THE GOLDEN HADES

BY

EDGAR WALLACE

The Golden Hades

CHAPTER I.

FRANK ALWIN lifted his manacled hands and gingerly pulled off his moustache. The sound of the orchestra playing the audience out came faintly through the heavy curtains which divided the stage from the auditorium. He looked round as the property man came forward with an apology.

"Sorry, sir," he said; "I didn't know the curtain was down. We finished early tonight."

Frank nodded and watched, as the man deftly unlocked the handcuffs and took them into his charge.

Five minutes before, Frank Alwin had been the wicked Count de Larsca, detected in the act of robbing the Bank of Brazil, and arrested by the inevitable and invincible detective.

He stood on the stage absent-mindedly as, one by one, the battens were extinguished and the nimble stage-hands struck the scene. Then he walked to the whitewashed lobby which led to the dressing-rooms.

A girl was waiting in her street clothes, for her tiny part had been finished an hour before. Frank, his mind fully occupied with other matters, had a dim sense of obligation. He had a keener sense that he had failed to surrender a great wad of paper money which he had filched from the property safe and which now reposed in his pocket. He smiled into the girl's anxious face as he approached her and slipped half a dozen bills from his pocket. These he folded solemnly and pressed into her hand.

"For the che-ild, Marguerite," he said extravagantly, saw the amazement in the open eyes, chuckled to himself, and mounted the stairs to his dressing-room two at a time. He was near the top when he remembered and cursed himself. He dashed down again to find she was gone.

Wilbur Smith, late Captain Wilbur Smith, but now just Wilbur Smith of the Treasury Department for Counterfeit was lounging in a big arm-chair in the actor's dressing-room, filling the small apartment with blue smoke, and he looked up as his friend entered.

"Hullo, Frank!" he exclaimed. "What's the matter? Didn't the show go?"

"I'm an ass," said Frank Alwin, dropping into a chair before his dressing-table.

"In some things, yes," said Wilbur Smith genially; "in other things, quite a shrewd man for an actor. What particular asinine thing have you done?"

"There's a girl—" began Frank, and the other nodded sympathetically.

"I'm sorry. I didn't intend probing into your indiscretions. If you are that kind of ass, that doesn't count against you."

"Don't be a fool," said Alwin irritably. "It's not like that at all. There's a girl in this company... " He hesitated. "Well, I can tell you. Her name is Margaret Bishop. She has a small part in the show." The other nodded.

"I've seen her, a very pretty girl. Well?"

Again Frank hesitated.

"Well, the fact is," he said awkwardly, "she came to me tonight as I was going on, and said she was in some kind of trouble—her people, I mean. And she asked me if I would lend her some money. It was only a few seconds before I went on. I promised her I would, and forgot all about it."

"Well, you can find her," said the other. "It isn't that that is worrying me. Look here!" He thrust his hand in his pocket and threw a roll of bills on the table. "Stage money! I saw her waiting for me and completely forgot our conversation—so far forgot it that I acted the fool and gave her half a dozen of these by way of a joke."

Wilbur laughed. "Don't let it worry you," he said. "I promise you that if she is arrested for passing fake money I'll see her through." He rose from the chair, and, walking across to the dressing-table, picked up the bundle of notes. It was a very thick bundle and the bills were of large denomination.

"That's pretty good stage money," he said.

Alwin stopped in the process of rubbing his face with cold cream to look.

"It isn't the usual stage money, either. Why, you might think that was real stuff." He wiped his hands on a towel, and, picking up one of the bills, examined it. "Watermark O.K. Now, what the devil does this mean? I've

never had stage money like this before. That girl ought to be able to pass every one of those bills. Wilbur, I wish you would go down and see her. She lives on the east side somewhere; the stage-door keeper will give you her address."

"Queer, isn't it?" said Wilbur Smith thoughtfully, fingering a bill. "The realest-looking stuff I have ever seen, and—good God!"

He had turned the bill over and was staring at the back.

"What is it?" asked the startled Alwin.

The detective pointed to a little yellow design which had evidently been stamped upon the bill.

"What is it?" asked Alwin again.

"What do you think it is?" demanded Wilbur Smith in a strange voice.

"Well, it looks to me like the picture of an idol."

The other nodded.

"You're nearly right. It is a picture of the Golden Hades!"

"The who?"

"The Golden Hades," replied the other. "Have you never heard of Hades?"

"Yes," said Frank with a smile, "it's a place you send people to when they're in the way."

"It is also the name of a deity," said Wilbur Smith grimly, "a gentleman who is also called Pluto."

"But why do you call it Golden—because of its colour?"

The other shook his head.

"This is the third Hades I have seen, but the others were in sure enough gold." He picked up the bills and counted them carefully.

"Ninety-six thousand dollars," he said. "Do you mean," gasped Frank, "that these are—"

"They are real enough," nodded the detective.

"Where did you get them?"

"I got them in the usual way from the property man."

"Can you bring him up?"

"If he hasn't gone home," said Frank, and, going to the door, roared for his dresser.

"Send Hainz up."

Fortunately, Hainz was intercepted at the door just as he was leaving, and was brought back to the dressing-room. As he passed through the door his eye fell upon the money on the table and he uttered an impatient "Tchk!"

"Why, I knew I'd forgotten to collect something from you, Mr. Alwin," he said, "but being late for the curtain made me forget it. I'll take these—"

"Wait a moment." It was Wilbur Smith who spoke.

"You know me, Hainz?"

"Yes, sir," grinned the man; "not professionally, but I know you well enough."

"Where did you get this money?" The other stared.

"Money? What do you mean—his?" He jerked his thumb to the bills on the table. "

"I mean that," said Smith.

"Where did I get it?" repeated the property man slowly. "Why, I bought those from a bill-man. I was running short of stage stuff and he had a lot. He was using 'em as a border for that movie picture 'The Lure of Wealth'."

"Where did he get them?" asked Smith.

"I don't know—he just had 'em given to him."

"Do you know where I can find him?" The man produced a dingy little notebook and read an address.

"I happen to know where he lives, because he sometimes does a bit of work for me," he said.

When the man had gone Wilbur Smith faced his astonished friend.

"Get that paint off your face, Frank, and make yourself human," he said good-naturedly. "If you don't mind, I'll take charge of that money and we will go and have supper somewhere."

""But what the devil does it all mean?" asked Frank Alwin.

"I'll tell you while we are eating," replied Wilbur Smith evasively.

CHAPTER II.

HE had little to tell, as it proved, and as he frankly admitted half an hour later.

"The first time I saw the Golden Hades it was real gold," he explained. "It had been stamped on the back of a thousand-dollar bill and had been dusted over with gold-leaf. Then it had the word 'Hades' in Greek beneath it, and that's how I came to identify the picture; it is pretty easy to identify from any classical dictionary. The bill came into my hands in a very curious way. There was a poor woman down on the east side who worked as a help in one of the Brooklyn hotels. According to her story she was returning home one night when a man walked up to her and gave her a big package of bills and walked away. She got back to her room, switched on the light, and found that she had a hundred thousand dollars. She couldn't believe her eyes, supposed somebody had been having a joke with her, and thought, as you thought, that the money was fake. She put it under her pillow, intending in the morning to take it to somebody who could tell real money from counterfeit. In the night she was awakened by hearing somebody in her room. She was about to cry out when a voice told her to be silent, somebody switched on the light and she discovered that there was not one, but three masked men standing about her bed."

Frank looked at the detective.

"Are you stringing me?"

Wilbur Smith shook his head.

"This is dead serious. They asked where the money was, and she, speechless with terror at the sight of their guns, pointed to the pillow and fainted. When she recovered, the money was gone all except one bill, which they overlooked in their hurry. She brought this to the office the next day and told her story. The chief thought it was a lie and that the woman had stolen the money from the hotel where she was working, that she got scared, and prepared this very thin yarn to clear herself."

"And was this so?" The detective shook his head.

"No," he said, "I took up the case. There was no money missing from the hotel. The woman had a very good character, was, in fact, one of the poor but transparently honest types, and we'd no other course to pursue but to

hand over the thousand dollars to her. That was the first time I ever met the Golden Hades.

"The second time," he went on, "the circumstances were almost as remarkable. This time the notes, several of them, were in the possession of a man named Henry Laste, a confirmed gambler, who was picked up drunk in the street by a patrolman and taken to the station. I happened to be there and when the man was searched eight of these bills for a thousand dollars were found in his pocket. We got him sober and he told us a story that his wife had found the notes between the leaves of a book she'd bought. I got this information from him about eight o'clock in the morning," Wilbur Smith went on slowly, "and started off for his house to interview his wife. He lived in a tenement house, and when we got to the door and knocked there was no answer. I was pretty interested in the business, and I knew there was something big behind it. I got the janitor to unlock the door with a master key."

"And the woman was gone?" asked Frank. The detective shook his head.

"The woman was there," he said simply, "dead! Shot through the heart, every room ransacked, drawers turned out, wardrobes stripped—"

"The Higgins Tenement Murder!" gasped Alwin. Wilbur nodded gravely.

"The Higgins Tenement Murder," he said.

"And did you find any notes?"

"None. We wanted to charge the husband, but he had no difficulty in proving an alibi. He had been at a gaming house until five minutes before he was picked up, and had been in custody since one o'clock in the morning, and the murder had been committed at ten minutes past two. The shot that killed the woman passed through her body and through an alarm clock which stopped at that hour."

They sat looking at each other in silence; the clatter and chatter of the restaurant jangled in the ears of Frank Alwin, and there came to him a sudden realisation of danger, mysterious, menacing and real

"I see," he said slowly; "everybody who has handled those notes stamped with the Golden Hades has been—"

"Hold up," the detective finished the sentence. "That's just it, and that is just why I am going to stick with you through the night, Frank."

They had been friends for many years, the leading man at the Coliseum-Majestic and his old-time school-fellow, who had more crime discoveries to his credit than any man who drew a salary from the Department of Justice.

Frank Alwin himself had three strenuous years of wartime service in the Justice Department to his credit and had he not been a born producer, a brilliant actor, and a comfortably rich man, he might have made a reputation equally great to that which he enjoyed, in the same service as his friend.

"I don't like it," said Alwin, after a while. "It's uncanny. Who was Pluto anyway?"

"He was the deity of the underworld, the one deity who is worshipped today by certain cranks. I suppose there is something about him that appeals to the modern demonologist."

A waiter came to the table at that moment.

"Mr. Alwin," be said, "there's a phone message for you."

Frank got up and the detective half rose to accompany him.

"Don't worry," laughed Frank, "they're not going to kill me by 'phone. Anyway, they couldn't get the money, it's in your pocket."

Three minutes passed and he did not return. Five minutes went by and the detective grew uneasy. He beckoned the waiter.

"Go into the vestibule and see if Mr. Alwin is still at the 'phone," he said.

The man returned almost immediately.

"Mr. Alwin's not in the vestibule, sir," he said.

"Not there?" Wilbur Smith leaped to his feet, pushed the chair aside, and went into the vestibule. The hall porter said he had not seen Alwin go out, but he had been absent from the entrance for five minutes. He had seen a car waiting at the door which was gone when he returned.

Wilbur Smith ran into the deserted street. There was nobody in sight. The entrance stood between and at equal distance from two electric light standards, whose rays were so thrown that immediately before the entrance of the restaurant was a little patch of darkness. He saw something at the edge of the pavement, stooped and picked it up. It was Frank's hat, battered and damp. He carried it to the light. One look was sufficient. His hand, where it had touched the crushed crown, was red with blood.

CHAPTER III.

STEPS. Two steps—three steps—four steps —five steps—landing—turn. One step—two steps —three steps—four steps—five steps—six steps —landing—no, this was the end of the stairway.

A key clicked in the lock, and presumably a door opened, because there came a breath of cold and somewhat musty air; Then the journey was resumed.

Frank Alwin came to consciousness, or semi-consciousness, as they were carrying him down the steps. By some peculiar trick of the mind he began to count at "two," without being conscious that the first step had. been descended. His head was aching, his face felt as sticky and uncomfortable as though somebody had spilt spirit gum down it, and his arm ached dreadfully. But the head was the worst. He had never realised how inspired was the coiner of phrases when he had described a splitting headache. It was as though his skull had been rent in two and the broken ends were grating. The agony seemed unendurable; he could have cried out with the pain of it, but subconscious reason bade him be silent. Whoever carried him was handling him with care. He felt himself laid upon a bed.

