to, the burglar of to-day rgiar of a generation said Felix Boyd, through pe smoke. "He is not the t ruffian at mere fancy rded fellow in rough atister mask, with a kit of his coat and a brace of a distance." on's in his hip pockets, attribute was brute who cracked with equal merchant's safe or the

eleman laughed, knocking m his cigar, and nodded

ral office man was Boyd's friend and most ardent ably the latter because auch more of Boyd's reable to appreciate his ex-

copped into Boyd's office in alf-an-hour before, merea morning smoke in genial

right, Felix," said he. changed mightily in since we wore a frock

Jimmie," added Boyd, in good, "we have to-day the intelligent and dangerous forms and executes his exquisite cunning and sawho employs every modthe constantly improving on gradual, but is very proencounters. The transithe detective art has corresponding change." true, too, Felix."

essful sleuth of to-day, sides possessing the dogged ourage of old, must be a d intelligence, a keen obsubtle analyst, and one caerning remote relations. n of obscure bits of evithe art of making correct herefrom, chiefly serve to at criminal mysteries of

again, Fellx you have that," nodded Coleman at bond robbery of Curry, last November. By the that that man Wykoff, ected of having had a affair, is again operating

led oddly, and laid away

as I remarked at that time master knave in that af he "Take my word for it. was another Richmond in the field. That ingenious not designed by Paul by some much more capa--reaching knave." still think so ?"

deed," said Boyd, with noavity. "It is my impression. that something seriously down here below the

you think so?" me why; the grounds lyings are still vague and Yet I seriously believe that. in this wealthy locality, as change hands with business hour, somevery heart of our great naelstrom, there exists a lus for crime."

4 for crime?" echoed Colewhose obscure personality one executed by others, risen, d by him with all the evil and consummate foresight of knavery. I see only of this at present, Jimmie, en cropping out in crimes seculiar originality, all of e line upon him, but some do so. Some day, Jimmie, is web, and conspires with ed to place it in the hands of the po-s a well-organized gang of lice for investigation."

put in Coleman, lifting his There are steps in the corone is coming this way." onlously entered. steated exceeding ner-

r Mr. Boyd-Mr. said quickly, with

Boyd," said he. "Take

waved his visitor to a chair.

"You do not know me by name, I take It," said Dickson, as he sat down.

"Only since seeing your card," said "Which really is very foolish of Boyd. "I observe, however, that you you," said Boyd indifferently. "I do are a married man, and very near- not think your life is in any danger,

spot has been sponged from your vest I possess," replied Dickson more comthis morning, presumably by your posedly. "I own a modest summer inscribed the desired address, wife, since you scarce could have visitplace near Jamaica Bay, where I dwell "There it is, Mr. Boyd," said he, ed your tailor thus early; and I notice the handle of a reading-glass protruding slightly from your inside ter.

That one of these deductions did not affect Dickson very pleasantly was apparent in his increased nervousness, and the sudden trembling of his hands on his knees; yet he laughed a little, and cried:

"That is occasionally the case, I un-

very few are as sorely afflicted as I. can read only with a very powerful glass, as you may see."

Mr. Dickson, Are you a man of much

ing a house in town during the win-

"At present you are where?"

"I am still living in town." "You do a large business in dia-

houses; moreover, I carry a valuable much you have relieved me."

mothed to prevent being traced by his

"I have your business card," said. Boyd. "In case I should wish to reach you at home, which is not very probable, you had better leave me your uptown address. Write it on this blank, if you like. Here is a pencil."

property?"

"Bradstreet rates me at a hundred holding it in his left hand while he wrote with the other, and bowing his thanking the ball of the ball

for about six months of the year, rent- arising. "I am always at home evenings. My wife and children are my chief comfort and delight, Call some evening, if you will, when not upon business. A thousand thanks for your, opinion and advice. My bankers tell me that you invariably are right in "Quite so. As agent for foreign such matters. You cannot imagine how

> Boyd smiled, and shook his proffered hand, bowing him to the office

When Jimmie Coleman entered a

this, Felix?" inquired Coleman, curl-

gleam in one corner of his eye.

