out. Hold tight, I'm after the tip-toppers," scambling higher as he spoke, and reaching far out to clutch boughs as yet undespoiled.

He drew them in steadily but so slowly they did not snap. "Now you pick the cherries," he said smiling down at Allison.

The laden boughs waved invitingly, near her head—in a trice her basket was full, yet ripe fruit still gleamed thick on half of the twigs.

"You may have the rest" Allison said sweetly. "This basket won't hold another cherry."

Mallibone looked down at her with an odd smile. He had been thinking how typical was his own action—nearly all his life he had been asking Allison to pick metaphorical cherries for him—the wonder was that she had not rebelled earlier.

But he would not let her see that he caught any other than a surface meaning. Holding fast to the bough with one hand, he balanced his inverted hat deftly in a big crotch, and began to pile it with fruit. To fill it entirely he had to reach for a fresh bough—a stubborn one that tugged against him at the least ruffle of wind. In the effort to hold it steady he surged hard against the main branch upon which he stood.

The cherry tree had a trunk cleft in three at the bottom. Allison was perched upon the stoutest of the three main stems, Mallibons on the weakeet. But it would have held him up safe but for the leverage and the wind—together they broke it short off at the cleft. With a slow sweeping swish it went down, carrying Mallibone with it, and slamming him against the earth so hard that for an instant he lost breath and sense.

When he opened his eyes he saw Allison standing well apart from him, and heard her say in a voice of relief, "That was a lucky spill. I've been wondering how I should get down. It's a pity about your hat! See, it's all smashed, and stained through and through. I reckon, though, you can find something at the store; or if you can't, Aunt Jack will lend you Uncle Jack's beaver—she keeps it in the hall to scare tramps and burguars."

"Why don't you ask me if I am hurt?" Mallibone said, trying to look deeply injured.

Allison opened her eyes. "Why, are you?" she asked. "I never thought of it. I was so taken up with the cobbler I never even thought to ask why you had come."

"Why do I ever come? "To see you, isn't it?" Mallibone demanded.

Allison nodded brightly. "Yes," she said; "but most times you let us know. Or else I write you things—when the chickens are frying size, or the Indian peaches ripe. "Oh, I know you don't come just for that, but it is nice to have you then——"

"And this time the Indian peaches are still very green," Mallibone interrupted. "You the right, though; I come for something very special. Come to the Summer-house, and let me tell you about it."

"I will," Allison said, turning about. "But you must wait until I make sure of my cherry pie."

Mallibone waited, in half a dozen minds at least, before Allison came to him. The letter was not a love letter—there was nowhere about it any suggestion of a confidential communication. Still he could not quite get away from the feeling that it was wrong to show it. Unless he did show it, how would he ever make Allison understand? He doubted if she would understand wholly, even after reading the letter. She was the dearest girl in the world—almost. Her quick intelligence would readily lay hold upon all that was in the lines of the letter. But was what between the lines she might overlook—not only the atmospheric suggestion, but the subtler ones of a soul vibrant with another turned to its own key.

Fate saved him from choosing. As Allison came through the door a ruffle of wind tore the sheets from his grasp and whisked them to her feet. She picked them up without looking at them, but once they were in her hand he would not take them away unread. When she had read, she looked down, and shook her head gently, saying: "What is the puzzle, Arthur? I find nothing strange."

"Why—don't you see—everything is strange," Mallibone cried, eagerly. "To think of a woman—clearly a gentlewoman, as clearly a poet by divine right—sending me such a screed. You see, I signed my name, and gave references—and said—Oh! the sort of thing one would say to Rose-Royal. You read her verses, of course—the dawn, and the dew are in them—and heart break—and life—and—and love?"

"And she writes to you like a mother, almost," Allison said, with a smile of soft malice. "Really, Mr. Arthur Mallibone, I approve her letter. She wrote it, I am sure, feeling that the other woman was a looking over her shoulder."

"The other woman! How would she know?" Mallibone began, helplessly.

Again Allison laughed. "Do men who can do plenty of other things ever read verses except when they're in love? And you couldn't be in love with her," she said demurely.

"But I am in love with her. At least I would be if—" Mallibone protested, breaking off short at the end.