"Spring bed, damp pillow," registered his mind.

Then alight was turned on, and the sensation, after the darkness, was almost as painful as his throbbing head. He groaned and turned over, and groaned again.

"Phew!" said a voice. "Look at my coat! Blood will never wash off and I'll have to burn it. I think it was a fool's trick, anyway, to bring him here. Why not leave him?"

"Because Rosie is right," said another voice—a deeper tone with a growl in it.

"Rosie!" The first speaker laughed contemptuously.

Who was Rosie? wondered Frank Alwin through his pain. Was there a woman at the back of this extraordinary mischief? What manner of woman was she?

He remembered coming out of the restaurant because—because.... He couldn't remember just why he had gone into the street. He had only the

dimmest recollection of what had happened after. Anyway, he was here and he was alive—that was something. But they were talking of Rosie.

"I tell you Rosie was right," said the growling voice. "This fellow Smith is the most dangerous man in New York—for us."

"What about Peter Correlly?" said the first speaker, and there was a silence as though the second man, who spoke with such authority, was considering the matter, as apparently he was.

"Peter Correlly?" he repeated. "Sure, Peter Correlly is dangerous, but Wilbur Smith wouldn't have him on to the same job. Besides, I think its too big a thing for Peter Correlly, anyway."

There was another pause and the sound of somebody washing his hands. That some one was singing in a low voice. What is there about the sound of running water which inspires all men to song?

"But it's all story-book stuff," said the voice of the first man who had spoken, and the note of contempt still held.

"Rosie doesn't think for a minute that Wilbur Smith will chuck up the job because his pal's in danger? Anyway, how does he know that we haven't finished him? Rosie talks about killing two birds with one stone, but we ain't killed any birds yet. This nut hasn't got the money and he's alive!" There was a long pause.

"Yes," said the growling voice, ""that's so. Maybe we've got to alter our programme. You're sure he said he gave the money to Smith? Maybe he didn't know what he was saying."

"He knew what he said all right," said the first speaker. "Smith has the money and that alters things."

Frank was trying desperately hard to catch hold of the past few hours or few minutes. When had he said he had given the money to Wilbur Smith? He had no recollection of the few moments of consciousness which he had enjoyed on the way to this place. Yet somehow he knew that the man was speaking the truth, and he groaned again. One of the men came across and looked down at him.

"Hullo, you!" he said in a growling voice. "Feel better?"

Frank unscrewed his eyes—that exactly describes the sensation —and peered up at his questioner. He might have saved himself the trouble, for the lower part of the man's face was covered by a silk handkerchief, and Frank noticed stupidly that it was a Paisley design.

"You're in luck," said the man. "You ought to be dead by rights. You're in a little place which was built specially for me—a swell apartment. Why, you can have a bath if you want one!"

Frank groaned again, and presently he heard no more.

The man with the handkerchief sat down, pulled the unconscious man to his back and lifted his eyelids.

"I thought he was dead for a minute," he said. "He's a bit soft. You didn't plug him that hard, Sammy?"

The man addressed as Sammy laughed. He was shorter than his companion, quicker of foot, more wiry, and he stepped over to the side of the unconscious Alwin and examined his hurts with deft fingers.

"It's nothing serious," he said; "he's lost a little blood."

He rose and looked round the undressed brick walls of the room.

"A very desirable residence," he said," but I'm glad it's him and not me that's going to live here. Tom, if you and me and Rosie ever have to hide for our lives, this is about the last place in the world we ought to be. Yes, I know it has a bathroom and lots of books and plenty of grub, and it's the sort of place where you could sit quiet for a year if you were clever. I thought it was a grand idea of Rosie's when he first put it up. He planned the whole building, brought the workmen up from Mexico, sent them home again, and no human eye saw it being built—unless you call a Mexican human." He chuckled. "But things have gone big since then, Tom. What looked like a little graft that nobody would take any notice of, is now the biggest thing we've ever struck. And God bless Rosie for it!"

"Rosie! Huh!" growled the other.

"Why, say! You were praising him up just now," sneered the second man. "Which reminds me," he said suddenly in a different tone of voice.

On the other side of the room from where he was sitting were two sea chests, one on top of the other. Their fastening was of a primitive character and he opened one, examining its contents with an approving eye. It was half full of books, papers, scrap-books, wire table baskets, stationery racks and the paraphernalia of an office desk.

"Rosie wants this stuff sorted out," said the man.

"Sorted out," repeated Alwin, coming back to consciousness at these words. "Let him come and sort 'em out," said the other. "What's the hurry, anyway?" He considered a moment and then went on.

"I suppose we ought to do it. Rosie said there was a lot of stuff in these boxes that might be of use and a lot that might be damaging if it ever fell into wise hands. We could take it up to the Temple tomorrow night, then Rosie could persuade the mug to send them to his place."

Alwin heard the snap of a watch-case and the grating of a chair being pushed against the wall. Then one of the men said briskly, "Well, it's time — why doesn't Rosie come!"

There was a sharp tap-tap at that moment which sounded to Frank as though it came from the ceiling. It was like the tap of a walking-stick on a tessellated pavement, and he wondered what was above the vaulted roof.

"Talk of the devil," said the man called Sam. "Come on, Tom. He won't come down here. What about this fellow?"

"Leave him for a moment, and leave the light. Let's see what Rosie has to say."

The door shut softly behind them, and with an effort Frank turned his head. He was in a large cellar. It was evidently the cellar of a house which had been newly built. It was oblong in shape, and the concrete floor was covered with matting. Unlike the cellar of fiction, it was clean and apparently well ventilated. It contained three beds, on one of which he was lying, the others being in the corners on either side of the door. There was a plain, fixed table, two wooden chairs and an armchair, and these, with the two chests, constituted the furniture of what one of the men had called his "apartment".

In the corner farthest from the entrance was a door, which apparently led to the bath of which the man had boasted.

By a powerful effort of will Alwin dragged himself to the edge of the bed and, holding tight to the head-board, stood erect. His head swam, his knees felt as though they would collapse at any minute; he thought he was going to faint. He was sick and trembling, and his head was one wild, frantic ache. His first thought was to find some weapon which his captors might incautiously have left behind in a moment of forgetfulness, but this miracle did not happen. After a few painful moments he crawled back to the bed and lay down. The relief was such that he was satisfied to stay. He had put his hand to his head and discovered that some sort of rough dressing had been applied to the wound to his scalp and there was nothing now to do but to rid himself of this intolerable ache and to recover some of his lost strength.

He must have dozed off, for he was awakened by the door being opened and the two men entering. The man called Tom was grumbling about the boxes. Evidently Rosie had been insistent. Though they spoke of this mysterious personage in tones from which they did not attempt to banish their contempt, he was evidently of some importance.

"What about this guy?" said one of them suddenly, and Frank knew they were speaking of him.

"Give him till tomorrow night," said the growling voice. "Let's see what we can do with Smith."

"Do you think we can do anything with him?"

"Who—Smith? Sure we can. He has the money—Rosie says so and Rosie knows."

"That makes a difference. It complicates things to put this guy out of the reckoning. This is the third blunder Rosie has made in three months."

They lowered their voices here, and Frank could not follow them. He gathered that they were examining the two black boxes which stood against the wall, for he heard them pant as they lifted one down to examine the box underneath. Presently they left, and he heard the thud of the door as they shut it behind them. And then there was silence.

CHAPTER IV.

"I AM sorry to disturb you."

In the grey of the morning Wilbur Smith stood, hat in hand, at the door of a small apartment, and the elderly man who had opened the door, clad in an old overcoat which was worn over his pyjamas, gazed sleepily upon the unexpected visitor. "Here is my card."

The man took it and read.

"Police!" he said, startled. "Why, what's the matter?"

"There's nothing wrong— "

"Don't tell me that Margaret— "

"There's nothing wrong in the sense that your daughter is to blame. I suppose Miss Margaret Bishop is your daughter?"

"Come in, sir," said the man. The little room was furnished poorly but neatly.

"Is it about the money?" asked the man anxiously. "I didn't understand it. You see, Margaret asked Mr. Alwin because he had been so kind to her in the past. I was amazed when she brought the money back. I didn't know he was that rich. I thought there must be some mistake. Mr. Alwin has sent you?"

Wilbur shook his head.

"Not exactly," he said; "but if you don't mind I'd like to see your daughter."

He waited in some anxiety and was relieved to hear the girl's voice. Presently she came in, a little pale but looking pretty, he thought. She carried in her hand a bundle of notes.

"Is it about these?" she asked.

He nodded.

"Mr. Alwin gave them to me," she said, speaking agitatedly. "I thought there was a mistake, but I didn't think he would send— "

"He has not sent anybody, be assured of that. I have really come to see that you are safe," said Wilbur kindly.

"As to the money, you need not worry. I shall want it for a few days. At the end of that time, if nothing happens, I will return it to you."

"I hated asking Mr. Alwin at all," said the girl, "but daddy has been troubled about money, and we owe a lot of rent. I tried everybody before I asked Mr. Alwin, and I think I should have sunk through the floor with shame if he had refused. It's awful to ask," she faltered.

"Don't worry about that, please," said Wilbur with a little smile. "I am only concerned about you, about the danger— "

"The danger?" she asked quickly. "What do you mean? You said something about my safety!"

He was examining the notes under the gas. They each bore the yellow stamp.

"These are the ones," he said, and drew from his pocket the big bundle of notes which Frank had handed to him. The girl's mouth opened in astonishment at the sight of so much money.

"You see, the numbers are consecutive. I had better take a note of these."

He jotted some figures down on the leaf of his notebook and tore it out.

"Keep this for reference," he said. "Those are the numbers of the bills I have taken, and, as I say, they will be returned to you—if nothing happens. In the meantime"—he drew his own note-case from his pocket —"you must tell me how much money you wanted to borrow from Mr. Alwin."

He saw the blush that rose to the girl's cheek, and laughed.

"You must take this as a loan from Frank Alwin," he said, and winced at the thought that Alwin at that moment was probably dead. She named a sum in a low voice, and he extracted the bills and passed them to her.

WHEN he got to his office that morning, after two or three hours' sleep, he found a bunch of reporters waiting for him. Wilbur Smith had one way with

the press, and it was the way of frankness, which he had found to pay ninety-nine per cent.— and the one per cent. didn't matter anyway.

"Yes, boys, it's perfectly true that Mr. Alwin has disappeared, and, so far as I know, has not been seen since last night." (He had been on the telephone before coming to the office.)

"There's a pretty big mystery behind his disappearance, and I have some sort of clue."

"Is there any connection between this crime and the Higgins Tenement Murder?" asked a reporter, and the detective nodded.

"I don't know how that story has got round, but there's a lot of truth in it," he said. "Alwin is a very good friend of mine, and you may be sure that I am not going to rest until I have tracked him and the men who took him away. Now, in case you get these facts all mixed up, I will tell you just what has happened," he added, and related the story of his meeting the actor in the theatre, of their dining together and of Alwin going out to answer a telephone call and disappearing. He made no reference either to the money or to the Golden Hades.

That was a matter, he thought, which could be left over until a future date might provide the press with further material. For the moment he had no desire to warn this mysterious agency, by letting them know that he associated the crime and its predecessors with themselves.

Whatever his views were, however, they were somewhat altered when a voice at the rear of the little group of reporters asked:

"What about the Golden Hades, Smith?"

Wilbur looked up sharply.

"Who's that?" he said, and a cub reporter was pushed forward.

"We received it at the office this morning," he said, laying a letter on the detective's table.

Wilbur opened it. Both paper and envelope were of the best quality, and the letter it contained was typewritten. It said:

Warn Wilbur Smith that, unless he wants his friends to die, he must let up on the Golden Hades.

Wilbur read the letter twice.

"When did this come?" he asked.

"About half an hour before I left the office. It was sent up on the tube to the city editor, who opened it and handed it to me," explained the newspaper man. "What does it mean, Smith?"

Wilbur smiled.

"I should rather like to know myself, son," he said. "So far, however, I am in the dark. I'll hold this letter if you don't mind—and even if you do mind," he added.

"But this isn't the first time you've heard of the Golden Hades?" persisted one of the reporters. "How much do you know, Mr. Smith?"

Wilbur looked at the young man squarely.

