

A Husband by Proxy

By JACK STEELE

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CHAPTER I.

The Proposition

WITH the hum of New York above, below, and all about him, stirring his pulses and prodding his mental activities, Jerold Garrison, expert criminologist, stood at the window of his recently opened office, looking out upon the roofs and streets of the city with a new sense of pride and power in his being.

New York at last! He was here—unknown and alone, it was true—but charged with an energy that he proposed Manhattan should feel. He was almost penniless, with his office rent, his licenses, and other expenses paid, but he shook his fist at the city, in sheer good nature and confidence in his strength, despite the fact that he had waited a week for expected employment, and nothing at present loomed upon the horizon.

His past, in a small Ohio town, was behind him. He blotted it out without regret—or so, at least he said to himself—ever as to all the gilded hopes which had once seemed his all upon earth. If his heart was not whole, no New York eye should see its wounds—and the healing process had begun.

He was part of the vast machine about him, the mighty brain, as it were, of the great American nation.

He paced the length of his room, and glanced at the door. The half-painted sign on the Frosted glass was legible, reversed, as the artist had left it:

JEROLD CRIMINOLOGIST.

He had halted the painter himself on the name, as the lettering appeared to be faint—no sufficiently plain or bold. While he stood there a shadow fell upon the glass, and he turned to see outside, in the hall, as if undecided, the owner of the shadow oscillated for a moment—and disappeared. Garrison leaped to open the door and gratify a natural curiosity, remained beside his desk. Mechanically his hand, which lay upon a book entitled "A Treatise on Poisons," closed the volume.

He was still watching the door. The shadow returned, the knob was revolved, and there, in the open frame, stood a tall young woman of extraordinary beauty, richly though quietly dressed, and swiftly changing color with excitement.

Pale in one second, crimson in the next, and evidently concentrating all her power on an effort to be calm, she presented a strangely appealing and enchanting figure to the man across the street. Bravely was blazing in her glorious brown eyes, and firmness came upon her manner as she stepped inside, closed the door, and silently confronted the detective.

The man she was studying was a fine-looking, clean-cut fellow, gray-eyed, smooth-shaven, with thick brown hair, and with a gentleman-athlete air that made him distinctly attractive. The faintest shadow of his eyes completed a personal charm that was undeniable in his entity.

It seemed rather long that the two thus stood there, face to face. Garrison candidly admitted to his eyes, his visitor studious and slightly uncertain.

She was the first to speak. "Are you Mr. Jerold?"

"Jerold Garrison, the detective answered. "My office is unfinished. May I offer you a chair?"

His caller sat down beside the desk. She continued to study his face frankly, with a half-smile, half-defiant scrutiny, as if banishing a natural diffidence under the pressure of necessity.

She spoke again, abruptly. "I wish to procure peculiar services. Are you a very well-known detective?"

"I have never called myself a detective," said Garrison, "but in trying to occupy a higher sphere of usefulness, I left college a year ago, and last week opened my office here and became a New Yorker."

"He might, in all modesty, have exhibited a scrap-book filled with accounts of his achievements, with countless references to his work as a "scientific criminologist" of rare mental attainments. Of his attainments, his eyes told her there was no need of reference. They proclaimed themselves in his bearing.

His visitor laid a glove and a scrap of paper on the desk. "I need much detective services," she said; "but of course you are widely acquainted in New York—I mean with young men particularly."

"No," he replied, "I know almost none. But I know the city fairly well, if that will answer your purpose."

"I thought, of course—I hoped you might know some honorable—You see, I have come on rather extraordinary business. Let me ask you first—the confidence of a possible client quite sacred with a man in this profession?"

"Absolutely sacred!" he assured her. "Whether you engage my services or not, your utterances here will be treated as confidential and as inviolate as if spoken to a lawyer, a doctor, or a clergyman."

"Thank you," she murmured. "I have been hunting around—"

She left the sentence incomplete. "And you found my name quite by accident?" he supplied, indicating the scrap of paper. "I cannot help observing that you have been to other offices first. You have tramped all the way down Broadway from Forty-second Street, for the red ink that someone spilled on the Forty-second Street crossing is still on your shoes, together with a bit of dust."

"She withdrew her shoe beneath the edge of her skirt, although he had never apparently glanced in that direction. "Yes," she admitted, "I have been to others—and they wouldn't do. I came in here because of the name Jerold. I am sorry you are not better acquainted—for my business is important."