Allison raised her eyebrows significantly. "If there were not others," she said. "Poor, poor Arthur! It's dreadful to be so eligible. I'm awfully afraid you'll have to marry—as it were in self defence."

"If I did, would you care?" Mallibone demanded, suddenly laying hold of her hands.

She smiled at him tranquilly as she answered: "Certainly. There would be an end to our god times, no matter how much I liked Mrs. Mallibone."

"Why?" Malibone demanded, relentlessly, keeping her hands in his.

Her eyes danced, but her lips were grave as h answered: "Oh, because as sure as you found yourself tied fast to somebody else you would fall in love with me—if I gave you half a chance."

Mallibone sat down suddenly, helpless with laughter. "I should have fallen in love with you long ago if you had given me a quarter of a chance," he said. "But you wouldn't—always you've been so ruthlessly unsentimental—"

"Bother sentiment," Allison interrupted. "Let's get back to the letter; of course you'll answer it?"

"I hardly know," Mallibone said, untruthfully. He knek he should answer it, but was somehow loath to let Allison know it, too.

Allison looked at him keenly. "You will answer it, and the thing will go on and on. Suppose, after a while, when you are head over ears in love with the unknown—you should meet her, and find her hideous—say a lump of fat, or a Maypole ,or a missionary figure—why, what then?"

I shall not ask to see her yet. If I ever do, depend on it I shall know in spite of typewriting and all, she is worth seeing," Mallibone said, with his most superior smile.

"But how will you know?" Allison persisted.

Again Mallibone smiled. "By being a man, and not wholly without penetration," he answered. "No woman can write a man three letters without showing pretty clearly the sort of person he may expect her to be."

Mallibone might possibly have revised that judgment had he been given the chance several months later. Letters flew back and forth between him and Rose-Royal. He hardly waited for the fateful third to beg an interview, Rose-Royal demurred coyly—even hinting that the meeting was forever out of the question. She said outright he must walk warily, and pledge himself against trying to find out her name and local habitation. "You are a caprice. I do not know that you will ever be more," ran one epistle. "Until I am sure that you are worth the trouble, why give myself the trouble of talking to you face to face? Besides, it may be kinder to remain only an ideal. But even in shaping the ideal, pray bear in mind that a rhymer, like a volcano, is not built of the matter erupted. Heaven be praised for the fact. If it were not a fact I should not relish my dinner as I do, nor have fine feeling for my clothes, which are often which you are pleased to call my poems, in their last transformation. How can you expect me to waste sentiment in letters It rhymes itself almost automatically, and is so readily merchantable."

Notwithstanding, Mallibone persisted. The thing so idly begun had become a deadly earnest. He never let himself think in cold blood of what the end might be; he refused to take further counsel with Allison—indeed, he kept out of her way, and left her short letters unanswered until answering them was impossible. He refused blindly to believe the letters of Rose-Royal, choosing rather to judge her by the verse signed with her name. Always rhythmic, musical and delicate, it was by turns despairing, or else filled with a tricksy joy in life and the good world. Now and again, too, there was a rare elfin note, sweet and high as the singing of skylarks, that thrilled and made the heart beat faster. Whenever he heard this elfin note he had to tell the singer how much, how dearly he loved her. For long she took no note of the avowals, but one day toward the end of October she wrote: "You say you love me. Come and find out if you have spoken truth."

That was all, except on a separate sheet, prosaic details. She was coming cityward at such a date. He must call at a street number and ask simply for Rose-Royal. Mallibone dropped the paper there, his head suddenly giddy.

After a little he noted joyously that he had only a day to wait. He spent the first hours of it curiously—in pouring out to Allison what he felt and hoped. Thus only, it seemed to him, could he hold fast to sanity.

Rose-Royal had bewitched him, but she had not put Allison, cheery Allison, who warmed like sunshine and braced like the west wind, out of his heart. Nobody ever would do that. He wished devoutly that he loved her as he loved this unknown. He might have done it if there had not been all that beastly talk of money—his money, and Allison's—and the elders on both sides so eager to make the match. The wonder was not that they had rebelled, but that the elders had not made them hate each other.

