

HELD TO ANSWER

CHAPTER I

THE FACE THAT DID NOT FIT

Two well-dressed men waited outside the rail on what was facetiously denominated the mourners' bench. One was a packer of olives, the other the owner of oil wells. A third, an orange shipper, leaned against the rail, pulling at his red moustaches and yearning wistfully across at a wattle-throated person behind the roll-top desk who was talking impatiently on the telephone. Just as the receiver was hung up with an audible click, a buzzer on the wall croaked harshly,—one long and two short croaks.

Instantly there was a scuffling of feet upon the linoleum over in a corner, where mail was being opened by a huge young fellow with the profile of a mountain and a gale of tawny hair blown up from his brow. Undoubling suddenly, this rangy figure of a man shot upward with Jack-in-the-box abruptness and a violence which threatened the stability of both the desk before him and the absurdly snail typewriter stand upon his left. Seizing a select portion of the correspondence, he lunged past the roll-top desk of Heitmuller, the chief clerk, and aimed toward the double doors of grained oak which loomed behind. But his progress was grotesque, for he careened like a camel when he walked. In the first stride or two these careenings only threatened to be dangerous, but in