"Perhaps if I knew the nature of your needs I might be able to advise you," said Garrison. "I hope to be more widely acquainted soon."

silence. She was evidently striving to overcome some indecision.

Garrison looked at her steadily. He thought he had never in his life beheld a woman so beautiful. Some wild, untruly hope that she might become his client, perhaps even a friend, was flashing in his mind.

The color came and went in her cheeks, adding fresh loveliness at every change. She glanced at her list of names, from which a number had been scratched.

"Well," she said presently, "I think perhaps you might still be able to attend to my requirements."

He waited to hear her continue, but she needed no encouragement.

"I shall be glad to try," he assured her. "She was silent again—and blushing. She looked up somewhat defiantly.

"I wish you to procure me a husband," she said.

Garrison stared. He was certain he had not heard incorrectly.

"I do not mean an actual husband," she explained, "I simply mean some honorable young man who will assume the role for a time, as a business proposition, for a fee to be paid as I would pay for anything else."

"But I would require that he understand the affair to be strictly commercial, and that when I wish the arrangement to terminate he will disappear from the scene and from my acquaintance at once and absolutely."

"All I ask of you is to supply me such a person. I will pay you whatever fee you may demand—in reason."

Garrison looked at her as fixedly as she was looking at him.

Her recital of her needs had brought to the surface a phase of desperation in her bearing that wrought upon him powerfully, he knew not why.

"I think I understand your requirements, as far as one can in the circumstances," he answered. "I hardly believe I have the ability to engage such a person as you need for such a mission. I informed you at the start that my acquaintance with New York men is exceedingly narrow. I cannot think of anyone I could honestly recommend."

"But don't you know any honorable young gentlemen—like some college man, perhaps—here in New York, looking for employment; someone who might be glad to earn, say, five hundred dollars?" she insisted. "Surely if you only know a few, there must be one among them."

Garrison sat back in his chair and took hold of his smooth-shaved lip with his thumb and finger. He reviewed his New York acquaintances rapidly in his mind. "No," he repeated. "I know of no such man. I am sorry."

His visitor looked at him with a new, flashing light in her eyes.

"Not one?" she asked significantly. "Not one young college man?"

He was unsuspicious of her meaning. "Not one."

For a moment she fingered her glove where it lay upon the desk. Then she looked more pronounced determination and courage came upon her face as she raised her eyes once more to Garrison's.

"Are you married?"

A flush came at once upon Garrison's face—and memories and heartaches possessed him for a poignant moment. He mastered himself almost instantly.

"No," he said, with some emotion. "I am not."

"Then," she said, "couldn't you undertake the task yourself?"

Garrison leaned forward on the table. Lightning from an azure sky could have been no more astonishing or unexpected.

"Do you mean will I play this role—as your husband?" he said, slowly.

"Is that what you are asking?"

"Yes," she answered, unflinchingly. "Why not? You need the money; I need the services. You understand exactly what it is I require. It is business, and you are a business man."

purposefully to fit your requirements," he said. "Am I not supposed to know you by any other name?"

"If you accept the title 'employment,' she answered, once more blushing crimson, 'you may be obliged at times to call me Dorothy. My maiden name was Dorothy Booth.'

"Dorothy Booth," he said. "Oh!"

"They were silent for a moment. The man was pondering the possibilities. His visitor was evidently anxious.

"I suppose I can find someone else if you refuse the employment," she said. "But you will understand that my search is one of great difficulty. The person I employ must be loyal, a gentleman, courageous, resourceful, and very little known. You can see for yourself that you are particularly adapted for the work."

"Thank you," said Garrison, who was aware that no particular flattery was intended. He added, "I hardly suppose it could do me any harm."

Mrs. Fairfax accepted this ungalant observation calmly. She recognized the fact that his side of the question had its aspects.

She waited for Garrison to speak again.

A knock at the door startled them both. A postman entered, and dropped two letters on the desk, and departed down the hall.

Garrison took up the letters. One was a circular of his own, addressed to a lawyer over a month before, and now returned undelivered and marked "Not found," though three or four different addresses had been supplied in its peregrinations.

The second letter was addressed to himself in typewritten form. He was too engrossed to tear it open, and laid them both upon the table.

"If I took this up," he presently resumed, "I should be obliged to know something of the party to whom they were when we were supposed to have been married."