On the street fronting the store was a crowd of spectators, kept back by son's several policemen, and Boyd found of hi Coleman and an officer engaged in all." forcing the iron grating guarding the closed door.

"What's the trouble. Jimmle?" he added, as he joined him.

The central office man quickly looked up on hearing Boyd's voice.

"Ah, you're here! Good enough!"

he exclaimed, "Recalling that letter, I there has been an explosion in here, a gone to his summer home for the day. I happened along just after the explosion was heard, and found Gib-son, who occupies the upper floors, trying to get in here."

mild such massive neighbors by some freak or mizebance.

The single broad window was protected with high wooden shutters, and the store door guarded with a stout iron grating, then closed and secured with a padlock. On a card tacked on the shutter of the door was rudely printed

OPEN THURSDAY MORNING.

It being Wednesday, the card and the closed store plainly indicated that Dickson had planned to be absent for a day, and had left a notice when he should return.

On the street fronting the store was all once apparent.

Furthermore, indicating the violace of the explosion, the counter was thrown awry, and the giaze of the rear window was scattered in fragments over the floor, leaving only the scourced iron shutter, through the round aperture in which entered a beam of sunlight from the rear arear or yard. On the broad sill of this window lay large reading giase, similar to that which Dickson carried on his person; but of Dickson himself, or of the linaves guilty of perpetrating this midday burglary, there was not a sign. "Whew!" whistled Coleman, the instant his gaze fell upon the scene. "Here's a mess! A burglary in broad daylight!"

"Burglary, indeed!" exclaimed Boyd. "The crooks have we exclaimed Boyd. "The crooks have we exclaimed and the closed store plainly indicated that Dickson had planned to be absent for a day, and had left a notice when he should return.

sweep. This will settle me in Dick-son's opinion. That patchwork letter of his had a wicked meaning, after

"I should say wicked!" cried Cole-man, hurriedly opening the rear shut-ter, and springing out of the window. "I'll see what I can find out here,

"Go ahead!" cried Boyd, "Till examine things in here."

Coleman returned in about five minutes, bearing in his hand a pair of solled rubbers, with which he scramdevil of a noise, and that Dickson has bled back through the window, remarking, rapidly:
"There are footprints in the soil of

the alley, but not at all definite. Yet the crooks must have escaped by that way, and one of them probably wore these rubbers, for I found then under some refuse near the alley exit."
"Very likely." said Boyd, glancing

at them, "Burglars frequently wear them to muffle their steps indoors. Size eight, aren't they?"

A flight of stairs from one corner

led a dimly lighted cellar, to which Boyd quickly conducted his compan-ion, At the foot of the stairs he halted, and pointed to a narrow door, the one Coleman vainly had tried to force from outside. Against it was a heavy piece of joist, one end of which was securely blocked several yards from the door.

"Humph!" ejaculated Coleman. They went that way, and the timber shows how they secured the doow after them. It was so adjusted as to fall into place when the door closed, and thus prevent the immediate entrance of any one anxious to learn the cause of the explosion. The delay gave the crooks a chance to get well away. They have done the job all right, covering their tracks well, and already have a long lead on the police. There's no question about that."

Boyd nodded indifferently, and led the way up stairs.

"You had better rush a message to Dickson's wife, Jimmie," said he. "Here is his city address. Have her or some of the family, telegraph to Dickson, and bring him here as quickly as possible. He should show up by the middle of the afternoon."

"I'll do so at once," nodded Coleman, hastening to the front door, where he not only started a messenger for Dickson's residence, but also despatched another to headquarters to report the extraordinary burglary.

When he returned he found Felix Boyd on his knees a few feet from the ruined safe, and between it and the rear window. He was intently engaged in studying, with the help of Dickson's large reading glass, the hard pine boards of the bare floor, "What have you discovered there?"

Coleman demanded, with immediate

"Nothing much," muttered Boyd, glancing up. "Only this smutty mark across the floor, Jimmie. It begins here, and ends at the corner of the

"What do you make of it? What caused it?"