"That is exactly what the gang want to find out," he said, "and that is just what I'm not going to tell you. This letter was only sent for that purpose. Maybe Alwin is alive and in their hands and they are holding him to ransom. Maybe they'll kill him if I go any farther in the matter. But this you can bet on, that the object of sending that letter to your newspaper was to get you boys to dig out all I knew about the Golden Hades—and I'm not falling for it."

He dismissed the pressmen and walked into the office.

Grey-haired Flint heard the story without speaking.

"It sounds like something out of a story-book," he said when the other had finished, "and it's certainly unusual."

"It is right off all the usual lines," said Wilbur Smith. "Why, compared with this the Black Hand is child's play, and a Chinatown murder mystery is as simple as shelling peas."

The chief rubbed his bristly chin.

"Do you know what I'd do if I were you'?" he said. "I'd get Peter Correlly on this job."

"Peter Correlly!" said Smith quickly. "Why, of course! I never thought of him. I'll phone him to come over and see me in the office."

"Where's the money?" asked the chief. "In my safe. I'll show it to you." Flint examined the wad of money carefully.

"Obviously your first job is to discover how this came into the theatre. You've seen the property man, you say?"

"Yes," replied Smith. "I haven't yet interviewed the bill man. He may be able to throw some light on it. I'm taking the money to the Treasury," he explained as he wrapped and pocketed the bills, "because I'm anxious to trace the notes to the bank which issued them. Once that is done, I may be on the way to discovering the reason why this money made its appearance in such a queer way, and why the holder is in line for trouble the moment he slips the money into his pocket."

He went back to his office to phone Correlly, then left the building.

The officer on duty at the door saw him hail a taxi and go off.

Three hours later his seemingly lifeless body was found in a vacant lot near Jamaica Street; and when they got him to the hospital and put him to bed, and Peter Correlly searched his clothes, the money had disappeared.

CHAPTER V.

PETER CORRELLY came back from a visit to the hospital where Wilbur Smith was lying.

"Gunshot wound right shoulder, two legs broken, a small fracture of the skull, concussion, and a few bruises about the body," he reported. "The body bruises are not important, the shoulder wound is healing, and the only thing that troubles the doctor is the fracture. As it's a skull fracture it may be pretty serious."

"Has he recovered consciousness?" asked Flint, twisting his hands nervously on the blotting-pad.

Peter Correlly nodded.

He was a tall, sallow young man with a perpetual stoop. His carriage suggested weariness, his apparent thinness deceived many good judges into the belief that he suffered from ill health. He was neither weak nor thin. He had the appearance of being chronically tired, but that only concerned the deluded people who were deceived by him. He was alert enough when he brought Madame Recamier to justice and exposed certain very foolish-looking society leaders who were disciples of that wicked old faker. That she took a name honoured in history to advertise her séances was not the least of her sins. He traced Eddie Polsco eight thousand miles after Eddie got away with Mrs. Stethmann's bank balance by a series of twists, and Eddie never complained of Peter's lethargy.

"I told you the whole of the story, Correlly," said the chief, "and you know very nearly as much as Smith does. The possibility of running the gang to earth is now an imperative necessity. This crowd, whatever it is, has come right up against our department and thrown out a challenge which at all costs we must take up. That they waylay, half murder and rob an officer of the department of justice in broad daylight, argues a power and an organisation greater than even poor Wilbur Smith imagined."

Peter nodded.

"I suppose I'll have to take it up," he said disconsolately, and Flint looked at him sharply.

"There are a lot of things about you, Correlly, that I don't understand," he said with acerbity.

"I don't understand why a college man should come into the police force, anyway, but once he is in it I should have thought that he would have taken an intelligent interest in his work—show some enthusiasm, man!"

Peter stifled an obvious yawn.

"I am in this department," he explained, "because it pays me money. That's all there is in it, chief. It isn't respectable to go poking your nose into other gentlemen's business, and it isn't the sort of thing that one would do in cold blood or for the fun of the thing. Yes, I suppose I'll have to take up this case. Mr. Smith won't be around for a couple of weeks—if he's ever around at all," he added lugubriously.

"Cheerful devil!" said his exasperated superior. "Get out and get busy!"

Peter Correlly slouched from the room, his hands in his pockets, and came to Wilbur Smith's office, where he found a convenient chair, fell into it and went to sleep. People walked into the office, saw him, and tiptoed out again, and it was left to the irate Flint to discover him and rouse him with a vigorous shaking.

"Say, what is this, Correlly?" said the chief sternly. "You're carrying this Weary Willie business a little too far. You're supposed to be out tracking down men who have attempted to murder a brother officer."

Peter blinked and stretched himself.

"Quite right, chief," he said calmly, "but I've been up three consecutive nights in connection with this business, and I guess I'm a little tired."

"In connection with this business?" said Flint, surprised. "But you were only called into it today!"

"I've been on it for over a week," yawned Peter. "If I hadn't been so infernally sleepy I should have been here in time to warn Smith. Anyway"—he looked at his watch— "there's nothing doing for another quarter of an hour, when I'm going to interview a gentleman on the subject of miracles."

Flint closed the door of the office.

"Now, son," he said, "just tell me all you know."

"I know very little," confessed Peter, shaking his head sadly. "You see, I've got on to the case from another angle than Smith's. I've also seen these bills with the Golden Hades stamped on the back. It happened about six months ago. I was looking for Tony Meppelli who stabbed a man at a dago picnic and disappeared. I had to live in a poor part of the town, so I rented a room, and found that I had, as a fellow boarder, a girl who works at a factory and also does a lot of spare-time work with her fellow employees. She's a genuine Uplifter, though she's hardly got two cents to rub against each other. No, she isn't pretty or interesting, or anything except just a very serious, genuine kind of girl with a cheerful view of life—which is a most surprising thing to me, because, if there is anything in life that makes for cheerfulness— "

"Leave out the philosophy," said the chief, "and come to the facts."

"This girl's name was Madison. Whether she was named after Madison Square or Madison Square was named after her, I didn't discover. She was going out to some sort of party which the Uplifters were giving to the poor children of the neighbourhood. She had hardly taken a dozen paces from the house when a man turned towards her out of the darkness. Naturally, she was used to that kind of thing, and was able to take care of herself. She was preparing to say a few unfriendly words when he slipped a big packet into her hand, and with the words. 'May the gods be propitious!' disappeared into the night. It was quite dark and she did not see his face. All she could say was that he spoke in a very cultivated voice and was apparently a well-educated man. I happened to be coming down the stairs as she came in, and she told me about it. I thought she had been handed a brick or a bomb, because the Uplifters, being violent Protestants and doing their work in a neighbourhood which is just as violently Catholic, there was always the chance of an explosion.

"On my suggestion she carried the parcel into my room, or studio—I was there in the role of a poor but promising artist. I unwrapped the package, and to my amazement discovered that it was made up of four fat wads of bills, each for a thousand dollars. I looked at the girl and she looked at me, and then I had another look at the money.

"The first thing I saw when I detached a bill from the package was that on the back was stamped a neat little figure of an idol, as I thought, which had been dusted over with printers' gold dust, and had been done in a rather amateurish fashion, since the edges were smudged and blurred."

"And it was real money?" asked the chief.

"Real money," said Peter. "I don't see much of it, but I see enough to know the good stuff when it comes my way. The girl, of course, was delighted.. She was one of those simple creatures who believe in miracles. It appears that she had a great scheme at the back of her mind for building a big rest home for working girls in the country. The optimism of the untrained mind," said Mr. Correlly, "is in itself—"

"Don't moralise, Correlly," growled Flint. "Get on with the story."

"Anyway, she thought this gift had sailed from heaven to the East River. She settled right down to decide whether the dormitories should be washed in pink or blue. At any rate, she carried the money away into her room, and. I went out into the street, where there was room to scratch my head and think. I meant to return early that night, but to the distractions of the evening was added the unexpected arrival of Tony Meppelli on the scene. He was full of firewater and high spirits. I have observed that drink has this quality in common with enthusiasm—"

"Never mind about drink," said Flint. "Get on with the story."

"Well, we got Tony to sleep after a great deal of rocking," said the unabashed Peter, "and, my job being over, I went back to my lodgings, to gather my possessions, and make a graceful retirement, intending to sleep that night in comfort.

"It was nearly one o'clock when I got home, and to my surprise I saw there was a light in the landlady's parlour. That suited me fine, because I had to settle my bill. When I opened the door, however, I was immediately invited in by the Uplifter girl, who had been sitting there waiting for me. She told me that I had hardly left the house before a car drove up to the door, and an elderly man had alighted, carrying a black bag. 'And who do you think it was?' she asked in triumph. 'It was the President of the First National Bank! He told me he had been roused from his bed by the gentleman who gave me the money, because he was afraid I might lose it, and he had come to take the money right off to the bank and give me a receipt for it. Here is his card.'

"She showed me the card with the name of the sure-enough President of the sure-enough First National Bank, and on the back of it was written a receipt for a hundred and twenty thousand dollars." Peter paused.

"Well?" asked Flint.

"Well," drawled Peter, "that's the last she ever heard of her money, and the first and last time she ever saw that particular President of the First National."

"In fact he wasn't President at all?" suggested Flint.

"That's about it," replied Peter.

Flint bent his brows in thought.

"It is all very curious. Why give her the money at all if they're going to take it away? Did you form a theory?"

"I never have theories," said Peter. "They hamper my work. All I wanted were a few facts, and I did not get one until about a week ago—"

He stopped, and asked abruptly:

"Do you know a man named Fatty Storr?"

The chief nodded.

"Yes, I know Fatty. He's an Englishman—a lanky, cadaverous-looking man—even a worse looker than you, Peter. He's a chronic circulator of bad money. I haven't seen him lately."

"They call him Fatty," said Peter without any trace of a smile, "because he is thin. That is the English form of humour which makes 'Punch' so exhilarating. You haven't seen him lately because he has been in serious trouble, and an even more serious gaol, in New Orleans. A week ago, Fatty was seen on the street looking very bright and beautiful. His gay and gallant attire was convincing evidence that he was out on a strictly business proposition. He was seen to stop outside a store, extract a note from his hip, fold it and place it nonchalantly in his waistcoat pocket. He was then seen—
"

"Who saw him?" demanded Flint.

"I saw him," said the other calmly, "because I was watching him. That is invariably the best way to see people."

"Then why didn't you say so?" growled Flint.

"He walked into the store, made a small purchase and tendered a hundred-dollar note. Either there was some delay in the bill being cashed, or else Fatty detected some movement which he interpreted as being hostile to himself; at any rate he left the shop hurriedly and walked quickly away. Turning his head, he saw me and stopped walking."

"Was he waiting for you?" asked Flint.

Peter shook his head.

"When I say he stopped walking I mean he started running, and Fatty can go. I lost him for a little while in a labyrinth of small streets and alleys, but eventually I picked him up. He protested his respectability and came back to the store. Fatty didn't want to go in, being of a modest and retiring nature, but I persuaded him. 'See here,' he said, 'if you saw me go into this store I might as well own up.' We found the manager of the store and the note Fatty had passed. I took it in my hand," said Peter slowly, "and, turning it over, I saw—the Golden Hades. 'This is the man,' said the store- keeper; 'he went out without waiting for his change. Has he stolen the money?' 'Is that a phoney note?' I asked. 'No, sir,' said the storekeeper, 'that's a good enough note.' "

"For the Lord's sake," said Flint in despair, "what is the story?"

"That's just what I'm trying to find out," said Peter. "The man who was genuinely astonished was Fatty. I thought he was going to faint when he found that he'd been trying to pass real money. I pushed him into the station, but before I got there he was hysterical and wailing about the hundreds of thousands of dollars that he had given to a small boy."

"Then you've been on this job ever since?" asked Flint, in surprise.

"That's about the size of it," replied Correlly. ""You see, Fatty wouldn't talk. He was mad to get out and find the boy to whom he'd given the notes. There's no doubt whatever that he did pass on the notes when he saw I was chasing him, under the impression that they were all phoney. I was bringing him up here today to see Smith; in fact he ought to be in the office now."

"Go and see," said Flint. "If he's here bring him in. I presume he is the gentleman you are interviewing on the subject of miracles?"

Peter nodded.

"Have you heard of anything more miraculous than Fatty Storr working hard to pass good money?" he asked.

