

# 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 drying 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 grove 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, starting 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

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"Why did you find this, Anson?"

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 interesting 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 gaiety; he seemed to me to be a big, light-hearted pleasure-loving 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 of his shooting triumphs in Scotland.

For a time I was amused at this distraction; no one could have imagined that we three people, promenading 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 imitation stones, she told me that Miss Van Alstyn had asked

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

She was immensely pleased and I immensely puzzled.

Letty Van Alstyn had been indifferent 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 barging 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.

for a flower holder. But it often happens that one must assume the dilapidations of the previous tenant, which may include repairs and decorations of importance. So it is a word to excite suspicion.

What the American adventurous spirit asks of England for the summer is a smallish house, even a cottage. But it must be under a style name like Tudor, or more romantically Elizabethan, or perhaps, Queen Anne and the Georgian, either late or early.

Hunting a Country House. The hunt for the ideal takes on the aspect of a tour. It is possible to get about by commodious omnibuses. They set you down on the main roads, where local motor cars with drivers can be hired.

Gradually you come to know the districts not too far from London where certain types of the ideal house have sprung from the soil. It is a requisite of the ideal English small house that it should look as if it had pushed itself up from Nature's laboratory of the earth, just as the shrubs, flowers, and trees have done. They are close kin.

Districts not too far from London contain an entrancing variety of old styles. The house of carved interiors and scrolled gables is a specialty of Kent; the thatched roof hides beside the roads of Hampshire's New Forest; the cottage of light-gray stone makes glad the villages of the Cotswolds; and the Georgian, or rather Eighteenth century houses, scatter their elegant lines in all parts of the land. Timber and plaster houses tempt one almost everywhere with their Tudor charm.

You come to one of the richest of all districts for those who hunt the ideal house when you arrive at the hills of the Cotswolds. Gradually its little stone houses catch you in the spell of their beauty. They spread themselves beside the road, taking on almost human qualities. They lift their gables with dignity; they spread their mullioned windows with frankness. Their symmetry seems of the highest art, yet it is said these lovely houses were built by simple artisans. They took the warm, light stone of the land, and even the roof tiles are made of it. All seems a pearly gray, and on this ideal color climb the bright flowers of the garden.

Many Enticing Places. You linger long and drift from road to lane, from village to farm, drinking in every detail of these houses—the Tudor ornament over the leaded windows, the lovely flat arch of the front door, the beauties of the back of the house, the flowers and a cunning use of shrubs and creepers piling one thrilling beauty upon another against the light-gray stone.

In Sussex and Kent, hunt out the old farms and the ancient houses of villages. They have a beauty all their own, with their bricks turned to pink and softened brown. Many have an end gable of stone fashioned in the grand curves which fascinatingly recall the Walloons who brought with them their own traditions of art when driven to England by religious persecutions. Those curvilinear gables have, too, a Spanish flavor, a late Renaissance caper of free-drawn curves. Fascinating interiors those Walloon cloth weavers constructed to make the homes of their exiles resemble those they had left.

In Kent is found that enticing structure, the house of timber and plaster, or timber and brick ingeniously laid. It is eternally lovely, bewilderingly fantastic. How did modest man fancy such a house easy to build, and practical? The beams, black and exposed, seem to represent superhuman effort in the interest of beauty. The curved ones, the purely ornamental ones, fascinate the eye. The overhanging second story is a fantastic denial of architecture's law of the large base.

One of the Partners may ask you strange-sounding questions. "Are you prepared to pay dilapidations?"

That is disconcerting. "But I don't want a house that is actually in a state of decay."

The Partner patiently explains that any sort of damage or breakage must be restored by the tenant. Four bills for dilapidations may be only four shillings, about one dollar.

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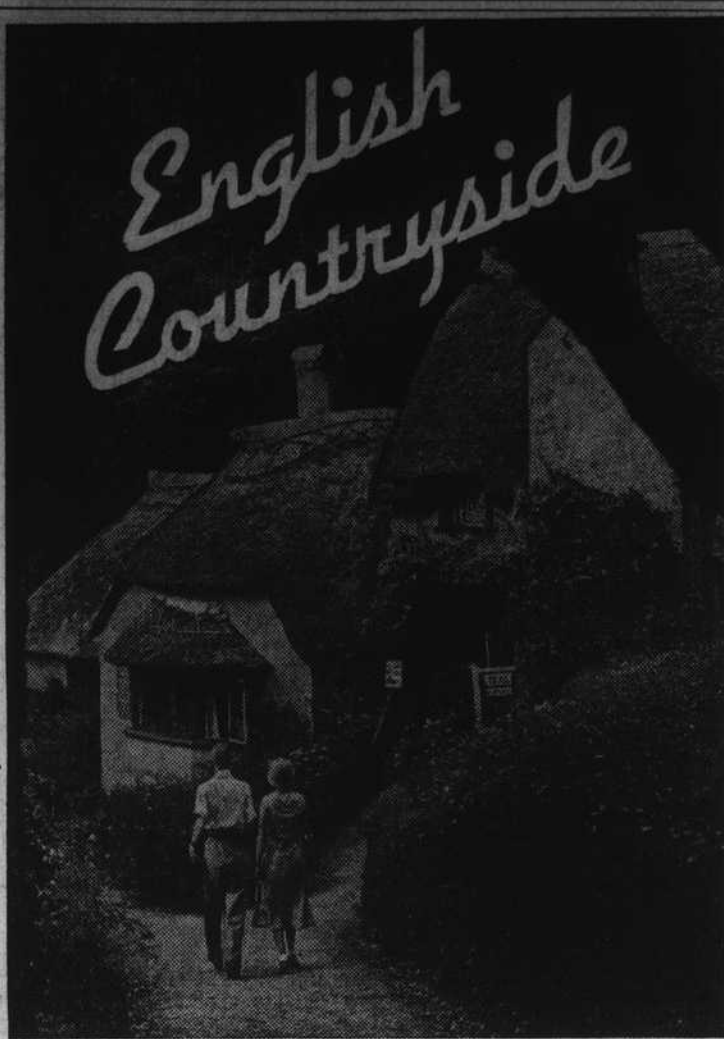
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At the End of an English Sylvan Path.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