"It was caused by a fine fuse, Jimmie, with which the charge in the safe was exploded. In burning, it scorched the floor a little, making this almost imperceptible dark line. At first sight, I thought it was a narrow crack only, but this lens belonging to Dickson reveals its true character. Very kind of Dickson to have left a glass so handy." There was in Boyd's voice an into-nation so vaguely odd that it brought a look of perplexity to Coleman's attentive face. He could discern no more

however, and he growled, a little im-"Well, what of it? What do you mean by that? We know the charge was exploded by some means, and what matters whether a fuse or an

than had been pointed out to him,

electric current was used?" "It doesn't matter much, Jimmie," returned Boyd, still on his knees, "Yet

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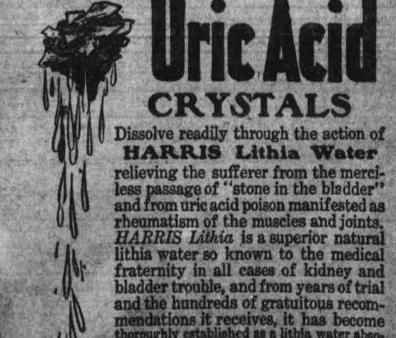
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"Dear me! How is that? Do I wear my heart on my slesve?"
"Hardly that," smiled Boyd, "But a

"Oh, yes, quite right; you are quite right. Mr. Boyd, I am very nearsighted, very, when viewing objects brows. close at hand. Yet I do not even require glasses for observing things at

"I am told so. Yet I believe that

And he now displayed his reading- the patchwork letter."

That is apparent," cried Dicks self? It has given me a dreadful shock My nerves are completely unstrung. It is so indefinite, yet in a way so threatening. I don't know whether my life is in danger, or my property, or what I am all of a tremble from head to foot."

Boyd smiled, and again glanced at

"In part consigned to you, I presume," observed Boyd, raising his door, where he bade him good morn-"Yes, certainly." "Do you consider your quarters in little later, he found Boyd at the win-Maiden Lane, and the safe or vault in dow still studying the letter; and the hastened to send for you. I'm told which you store your goods, perfectly latter at once confided to him the ocsecure against burglars?" inquired casion of Dickson's visit. "And what do you really make of "Indeed, yes!" exclaimed Dickson. "I never felt otherwise." ously examining the letter.

Boyd laughed softly, with an odd

THIS HE ADVISTED IN THE BADDRE, AS BEFORE, THEN STRUCK A MATCH.

glass, a thick lens nearly six inches in | diameter, having a silver rim and an Dickson, is a practical joker?" he askebony handle. Boyd merely glanced at vaguely discerned behind it, then turned to Coleman, who had

> "Drop in a little later, Jimmie," said he. "I imagine that Mr. Dickson will not long engage me."

"No, Mr. Boyd, not very long," said Dickson, when they were alone. "I received in my mail this morning a letto a masterful and ma- ter which gives me great uneasiness, s hid in the background. if not serious alarm. I took it to my we been upable to get the bankers for advice, scarce knowing what else to do, and they advised me to consult you. I wish you would exuliar crimes will give amine the letter; here it is, and tell to this master knave, who, me what you think of it, and how searks about here like a riously I should regard it. I am tempt-

> Boyd examined the letter with interest, and was immediately struck

with its peculiarities. It neither was written nor printed in the ordinary way. Instead, each tainty as this concerning his meanis pale face and dilated book or newspaper, evidently with a word had been cut singly from some ing.

sheet of paper. Pisinly the work had been very carefully done, yet it had been found Boyd; "if knaves contemplate any seso delicate that the completed lines presented considerable irregularity, with the separate words differently the stranger to a spaced and slanted at various angles. The communication thus conveyed

was quite brief, and read as follows: "Nathan Dickson, Malden Lane: You look out for yourself, Persons I he stranger, hasten- dare not name are about to execute a ard. "I am Nathan design against you, the character of "You Lane, dealer in which I cannot safely disclose I am joke?" a Lane, dealer in which I cannot safely disclose.

American agent for a friend to you, and this is a warning you will not wisely ignore. Heed it.

