

Unconfessed



CHAPTER VII—Continued

There were three people, I thought, on whom suspicion might justifiably rest; there were the Prince and Princess Rancini and Letty Van Alstyn, but there was not a scrap of evidence against any of them.

No, there were four. I had to be honest with myself; I couldn't pretend. There was Alan Deck. And against him was all the evidence they had.

I wanted to see Deck. I wanted to talk with him. Not here, with Clancy at hand—yes, here, even though we could say nothing that mattered. If I could see him again, I thought I could find an answer to that worrying uncertainty in me.

The testing was a difficult business. The handkerchief had been so thoroughly washed that I began to despair of uncertainty in my experiments. Not about the rust marks; those I did make sure of. Then, in one of the corners, close under the fold of the hemstitched hem, I found traces of stain that yielded a blood reaction.

"That's blood," I said.

In the intervals of waiting and trying I walked up and down the gallery.

I found myself wishing to get at the records of these pictures to begin the real work for which I had come. For a few moments I forgot the nightmare of that murder. I grinned at a Magdalen, attributed to Titian, analogous to the one at Naples, and then I was caught by a lovely little Virgin whose suppliant, adoring curves and pure, poignant ecstasy made me yearn to prove her the creation of Angelico that she was labeled.

As my mind bit on these familiar realities my nerves steadied, and when I went down with the policeman to make my report I was feeling more like myself.

Alan Deck was with Monty Mitchell, and when he saw me he came forward quickly, with a "Good morning, accomplice!" in his mocking way. Monty said, "Find anything?" And they both came with me while I had my moment of importance, making my report to Donahay.

I used all the words and technical terms that I thought he would not know but the main facts were clear—blood in one corner, and five marks of rust.

Donahay nodded, as if he had guessed it all the time, and I moved away with Deck. Mitchell stayed with the inspector; I remember seeing him turn the handkerchief about very slowly in his hands.

Deck said thoughtfully, "That blood rather disposes of the theory that the diamonds might have been put there by some one who just picked them up—afterwards."

And at my assent he said, "Well, that's that!" in a hard voice.

Grant now appeared before us, announcing that a buffet luncheon was being served in the dining room. As I went to wash my stained fingers I saw Miss Van Alstyn in the hall ahead of me. As she paused at her door, opposite that closed door behind which Nora Harriden was lying, I saw the maid, Anson stop her, holding something in her hand.

"Yes, I threw it away," I heard Miss Van Alstyn say. "It's broken—throw it out."

"It's so pretty," Anson murmured. "If you don't mind my keeping it—"

"As you like," said Miss Van Alstyn indifferently and disappeared into her room.

Out of an impulse of friendliness for that pretty Anson I turned and asked her what she had.

"It's for the hair, miss, only the comb is broken," she told me. "Maybe I could get another fixed on. It's so pretty—"

It was pretty—a sharp-pointed crescent about four or five inches long, glittering with bright brown stones. The comb, at right angles to the crescent, had been broken sharply off. I picked it up; it seemed a little large and too heavy for anywhere except the back of the head, above a froth of curls. It was of some solid brown metal and I thought another comb could easily be soldered on.

"It's worth it," I told Anson, and she said she had been afraid to carry it away without asking, for fear it had fallen in the basket by mistake.

I was reflecting that costume jewelry, to Miss Van Alstyn, was not worth repairing, and then, staring at those hard, pointed ends, that solid metal—

"If a woman had a thing like this in her hands . . . if she struck out with it furiously . . ."

Last night, she told me. When she had been arranging the room for the night.

"Were the broken pieces of the comb in the basket, too?"

"I did see some broken pieces. But they went with the trash. They couldn't have been fixed."

"With the trash? Where did the trash go?"

"Why, in the incinerator, Miss," she answered, eyes widening at my questions.

"And was the incinerator going?"

"Last night, miss? I couldn't say. I know it hasn't been going this morning for that policeman gave orders not to have anything burned."

I turned the crescent about. No sign of a blood film over any of its brightness—but blood could be superficially washed off in running water. A blow with it, a jab with one of those viciously pointed ends, would have broken off the comb. . . . She might not have thought to wash off the pieces of the comb. . . .

In imagination I saw Letty Van Alstyn snatching this crescent from her hair, striking out recklessly. . . . Anson was staring at me; I handed it back to her, saying something about my interest in imitations to excuse my absorption in it. . . . Letty Van Alstyn came out of her room, passing down to luncheon, and in the vague smile she swept over us I felt a sharpening of curiosity.