IF ANYONE wants to know the English countryside, let him go house hunting. On such a quest he will discover Nature's cozy-corners that casual never find. They are everywhere, but as ingeniously concealed as a bird's nest. There may even be a sign which says, "Dangerous narrow road. Enter at your own risk." But that is just the kind of place to insist upon penetrating.

Enter on foot if you are afraid, but the car can squeeze in. You find yourself in one of those incomparable roads like tunnels of living green. Earthen banks of ivy and wild flowers rise ten feet high to be topped by tall trees sprung from the original hedge planted a hundred years ago. The road keeps you guessing by making such curves that there is no penetrating the secret of what lies ahead.

All at once a gate. Within, a bit of woodland, flower-brightened; beyond that, a sunny garden, molly mossy walls, lattice windows, creepers all about and reaching to the roof tiles, which are toned from dull red to gentle green by two centuries of soft rains and sun.

Who would not penetrate the wood to gaze closer—especially when armed with a handful of permits from a real estate firm? You pass through the bit of flowered woodland gay with yellow primrose patches and massed bluebells. But on emerging from the screening trees and seeing the open garden lying in the sun and the house forming a part of it, you gasp and halt.

This is the house of your dreams. A servant appears and explains that the house is to-be-let and is at your service; the lease is for sixty-five years! Exclamation marks rattle about in your head.

Peculiar Rental Customs. You select another house which you consider a perfect gem, only to be told that it is not available for "instant possession." The present tenant has the place for four years longer.

These, and other interesting rental customs you may learn in English real-estate offices. Mayfair is full of fascinating real-estate offices, most of them seeming like private homes, with their open fires, Chippendale chairs, and bookcase desks.

"Mr. Upperton and Partners" is the diverting and reticent sign over the door of one of these. Lovely way of expressing it; Upperton, Stoggs, Chair and Jones is outdone by the dignity of "and Partners."

Any of these gentlemen can teach the eager American client new uses of English words and phrases in real-estate jargon, whether or not he offers the ideal ancient house and romantic garden. And it is here that you learn that the rent of unfurnished houses is denoted in pounds sterling, while the furnished house smartly demands guineas—an extra shilling on each pound.

You also learn that company's water "laid on" merely means that domestic water flows from taps instead of being pumped up from well or cistern. Indeed, one must not visibly shudder to learn that for 200 years houses have been occupied by gentry, modern smart people among them, who have had no running water, no lights except kerosene lamps, no telephones. Incredible! Without the tireless English servant, the English gentry must have died out for lack of comforts.

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## Uncle Phil Says:

It's Useless to Wish  
Trouble not yourself with wishing that things may be just as you would have them; but be well pleased that they should be just as they are, and then you will be at ease.

In trying to make the world pleasant for other people, you find 90 per cent of them will reciprocate.

It is a sensible man who doesn't expect more than one expression of gratitude for a favor.

Don't Harbor Resentment  
No person on earth can hope to advance while harboring in the heart a case of resentment toward his or her service.

Those who are "blunt" in their statements aren't very sensitive and they think others are not.



Just sprinkle Peterman's Ant Food along window sills, doors, any place where ants come and go. Peterman's kills them—red ants, black ants, others. Quick. Safe. Guaranteed effective 24 hours a day. Get Peterman's Ant Food now, 25c, 35c and 60c at your druggist's.



Without Order  
A contempt for order is a sign, not of poverty; but of a low-grade intelligence or a break-down, mental, moral or physical.—Mary Borden.



Quakes Rare in England  
Earthquakes are rare in England, the average being one a year. The world average is about 600 a year.



Forget Your Woes  
Talk happiness; the world is sad enough without your woes.—E. W. Wilcox.



For Bilemness; Sour Stomach; Flatulence; Nausea and Sick Headache, due to Constipation.

Gift of Hospitality  
Stay is a charming word in a friend's vocabulary.—A. Bronson Alcott.

## 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.)

## face "Broken Out?"

Start today to relieve the soreness—aid healing—and improve your skin, with the safe medication in Resinol

## Freedom of Self-Control

Who, then, is free? The wise man who can govern himself.—Horace.

## FEET HURT?

INSTANT SURE RELIEF! Apply New Do Line Dr. Scholl's Zinc-oxide whiter than the snow on your windows and you'll have instant relief! Cures calluses on toes, corns, itching feet, etc. These relieving ointments and foot powders are new. In fact, they are the only ones of their kind. They are the best ever made. They are the best ever made. They are the best ever made.