

which puzzled the whole staff. He did not go to church any more, for one thing, and, while he kept himself sober, his breath was frequently tainted. He was more boisterous than he had ever been before and talked noisily of funny escapades in strange places. Hitherto he had been very reticent about his past; but now he talked with zest of how down South he had chased a man with a gun—case of shoot at sight; how he had tramped it to Vancouver and weeded cabbages in a field full of dirty Orientals for a bite to eat; how he had chucked one job here for this reason and another job there for that reason. Apparently he had ridden the bumpers all over the country, and the funny stories he told in his own inimitable way set the staff roaring.

All but Copley. Copley was worried. Cherry was too good a man to see spoiled, and on several occasions he remonstrated with Cherry. But Cherry only laughed in his free and easy way.

He was still doing his work, though, and doing it well at that. If at times a slight carelessness was manifest in his copy, it was not so glaring but it could be very well passed over. He was still *The Recorder's* star man.

So it was natural that when Copley got a private tip on what promised to be the biggest scoop *The Recorder* had ever manipulated, he called Cherry aside.

"Better take a day off, Rutherford, and see what you can dig up," he concluded. "This may pan out to be a ripping sensation, and, again, there may be nothing in the rumour. But the tip's pretty straight, and I rather fancy there's something doing. Go quietly, though. You can report progress to-morrow night; if there's a story at all, try and get it for to-morrow night. If you can swing this, Rutherford, there isn't a paper in the country that won't be open to you. Good luck. That's all."

Cherry left the office at once. He

realised that he was up against a big thing that would require all his resources, and there was no time to be lost. Copley's tip was to the effect that the Robertson Loan and Savings Company, the biggest concern of its kind in the city, was on the point of closing its doors; that President Robertson, instead of being somewhere up in the Temagami district on a fishing trip, had absconded; that he had been preying upon the company's resources for years, his defalcations amounting to over half a million dollars.

The sensation which the verification of this would create would be almost unlimited; for not only was Robertson a prominent figure in church and social circles, but his company's business had its foundation in a great co-operative system of weekly collections from small investors, with the poorer working classes as patrons. The effect of the failure would spread throughout a large section of country and would undoubtedly create something very like a panic.

"Gee! What a peach if she's true!" Cherry ejaculated, as the possibilities of the story dawned more fully upon him.

And at that, he had yet to make his startling discovery.

First he paid a visit to President Robertson's residence. He went straight from there to Detective Tommy Allison, and because Detective Tommy Allison knew Cherry for a man to be trusted, he took him down to the morgue and pledged him to secrecy for twenty-four hours. He also accompanied the reporter to private conferences with some of the company's directors. It was a thing that was bound to become public property before long anyway, and on the twenty-four-hour condition and the detective's guarantee, Cherry got what he was after.

"Just one more favour, Tommy, old man." They were back at the police station again. "I want to see you alone for a jiff—important and confi-