Scrubbing my stained fingers, brushing out my hair, I tried to fit the pieces together in this pattern. . . . Suppose Letty were guilty—how about that scene at the window? Well, that could have had nothing to do with the actual murder—it might have been Deck, or Rancini or Harriden for all his denials. . . .

Suppose it had been Harriden. Suppose he had gone on down to dinner, and Nora had been in bed, resentful, hysterical, when Letty had dropped in on her way down. Nora might have surmised that Letty had been stirring up Dan's jealousy, so there was every reason for a scene between them. A terrific scene, in which Letty, in blind rage or in self protection had struck out with the first thing at hand. . . .

I had to imagine her picking up one of Dan's handkerchiefs to wipe off the blood. . . . thrusting Nora into the closet. . . . waiting till she was sure the rest were down at dinner, then putting her out the window. Perhaps the blood-stained handkerchief had been a crumpled ball in Letty's brown bag and after dinner she had gone up to wash it out—that was when she had met me in the hall, outside Mrs. Harriden's door.

Perhaps the yellow diamonds had been in Letty's brown bag, too. And I picked them up—afterwards."

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"If a woman had a thing like this in her hands . . . if she struck out with it furiously . . ."

"When did you find this, Anson?"

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Promptly he dashed my hopes. "Incinerator been going for an hour. Donahay let them start it up when he saw there wasn't any rags there—just trash and garbage. Did you keep the crescent?"

When I said I hadn't, he advised me to get it and test it for blood. But he seemed a little detached. He even said, "I think you're barking up the wrong tree."

"It was your tree," I told him indignantly. "You thought she would be a guilty soul."

"Oh, a possibility—yes. But somehow—" He left it in dubiety.

We went on talking. I remember saying about the inquest. "Why don't they have it today and get it over with?" And he said that Donahay wanted to do more work on the case, wanted enough for an indictment, if possible. And he said, "By keeping people herded up like this, in an isolation camp, he can induce a state of nerves that may cause a breakdown. Anything may develop any moment. That's psychology."

After luncheon he had me get my hat and coat and, with Donahay's permission, he took me outdoors and marched me up and down the landscaped road in front of the house where cool winds and sunshine had their tonic effect.

The shore was being patrolled by guards to keep reporters and curiosity seekers from landing, and I had a feeling of being under martial law in some internment camp.

Other members of the house-party were out taking exercise, too; the Prince Rancini walked by, very smartly turned out with spats and a cane. After we had passed each other twice he turned, smiling, to ask permission to join us.

Without his wife's presence he expanded into gaily; he seemed to me to be a big, light-hearted pleasant-looking fellow, with a Continental's casual cynicism about life and emotional responsiveness to beauty. He stopped to show us a particularly lovely contrast of light and dark blue in the sea, pointing with his stick, and he told us of his swimming feats at Capri and his skiing records at St. Moritz and his shooting triumphs in Scotland.

For a time I was amused at this distraction; no one could have imagined that we three people, promeneading up and down those stately avenues, chatting of tournaments were three members of an isolated household darkened by death and shadowed by suspicion.

Mitchell said very little—he had small chance against the prince except through interruptions. But he created a diversion by suddenly tripping over a root and emitting a succession of fervent damns as he hopped about distressfully. "It's this confounded ankle—strained it a year ago. May I borrow your stick?" he asked the prince.

I thought Rancini passed it over rather reluctantly. At the time I imagined he fancied it as part of his own costume. Mitchell leaned on it as he walked along with us, refusing to return to the house. "Be all right in a second."

Then Rancini began telling about his palace in Rome that he was doing over and about his efforts to collect the tapestries and furniture that he had previously sold. I gathered that he was doing all this with his wife's money.

It was when we returned to the house, and Mitchell was passing back the cane, declaring himself completely recovered, that he made a casual-sounding observation.

"This is one of those trick things, isn't it, prince? Isn't there a spring I feel here—?"

"But yes," said Rancini, without the slightest hesitation. "You press this—please take your hands away. I do it—I know this thing. So—like that. And out comes this little toy."

What came out was the point of a substantial looking knife, quite a stabbing tool. "Another press and a bayonet," said Rancini, laughing.

"Quite a toy," Mitchell commented, eyeing it quizzically.

"And not such a toy at that. In Rome now, the streets are safe, but in Paris, when one is late—in the quarters of a little milliner, perhaps—"

"With a jealous lover around the corner," Monty Mitchell suggested.