All this and more he recalled while his pen raced. Then, when he had dropped it, after signing his name, he caught up the mass of written sheets, tore them in half and scrawled in the middle of another, "Please God and Rose-Royal, you will see me two days hence," folded and sealed it, and sent it straightway to the post. Then he went out and walked the streets until near morning. It was the only way he could hope to get sleep later in the night.

All things conspire against him who waits. Mallibone was sure of it when he woke from troubled sleep to find a chill, muggy grayness washing out October's splendor. His hope had been to take Rose-Royal for a drive in the Park, its riot of gold and green and scarlet softened by low, late sunshine and wreathy blue mists. Now his brougham went crawling through greasy, sodden streets, checked every little while by a tangled blur of other vehicles. He should be late—half an hour late. What would she think of him after——

He did not let himself get further. At last, in a peculiarly inpenetrable jam, he sprang out impatiently and darted to the footway, getting well splashed for his pains, to find the next minute that the jam had suddenly resolved itself in to an orderly procession, so he had lost time, and gained only mud.

So he came at last to the appointed place, with his nerves on edge. It did not reassure him to wait full ten minutes in an obvious parlor, full of rosewood and brocatelle horrors, and miscalled bric-a-brac. A picture over the mantel fascinated him—a woman's picture, with triple chins lying within a fiercely upstanding lace ruff, and a frowsy mat of very short ringlets, tumbling almost into the eyes. One fat hand, stiffly extended gleamed with rings—every manner of rings. A malevolent turquoise was held between thumb and forefinger, as if being appraised. The light was dim, although both the tall windows were unshuttered.

Mallibone stood staring upward and listening to the thumping of his heart. He heard nothing else until a high falsetto voice said a little way beside him: "So you too are fascinated by our heirloom. It is a good beginning."

He turned to see the heirloom's counterpart—the same frowsy ringlets, bottle nose, and stiff, chubby hand. The chins he could not see, for an enveloping ruff, not of lace, but full and fluffy, quite swallowing neck and shoulders. The woman was reasonably tall—more than reasonably plump. Her gown fitted like wax—indeed there was something very like waxworks in her pose and attitude.

"I am Rose-Royal. Confess I shatter your ideal," she said, holding out her hand. It was gloved, very tightly. Somehow Mallibone managed to take it, pull himself together and stammer out: "You do indeed, go beyond my ideal."

As he dropped the hand he felt like dropping himself. He was limp throughout, and cold and sick. The woman half turned from him, motioning him to a chair. She herself stood a minute, as if uncertain—then began to shake and put her hands over her face.

Mallibone sprang up awkwardly and made a step toward her, but drew back, dazed and uncertain. He wanted to fly, but manhood bade him stay. "You—You won't mind I —hope—I—I —am a little overcome—you know you kept me—waiting," the lady said at last in a chocked voice, from out the muffle of a silk handkerchief.

As she stood Mallibone noticed that the curls were dyed. It needed but that to decide him—he hurried towards the door, with no pretense of excuse, or explanation, conscious only of the impulse of flight.

His hand was on the knob when he heard a soft thudding sound, and under it uproarious giggles. Then came Allison's voice, saying: "Turn again Whittington. You may not be lord mayor of London town, but you may have a good laugh," and as he stayed his flight to look he saw the wig and ruff and glasses lying on the floor where merry Allison had thrown them —saw Allison herself slip off the false bottle nose, then run behind an aggressive screen, and come back fully clad, but free of her padded chrysalis.

She dropped him a little courtesy and said roguishly: "Poor dear Rose-Royal. You are very ungrateful to run away from her—after the trouble she took to be—somebody other than herself."

"You don't mean—you can't—" Mallibone began, seizing both her hands and making to kiss her.

"But I do mean—and I can—I'm Rose-Royal—who but me. I always had a taste, a talent almost for making up." Allison interrupted. "Also for rhyming—though I kept it dead dark. But it got the better of me now and then—and I was afraid any way, if I didn't let it, some day I should do some awfully foolish thing. I like to be sensible most of the time—writing verses helped—it was a sort of escape valve, you know—"

"But—but why didn't you tell me?" Mallibone interrupted, still holding her fast.