"Who among your friends, Mr. | ed, a bit dryly. "Really I recall none."

the work of such a person." "A joke-a practical joke! Sent only to annoy or alarm me!" exclaimed Dickson, with much eagerness. "Do you really think so, Mr. Boyd? Indeed, I shall feel greatly relieved if that is your opinion. Do you really think so,

Mr. Boya !" Plainly, his relief already was great, and Boyd at once proceeded to furth-

er assure htm. "I think, Mr. Dickson," said he decisively, "that any true friend, so anxlous to warn you of serious danger, could easily have found a way to intelligently do so without imperiling himself. The greater your danger, sir, the greater probability of such a step on the part of a friend, who surely would have left you in no such uncer-

"I had not thought of it in that penknife, and then pasted on a blank light," cried Dickson. "Really, Mr. Boyd, I begin to think you are right." "To go a step farther," added nary dictionary."

> absurd." "Surely." "That, Mr. Dickson, is my opinion of this piece of indefinite patchwork." "You believe it to be a practical

"Nothing more serious, sir."

"What would you advise me to do "Nothing at all," declared Boyd bankers, who stated that the latter ed, when he threw open the door and comptly. "I should give it no further was a man of sterling integrity, whose entered the shop.

"Make of it, Jimmie?" said he. "Not | Boyd glanced at a tall, elderly man, very much more than I told Dickson. who nodded in corroboration of Cole-Still, it presents a few curious features. Notice that each word was cut ed: "Yet this letter is, in my opinion, from some book or paper." "That's very evident."

"Now place the face of the page against the window-pane, so that the light strikes through it, You find that last night. He said he was going to his you then can decipher the printing on summer place to-day, to plan for octhe reverse side of the page from cupying it a little later." which the word in the letter was carefully cut."

"So I can, for a fact." "Under the word "design," in the etter, you find Fr 'descant," in small

"Yes, it is quite plain." "Under the word 'execute,' in the letter, you find the two words-to exert. Plainly, Jimmie, those two words, as well as the italics noted, formed parts of the definitions of the two words 'descant' and 'exertion,' on the reverse page from which the words

'design' and 'execute' were cut by the sender of this letter." "Eureka!" cried Coleman. "It's dead open and shut, Felix, that the words of this letter were cut from an ordi- on hinges, secured inside the

cret design upon you, certainly no Boyd; then he added, rather dryly; the smoke in the store such warning as this would have pre- "Very possibly, Jimmie, I some day scured everything. There has Such a step on their part would be

afternoon he returned the letter to Dickson, at his store in Malden Lane, a hair, so I turned to tackle this one. stating that he found nothing in it to Ah, now we're in!" warrant serious apprehensions, and he left the dealer in diamonds quite assured that his earlier fears were entirely groundless.

There is a round hole in it "Certainly it is, Jimmie," laughed through which I looked, but responsible. First, it was his coat of shall discover the dictolnary from an explosion in there all right, but I such a step on their part would be saw no signs of thieves in the rear Yet Mr. Felix Boyd gave the matter area, which lies a bit lower than the very little immediate attention. That street. I tried to force a small celler afternoon he returned the letter to door back there, but it wouldn't give

man's explanation. Boyd quickly ask-

"Did Dickson tell you he should be absent to-day, Mr. Gibson?"

"He did, sir, as he was closing up

within, and Boyd next forced open the

"Does he employ no clerks here, who could have kept the store open?"

alone. I greatly fear that robbery has

been committed here. The explosion

occurred about 10 minutes ago, and

was very severe, fairly shaking the un-

Boyd glanced quickly at the window.

An inner curtain, drawn below the

tops of the window shutters outside,

prevented a view of the interior of the

"Have you looked out back, Jim-mie?" he demanded quickly.

"Yes, first thing," cried Coleman

The way is through that alley, and

the back window with an iron shutter

per floors.

"None, sir. He runs his business.

Boyd next called upon Dickson's door, an operation quickly accomplishwas a man of sterling integrity, whose word was as good as his bond, and

The iron grating finally had given way, and fell clanging upon the sidewalk. With an iron bar, Coleman then proceeded to force the lock of the

Harris Springs, S. C. latel Open June II