"SI, SI!" Rancini laughed, then under his breath to me he murmured in swift Italian. "When the heart is empty one must pass the hours," and I smiled up at his smile and asked to see the knife again.

I looked hard at it. The sharp, strong point seemed bright, unstained.

CHAPTER VIII

Mitchell said very naturally, "A useful thing, that! A pity Nora Harriden didn't have one at hand when that fellow set on her."

Not a quiver of Rancini's face, as far as I could see. Perhaps the fact that there wasn't a quiver, that his voice was blandly expressionless meant something. Smoothly he agreed, "It might have made all the difference."

We were back in the house again, its walls shut upon us, closing us in to tension and uncertainty and the strain of our own thoughts.

Mitchell went off to Donahay, coming back just for a moment to report that no trace of the pendant had been found. When I went to Anson to get the crescent, with a little made-up speech about my interest in imitations, she asked me that Miss Van Alstyn had told

for it back, giving her instead a star of brilliants.

She was immensely pleased and I immensely puzzled.

Letty Van Alstyn had been incinerated itself before me as to the fate of that broken ornament. Why the sudden, surreptitious change? I tried, on the impulse, to find her but she wasn't in her room; my maid at last located her in the Keller sitting-room, with Mrs. Crane and the two Kellers, playing at bridge.

"I don't think they liked my bargaining in on them, and Miss Van Alstyn looked frankly wondering when I asked for the crescent. Yes, she had taken it back, she told me, her eyes reverting to the cards; she rather thought she'd get herself another one and so didn't want a duplicate about. Certainly I could look at it if I wished; it was somewhere in her room, she supposed vaguely. "Just ask Anson to find it." I closed the door upon her faintly breathed but perfectly audible, "Extraordinary."

But Anson could not find that crescent. She promised to bring it up to me when she did. "Maybe she locked it up with her jewels," she suggested.

I decided to wait for the results of Anson's search, and I was so sleepy, after the wakeful night and the walk in the open air that I curled up in my rose cushioned chair for ten minutes and slept for forty. I woke to find Harriden in my room, sitting stolidly there confronting me with an air of grim scrutiny.

I sat up quickly, pulling down my rumpled gray frock and brushing my hair out of my eyes, staring at him with something very much like fright. Behind him the door was closed.

"You needn't try to run," he told me, and I flung back, "Why should I run? What do you want, Mr. Harriden?"

"I want to know what you know about all this," he growled at me.



His Eyes Looked Me Through and Through.

"You're in with Deck. I want to know what all that row was about—that row with Elkins—"

His voice fumbled so at the words that I felt a pang of pity for him in spite of all my other feeling.

"I never saw Alan Deck until I came here," I said and spoke as quietly and gently as I could. "I don't know anything about his affairs."

"That's your story, and you can stick to it before the others. But I want the facts, and I'm prepared to pay for them. And I'll let you off—I'll let you off whatever trouble those stones have got you in for, if you'll tell me everything you know."

"I know nothing."

"You know why you went up to my wife's room last night. You had some reason—even if you saw her slapped you wouldn't go in like that—"

His eyes, grimly skeptical, looked me through and through.

"You can't pull any wool over my eyes. You were meeting Deck before dinner. I want to know what he and—what he was threatening my wife about. He wanted money from her—wasn't that it? If you never met him before, as you say, he's interested enough in you now to tell you. Your own safety and a good substantial sum of money ought to make you see the light."

"I'll give you five thousand—five thousand for a few words. Only no faking. I want the truth."

"You are utterly mistaken in me, Mr. Harriden," I said steadily. "I couldn't sell information if I had it. . . . I know nothing at all of Alan Deck and his secrets."

Some one knocked. I called, "Come in," and the door opened. There stood Alan Deck.

At sight of Harriden he stiffened, then, with assumed naturalness to me, "About those pictures—"

Harriden got to his feet; his eyes flickered from Deck back to me with a malevolent sort of satisfaction.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"Oldest Citizen of Brussels." In Brussels travelers always seek out the fountain of the Mannekin, "the oldest citizen of Brussels." It stands behind the Hotel de Ville, at the corner of the Rue de l'Étoile, and the figure was cast about the time the Dutch were settling Manhattan. The story goes that it was erected by a citizen who found his lost son on the spot, in the unconventional pose of the statue.

