

Wanted; a Collaborator

Continued from Page 22 stories in him. Then pop! the vein runs out with a sickening gurgle," she said, meditatively. "I think, Ephraim — Mr. Stubbs — that's what's happened to us."

Her collaborator missed much of what she had said because of the thrilling fact that she had called him for the first time by his given name.

"I—I think it was my fault, though, that our last effort didn't sell," she went on. "I couldn't get the thought of the old farm and the peach blossoms out of my mind."

"Mary, your eyes are like—like those violets you once told me about! With the dew on them! Mary, will you—"

A knock at the door! Mr. Stubbs rose reluctantly and opened it. A thin, ratty-eyed man stood there, smiling unctuously and unpleasantly.

"What do you want?" demanded the author, bluntly.

He had a vague memory of having seen the man before.

"I want you," was the reply. "You two. The both of you."

The author stared in bewilderment and anger. Then he made as though to close the door. The man must be drunk—or crazy.

"Wait. Here's the card of invitation, if you insist," said the stranger in the same oily voice.

Mr. Stubbs frowningly received the bit of soiled pasteboard. He read: "Mr. Alonzo P. Ketchem, Never-Beaten Detective Bureau; phone 1162; open day and night."

"Well?"

"We wantcha right away—you and the girl."

"What?"

"You heard me. I gotta taxi down below. Get a move on, bo."

Mary had risen and advanced to the door.

"They've made a mistake. I suppose we'll have to go and rectify it," said the author in an aside. "This fellow is a mere subordinate. We can't argue with him."

"A detective bureau!" cried Mary as she in turn read the card.

Then she laughed.

"Maybe we can get a story out of it!" she exclaimed, gaily.

As they bowed away in the car, Mr. Stubbs, who had been eyeing the bureau's emissary with a puzzled frown, found his curiosity mastering his pride.

"Say! Where've I seen your mug before?" he demanded.

The other smiled his smooth, satisfied smile.

"I room at Mrs. Ryan's too," he said. "I'm in the room next yours. Been onto your little game for some time."

"Our little game!" Mary cried, involuntarily.

But he only leered at her in reply.

At the bureau the three lined up before a severe official who rapped out questions with the force of a drill-sergeant and in the voice of a rip-saw.

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—has just so many

stories in him. Then

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tions with the force of a drill-sergeant

and in the voice of a rip-saw.

"Here are the two suspects." Mr.

Ketchem had opened up.

Presently it became clear that they

were being taken for a dangerous type

of Socialist. They were asked where

they had been on a certain date in the

previous fall, where they had been on

such and such a night, what they had

been doing on the evening the powder-

works had been blown up, and so on.

Mr. Stubbs and Miss Manners were equal

to the first lot of questions. They said

they could furnish satisfactory alibis.

Another official had gotten a camera

ready and now trained it on them.

"Of course we hope it isn't going to be

a police case," said the severe official,

frowningly. "But our operative, Mr.

Ketchem, is always fairly sure of his

quarry before he hits. He's one of our

newest operatives but one of the most

energetic and ardent. I scarcely think he

can have made a mistake."

Mr. Ketchem looked intensely pleased.

"You have aliases, Mr. Appleton," went

on the chief. "Stubbs is one, I under-

stand. Honest folks seldom have need

to resort to two or more names."

"Stubbs is my real name," said the

author, stoutly. "Come out straight,

can't you, and tell us what you're charg-

ing us with!"

"We charge you with plotting against

H.M. the King," said the chief somor-

ously. "Can you deny it?"

Silence. Mary nudged the author

gently.

"We can't deny we were plotting," she

said clearly.

"Ah, I thought so!"

"But it wasn't against the King."

"That's merely a form of words used.

She admits the charge," the chief said to

his secretary.

"Hold on!" Mr. Stubbs interdicted.

"She means—"

Mary gave him a silencing look.

"Fool 'em," she whispered. "It serves

'em right."

"Mr. Ketchem has overheard much of

your talk, nearly all of which was of a

highly suspicious nature," said the chief

severely. "He says he was suspicious of

you, Appleton, or whatever you call

yourself, from the first day he went to

Mrs. Ryan's. He boards there because

he happens to be working on several sus-

pect cases in that neighborhood. He—"

"He's crazy with the heat!" observed

the author, politely.

"He didn't like either your looks or

your manner. He says you wore your

hair like a rabid revolutionary, that your

rent was in arrears, that you continually

paced the floor and gave vent to mut-

tered curses and ejaculations, and that

nobody knew anything about you. Then

this young woman joined you. She

brought what purported to be a type-

writer but which he suspected to contain

an infernal machine—"

"It is an infernal machine," Mary in-

terposed wearily. "I've broken nearly

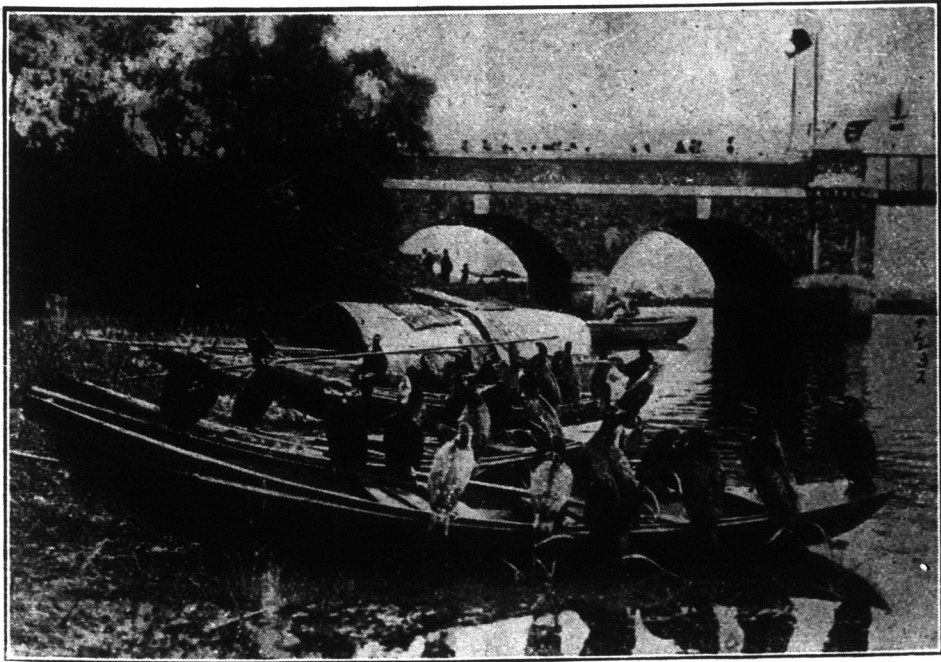
all my nails on it and the ribbon carriage

has St. Vitus dance. The spacer is loose

and the comma, question-mark and dash

don't hit straight. If ever—"

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A very unusual photograph showing trained kingfishers perched on the side of a Chinese dory ready for a morning's work in the water. The birds, after a long course, perform the work of catching fish while the Celestial citizen calmly reposes pulling on his opium-soaked pipe. The photo was taken on one of the broad waters of Central China.



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