Allison dropped her eyes and flushed until she was indeed a rose-royal as she answered: "How could I? The—the rhyming was—all because I loved you."

Mallibone wanted to kneel to her. Instead he took her boldly in his arms, and said, dropping kisses upon her soft hair: "I have been blind indeed, but now I see."

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A CRIME EXCHANGE - - By Montague Glover.

Algernon Vansittart came out of Sing Sing with a close shave, a haircut, and a great idea vibrating through his brain.

Since the day when Algernon was let off with a sentence of six months, hard labor, because he had made a few mistakes in a Boston bank, his views had changed considerably. It could not be contended that he was a better man. He had lost one of his ideals. He no longer possessed the respect that everybody feels toward the great criminal.

Algernon was like the reform alderman who meets his fellows in caucus for the first time. He had learned that names revered from one end of the Tenderloin to the other were those of charlatans, and he was forced to admit that crime was carried on in a manner which made him, at times, ashamed of his profession.

But as he left Sing Sing, Algernon was no longer sad or preoccupied. His step was elastic, his brain clear, as he rushed around the Thirteenth Ward renewing old friendships, obtaining expert advice, and securing promises of co-operation.

The great idea had commenced to boom, and at the end of a week Algernon had made sufficient progress to enable him to take a business proposition to Ronald, Gilligan & Ronald of Wall Street. Heironamus J. Ronald, whose name appeared in the little table at the left-hand top corner of the firm's notepaper, was an ethnologist in his way, and could identify the genus businessman at sight.

He was in the habit of making everybody wait in his outer office for twenty minutes as a matter of principle, but when he saw Algernon's card he gave instructions for his immediate admittance.

"I have brought you a scheme which I believe will result in profit to both of us," began Algernon; "at any rate, I hope to me. After due inquiries, I found your firm to be the most unscrupulous in New York, and——"

"You flatter us," murmured Mr. Ronald.

"And accordingly," continued Algernon, "I accepted that recommendation. My scheme, which I desire to float into a joint stock concern, is to conduct crime on a scientific basis."

Mr. Ronald yawned and waved his hand impatiently. "We have been doing that in Wall Street for years," he remarked.

"I am aware of that," said Algernon, "but my scheme deals in forms of crime unfamiliar even to Wall Street."

"You are contemptuous of our efficiency," said Mr. Ronald, smiling with a superior air.

"Not at all," replied Algernon; "but of course I must look elsewhere if we cannot deal."

"I did not say so," contended Mr. Ronald sarcastically. "All I said was that the idea was a back number, and consequently the profits to yourself would be curtailed, while the expenses of brokerage would necessarily be increased."

Mr. Ronald turned the disk on his door exposing to the world the word "Out," and Algernon and he spent four hours in earnest conversation.

Three and three-quarter hours were devoted to deciding how much each was to get out of the spoils of flotation. The remaining quarter of an hour was spent in preparing the prospectus of The Crime Exchange and the advertisements for the preliminary meeting.

"I suppose that's about all I could get," thought Algernon as they parted, "but I'l back him against any guy in the A division for clean, gentlemanly, sceintific robbery."

When the meeting was held a week later, the hall was crowded. The prospectus, which had been widely circulated, set forth that the objects of The Crime Exchange were to carry on, conduct, exploit, devolop, and perfect all branches of crime; to experiment and report upon new devices and inventions and generally promote the well-being of the members of the profession.

The capital was to be $250,000, in 50,000 shares of $5 each, $1 on application, $1 on allotment, and the balance in quarterly calls, which, it was anticipated, would not be necessary.

The vender of the property, Mr. Algernon P. Vansittart, was to receive $25,000 in cash and 10,000 shares fully paid up, and it was proposed to retain his services as managing director at $5,000 a year.

The brokerage fees would amount to less than $500. When Algernon made the declaration that the contents of the prospectus were true in every particular, the only thing that worried his conscience was the fact that $20,000 of the $25,000 he was to receive for the goodwill was to go into the pockets of Mr. Ronald.

The provisional directors were William T. Splintzner, of the Tenderloin; Chunk McGrath, of no fixed place of abode, porch-climber; Stump Wilkinson, of the Main Stem, gold brick operator; Heironamus J. Ronald, of Wall Street, sharebroker; and Nip Hourigan, of the Tombs Prison, forger.