Fatty certainly belied his name. He was a gaunt, untidy-looking man, whose finery had run to seed in the few days of his incarceration. A low forehead, from which his mouse-coloured hair was brushed back, libelled his undoubted intelligence. He sat with an officer on each side of him, and when Peter came into the room where he was waiting he looked up with a scowl.

"Look here," he blustered, "you've kept me long enough in this blasted place. You ain't got any right to do it, see? I'm a British subject, I am, and I'm writing to the English Ambassador about the way you've treated me, you skinny perisher!"

"Oh, Fatty," said Peter reproachfully, "what abuse when I'm saving your miserable life! Come along and see the chief, and just pour out your young heart, for he is a family man and has children of his own."

Fatty sniffed, and shuffled along before his custodian.

"Here's the specimen, chief," said Peter.

Flint favoured the prisoner with the nod of old acquaintance.

"You will observe the insufficient frontal development," said Peter, "the indentation of the temporals and the oxycephalic character of the skull. From the occiput—"

"We'll postpone the anthropological lecture to a later date, if you don't mind," said Flint. "Now, boy, let's have a little truth from you. We've caught you with the goods."

"What do you mean?" demanded the prisoner fiercely. "What goods did you catch me with? Good money, wasn't it? You can't pinch me for passing good money."

"We can pinch you for being in possession of money, good, bad or indifferent," said the chief, "if we're not satisfied that you came by it honestly."

"And, knowing you," added Peter, "we realise that you are constitutionally incapable of getting money by the sweat of your brow, unless you perspire when you run away with it."

"Now come on, Fatty," said the chief, "unless you want to be tied in with murder."

"Murder!" said the startled man.

"That's right," said Flint. "There's a murder in that money."

"You're pulling my leg," said the prisoner uneasily.

"Not a bit," broke in the irrepressible Peter. "No, Fatty, the chief is giving it to you straight. There's one, two, and possibly more murders attached to that money, although I didn't know it when I pulled you in. Now there's no question of kidding you to give us all the information you have; you know that we must have that information. You're a sensible man, Fatty, and you've been through the mill. You know that neither the chief nor I would put one over on you by using the murder argument."

"What do you want to know?" asked the man after a moment's consideration.

"We want to know first of all how the money came into your possession, and what happened to it when I was chasing you."

Fatty looked from face to face suspiciously. He was a shrewd enough fellow, and his wits, sharpened by years of strenuous encounters with the police, were keen to the point of intuition.

"All right," he said at last, "I'll tell you all I know. But I'm not going to give anybody away—not anybody in my way of business."

The chief nodded.

"If you mean am I going to ask you where you get your phoney money from, you can set your mind at rest. I am not."

"All right," said the man, relieved. "Then I'll tell you. First of all, I've got to explain that I get it from a man in a certain town. He gives it to me in wads of about two hundred bills. When I want money I send him a letter and he meets me at night some place outside New York, where there aren't too many cops and where I'm not known. I've got to explain this to you, chief, because otherwise there's nothing to the story. Well, I arranged for this

gentleman to meet me about a week ago—in fact, the day before I was pinched.

"This is how we work it. I send him the real money, and, passing me by careless like, he slips the phoney stuff into my hands. We've got another arrangement too. If there's anybody hanging about at the place where we've agreed to meet, we go on walking up the street or avenue or whatever it is, always keeping north. We do that so that we don't miss one another.

"Well, this night I turned up, but at the place where I should have met my pal there was a cop! So I went on, walking up the street to the north. I must have gone about a mile but I didn't see him. I think there were too many people about. I never saw so many guys loafing round at that time of night in my life," added Fatty disgustedly.

"I shook them off at last and came to an empty stretch of road where there wasn't anybody about and no houses only a blank wall, and that's where I stopped. You see, I thought that maybe this friend of mine was shadowing me. I waited about five minutes, keeping my eyes skinned for the police, and suddenly I heard a noise behind the wall, a sort of twanging noise, and then something fell at my feet."

He paused impressively.

"What was it?" asked Peter.

"It was an arrow, a short, stumpy sort of arrow, the kind of thing you see in a Museum. l picked it up, as I say, and then I saw there was a package tied to the end of it. I broke the string and walked to the nearest lamp to see what was in it. Then I saw the money."

"It was all money, then, eh?" said Peter, and the man nodded.

"Of course I thought it was the slush, and that my pal was hiding on the other side of the wall. That was all I cared about. So I walked on and turned the corner, just in time to see two men beating up another."

"This is the interesting part, I think," said Peter slowly. "Somehow I guessed you would see two men beating up another."

"I didn't want to get into any of that kind of trouble, so I crossed the road—"

"Like the Pharisee of old," suggested Peter.

"Don't interrupt, Correlly, please," said the impatient chief. "Go on, Fatty."

"Well, then I heard my name called, and who do you think it was that called?" asked Fatty.

"It was your friend the 'phoney' merchant, of course," said Peter, nodding his head. "He is a man named Cathcart." A look of apprehension came into Fatty's eyes.

"Don't worry. I know it was Cathcart because he was picked up half dead by the police the following morning on the outskirts of Jersey City, and how he got there the gentlemen who had hammered him know best. Well, what did you do?"

"I beat it," said the other laconically. "It wasn't no quarrel of mine, and I didn't want to mix myself up in the affair."

"That disposes of one thing," said Flint. "Now what did you do with the money?"

"I gave it to a boy. I'm telling you the truth. I caught up with him; he'd got a big satchel slung over his shoulder, like a mail bag. I pushed the stuff into the bag and told him to take it to his father. If I die this minute, that's the truth!"

"Would you know the boy again?"

"Sure I'd know the boy again," said the crook contemptuously. "Do you think I go about with my eyes shut?"

Flint looked at his subordinate.

"Well, Correlly, what do you think? Do you accept this man's story?"

Peter nodded.

"I think so," he said slowly. "But I warn you, Fatty, that it may be death to you to go around New York without an escort."

The man looked uncomfortable.

"You're trying to take a rise out of me," he said.

Peter shook his head. He walked to the door and opened it, and called to the officer who had charge of the man. "Take him back to the station," he said. "Let him go just as soon as he wants. Maybe you'd better wait till night. If you take my advice, Fatty, you'll get out of New York just as quickly as you can."

A slow, cunning smile dawned on the face of the man.

"I get you," he said sarcastically; "but I'm just going to hang around New York till I get my hundred dollars back."

"Imprudent man!" was Peter's only comment as he closed the door behind the lanky figure.

"Now," said the chief, "what are you going to do about it, Peter?"

"I'm going to wait for the next act in this surprising drama," said Peter, "and—"

The next act began at that moment. The telephone rang and the chief took off the receiver.

"Who?" he asked, his eyebrows raised. Then, after a pause: "When was this? Where? Didn't the manager know her?" And then: "I'll send a man to fix it right away."

He hung up the receiver and looked at Peter.

"Do you know Miss Jane Bertram?" he asked. "The banker's daughter?" said Peter. "Yes, I know her, so far as the lowly may know any of the Four Hundred. Why do you ask?"

"Because," said the chief deliberately, "she has just been arrested by the detective at Rayburn's Stores."

"Arrested?" said the astonished Peter. "Great heavens! They don't arrest members of the aristocracy. What was the charge?"

"The charge," said Flint, "was attempting to pass a counterfeit note for a hundred dollars."

CHAPTER VI.

THE girl whom Peter Correlly saw when he arrived, in the attempt to straighten out the ghastly error into which the store detective had fallen, made up in vitality and vehemence all that she lacked in inches. Anger, or, indeed, the expression of any strong emotion, has a tendency to make most women ugly; but this girl, white with rage though she was, firm and straight as were the lines of her scarlet lips, out-thrust as was the daintiest, roundest chin, had qualities of beauty which were wholly unfamiliar to the young man who stood before her, hat in hand.

To say that he stood was inadequately to describe his attitude. Rather did he droop in her direction. And she, looking up at his angularities, his tired stoop, had a first impression of a thin, yellow face, two weary eyes and a drawling voice which seemed too tired to continue the conversation which he began.

"The chief is extremely sorry, Miss Bertram, that you have been put to this indignity, and he has sent me down straight away."

She nodded, tight-lipped, strangely and violently hostile to all the forces of law and order, and slowly and deliberately pulled on a glove—which she had a few moments before as slowly and deliberately pulled off.

"It is monstrous that I should be detained here one moment," she said. "It is the sort of disgraceful thing which could only occur in New York. To hold me for a moment on the evidence of that man"—she pointed to a very dejected little man, who cowered under the fire of her scorn—"is laughable."

"My dear lady—" began Peter.

"I'm not your dear lady!" she flamed. "I will not have your insolence and patronage tacked on to the other outrage. My father will be here soon, and we will go right along to the Police Department and lay a complaint."

Peter sighed, and when Peter sighed it was less of an incident than an occurrence. He closed his eyes, and every line of his body testified to his unhappiness. Even the girl, flaming as she was, stared, and would have laughed in spite of her anger.

Peter turned to the officer in charge.

"You can release this lady. She is well known to us."

If she was hesitating between being pacified or still further inflamed, this last speech decided her. For a moment she could find no words; her lips trembled, and then;

"How dare you say I am known to you—to the police!"

"Listen!" Suddenly Peter's languor had gone. "This city contains pretty nearly two million democrats. They may not all vote the democratic ticket, but they are democrats according to the constitution in the sense that they're as good as you. A mistake like this is bound to occur. You go into a store where you are not known, you pass a counterfeit note and you're pinched. And who in the name of Hokey are you that you should not be pinched if you attempt to pass a counterfeit note? Why, I'd pull in the President of the United States if I found him in similar circumstances. But you carry on, Miss Bertram, as though you were something better than the common people and should have treatment which the lower class of human beings who occupy this city should be denied. If you think that's American, why, you're entitled to your opinion. I came here to release you. I treat you courteously, and you hand me the same kind of atmosphere that I'd get if I were raiding a pool-room."

She looked at him, speechless, her mouth and eyes open.

"In Petrograd," continued. Peter, "in the days when the Cars were going some, I guess the Carina would have fussed on something like you if Protopopoff had dropped in on her and said; 'Mrs. Romanoff, you're pinched!' "

Here was a policeman—a common or an uncommon policeman—standing before her, hands on hips, feet apart, glowering down at her and hectoring—yes, bullying—her, the daughter of one of the first business men in the city; if not a millionairess, the daughter of a millionaire; a social leader, and a veritable autocrat in her own three homes. When he stopped she answered—meekly, it sounded to those who had only heard the imperious note.

"I'm not asking for any better treatment than any other woman would receive. It was a stupid mistake for the storekeeper to make, but it is true that I have never been in that store, and I shouldn't have gone in only I wanted to buy something for my maid's birthday and she told me she had set her heart on a dress she had seen there. But I really don't see why you should lecture me," she said, with a return of something of her old tone.

"I am paid to lecture people," said Peter calmly. " 'To protect the children of the poor and punish the wrongdoer.' This—" he indicated the nervous little manager who had been instrumental in arresting the daughter of George Bertram—"is one of the children of the poor."

She looked for a moment at the little man, and then her sense of humour overcame her annoyance and she laughed till the tears stood in her eyes.

"You're quite right," she said. "I have been rather foolish and bad- tempered, and I'm afraid I've given everybody a lot of trouble. Here's my father." She walked quickly across the room to meet him.

George Bertram was a man of fifty-five, trimly bearded, perfectly dressed, a man who gave the impression that he was everlastingly wearing new clothes. From the tips of his polished shoes to the crown of his polished hat he was a model of all that a tailor would like a man to be. His face, despite his fifty-five years, was smooth and unlined. His big, prominent eyes gave the keynote to his character, for they beamed benevolently. A mild, easy man, be was nevertheless a brilliant financier, who, from the moment he passed through the gunmetal grille of the Inter-State Bank to the moment he emerged to his limousine, had no thought in his mind which did not begin and end with the dollar mark.

"My dear, my dear," he said mildly, "this is extremely unfortunate. How did it happen?"

"It was my own fault, father," said the girl. "I just got mad when I ought to have been sane and explained to the storeman who I was."

"But what did you do?" he asked, and when she had explained he looked at her with amazement.

"A forged note?" he said incredulously. "But, my dear, how on earth did you get a forged note?"

She laughed.