Common People for Roosevelt

New League Formed to Further F. D. R.'s Social Program; French Trade Pact

By EARL GODWIN

WASHINGTON.—There is a newly organized outfit with a good name . . . "The Good Neighbor League" . . . headed by an erstwhile Republican Dr. Stanley High, a rather famed publicist who believes that Roosevelt's policy of loosening the tight social structure is the only thing that will save this country from a collapse. In this league, which has a sort of Golden Rule complex, there are thoughtful people active in church work, labor organization work, relief work, editorial work, etc. They are not politicians by any means, but they will undoubtedly turn out to have a vast political influence by stressing the fact that Roosevelt's policies are strongly endorsed by the great mass of inarticulate folks far down in the social scale.

You'll find in the Good Neighbor league such men as Col. Patrick H. Callahan, the Louisville industrialist who long ago began sharing the wealth of his business with his workers. You'll find Fannie Hurst, the author; A. P. Glavin, financier and chairman of the Bank of America; Clifford Gregory, editor of the *Prairie Farmer*; Dr. James William Crabtree, who heads a worldwide educational association—I wish there were room to list the leaders of this outpouring of people of independent thought and liberal tendencies who know that unless some one interprets events and politics the reactionaries will so completely mis-state the case as to fool millions of people. The league represents a definite movement to help Roosevelt do what he wants to do under the promise "to make America a better place in which to live."

It is a slap at the Du Ponts and their Liberty league, and will give that munitions group a lot to think about. It comes along about the same time that a young fellow with a lot of vision named Paul Best forms a nation-wide organization headed up as the Roosevelt First Voters—an outfit designed to reach young men and women who vote for the first time next fall. It is not a Democratic outfit—just an outfit in honor of the fact that Roosevelt has touched the hearts and minds of young people who have heard a lot of promises but have seen no performance except from F. D. R. Especially interested are these Roosevelt First Voters in the policy of providing opportunities for young men and young women.

Then comes Labor's Non-Partisan league, which in my opinion is the most striking thing that has occurred in politics recently. This is an organization of labor union leaders and their followers to re-elect Roosevelt, whom they describe as the one man to carry on their fight for a fair wage at fair working conditions. The labor men in this league issue statements declaring themselves violently in opposition to the Liberty league and the National Association of Manufacturers and all so-called southern "grass roots" organizations opposed to Roosevelt. They know that these southern bursts of anti-Rooseveltism are financed here in Washington by the Liberty league or some close affiliation.

Heading Labor's Non-Partisan league is Maj. George L. Berry, a printing press union man; John Lewis, United Mine Workers' chief (and I think the most daring union leader in America), and Sidney Hillman, Garment Workers' head. . . . They have a well-knit army of tens of thousands all ready to go. They have 4,000 experienced platform men and women—speakers and campaigners and organizers.

SUGAR COAT G. O. P. MEET

Plans to sugar coat the Republican national convention at Cleveland so that it will have an up-to-date stream-lined, show-window appearance, are being made by one of these New York super-publicity men named Bruce Barton, whom the Alf Landon element in the party brings in to give life to the unutterably dull campaign as run by Chairman Fletcher of the G. O. P. headquarters here. The fact that Barton has been recruited to publicize Alf Landon is interesting in the light of the fact that he is the author of a book entitled "The Man Nobody Knows."

However, anything that anybody can do to humanize a political convention, now that so many attend them via the radio, is commendable. The Democratic chieftains have been leading the way in publicity, air and printed, for several years. Now that the Republicans have decided to make improvements, the general public can sit back and have a swell time in a few days now, listening to the impassioned orators spellbinding.

TANGLE PREDICTED

Administration leadership managed to choke back the demand

for a low-interest means of paying off farm mortgages, when the house voted down the Frazier-Lemke farm mortgage bill. But while conservatism won a momentary victory, I look for the episode to start a tremendous tangle in coming events . . . particularly in politics. Wouldn't surprise me in the least if it is the touch-off for a grand assault by Father Coughlin and other radicals who have a tremendous following for their theory that the way to salvation is through a currency so completely diluted that it will wash the banks and bankers all away.

The proposal that the federal government should pay off farm mortgages with three billions of new money, and then reimburse itself by very small annual payments from the farmers at a rate of about 1½ per cent a year is attractive enough to any farmer with a mortgage; and had enough support to get 142 votes in the house in the face of strong administration opposition.

But the method is looked on by so many leaders as dangerous inflation that for all intents and purposes it is too radical a measure to get to the statute books until there is a much more radical following in both houses of congress. The strongest attack on the measure came from organized labor, which feels the financing of the mortgage payments by three billions of new money (to be either borrowed or printed), would dilute currency to a state where prices would sky-rocket and wages remain static. That idea killed the bill—and that alone. Scores of men who are sympathetic with the farm problem voted against the Frazier-Lemke measure, on the ground that this diluted money would be ruinous to everybody—explaining that the farm-mortgage problem and the other rural economic tangles—would be straightened by a price reform and better business, rather than by greenback money.