Since the prospectus was printed, Hourigan had ben found not guilty and he was loudly cheered as he took his seat at the chairman's table. Splintzner was elected chairman, and called upon Algernon to state the proposition. Algernon, who was received with applause, cleared his throat and began:

"Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen:—A large number of those present are aware of the details of this scheme—my scheme, I was about to say, but when I see around me so many earnest workers in the great cause—gentlemen to whom I owe so much for their fatherly guidance in the way I should not go—I feel constrained to give dishonor where dishonor is due. (Applause.) This body which we are about to create—for I take it that success is assured—is the result neither of my own enterprise nor of the admirable qualities of those gentlemen to whom I referred. (Cheers.)

"It is merely the outcome of a world-wide movement to secure for the man of pluck and enterprise an adequate reward, to bring the producer and the consumer into closer touch, to adopt the methods of organization and intelligence which are part of every modern army, military or industrial, and, generally, to further the interests of the class which, more than any other, has suffered from over-legislation. (Loud cheers.)

"At one time the profession we are proud to represent stood at the head of all. Now, unhappily, there are none so poor to do it reverence. This is not because the men have deteriorated. Our unworthy chairman would stand comparison with the most successful baron of the middle ages, and I see before me gentlemen whom the great masters—Cartouche or Gilderoy, or the illustrious Blueskin himself—would have been glad to hail as equals. (Loud cheers.)

"The fault lies in the fact that while all other arts and sciences have developed with civilization, crime has stood still. The Crime Exchange will remedy all that. It will be an Exchange in the true sense of the word. There will be nothing speculative about it. It will simply provide a means whereby those in possession of information, which they cannot use themselves, may dispose of it to those who can. How many of us have witnessed the humiliating spectacle of riches lying before us which we could not put to their illegitimate use. (Hear, hear.)

"I have known a man to swing a sandbag for one hundred and fifty dollars, when all the time there were dozens of persons who would gladly have given ten times that amount to secure the removal of somebody who stood between them and a vast fortune. (Hisses.)

"My heart has bled to see expert forgers going to endless trouble to obtain cash for an order of a few dollars, while all the time within a stone's throw were people who would have rejoiced to pay five thousand dollars for a well-forged will. This is the sort of thing that The Crime Exchange is going to stop. (Hear, hear.)

"In future the gap between supply and demand will be bridged and a courageous, enterprising, and industrious body of men will gain the wrongful fruits of their energy." (Loud cheers.)

As Algernon resumed his seat, there was a hum of approval. Many of those present had expected eloquence. They were agreeably surprised to find nothing but a hard, clear, business proposition. The chairman rose to speak, but Bunt Evans, one of the most eminent strong arm men along the Main Stem, cried at the same moment:

"I'll take five hundred shares."

The chairman's voice was drowned. From all sides came applications, and the clerk from Ronald's office wrote till his hand shook.

"How many kin I score on them?" asked young Arty Walsom of the Battery Gang, handing the chairman two gold watches, a diamond pin, and two pieces of broken chain.

"Twenty-five,' 'replied Algernon, sweeping the lot into his pocket. There was a hum of applause, and the incident made an excellent impression.

"Another of our objects," announced Algernon, "is to secure for the worker an adequate reward. Too long have we all suffered in this respect." (Hear, hear.)

It was not long before the capital was all subscribed, and the articles of association agreed to. It was only when Algernon proposed a fellow-Bostonian as treasurer that old Bunt Evans objected.

"It's this way," began Bunt. "I ain't castin' de slimey slur against dis young guy. But we all know dis is goin' to be a big combination. De treasurer 'll have a million keepin' him company at times, an' which of us 'd resist duckin' wit' de lot?"

The room was silent. His logic was indisputable. "What I say," continued Bunt, "is we oughter git some guy as ain't one of ourselves. Some on de level guy if we can—some guy what's bin dead square an' in wit' de shiney crowd." (Hear, hear.)

"Where is he?" asked somebody.

"I dunno," replied Bunt fiercely. "I ain't got no game on. Git de dreaktry, squint along de good-boy sercieties an' pick one for yerselves." (Hear, hear.)