"From your bank, father. I called on my way up town." "

"Let me see the note," he said. The sergeant produced the offending instrument, and George Bertram examined it carefully.

"Oh, yes, this is a forgery," he said. "Did you have any other money?"

She opened her bag and took out three or four bills.

"These are all right," said the banker, "but there may be a lot more of this bad money in the bank. I'm surprised that Dutton should not have detected it. My cashier"—he addressed Peter—"is one of the cleverest men in the banking business, and it is simply incredible that he should have passed this bill across the counter without detecting it. You are sure you had no money in your bag when you came out?"

The girl hesitated.

"I think I did, now that you mention it, father." She counted the notes.

"Of course I did—I had one note. Now where did I get that? Somebody changed a bill for me—wasn't it ...?"

Her brows met in thought.

"I don't think it matters very much for the moment where you got it, Miss Bertram," said Peter good-humouredly. "But if you can trace it back, I shall be glad if you can give me some information. I will call on you tomorrow." She laughed. It was a pretty laugh, as Peter admitted.

"Please come," she said. "I would like you to finish your lecture on the rights of democracy."

"The rights... ?" repeated Mr. Bertram, puzzled.

"Oh, a little talk that Mr.— I do not know your name."

"My name is Peter Correlly. You had better have my card," said Peter.

"I'd be glad if you'd return it to me when you've done with it. I've only six and they've got to last me out. You see," he said, as they strolled to the door, "I very seldom need any other introduction than a pretty little badge supplied to me by Police Headquarters."

"You're a very strange man," she said, as she held out her hand at parting.

She was interested in him, and piqued by the knowledge that he was not particularly interested in her. He was a strange man with his queer drawl and his quotation from the Bible about the children of the poor?—and he

had that rare quality of self-command which she, despite her own impetuous nature, admired.

"You won't forget to come and see me?" she said at parting, leaning over the side of the car.

"You can improve my mind and morals."

"It is only your mind that needs improving," was Peter's parting shot, and, looking back as the car sped on its way, she was annoyed to discover that he had not stood and gazed after her, but had turned his back and was slouching back to the store.

"As for you, Mr. Rayburn"—Peter addressed the storekeeper— "you've got out of a mighty bad fix. Anybody but a man suffering from myopia, or altogether batty, could see that that lady was not the kind who would pass phoney notes for the fun of it."

"But, Mr. Correlly," the storekeeper answered, "I'm always getting that sort of trouble, and my losses this year are simply colossal. I never saw Miss Bertram before, but she's a customer of mine."

"You said she's never been to your store," said Peter.

"That's true, but I have a book store down town, in the name of Mendelsheim. I bought it from Mendelsheim's son when the old man died. She's a good customer of mine there—say, I hope you aren't going to tell her I'm the boss, Mr. Correlly?"

Peter shook his head. "She has all the new books sent up to her, and she keeps what she wants. I wouldn't have had this thing happen for a thousand dollars—no, not for ten thousand dollars. I've had enough trouble this year. Why, do you know that that book store of mine was burgled two months ago, and every book in stock was practically destroyed?"

"Breathe your sorrows into the ear of the sergeant," drawled Peter. "Anyway, your story doesn't sound good. None of the burglars I know have literary tastes until they're jugged. Then they start reading books of sermons."

"But it's true, Mr. Correlly," said the man. "I'd have thought you'd heard about it. You never saw such a mess in all your life. The books were thrown everywhere, every shelf was empty—"

"And the safe was open and the accumulated savings of a lifetime were gone?" suggested Peter.

"That's the funny thing—the safe wasn't touched."

Correlly swung round. The bizarre in crime was especially interesting to him.

"Do you mean to tell me that the burglars who broke in to steal remained as rust and moths to destroy?" he demanded.

"I don't know a thing about moths," said the storeman hazily. "All I know is they did more damage than a fire, and I got nothing from the insurance people."

Peter produced his notebook.

"Date?" he said laconically.

The man gave the date without hesitation. He had reason to remember it.

"Good," said Peter, as he covered two pages with his new entry. Then: "Would you let me examine your books for the week before and after the burglary occurred?"

"Surely, Mr. Correlly," said the other. "I'll come along to your store at five o'clock this evening," said Peter.

He went out in a very thoughtful frame of mind. He walked with long strides the mile and a half which separated him from the Northern Hospital. His inquiries brought satisfactory news.

"Yes, Mr. Wilbur Smith has recovered consciousness, and I do not think that the fracture is a very bad one," said the surgeon in charge.

"Do you want to see him? I don't think you'll do him any harm."

Wilbur Smith lay in a private ward, his head swathed in bandages. There was a gleam of satisfaction in his one undamaged eye when he caught sight of the lanky figure in the doorway.

"Hullo!" he growled. "Have you come to take my dying statement?"

"You look pretty wholesome for one who is no longer with us," said Peter, pulling up a chair to the bedside. "Well, they got you."

"Huh!" said Wilbur disgustedly. "I was the easiest thing that ever happened, Peter. They had two taxis planted waiting for me—I took the first."

"It doesn't seem possible that that sort of thing could be done in broad daylight right here in the heart of New York," said Peter.

"That's just where it was done," retorted the other, "and it was dead easy. No taking me by unfrequented paths, no racing me away into the country, nothing to arouse the slightest suspicion, except that we were taking short cuts. Then suddenly the car turns into a garage, the gates of the garage are closed behind us, and I jump out. Before I can pull a gun I'm plugged. That is about all I remember."

"Afterwards they deposit you in a vacant lot, far from the madding crowd," said Peter. "I guess they thought you were dead. Did you see any faces?"

"None," replied Wilbur definitely. "I have no recollection except of being in an empty shed and seeing a man come towards me from the far end with a can of gasoline in his hand. That was probably done," he explained, "to allay my suspicions. While I am making up my mind what to do, and what it is all about—plunk!"

"They took the money, of course?" Peter nodded.

"And you are on the job?"

Peter nodded again.

"I have one or two new ends to the case," he said, "and they're all pretty interesting."

He related what had happened to the Uplifter who had suddenly found herself possessed of a fortune beyond her dreams. Then he told the story of Fatty, and Wilbur Smith pursed his damaged lips.

"It's a weird case," he said, "the weirdest I ever knew. Honestly, what do you make of it?"

Peter walked to the door of the private ward and closed it. "I can't say that it is altogether novel to me," he said. "I'm referring particularly to the picture of Hades that is stamped on the back of the bills. That is sheer Devil Cult."

"Devil Cult?" repeated the other in wonder.

"Sure, Devil Cult," said Peter confidently. "There are dozens of them in the world—genuine devil-worshippers. You think I'm mad, but I can bring chapter and verse to prove that what I say is true. There was a cult in Italy exposed during the Camorra trial. There was a cult in the north of England—a regular religious sect, conducted without any obscenity and in a deep religious spirit. There are half a dozen cults in Russia, particularly in South Russia, each with its priests and ritual."

"But—" began Smith.

"Wait a moment," insisted Peter. "I want to tell you this, that it is an invariable feature of these devil-worshippers that they put into circulation the image of their deity. The North of England crowd always used to send their totem out printed on envelopes, the design being covered by the postage stamp. The Nick-worshippers of South Russia have the design burnt into the soles of their boots, and I think it was in Russia that the practice was instituted of stamping the object of their veneration upon the backs of paper money."

Wilbur Smith was silent.

"You sound as though you were making it up, but I know you wouldn't do that," he said. "Where did you get your information?"

"Well," drawled the other, "one lives and learns. I've been chasing fakers all my life; but even if I hadn't, I could have procured quite a lot of information from any encyclopaedia on the subject of demonology."

"Then you think—"

"I think there's a cult in America, but it is working out quite differently from any other of its kind I have ever read about."

"Any news of Alwin?" asked the man on the bed, incautiously turning his head and wincing with the pain of it.

"No news at all. I've an idea that they have Alwin."

"I think he's dead," said Wilbur quietly. "Peter, I'm going to get out of this bed as soon as these darned ribs of mine will behave, and I'm going after the men who took Frank Alwin, and if it takes me the rest of my life I'm going after the man who plugged him—and believe me, I'll get him!"

"You're a savage, ruthless fellow," said Peter with his characteristic sigh. "If you'd only devote your mind to thoughts of a better and brighter life—"

"Cut it out!" said Wilbur. "But come again. I want some more of that devil dope."

"I'll be able to give you a whole lot," said the other, picking up his hat. "I'm seeing old Professor Cavan this afternoon."

"Cavan? Who the devil is Cavan?"

Peter made a gesture of despair.

"The people you don't know in this world would fill a pretty big directory. Do you mean to tell me you don't know Cavan?"

"I mean to say that I have never heard of the man," said the exasperated Smith.

"When did you hear about him?"

"Yesterday," said Peter shamelessly, and made his exit. He shared the actor's passion for getting off with a good line.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER his captors had gone, Frank Alwin must have slept, and woke without a headache, and feeling ravenously hungry. He was sore from head to foot when he got up, and a little dizzy, but he was feeling infinitely stronger and better than when he had lain down the night before.

Evidently the men had returned while he was asleep, for on the table were a large box of crackers, a slab of cheese, and a bottle of beer. He had seldom enjoyed a meal more.

The boast of the bath was wholly justified. There was a big press full of linen and towels, and a cold bath was just the kind of tonic he wanted. Though he bad been searched his watch had not been taken away; it was going and pointed to twelve o'clock, It might have been midnight, for no ray of daylight entered the subterranean room. The one electric globe which the men had left on still burnt.

He spent the rest of the day exploring his prison and made a few interesting discoveries. A small opening from the bathroom led to a tiny, square apartment, which at first appeared to have no special function, nor to possess any kind of door. This last impression was erroneous. It was indeed furnished with a sliding door which was now run back. The 'room" was four feet square and unlighted. It puzzled him why the door should have been open, until he discovered that what he thought was a storeroom in reality served as a big ventilating shaft. A current of fresh air came from above, and the underground cellar was only habitable so long as the door was open.

He remembered, too, his first impressions on being carried into the cellar, the closeness and stuffiness of the atmosphere, which must have freshened as soon as the obstacle to ventilation was removed.

He felt all round the wall, and presently came in one corner to a steel bar placed diagonally from wall to wall. He felt upwards and found another, and yet another. So, in addition to this being a ventilating chamber, it must also be an avenue of egress. Bracing himself for the effort, he began to climb upwards, counting the rungs as he mounted.

He started his climb in some doubt, because the first rung of the ladder was loose and had given under his feet, but the remainder were firm enough. After the twenty-eighth rung his groping hand felt into space, and, bringing it down gingerly, he located a small stone platform, on to which be climbed. It was triangular in shape and was just large enough to allow him space to

sit. He felt along the angle of the walls and found a wooden door, big enough to crawl through, supposing it were open. In point of fact it was closed. He felt the keyhole. He knew instinctively that this was the only way out, and that any unaided effort of his to escape in this direction must be futile.

After a while he swung his legs over into the darkness and descended again to the basement. He was weak before he reached the cellar, and he lay down for an hour before be made any other attempt. He usually carried a bunch of keys in his pocket, but these had been taken away by the men who had captured him. A careful search of the cellar failed to reveal anything that looked like a key.

Late in the afternoon he made his second investigation, this time carrying with him the lower rung of the ladder which he had wrenched from the wall after an hour's work. With this he attacked the door. It was a long and painful job, but he succeeded. He had light now—a dim, reflected light which came up from the open eaves of the building. He was in the ribs of the building, in the space between the sloping roof and the ceiling, and he could look down under the eaves, and see the green of grass. He stopped suddenly in his survey and listened. There were voices—the voices of the two men who had captured him. Hastily he made his way back down the ladder to the cellar, and was lying on the bed when the door opened and they came in. One carried a pie, the other two bottles of beer, which they placed on the table. The faces of both men were covered, as on the previous night.

"Hullo!" said one, and Frank recognised the man called Tom. "How are you feeling now?"

"I'm all right," said the actor.

"I hope you remain so," replied the other unpleasantly. "Here's some grub for you."

He put the packages on the table, threw a cursory glance round the room, then brought his eyes back to Alwin.

"Found your way to the wash-house, have you?" he said. "Now let me tell you"—his voice took a more serious and more menacing strain— "you're in a jam, and if you get out without an In Memoriam notice you'll sure be lucky. If every man had his due you'd be dead. And if Rosie—if a friend of mine hadn't had a fool idea—"

"I won't bother to tell you that kidnapping is a very serious crime,'" interrupted Frank.