"On the 10th of last month," she answered promptly. "And, in case of necessity, how should we prove it?"

"By my wedding certificate," she told him calmly.

His astonishment increased. "Then you were actually married, over a month ago?"

"I have the certificate. Isn't that sufficient?" she repeated evasively.

"Well—I suppose it is—for this sort of an arrangement," he agreed. "Of course some man's name must appear in the certificate. I should like to know, in the name of the arrangement, to whom it was issued."

"Certainly," she said; "I told you came into your office because your name is Jerold."

"Exactly," he mused. "The name I'd assume is Jerold Fairfax?"

She nodded, watching him keenly.

"It's a good enough name," said Garrison. "I have no objection."

He paced up and down the floor in silence a number of times. Mrs. Fairfax watched him in apparent calm.

"This is a great temptation," he admitted. "I should like to earn the fee you have mentioned, Miss Booth—Mrs. Fairfax, but—"

He halted.

"I don't exactly like the look of it, to be frank," he confessed. "I don't know you, and you don't know me. I am not informed whether you are really married or not. If you are, and I am not, you have no desire to enlighten me on these matters. Can you tell me why you wish to pretend that I am your husband?"

"I do not wish to discuss that aspect of the arrangement at present," she said. "It is purely a business proposition that should last no more than a month or two at most, and then terminate forever. I would prefer to have you remain out of town as much as possible."

"A great many haphazard deductions present themselves to my mind," he said, "but all are doubtless inaccurate. I have no morbid curiosity concerning your affairs, but this thing would involve me almost as much as yourself, by its very nature."

something akin to sympathy—something that burned like wine of romance in his blood, with every venture and a surge of generosity toward this unknown girl—tingled in all his being. Something in her helplessness appealed to his innate chivalry.

Calmly, however, he took a new estimate of her character, notwithstanding the fact that his first, most reliable impression had been in her favor.

"Well," he said, after a moment, "it's a blind matter for me, but I will accept your offer. When do you wish me to begin my services?"

"I should like to notify my lawyer as soon as possible," answered Mrs. Fairfax, "and to have you sign a receipt. He may regard the fact that he was not sooner notified as a little peculiar."

"Practically you wish me to assume my role as 'Jerold,' don't you?" Garrison asked.

"Mr. Stephen Trowbridge," Garrison took up that name, addressed her, returned by the post, and passed it to her. This envelope has been addressed as you observe, but it has never reached its destination. Is that your name?"

"Yes," she said, "I think so. Do you wish my present address?"

(To be continued.)

CANADA'S TIMBER FAMINE

(By A. H. D. Ross, Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto, in the Canadian Courier)

In a former article we saw that enormous quantities of wood are now being consumed in this country, and that still larger quantities will be required for our own use in the immediate future, that other countries are already looking to us for the supplies which they lack, that there will soon be a world price for lumber, and that the conservation of our timber resources is an absolute necessity if we are to hold our place among the nations of the earth.

In this article I wish to draw your attention to the absolute senseless and wasteful destruction of huge areas of forest cover through the agency of fire. Without the protection of our timber crops against fire, man, plants, animals, and the primal forces of nature, what is the use of all the operations incident

to forest management?

Forest fires are nearly always caused by human agency. The New Island cases of fires started by lightning are of such rare occurrence that they can scarcely be considered in the present article. Besides, most of the fires started in this way are generally extinguished by the accompanying downpour of rain. The theory of fire started by "spontaneous combustion" will not bear close investigation. Hence, man himself is responsible for nearly all the cases they are started intentionally, but in the vast majority of cases they are entirely due to criminal carelessness.

The deliberate firing of the woods to drive out game, secure better pasturage, and improve the soil, are not intended to secure a better crop of berries, is a criminal offence that should merit the same punishment as setting fire to a building in a crowded city. What we need in Canada is a thorough understanding of what our losses from forest fires mean to us as a nation, and the cultivation of a strong public sentiment which will back up the enforcement of laws designed to protect our forests from fire. In Norway any person who causes a forest fire, by accident or otherwise, is held liable for all the damage, and imprisoned as well. The result is that forest fires very seldom occur.