The directory was brought. The societies and organizations were turned up, and the chairman read the first at the head of the A's: "The American Association for the Advancement of Decency, J. F. McFarlane, Secretary." The crowd cheered.

"That's only the first," explained the chairman. "There are two pages of them."

"Never mind," cried Bunt. "He sounds de real thing. If we close on de first dere can't be no trouble." (Hear, hear.)

"Well," said the chairman, "it is moved by Mr. Evans, seconded by Mr. Wilson, that Mr. McFarlane be asked to accept the position of treasurer at a salary of two thousand five hundred dollars a year. Those in favor; those against. Carried unanimously. (Cheers.)

The remainder of the business was formal, and the meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the chairman.

Within a week The Crime Exchange was a going concern in a handsome suite of offices on Fifth Avenue. Algernon and McFarlane shared an office between them, and Algernon's only regret was his failure to secure his old friend as treasurer. McFarlane was a small, wizened Scotchman, of fifty-five, with straggling, red whiskers, weak eyes, and a peaceful aspect.

He worried all day over the books, and never spoke but to say "Ssh!" when Algernon or some other member of the Exchange conversed too loudly. When anybody swore, he would make a wry face. "Can ye not put a stop to this onseemly language, Meester Vansetart?" he demanded more than once, and whenever Algernon himself expressed his feelings in profanity, McFarlane would gently reprove him for setting the staff a bad example.

Yet even McFarlane had his jocund moments. When he had secured a balance, after much trouble, he could be heard softly humming a simple tune, and, from the papers which he brought wrapped round his lunch it was discovered that he was in the habit of lecturing at lantern entertainments in the suburbs. But with all his virtues, McFarlane was not a congenial colleague, and Algernon's relations with him were purely formal.

At the end of the first week Algernon was able to send a private and confidential list of good things to the subscribers of the Exchange. The list was divided into two parts—"Hazardous" and "Safe."

Under "Burglary" appeared the addresses of a score of offices and residences suitable for operation. The second column gave descriptions of the safes, combinations, and locks, with the spoils contained at the date of publication: The third column described the habits of the inmates; and, under remarks, was further information as to the best methods of entrance, the disposition of watch-dogs and the duties and character of the police in the locality.

"Garroting, strong-arm work, etc.," gave the names, descriptions, measurements, and habits of persons known to carry money or valuables sufficient to warrant their being robbed. A useful footnote described those who wore imitation jewelry, those who carried guns and those who attended physical culture classes.

A vast amount of useful information was supplied under the head of "Miscellaneous." Wealthy visitors from the country districts were described accurately with their weak points set forth in marginal notes; the coin movements of financial institutions were given in detail, and new methods of crime in other countries deemed suitable for acclimatization were mentioned.

In an appendix were the names and descriptions, on the Bertillon system, of all persons having a pull with the police. Interference with any of these was punishment by expulsion. The list with an immense success.

Subscriptions poured in during the ensuing week, and McFarlane worked overtime without a word of complaint, walking to and from his lodgings, He saved his fares on the Subway, he explained one loquacious day, that he might invest them in real estate.

The daily meetings of the Exchange were even of greater value than the list. Safe-blowers were able to distribute among gold-brick operators, forgers, pickpockets, and strong-arm men, valuable facts that they were themselves powerless to turn into account.

Garroters who had followed big winners home from the race-tracks without an opportunity to aperate gave information to gangs of experienced burglars; and every branch of the profession co-operated in this manner with the others.

Old Mugton, for instance, did not carry out a single porch-climbing job worth a silver watch during the first month of his membership. Nevertheless, he lived like a fighting cock on the commissions obtained from fellow-members.

Algernon was in ecstacies. He scandalized McFarlans by buying a high dog-cart with white and gold harness. But he did not allow pleasure to interfere with the work of the Exchange. While he was on duty he labored at high pressure and lived the strenuous life.

It was through his efforts that the Exchange, at the end of the first quarter, took over all the remaining offces on the third floor of the building and started its legal branch, where one of the most eminent lawyers of the day gave opinions to members.