"Don't," said the other briefly. "It's not necessary. What ought to get you thinking is the chance of a more serious crime being committed. See here, Mr. Alwin," said the man, speaking earnestly. "You have a pull with Smith: why don't you persuade him to let up on the Golden Hades business? He's still alive—"

"What do you mean?" asked Frank. "You haven't dared—"

"Huh! Dared!" said the man in contempt. "Listen! We're nearly through, and if Ro—if one of the gang hadn't blundered, nobody would have been hurt. Smith knows a lot, and he's going to make bad trouble for us if he starts poking his nose into the Treasury Department. Suppose you write to him and tell him you'll explain everything when you see him, say you're well and happy, and ask him to let up on us until you see him? It isn't the bills we want, believe me—he hasn't those any more! We just won't have him digging any deeper. Now, Mr. Alwin, you're a sensible man—will you write to him?"

Frank shook his head.

"I will not," he said decidedly. "Wilbur Smith can look after himself, and he can look after you too. If you went after him and left him alive, you'll be sorry!"

The cold eyes above the handkerchief mask surveyed Frank in a long, dispassionate scrutiny.

"All right," said the man. "I never killed anybody in cold blood before, perhaps you'll be the first."

Without another word he turned away and walked over to the box which his companion was examining. They exchanged a few words, dropping their voices, and Frank only heard 'nine o'clock, after the séance."

He ate the meal, for he was hungry. Waiting till quietness reigned, he again mounted the ladder and continued his search. If there was any way out he could not find it. He tried the roof, using his bar, but the cross pieces which supported it were of iron and set too closely together to allow him to squeeze through, and though he did succeed in knocking off a shingle, he saw the futility of continuing.

There was another way of escape—the merest possibility, but one which he was determined to try. He worked that afternoon as he had never worked before in his life. His head was throbbing and every bone was aching when he dropped on the bed at seven o'clock in sheer exhaustion.

His chief difficulty was to prevent himself from falling asleep, and he was dozing when he heard a tapping above his head, and became at once wide awake. There was no sound at the door when he listened, no suggestion of footsteps on the stairs. He hesitated a moment, then, taking off his shoes, he made the ascent to the roof, crept through the broken door and lay with his ear pressed against the rough plaster-work of the ceiling of the room below. Hitherto he had hesitated to disturb this, knowing that detection was inevitable if any portion of the ceiling fell and if the room below was occupied, but now his curiosity overcame him. With a pencil which he found in his pocket he drilled through the soft fibre, pulling out little knobs of plaster until the hole was big enough to see through. He glued his eye to the aperture and saw nothing but a section of black and white tessellated pavement. He enlarged the hole, being careful that not a single crumb of plaster fell on the floor below. Now and again he stopped to listen, but there was no sound. He had made a gap in the ceiling as large as the palm of his hand when the sound of feet on the pavement below caused him to pause.

Now he had an excellent view. He saw a plain interior, along which Corinthian pillars, which he judged to be made of plaster, ran in two lines, from one end of the building, which was hidden from view by a long velvet curtain, to the other where, on a pedestal of marble, stood something hidden under a white cloth.

As he looked, the blue curtain parted and two men came in. They were clothed from head to foot in long brown robes, their faces and heads hidden under monks' cowls. Frank Alwin looked at them in amazement. Their attitude was that of sublime reverence. Their hands were clasped, their heads sunk forward. Slowly they moved along and came to within a few feet of the pedestal. The first man—by far the taller of the two—sank upon his knees as the second man passed to the pedestal and, with an obeisance, lifted the cloth.

Frank started. As the cloth lifted, a blaze of light leapt from the altar, flooding the figure which was revealed. There was no mistaking that golden form sitting erect, a trident in its hand. It was the Golden Hades!

CHAPTER VIII.

SPELLBOUND, Frank watched the two men standing in rapt attitude before the idol, and strained his ears to follow the weird ritual. He did not recognise the voice of the speaker. It was certainly neither of the two men who had been with him in the cellar. The voice was rich, tremulous with emotion, almost ecstatic.

"Hades, great God of the Underworld! Spouse of Proserpine! Giver of Wealth! Behold thy servants! Oh, mighty Pluto, by whose benefaction this man, who abases himself before you, hath grown to splendour of great possessions, hear him! And be favourable to him since he desires to share his wealth with the poor, that thy name shall be again established. Oh, Pluto, dread lord of Hell, give thy servant the word of thy approval!"

The taller man lifted his head and looked at the idol. Frank could only see the back of him; even had he been better placed, it was doubtful whether the face would have been visible, for the only light in this strange temple came from two electric candles which burnt on either side of the altar and reflected the glare from the hidden lights concealed in the altar itself.

For a few moments no sound was heard, and then there came a voice. It was a far-away voice, hollow and unnatural, and it seemed to come from the figure.

"Thy gifts are favourable in my sight, oh faithful servant! Thou shalt give to my chosen that which thou loveth best, and it shall be well with thee, and thy name shall be written in the Book of Hades in golden letters and thou shalt sit with me as a god in the days to come."

The tall figure prostrated himself and remained prone for five minutes, then he rose, and together the men walked slowly down the aisle between the pillars and passed through the curtain out of sight. Frank found himself breathing quickly, the perspiration streaming down his unshaven face as he slipped noiselessly through the door, down the iron ladder into the cellar again. He had plenty of time, and had recovered his breath and was apparently asleep when the door opened and he heard a familiar voice.

These were not the men who had taken part in that strange ceremony— that he would swear. He lay perfectly still under a blanket. One of them tiptoed toward him. He needed all his self-possession to remain quiet, for he had no doubt at all that if it suited the purpose of these criminals, they would make short work of him. He gripped the iron bar which he had brought into bed

with him, determined to make a fight if need be, but they seemed satisfied with their scrutiny.

"You were a long time coming, Tom," said one voice, and the other answered under his breath. Frank thought he said something about a tube. Presently he heard a creak and a grunt, and gathered that they were carrying out the first of the two boxes. The door closed behind them and the key turned, for they were taking no chances. They brought the box through a second door into the open and deposited it in the portico of a tiny Greek temple of beautiful design, which stood in the midst of thickly wooded grounds. There was no sign of house or of any other human habitation. The men deposited the box, and one of them, taking off his handkerchief, wiped his perspiring face.

"Now, what about that guy down there?" He jerked his thumb to the side door leading from the portico to the crypt.

"He's no use to us. Even Rosie agrees, and he's pretty dangerous."

They looked at one another in silence.

"I couldn't kill a man in cold blood," said the first speaker after a while, "but maybe if I gave him a punch or two he'd show fight—then it would be easy." The other nodded.

"Come on," said the first man, making for the door. "Let's get the other box up, and then we'll go down and settle with him after."

With some labour the second box was carried to the portico and placed by the side of the first. They sat for fully ten minutes recovering their breath. The night was still and the sky was full of stars. The dim shadow of two trees, the ghostly shadows of the temple, added perhaps an unusual terror to the sombre task they had set themselves. They seemed reluctant to move.

"Rosie fixed the next batch for Philadelphia depot," said one, as if to make conversation, and the other grunted. Presently the man called Tom rose and took something from his pocket—something which glistened dully in the starlight.

"Come on," he said suddenly.

They made their way downstairs, unlocked the door of the crypt and entered together. Tom walked straight over to the bed, and laid his hand upon the blanket.

"Now then," he said, "Get out of this, you—"

With a jerk he pulled back the blanket and disclosed nothing more human than a long, irregular ridge of papers and books. The man called Sam uttered an oath.

"He's gone," he said, and raced upstairs. The box under the portico was empty.

CHAPTER IX.

IT was a busy day for Peter Correlly—much busier, as it proved, than he had expected. When he suggested that he had not heard of Professor Cavan until the previous day he was; of course, exaggerating. What he meant was that Professor Cavan had interested him yesterday for the first time. Everybody knew the little man with the straggling, cobweb beard, the bald pate, the lank, grey hair, the big, steel-rimmed spectacles, and, greatest eccentricity of all in one who had turned professor, the comfortable bank balance.

The door had scarcely closed upon his visitor when Wilbur Smith, despite his abstraction, identified Professor Cavan. Yet his forgetfulness was excusable, since his mind was running on crime and criminals, and it was very difficult to associate this brilliant little scholar with the mundane affairs of crime detection.

"Cavan? Cavan?" thought Wilbur Smith, his eyes cast up to the ceiling. "Why, of course, he's the classical man. Peter is going to discover all about Hades," and he chuckled. If there was any man in the world who might know who Hades was, might help to elucidate the mystery which was puzzling the two cleverest men in the police force, it was John Octavius Cavan.

Both society and the learned professions had taken the little man to their bosom when he had arrived from the old world three years before this story opens. His erudition, his eloquence, plus his comfortable fortune, had been his credentials. He had been offered a chair in three universities and had declined—politely, eloquently, but positively.

He lived in an expensive apartment on Riverside Drive, with a butler, a footman, and a couple of maids and his prosperity gave the lie to the suggestion that the scholastic profession was without profit. Even Peter, who was not impressed by most things, was taken aback when, in answer to his knock, the door of the apartment was opened by an impressive butler—a typical English servant of stout build and polite manner.

He found the little professor sitting behind a big oak table, which was littered with papers, books open and books closed. When Peter was ushered into the room by the butler, the old man was writing, his head bent low over the table. He looked up, straightened himself, picking up Peter's card and reading it again in a near-sighted way, then he pushed up his spectacles to his forehead and leaned forward with a smile. "Sit down, sit down, Mr. Correlly," he said.

"James, put a chair for this gentleman. Would you like a cup of tea?"

"Thanks, no," said Peter. "That is a dissipation which I haven't acquired." "

"What a pity!" said the professor, shaking his head. "What a great, great pity! It is the most wonderful stimulant in the world. That will do, James, you can go."

When the door was closed he looked at the card again.

"Now, Mr. Correlly," he said, "I understand that you have come to consult me on a matter of Greek mythology. In fact"—he looked up with a quizzical smile—"you want to consult me about the Golden Hades."

Peter, excellent actor as he was, was taken aback. Nobody outside the office had mentioned the Golden Hades, which was, as he thought, a secret shared only by the heads of the police. The professor enjoyed the effect of his words.

"Come, come, Mr. Correlly," he said. "I am not clairvoyant. I only read the newspapers very diligently. There was some reference to the matter in yesterday's Evening Herald," said the professor. "Apparently a letter was received by the editor of the newspaper—"

"I remember," said Peter. "Of course, Mr. Smith had it."

"That's right," said the professor, "according to the newspapers. Now, Mr. Correlly, what can I do for you?"

"I won't ask you, professor, to tell me who Hades or Pluto was, because I've enjoyed the dubious advantage of a college education, and amongst the fragments of knowledge which I have carried away from that institution is a bowing acquaintance with classical history."

The old man inclined his head.

"So I gather," he said. Peter did not ask him how he had gathered the fact, but went on.

"I understand, professor, that you are acquainted with such of the ancient cults as have survived to, or been revived in, this present century."

The professor nodded.

"I certainly have an extensive acquaintance with survivals," he said, "and it is most extraordinary how many have come down, with their devotees, their priests and their rituals, even to the present day. For example," he said, "in Norway there are still Troll-worshippers—the Troll being a sort of devil who has passed into the legendary of Scandinavia. In Russia we have quite a large number who practise secret rites to Baba Yaga—another mythological creature who, I think, is to be identified with the Creek deity Cronus. In England and America there are a number of disagreeable people, of unpleasant antecedents, who worship one of the other members of the Greek mythology."

"When you say 'worship', what exactly do you mean?" asked Peter.

"I mean they worship these beings as reverently as the Parsee worships the sun."

"And they endow them with supernatural qualities?" asked the incredulous Peter.

"Certainly," replied the professor. "Now, take the case of your Hades. There are two or three groups of Hades worshippers. For some reason or other, Pluto, which is his other name, has a fascination beyond all the other gods."

"And are there such people here in America, in the state of New York?"

"Absolutely," said the professor, with a twinkle in his eye. "Some conscious and some unconscious. Do not forget that Pluto is the god of wealth."

He chuckled.

