

dawn showed him the rolling lands of Iowa which changed, while he was at breakfast in the dining car, to the snow-covered fields and farms of northern Illinois. Toward noon, he could see, as the train rounded curves, that the horizon to the east had taken on a murky look. Vast, vague, the shadow—the emanation of hundreds of thousands of chimneys—thickened and grew more definite as the train sped on; suburban villages began supplanting country towns; stations became more pretentious. They passed factories; then hundreds of acres of little houses of the factory workers in long rows; swiftly the buildings became larger, closer together; he had a vision of miles upon miles of streets, and the train rolled slowly into a long trainshed and stopped.

Alan, following the porter with his suitcase from the car, stepped down among the crowds hurrying to and from the trains. He was not confused, he was only intensely excited. Acting in implicit accord with the instructions of the letter, which he knew by heart, he went to the uniformed attendant and engaged a taxicab—itsself no small experience; there would be no one at the station to meet him, the letter had said. He gave the Astor Street address and got into the cab. Leaning forward in his seat, looking to the right and then to the left as he was driven through the city, his first sensation was only disappointment.

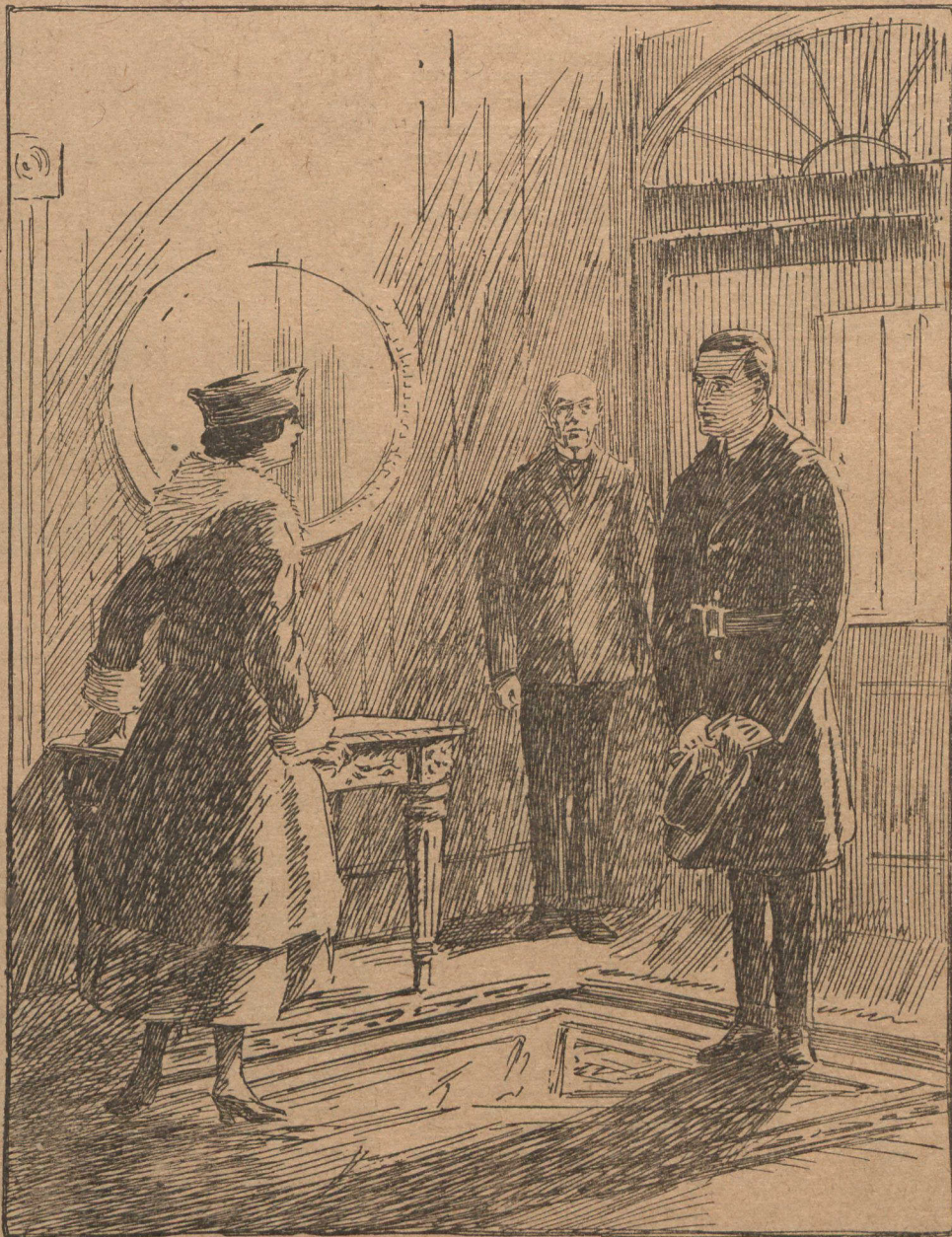
EXCEPT that it was larger, with more and bigger buildings and with more people upon its streets, Chicago apparently did not differ from Kansas City. If it was, in reality, the city of his birth, or if ever he had seen these streets before, they now aroused no memories in him.