In Europe they say "It is only the Americans (including Canadians) and Turks who burn the forests." From the northern limit to the Isthmus of Panama, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the North American continent has been fairly scourged by fire. Even those who are most familiar with the condition of our forests do not realize the enormous quantities of wood annually consumed by forest fires. Lumber enough to build whole cities, ties enough to supply complete railway systems, timber enough to develop the mineral resources of a whole country and fuel enough to supply a whole province for the winter have frequently been swept out of existence without raising an editorial comment in any of our newspapers.

This, surely, is striking evidence of the apathy of the public conscience towards fires which do not endanger the present luxuries and necessities of private citizens. It is also evidence of our national ignorance regarding the plentiful waste that goes on from year to year, and of the criminal negligence which allows it to go unchecked.

In Canada, the greatest sources of danger are the carelessness of the people who have occasion to use fire in the woods, and the railways running through the forested areas. Inexpelled campfires do not realize how easy a matter it is for a camp fire to escape into the neighboring woods and start a vast conflagration. Before starting such fires the ground should be cleared of all inflammable material for a distance of several feet, or else built where

there is no vegetable material in which it may smoulder for hours, or even days, before being fanned into flame. On breaking camp, every fireman should be taken to see that the fires used have been completely extinguished. The throwing aside of burning matches or cigar stubs and the use of rag or paper gun wads are also common sources of danger. The only sure way to fight a forest fire is to be careful not to let it get started. Under all circumstances I entreat you to adopt this policy. Try to impress it upon others, and your own good example as well as by talking about it, and you will do far more than you may imagine to check carelessness on the part of those who camp in the woods.

The railways are another fruitful source of danger. During their construction, the burning of timber felled along a right of way is a constant source of danger—particularly on very dry or windy weather. Fires built by navvies (mostly Italian and Hindoo) to cook their meals and warm themselves are also a source of danger—particularly if built against a stump or tree. There may smoulder for days before bursting into flame. When the railway is completed, the necessity of having a strong draught for the engines to get up steep grades projects the red sparks to a great distance from the rails. The dropping of live coals from the ash-pan is also responsible for the starting of many fires; also the burning of old ties and other rubbish along the right of way.

Forty years ago there was a solid forest extending from Nipigon, Ont., past Fort Arthur and Port William and westward to within forty miles of Winnipeg. In 1870, when the troops went through that country to Fort Garry to suppress the first Red Rebellion, the country was badly burned, and at the Canadian Pacific Railway was being built, the work of destruction was carried still further. Those of you who have travelled that route to Winnipeg know what a desolate waste the country still presents. In every province of the Dominion there is ample evidence of the havoc wrought by fire caused by the railways.

The clearing of land for agricultural purposes is another fruitful source of forest fires. Naturally this goes on in remote regions where the work of burning stumps and log piles cannot very well be done under supervision. In dry or windy weather it is a particularly dangerous operation, especially when conducted in the neighborhood of standing timber—as it generally is.

In 1894 the disastrous fires that swept through Minnesota were started by timber thieves who wished to obliterate the evidence of their depredations. If this is not a criminal offence, I would like to know what is.

Then, again, in the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York, I have seen thousands of acres of land that were deliberately burned over to secure good crops of huckleberries. Nor is our country exempt. In the Labrador Peninsula I have seen hundreds of square miles that were burned over by the Indians to make it easier to hunt for game. Officers of the Geological Survey who are familiar with the country west of Hudson's Bay tell me that the same thing has occurred there and in the Yukon. In our northern spruce forests the danger from fire is very great.

One of their tricks is to catch a buffalo, drive it into the river, and, clinging to its tail, guide it in the way they desire to go. By this means they are quickly carried down the current and leave no tell-tale footprints. But the reason is not always successful, for the reason that the tracker thinks nothing of distance and is likely to come upon the tracks of the thief farther on, where the thief was forced to leave the stream. A good tracker, it is asserted, will follow a trail, yard by yard, for a hundred miles and come up with him in the end.

In one instance a burglar was thus tracked until the searcher reached the lock-up of a village eighty miles from the starting-point. Inside the building was the man he had set out to find. The police of that place had observed a suspicious-looking character walking about, carrying a small bundle and had promptly looked him up. An examination of the bundle brought to light jewelry worth several hundred dollars.

In one instance the tracker's skill almost condemned an innocent man. Two sheep belonging to a government official had been stolen, and the footprints were to be those of a man employed to look after the public gardens.