Those about to embark in any novel form of crime could, before acting, ascertain if there were any flaws in the criminal law. Others, who contemplated flight, could arrange in advance that all attempts to extradite them should be effectively blocked; while the members in extensive practice were careful, before embarking in any hazardous enterprise, to see that the legal branch had an alibi ready. The Exchange also provided through this department for the suborning of witnesses, the securing of false evidence, and the squaring of witnesses.

From its inception, the legal branch proved the most successful of all Algernon's details, and fully satisfied the expense of securing an attorney who had to refuse an important judgeship in order to take the position.

It was just when the members had fully grasped the value of the legal branch that one of the oldest and best respected gold-brick operators in the Exchange was arrested in the act of telling a wealthy farmer from Yonkers the reason he was able to sell gold-bricks for ten dollars each.

In court the farmer said that he believed every word until gold-bricks were mentioned. Then he seized the operator and called for the police. This incident cast quite a gloom over the Exchange, which adjourned out of respect for its fellow-member when he was sent up for two years. But good comes out of evil, and Algernon was set thinking on lines which led to his creating a literary branch.

Within a fortnight, the journals which make a specialty of fiction had to fill up their space with reprint matter about curious customs of the Peruvians and similar tiresome stuff. Every story writer whose vivid imagination had gladdened the reading public ceased from sending in his copy. Editors, at their wit's end, sought them out and vainly implored them to continue. Prices advanced from the usual rate of three dollars a column to one hundred dollars, but the writers were not tempted.

One and all stood on their stoops and gave the editors a last glimpse of their imaginative qualities. Horimer had inherited a fortune. Irving Pardington had won a five-hundred-to-one-shot at New Orleans; Jack Scolland was devoting himself to art for art's sake. The truth was, Algernon had bought up all of them, and they spent eight hours a day in the story-factory established for the supply of convincing con narratives for the tellers of tales.

From the outset the venture proved successful. The very first story supplied to a member was used with excellent effect to deprive an experienced book-maker of his winnings, and a leading member of Tammany was swindled out of two hundred and fifty dollars by the next.

With the aid of Josephus G. Cokestone the head of the legal branch, Algernon was able to put a stop to the suicidal policy of overusing a good device. Some of the most cleverly arranged swindles were rendered unfit for use after one trial owing to unskilful practioners endeavoring to use them.

Algernon held—and the committee supported him—that a man with sufficient originality to devise a system of robbery or swindling should be entitled to its sole use. The upshot was the introduction of a regulation granting copyright to a bona-fide applicant who could prove novelty and necessity.

Penalties were provided for infringements and colorable imitations, and what proved a great boon to the clever members of the community who did not actually participate in crime was the right to issue licenses for the use of any copyright device.

A Mobile lecturer on "Home Life," who thought out an ingenious method of defrauding dry-goods men, was thus able to draw from McFarlane a monthly check for five hundred dollars.

As crime once more became a profession to which any ambitious man might be proud to belong, the committee of the Exchange found that a much superior class of young fellows was being attrated.

"It's up to us to do something for these guys," said Algernon to the committee. "Technical education has done so much in other professions that it's time we took a hand.'

The comittee made no objection. It had got beyond questioning anything that Algernon proposed. Next day the adjoining premises were leased for a business college in connection with the Exchange.

A staff of competent instructors was secured, and by means of "Crime Exchange Extension Lectures," Algernon was able to attract many who would otherwise would have drifted into honesty.

The syllabus was most attractive, and included "The Elements of Blackmail," by the Chief of Police of one of the principal cities of the Union; "First Principles of Disguise," by a leading actor; "The Origin and Development of Wounding in the First Degree," by Professor Willard; "Bacteriology in Its Relation to Embezzlement," by Dr. Cox; "Safe Blowing and the Roentgen Rays," by Professor Phing; "The Actuarial Basis of Profit and Punishment,' by a well-known insurance adjuster; and 'The Future of Forgery,' by the chairman of a National Bank.

But the Exchange was not without its troubles. A serious position was brought about by the very perfection of its organization. Through its good offices an old and respectable firm of burglars had gone to great trouble and expense in breaking into a branch bank, and they were just returning to the Tenderloin with the swag when they were intercepted and robbed of

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