"Let me ask you a plain, blunt question, professor,'" said Peter. "You're well acquainted with the best people in New York: do you know any of them who are worshippers of Hades? Before you reply," Peter hastily added, "let me tell you that for the moment I do not ask for their names."

"I would gladly give you them if I knew them," said the professor, "but happily, my activities do not lie in the direction of the study of eccentric cults. I merely know they exist because I have heard of them in a roundabout way; but where the congregation of the faithful is to be found—why, Heaven only knows!"

He rose abruptly and offered his hand.

"Good-bye, Mr. Correlly!" he said, and Peter, who had had no intention of going, found himself being ushered from the flat.

HE DINED with Flint that night in the chief's favourite restaurant.

"I was hoping that you'd get Cavan to help you," said the chief. "I've been talking with the District Attorney all afternoon—he came down to ask about the Golden Hades, and he's a pretty worried man. Cavan would have been the greatest help because, as the District Attorney tells me, he is one of the shrewdest, cleverest all-round men he has ever met."

"There was no chance to make any proposition," said Peter. "I hardly got beyond the pleasant introduction before he hustled me out."

"It's a pity," said the chief.

"Anyway," Peter went on, "I don't know what we could have put up to him that would induce him to help. He has plenty of money, and as likely as not he's told us all he knows."

"Have you found out who gave the money to the property man at the theatre?"

"I've cleared up two things that were rather worrying me," said Peter. "Both the property man's story and Fatty's story are true. The bill-man was billing posters of a new film. It was about money, and the advertisers had arranged that round the central picture should run a border made up of treasury bills. That is to say, pictures of bills that looked in the distance like money. The bill-man went out from his office without taking the border. He had arranged for his son to meet him at a station where the poster was to be exhibited and to bring along his lunch. The boy came by appointment, and told his father that on the way he had met a man who had thrust something into the bag he was carrying. On examining this they found that the 'something' was a big bunch of money. The bill-man thought they were for the border. He did paste one line of thousand-dollar bills, which we are now soaking off. He took the rest of them home, thinking that they were such good imitations that they would suit Alwin's property man, who had been asking for stage money."

"Then Fatty's story was true?"

"Perfectly true," said the other. "Evidently the bill-man's son was the kid that Fatty met when I was chasing him. And this I will say—" he went on, but stopped, his eyes fixed on the door. A girl was strolling leisurely to her table through the crowded restaurant, and in her wake came the preoccupied Mr. Bertram. But it was only for the girl that Peter had eyes. In evening dress her serene beauty was dazzling. Then she turned her head and saw him. She bowed, and Peter was on his feet instantly.

He saw her speak to her father, and George Bertram turned and bowed vaguely in their direction. Then she passed to the inner restaurant.

"Sit down, Peter, you're attracting attention."

It was only then Peter realised that he was still standing.

"That's Bertram and his daughter, isn't it? I gather that you fixed things this morning to their satisfaction."

But Peter was watching the door. He was curious to know, for no particular reason that he could analyse, who were to be the other guests at the dinner party. He saw Willie Boys, very red of face and in a mighty hurry—Willie had never kept time in his life—he saw a woman he did not know but whom the Chief recognised as a society leader; and then:

"Why, look who's here!" said Peter in admiration. The last of the party to enter was Professor Cavan—a little figure in evening dress, his coat thrown over his arm and a tall hat in his hand, he strutted through the restaurant, conscious that all eyes were on him and patently proud of the fact.

"I wonder if he would help if he knew," said Peter half to himself, but speaking aloud. "Why don't you ask him?" said Flint.

"I will one of these days," replied Peter.

It was Flint's practice to sit long over his meal; but it was Peter's habit to miss the dessert because dinner was invariably too long. He made his excuses to his chief, took his hat from the cloak-room and went out into the street.

It occurred to him then that this was the restaurant from which Frank Alwin had disappeared. Such a kidnapping would have been impossible at this early hour. The sidewalks were filled with people, and a policeman stood a few yards away, his hands behind him, watching the traffic with a

proprietorial air. A few yards from the entrance to the restaurant a Rolls was drawn up, and standing near the bonnet, talking over his shoulder with the chauffeur, Peter recognised the professor's butler. He asked a question of the doorman and was told that the car was Professor Cavan's. His curiosity impelled him to a closer inspection. The servant recognised him and touched his hat.

"Good evening, sir," he said. "You're the gentleman who called at the house? The professor is dining."

"I know," replied Peter. "This is a beautiful car."

"Yes," said the man, "it's a Rolls, the best imported car in New York. You should get the professor to let you take a trip in her. She's a very smooth running machine."

Peter laughed.

"Why, I don't know the professor well enough to beg a joy ride from him," he said, "but it certainly is a handsome car."

"The interior cost a small fortune to fit up," said the man proudly. He opened the door of the limousine and stepped in.

"The light isn't working. The professor snapped a wire with his umbrella, and we didn't notice it until we came out tonight. But feel these down cushions—"

Peter, with one foot on the step, turned. A man came out of the shadow with unsteady steps.

"Hullo, Correlly," he said boisterously. "Dear old boy, how are you?"

Peter turned. The man was obviously drunk. It was so unusual to be called by his surname—only Flint ever used it—that he was curious to know the man who was taking such a liberty.

"How's dear old Smith?" said the man thickly, and slipped and would have fallen, but Peter caught him and held him in his arms, his drooping head upon the detective's shoulder.

"Hold up, inebriate!" said Peter sternly. "You're not allowed to sleep on the police."

"How's old Smith?" said the languid man, and his voice died down to a sleepy mumble, but Peter heard all that the man said. Thus they stood for a few seconds, the servant watching the scene with a certain amount of amusement.

By this time the attention of the policeman had been called to the encounter, and he strolled across.

"Take this man," said Peter authoritatively. "I'll give you a hand with him as far as the next block."

"A lot of fuss over a drunk," said the professor's butler. He was a disappointed man. He had expected a much more exciting end to the adventure.

So had the drunk.

"Peter," he was saying in the other's ear. "if you had gone into the car you would have had a headache—I'm Alwin."

CHAPTER X.

PETER took his prisoner to the end of the block, and, dismissing the policeman, called a cab. He pushed the other inside and followed him, and, when the cab was moving:

"Now, Mr. Alwin," he said, "perhaps you'll tell me what this is all about?"

Frank Alwin sat back in the cab and laughed almost hysterically.

"I'm sorry to weep on your shoulder," he said, "but the fact is, I've been chased for the greater part of twenty-four hours and if I'm not drunk I am at least starving."

Peter realised that this was not the moment for publicity, and he drove his charge to his own apartment and produced from a near-by restaurant sufficient food to satisfy the hungry man. Frank, lying on Peter Correlly's bed, handed back the last tray with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Now I'll tell you the story," he said. For half an hour Peter listened, never interrupting, to the amazing narrative.

"It sounds like a lie," he said, "and if anybody else told me I shouldn't have believed it. Did you see the men's faces?"

Frank shook his head.

"And you have no clue by which you could identify them?" "

"None, except that just as I was getting over the wall, one of the men made a grab at me and I hit at him with my bar. It just missed his head and caught his hand. I fancy it smashed his thumb by something I heard him say."

He looked at Peter oddly.

"Out with it," said Peter. "You've something on your mind—something you haven't told me. What did you mean when you told me I should get a headache if I went into Cavan's car?"

The unshaven man on the bed shut his eyes.

"Good night," he said, and was almost instantly asleep.

CHIEF Flint had finished his dinner and had already called for his bill when Peter reappeared, laden with news.

"Nothing short of an electric battery would have kept that fellow awake," said the disgusted detective. "Now just listen, chief, and I'll tell you the only fairy story that I've ever believed in."

He narrated, with his own irrepressible commentaries, the story as he had heard it. Flint was nonplussed.

"It is certainly like something out of a play. You don't think he dreamt it?"

Peter shook his head.

"He's not that kind of fellow. Alwin is different from other actors—he's human. Besides, he spent two or three years in the Department of Justice during the war."

"I'd forgotten that," said Flint. "Now I remember they spoke very highly of him. Well, the Golden Hades should be tracked down, with three men like you and Alwin and Wilbur Smith on the trail. Here comes your dinner party."

"Not mine," said Peter, interested nevertheless, as Professor Cavan and Bertram, the banker, came from the inner room.

The professor was in excellent spirits, and if George Bertram was gloomy it was a gloom consistent with his general attitude towards life.

"Where's the girl?" asked Flint. Peter was asking the same question himself, and the party waited at the main door of the restaurant some three minutes before she appeared. Peter made a little noise in his throat.

"Hullo!" he said, half to himself. If Jane Bertram had not been crying, then he had no knowledge of women. Her eyes were red, there was dejection in her gait, a certain listlessness, which told of her distress.

The party passed out together, and. Peter, leaving his chief without an apology, walked into the inner room and interviewed the head waiter.

"What's the trouble, Luigi?" he asked.

"With the young lady?"

The little Italian smiled.

"Some love affair. It was with her father she quarrelled—only slightly, and then she left the table and did not come back. It did not matter much," said Luigi philosophically; "the dessert was not the happiest effort of my chef."

This was all the information Peter could get, and by the time he returned Flint had disappeared. He remembered his engagement with the girl and determined to keep it the next morning. That a girl should weep at dinner, especially an emotional girl and one who had already demonstrated her electric temperament, was not amazing, or even a matter for regret, unless she happened to be to you a shade different from all other girls.

It was just that with Peter, who, being neither impressionable nor ardent, could not be affected as other men were affected. To say that Peter had fallen in love with Jane Bertram at first sight is hardly to state the fact. It is true that the sight of the girl, whom he had only seen once before, and then in circumstances which did not arouse his passionate admiration, was sufficient to bring him to his feet, and that all the time he was speaking to Flint one half of his mind was running after her. But that was not love, that was just extraordinary interest.

Nor did Peter groan within himself because she was above his station or because her father was very wealthy, and therefore she was inaccessible. In fact, he did not regard her as being above his station; and he did not look upon her father's wealth as anything more remarkable than if he were possessed of any other eccentricity, such as a weakness for yellow waistcoats or a fondness for caviar.

The Bertrams had three houses: one in New York City, which was seldom used, one on Long Island and an estate in New Jersey. It was to the latter house that Peter made his way on the following morning, having discovered that the family was in residence there.

George Bertram's family consisted of himself and his daughter, and it is true to say that the household was in reality two households, since the girl, though on excellent and affectionate terms with her father, had a suite which occupied one wing of the building, whilst her father lived practically alone in the other.

As his car hummed up the long, tree-shaded drive, Peter found himself wondering how far he could revive the unpleasant memories of her arrest.

He was anxious to know the cause of her weeping, but doubted his ability to bring the conversation to that incident.

A liveried servant took his card. "Miss Bertram is expecting you, I think, sir," said the man, "and told me to show you into the drawing-room. Will you come this way?"

Peter was not a little astonished, but followed in the man's wake.

"A gentleman to see you, miss," announced the servant, and the girl came forward and suddenly stopped at the sight of Peter. On her face was such a mixture of consternation and surprise—yes, and even fear—that Peter permitted himself to smile.

"You weren't expecting me, I think?" he said.

"I—I—" began the girl, in confusion. "No, I was expecting —Do you want anything particular?" she asked suddenly.

Peter saw it was his turn to be concerned. In the brief time the introduction had taken place the girl had gone deathly white. She sat down, too, in the nearest chair so suddenly that Correlly was filled with a sense of dismay.

She recovered herself instantly and rose with a little smile.

"I asked you to come, didn't I?" she said. "I'm sorry I'm such a fool, but I've had a bad headache all morning. Won't you sit down?"

Peter found a chair and seated himself, feeling very uncomfortable. There was an unexpected hostility in her tone, and her face had suddenly become a mask from whence all expression had vanished. She was holding herself in consciously and for a purpose. What that purpose was the detective could not even guess. He decided to make the interview as short as possible; he would not have been Peter Correlly if he had not proceeded in his characteristically direct way.

"You're mighty scared about something, Miss Bertram," he began.

"Indeed, I'm not," she said rather stiffly, sitting a little more erect. "What should I be scared about? Do you imagine that I'm afraid of your arresting me?"

"You're scared about something," said Peter again, and he spoke slowly; "and it's a pretty big something, too."

He pursed his lips and looked at her with solemn eyes. She met the glance bravely for a moment, then her eyes fell.