But agrarian movements in the past have never died out as the result of a first defeat. I look for this Frazier-Lemke movement to sweep the Middle West and Northwest. Father Coughlin and his Union for Social Justice will become more important than ever from the standpoint of the make-up of the next congress.

A COMING LEADER

Representative Lemke of North Dakota is a coming radical leader. He was the only Republican to get a bill of any consequence through congress in the first half of this administration; that was the Frazier-Lemke moratorium bill which granted time to farmers who had come up to the limit on mortgage payments. The Supreme court held the bill unconstitutional.

Lemke is listed as a Republican, but he is not. Actually he is a Non-partisan Leaguer and when the league captured and ate up the Republican party in North Dakota he became the party's state chairman. But no Republican would claim him as a brother, because Lemke has stood for some of the most radical steps. As attorney general of his state he drafted laws which have been called revolutionary. They include state banks, state insurance for farmers against hail, state-owned flour mills, and other far reaching changes.

This radical farm leader is not without educational background. He studied in two of the most conservative institutions on earth; one was Yale university and the other was Georgetown university here in the National Capital. I look to see this gentleman attempt some great things for himself and his radical following in the future.

TRADE PACT WITH FRANCE

We have been engaged in a ten-year trade war with France; now it's all over. A new trade agreement has been completed which lowers tariffs; and permits us to deal more freely with France while they in turn have a better market for their goods (particularly wines and perfumes). Our tobacco raisers see a great opportunity to do a lot more business with the French, and all told every one should be gratified.

There is no sharp excitement about a new trade agreement, but world-wide peaceful results are bound to flow because the new-style treaties are a part of the new era wherein the seeds of war are being eliminated by a neighborly policy. Of course, there will be criticism directed at certain items. It will be charged, as in the case of the Canadian trade treaty, that foreigners are allowed to rush in and steal our markets; but all told the French and Canadian treaties together are being praised by some of the harshest opponents of the Roosevelt administration. At last we are getting to the point where we can tear down our fences and do business with our world-neighbors on the same human, common sense basis as we do in our own town.

It has been proven that past wars have sprung from the selfish, nationalistic tendencies of nations to build high tariff barriers and bottle themselves up in a ferment of selfishness. The new policy is like going down town and mingling with your fellows and learning that a little give-and-take in trading is the way to make friends—and at the same time do more business. You lose a little on one item but you make it up on another. Best of all, both sides remain friends.

Administration leadership managed to choke back the demand

Foreign Words and Phrases

Ab initio. (L.) From the beginning.

Ars est celare artem. (L.) Art consists in concealing art.

De mortuis nil nisi bonum. (L.) Of the dead (say) nothing but good.

Esto perpetua. (L.) May it (or mayest thou) last forever.

Imperium in imperio. (L.) Empire within empire; realm within realm.

Les absents ont toujours tort. (F.) The absent are always in the wrong.

Pater familias. (L.) The head of a family.

Qui vive? (F.) Literally, who lives? who goes there?

Repondez s'il vous plait. (R. S. V. P.) (F.) Reply, if you please.

Vulgo. (L.) Commonly.

Salve qui peat. (F.) Let him save himself who can.

STOPS HEADACHE AMAZINGLY QUICK

The next time you have a headache or neuralgic pain, try the improved, modern, method of relief—two teaspoonfuls of Capudine in a little water. Being liquid, the ingredients are already dissolved—all ready to act. This is why Capudine acts almost instantly.

Capudine relieves pain by soothing the nerves. It is delightfully gentle. It contains no opiates. At all drug stores; 60c, 30c, 10c sizes. (Adv.)

Proud of It Don't always judge by contraries. A man who boasts of his honesty, often is.

Black-Draught Good Laxative

Black-Draught has been kept on hand for all the family in the home of Mr. W. A. Lemons, of Independence, Va., since twenty years ago. Mr. Lemons writes that he takes it as a laxative in cases of "headache, dull, tired feeling, biliousness."

"And I take it if I feel uncomfortable after a heavy meal," he adds. "I especially use it for sick headache. It certainly is good."

"When a man says 'Black-Draught is good,' it is probably because he remembers the prompt, refreshing relief it brought in constipation troubles. It is a simple, herb laxative; natural in composition and action."

Nor a Real One If it makes one angry to be made a martyr, he will not be one long.