The man was arrested, but when the tracker was followed up, it was found to be the skins of the police station, where it seemed unlikely that a thief would deposit his booty under the very eyes of the police. A further investigation was made, and it was eventually proved that the sheep had been taken by the police, who, to throw the trackers off the scent, had stolen and worn the gardener's shoes.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 18.—(Special Telegram.)—A tiger, which was as ignorant of the French language as he was of fear, to clean the cages of the wild beasts.

The instructions were given to the man by means of gestures and dumb show, and apparently he thoroughly understood what he was expected to do.

The next morning he began his new duties by entering with bucket, sponge, and broom, at the cage of a tame bear, but that of a splendid tiger, which lay asleep on the floor. The three animal awake and fixed his eyes upon the man, who calmly proceeded to wet his large sponge and, untricked, approached the tiger.

At this moment the trainer proprietor saw what was going on and was struck with horror. Any sound or motion on his part would increase the danger of the situation by arousing the bear to fury, so he quietly waited till the need should rise to rush to the man's assistance.

The Cassack, sponge in hand, approached the animal and, perfectly fearless, proceeded to rub him down as if he had been a horse of a dog; while the tiger, apparently delighted by the application of cold water, rolled over on its back, stretched out its paws, purred, and offered every part of its body to the man, who washed him as complacently as a mother bathes her infant.

Then he left the cage and would have repeated the hazardous experiment upon another savage beast had not the trainer with difficulty drawn him off.

population. The authors of the French work show that, contrary to accepted opinion, mental diseases in the French Army are more frequent than French officers are willing to admit. Says a reviewer in The Interstate Medical Journal (St. Louis):

"The disturbances oftenest observed among foot-soldiers are psychoses synchronized with attacks of mental exhaustion. The sudden change from comparative comfort to an existence impeded with all the rigors of military discipline, not to mention the excruciating incidents of forced physical and mental exertion, entails something more than the ordinary soldier possesses, namely, the sort of adaptability one associates only with men who are habitually in possession of normal intellectual quality. One can readily see that since the individuality of the ordinary soldier is none too strong, he will not be long in manifesting insanity, should there be a predisposition to cerebral disturbances; a deplorable condition that is brought on partly by the officers in charge of regiments, who seem to see in his lack of ability to submit to stringent military rules, only what is inherent in human nature that must be corrected by increased discipline. Thus stubbornness is held responsible for insubordination, disregard of military rules, and even rebellion, when in fact it should be regarded as the prime cause."

This is particularly true, the writer tells us, in certain special corps—for example, legions, for instance—in which a number of soldiers are practically degenerate. General paralysis is said to occur as often as 63 times in every 100 cases of insanity among officers, and its great danger lies in the fact that it may remain unrecognized for some time.

We read:

"To illustrate, a captain of artillery, who was held in thrall by delirious ideas which had not been remarked by his associates, hauled himself against a stone pier while galloping at the head of his battery, and on another occasion had the cannon mounted in places so difficult of access, that it required considerable maneuvering on the part of the gunners, to fire them. All of which shows, beyond a doubt, how important it is to eliminate from an army those who are mentally unbalanced, directly the first symptoms are noticed. To effect so drastic a measure a corps of expert alienists would be required, and that Drs. Antheaume and Mignot are in a position to know what remedy should be applied to prevent defects which are at the head of the state lunatic asylum at Charcot, which houses all the officers and soldiers afflicted with mental diseases."

THE INDIAN THIEF TRACKER

IN India the great enemy of thieves is the kholi, whose name signifies "searcher," or "tracker," and whose business is to track criminals by their footprints. These trackers are terrible maniacs, calling from wood and becoming exceedingly expert. They are an especial terror to the cattle-stealers, who, in parts of the Junjab adjoining the Indus and other large rivers, where much grazing is done, are very plentiful. These match their cunning against that of the tracker, but they have to be very clever to throw him off the scent.

One of their tricks is to catch a buffalo, drive it into the river, and, clinging to its tail, guide it in the way they desire to go. By this means they are quickly carried down the current and leave no tell-tale footprints. But the reason is not always successful, for the reason that the tracker thinks nothing of distance and is likely to come upon the tracks of the thief farther on, where the thief was forced to leave the stream. A good tracker, it is asserted, will follow a trail, yard by yard, for a hundred miles and come up with him in the end.

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WASHINGTON A TIGER

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Alarmed Motorist (After Collision): "Are You Hurt?" Butcher Boy: "Where's My Kidneys?"—From Punch.