It had begun to snow again. For a few blocks the taxicab drove north past more or less ordinary buildings, then turned east on a broad boulevard where tall tile and brick and stone structures towered till their roofs were hidden in the snowfall. The large, light flakes, falling lazily, were thick enough so that, when the taxicab swung to the north again, there seemed to Alan only a great vague void to his right. For the hundred yards which he could view clearly, the space appeared to be a park; now a huge granite building, guarded by stone lions, went by; then more park; but beyond—

A strange stir and tingle, quite distinct from the excitement of the arrival at the station, pricked in Alan's veins, and hastily he dropped the window to his right and gazed out again. The lake, as he had known since his geography days, lay to the east of Chicago; therefore that void out there beyond the park was the lake or, at least, the harbour. A different air seemed to come from it; sounds. . . . Suddenly it all was shut off; the taxicab, swerving a little, was dashing between business blocks; a row of buildings had risen again upon the right; they broke abruptly to show him a wooden-walled chasm in which flowed a river full of ice with a tug dropping its smokestack as it went below the bridge which the cab crossed; buildings on both sides again; then, to the right, a roaring, heaving, crashing expanse.

The sound, Alan knew, had been coming to him as an undertone for many minutes; now it overwhelmed, swallowed all other sound. It was great, not loud; all sound which Alan had heard before, except the sighing of the wind over his prairies, came from one point; even the monstrous city murmur was centered in comparison with this. Alan could see only a few hundred yards out over the water as the taxicab ran along the lake drive, but what was before him was the surf of a sea; that constant, never diminishing, never increasing roar

came from far beyond the shore; the surge and rise and fall and surge again were of a sea in motion. Floes floated, tossed up, tumbled, broke, and rose again with the rush of the surf; spray flew up between the floes; geysers spurted high into the air as the pressure of the water, bearing up against the ice, burst between two great ice-cakes before the waves crackled them and tumbled them over. And all was without wind; over the lake, as over the land, the soft snowflakes lazily floated down, scarcely stirred by the slightest breeze; that roar was the voice of the water, that awful power its own.



Alan stepped into the hall face to face with the girl.

Alan choked and gasped for breath, his pulses pounding in his throat; he had snatched off his hat and, leaning out of the window sucked the lake air into his lungs. There had been nothing to make him expect this overwhelming crush of feeling. The lake—he had thought of it, of course, as a great body of water, an interesting sight for a prairie boy to see; that was all. No physical experience in all his memory had affected him like this; and it was without warning; the strange thing that had stirred within him as the car brought him to the drive down-town was strengthened now a thousandfold; it amazed, half frightened, half dizzied him. Now, as the motor suddenly swung around a corner and shut the sight of the lake from him, Alan sat back breathless.

"Astor Street," he read the marker on the corner a block from the lake, and he bent quickly forward to look, as the car swung to the right into Astor Street. It was—as in this neighborhood it must be—a residence street of handsome mansions built close together. The car swerved to the east curb about the middle of the block and came to a stop. The house before which it had halted was a large stone house of quiet, good design; it was some generation older, apparently, than the houses on each side of it which were brick and terra cotta of recent, fashionable architecture; Alan only glanced at them long enough to get that impression before he opened

the cab door and got out; but as the cab drove away, he stood beside his suitcase looking up at the old house which bore the number given in Benjamin Corvet's letter, then around at the other houses and back to that again.

The neighbourhood obviously precluded the probability of Corvet's being merely a lawyer—a go-between. He must be some relative; the question ever present in Alan's thought since the receipt of the letter, but held in abeyance, as to the possibility and nearness of Corvet's relation to him, took sharper and more exact form now than he had dared to let it take before. Was his relationship to Corvet, perhaps, the closest of all relationships? Was Corvet his . . . father? He checked the question within himself, for the time had passed for mere speculation upon it now. Alan was trembling excitedly; for—whatever Corvet might be—the enigma of Alan's existence was going to be answered when he had entered that house. He was going to know who he was. All the possibilities, the responsibilities, the attachments, the opportunities, perhaps, of that person whom he was—but whom, as yet, he did not know—were before him.

HE half expected the heavy, glassless door at the top of the stone steps to be opened by some one coming out to greet him, as he took up his suitcase; but the gray house, like the brighter mansions on both sides of it, remained impassive. If any one in that house had observed his coming, no sign was given. He went up the steps and, with fingers excitedly unsteady, he pushed the bell beside the door.

The door opened almost instantly—so quickly after the ring, indeed, that Alan, with leaping throb of his heart, knew that some one must have been awaiting him. But the door opened only halfway, and the man who stood within, gazing out at Alan questioningly, was obviously a servant.

"What is it?" he asked, as Alan stood looking at him and past him to the narrow section of darkened hall which was in sight.

Alan put his hand over the letter in his pocket. "I've come to see Mr. Corvet," he said—"Mr. Benjamin Corvet."

"What is your name?"

Alan gave his name; the man repeated it after him, in the manner of a trained servant, quite without inflection. Alan, not familiar with such tones, waited uncertainly. So far as he could tell, the name was entirely strange to the servant, awaking neither welcome nor opposition, but indifference. The man stepped back, but not in such a manner as to invite Alan in; on the contrary, he half closed the door as he stepped back, leaving it open only an inch or two; but it was enough so that Alan heard him say to some one within:

"He says he's him."

"Ask him in; I will speak to him." It was a girl's voice—this second one, a voice such as Alan never had heard before. It was low and soft but quite clear and distinct, with youthful, impulsive modulations and the manner of accent which Alan knew must go with the sort of people who lived in houses like those on this street.

The servant, obeying the voice, returned and opened wide the door.

"Will you come in, sir?"

Alan put down his suitcase on the stone porch; the man made no move to pick it up and bring it in. Then Alan stepped into the hall face to face with the girl who had come from the big room on the right.

She was quite a young girl—not over twenty-one or twenty-two, Alan judged; like girls brought up in

(Continued on page 25.)