"Really, Mr. Correlly—that is your name, isn't it?— I do not see why you should worry your head about matters which do not concern you in the slightest. I am very glad you called, of course, because I invited you, but it is rather embarrassing to me that you should be so—so—" she hesitated for a word, then added—"intimate".

"You're scared worse than anybody I ever knew," said Peter, "and I'd just give my right hand if I could help you get rid of that feeling, that panicky fear which, I know, is sitting on you at this very moment."

She looked up sharply, alarm in her eyes. A little frown gathered on her forehead, and for the first time a touch of colour tinged her cheeks.

"You'd give your right hand to help me?" she stammered. "How absurd!"

But her "how absurd!" was half-hearted. He thought he detected a plea in her voice.

"Of course I am not in trouble. How could you help me?" She looked through the window.

"I am expecting somebody very soon," she said. "I hope you will not think I am inhospitable if I cut this interview short."

He rose and crossed to her.

"Miss Bertram," he said quietly, "I came up here today with no other idea than just to renew your acquaintance under more pleasant circumstances, and maybe to ask you a few questions. I don't know you; I have only seen you for five minutes in my life, and I have no right at all, not even the right of a friend, to interfere in your private affairs. I have no authority to question you or to urge my confidence upon you, but I want to say just this: that there isn't any kind of difficulty you may be in that I wouldn't and couldn't help you with."

She rose quickly and walked past him to the window, turning her back to him.

"Go away now, please," she said in a low voice, which shook a little. "I —I think you are kind, but, unfortunately, you cannot help me. Good- bye!"

Peter hesitated. a moment, then picked up his hat and walked to the door. His hand was on the handle when she called him. She was holding out her hand and he hastened to take it.

"Good-bye!" she said. "Perhaps when I am in really serious trouble I will ask you to—" She stopped and shrugged her shoulders. "What is the use?" she cried passionately. "My trouble is nothing—nothing! Besides, what does it matter, Mr. Correlly?" she went on.

He felt something of the tension under which she was speaking. "What does it matter? I suppose I shall have to marry sooner or later, and one man is as good or as bad as another—you know enough of men, Mr. Correlly, to know that."

Peter nodded.

"So you're going to be married? That explains it. Would it be an impertinence on my part if I asked who is the fortunate man?"

She looked at him and her lips curled.

"The chosen of the gods," she said bitterly.

Peter drew a long breath.

"The Golden Hades?" he suggested, and she started back as if he had struck her, and again the pallor left her face.

"My God!" she whispered. "You know that?"

Without another word she brushed past him out of the room, and he waited until he heard the thud of a closing door, then he too went out. The car swept down the drive and passed a man who was walking up. It was Professor Cavan's butler.

"Good Lord!" thought Peter, with a sudden spasm of dismay. "She's never going to marry that old runt!"

"I hit his thumb," said a cell in his brain, and Peter half rose to check the driver, but sat back again.

For, quickly as he had passed the professor's butler, he had observed the bandaged hand.

CHAPTER XI.

THREE men sat in a private ward of the Northern Hospital and compared notes.

"Look here," said Wilbur Smith, shaking his bandaged head, "we've got to keep you out of sight, Frank."

Frank Alwin laughed.

"Don't laugh," said Wilbur Smith seriously. "The gang isn't on to you, or you wouldn't be walking around a live man. You know too much. It's probable they imagine you know more than you do." He turned to the other.

"Well, Peter, did you see Mendelsheim's books?"

Peter nodded.

"The story's clearing up," he said, "but the devil of it is that, the more I go into the matter, the more Miss Bertram is implicated. You remember the Higgins Tenement Murder, when the wife of Laste the gambler was shot?"

They nodded.

"You remember that Laste said his wife had found these dollar notes in a book which was bought by her at Mendelsheim's stores one afternoon, the store being burgled the same night? She was a great book reader, was Mrs. Laste, and she got this particular issue at bargain rates because it had had ink spilt on the cover. That is why the manager of Mendelsheim's remembers the sale so well. It also helped me to trace the book back to where the ink was spilt, You remember I told you that that storekeeper, Rayburn, sent up all the latest novels to Miss Bertram, who chose what she wanted and sent the rest back? Well, the book which Mrs. Laste had was one of these. I have no doubt in my mind that it was in the cover of this book that the thousand-dollar notes were hidden. It is likely that she found a much larger sum than she told her husband, knowing that he would gamble away every cent."

"What do you suggest?" asked Wilbur Smith bluntly. "That Miss Bertram put the money between the leaves of this book and sent it back to the store?"

"I have no theory," said Peter. "I'm telling you the facts."

He was a little irritable, which was unusual in him and was duly noted by the observant Wilbur.

"All I know is that these two events occurred within twenty-four hours—the return of the book purchased by Mrs. Laste, the burglary at the book store, and, less than twelve hours afterwards, the shooting of Mrs. Laste."

"Two things we have to find," said Wilbur Smith after consideration. "The first is the Temple in the garden, and the second is the mysterious individual who is called Rosie."

"Rosie I'm trying to locate," said Alwin. "When I was in Washington during the war I was brought into touch with Lazarus Manton; in spite of his name, he is a police captain or superintendent—I don't know what they call them—at Scotland Yard. I've cabled him, because I have an idea that Rosie is English."

"The obvious thing to do," said Wilbur Smith, "is to watch the Philadelphia station. The words which Alwin heard when he was sitting tight in the box must have a special significance. You're doing this, of course, Peter?"

Peter nodded.

"Watching Philadelphia is a mighty big proposition," he said, "and although I've two men on the job I shouldn't feel very confident if I had a squad."

"Where have you posted them?" asked Smith.

"In the waiting-rooms," replied Peter. "Locating the next demonstration of the Golden Hades at Philadelphia station is about as explicit and as useful as locating it in Greater New York. I'd give a couple of hours to the work in the busy time of the afternoon, but what are we looking for? Alwin can't help us to recognize the men, and as we don't know exactly what they're going to do or what particular act we've to frustrate the task is hopeless."

Nevertheless, it was the Philadelphia depot which produced the most important clue in this intricate and difficult case. Peter himself was on watch the following afternoon, sitting hunched up on a bench in such a position that he could look over and see the people who came in a never-ending stream from the arcade.

It was such a stream of humanity as ordinarily interested him more than anything else. He checked them in—the alert men, the tired men, the old

men, the women and children. Some came at their leisure, others in frantic haste. There were women with parcels and women without parcels.

At such an hour the hall of the Philadelphia station was a microcosm of the great city. It was his sixth sense which directed his attention to a middle-aged man carrying a collection of parcels under his arm. The man came wearily to a vacant seat and flopped down, placing his packages by his side. Peter marked him for no especial reason, then turned his eyes again to the stairs. When he looked at the man again he saw that another man was sitting by his side. He only sat for a minute, then rose and strolled away. It was only a back view, but it was a back which was familiar to Peter, though for the moment he could not identify it. The man with the parcels looked at his watch, then threw a helpless glance around, and rose undecidedly.

Peter watched him as he moved towards one of the many exits, which would take him eventually to his platform. He watched him idly, having no particular interest that he could understand or analyse, and was not even stirred from his apathy when the man was intercepted near the exit by a girl. They spoke together fox a little while, and it appeared from the man's attitude that the girl was a stranger.

Presently the man carried his parcels to a vacant seat, and, laying them down, proceeded to count them, the girl watching the process. Then he detached one, and with a smile handed it to her—and Peter still saw nothing extraordinary in the circumstance.

"He has been shopping and taken the wrong parcel from the store," he thought. "Lucky girl to recover your property before it was too late!"

They parted, the man lifting his hat and passing through the exit, the girl turning and walking with quick steps up the stairway. She was half-way up before Peter decided to follow her. He did not know why he came to such a decision—probably the sixth sense again. He lost sight of her, and was on Seventh Avenue before he picked her up, walking rapidly away from the depot, looking neither to the left nor to the right. He was hesitating whether to follow her further, when a ear swung out of the centre of the road and drew up just in front of her. She opened the door and stepped in, and the machine sped on.

It was at that moment that Peter had an inspiration. His qualities as a sprinter were proverbial, and he had leaped on to the footboard of the car before it had gone half a dozen yards. "Sorry to trouble you," he said coolly, "but I—"

He stopped dead. The girl was Jane Bertram.

She held a little parcel on her lap, a parcel from which she had ripped the cover as she entered the car, and under her hands was a great package of bills. Without another word Peter opened the door of the limousine and stepped in. He took the bills from her unresisting hands and turned the top one over. It bore the glittering stamp of the Golden Hades.

No word was spoken for the rest of the journey. Peter seemed deprived of speech. The girl sat, her hands clasped before her, staring steadily at the back of the chauffeur's head. Only when the car was pulled up by a traffic officer at a busy street centre did she make a move, giving some instructions to the chauffeur through the speaking tube. The car changed its direction, running up Fifth Avenue, till she tapped at the window. She had thrust the money into one of the deep pockets in the side of the car, and apparently she was no longer interested in its fate.

"Let us walk in the park," she said, and they paced along, still in silence. Peter hardly knew where to begin; the girl was evidently in as great a dilemma.

"Mr. Correlly," she said at last, "how much do you know?"

"About the Golden Hades?" he answered. "I know quite a lot, Miss Bertram, but I am hoping that you will tell me more."

She shut her lips tightly, as though she were afraid that she might involuntarily disclose the heart-aching secret which was hers.

"I can tell you nothing," she said. "What is there to be told? This money is mine—it is not an offence to carry money, even in New York."

"It is an offence to carry money which bears that stamp," said Peter sternly. "It is an offence to be associated with a sign whieh itself is assoeiated with a ruthless murder."

She looked at him in horror.

"Murder!" she faltered.

"Murder? Oh, not murder!"

"Murder, and worse," he said. "It was at the back of the Higgins murder, it was behind the kidnapping of Mr. Alwin—"

"But I don't understand," she said, bewildered. "I knew it was a folly. I know that the thing is wrong—all wrong—but not murder?"

Her agitation was painful to watch. She stood there, a pathetic little figure, a look of unutterable sorrow in her eyes, wringing her hands in an agony of despair. He laid his hand upon her arm, and at his touch she shrank back.

"Miss Bertram," he said, "why don't you let me help you? I want to help you more than I ever wanted to help any human being in this world. I am speaking to you as your own brother might speak to you—won't you trust me?"

She shook her head.

"You can't—you can't!" she almost wailed. "It isn't me, it isn't me that needs help."

"Who is it?" he asked. "I can't tell you," she said. "I wish I could, but I can't tell you. It is horrible, horrible!"

He took her unresisting arm in his, and drew her by unfrequented roads from the curious eyes which were observing her.

"Tell me this," he said at last, "how long have you known about the Golden Hades?"

"Two days."

The detective nodded.

"It was at your little dinner party?" She looked at him quickly.

"Answer me, please. Was it at the dinner party?"

"I didn't know, but I had an idea, and that night I found out for certain."

"Was that when you discovered that you were—going to be married?" He hesitated before he asked the question.

She nodded, and it seemed as though the question of her marriage had faded into insignificance beside some graver issue.

"I am going back now," she said suddenly. "Please don't come with me. I think we are being watched."

She shook hands with him and was turning to go, when she said:

"If I want you, Mr. Correlly, I will telephone. I have your number— it is on the card," she smiled. "You remember the card you asked me to return?"

Without another word she went, and Peter followed her at a leisurely pace. He came out on to Fifth Avenue in time to see the back of the car disappearing, and made his way back to his office.

There was a letter on his table waiting for him, but he did not trouble to open it. He leaned back in his chair, elevating his feet to the desk, and thought and thought, and the more he thought the more puzzled he became, till at last he realised that he was departing from his practice and was building a theory, and he hated theories.

He stretched out his hand, and, taking up the letter, opened it. It was a brief note from Alwin. He had never seen Alwin's writing before, or he would have opened it sooner. It ran:—

Dear Correlly—Just received this cablegram in reply to mine. What do you think of it?

Sincerely,

Frank Alwin.

He unfolded the cable form and read:—

THE ONLY ROSIE WE KNOW IS JOHN CAVANAGH, COMMONLY CALLED ROSIE CAVANAGH, WHO WAS RELEASED FROM GAOL FOUR YEARS AGO, AFTER SERVING TEN YEARS IN PORTLAND FOR FRAUD, CARRIED OUT THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF SPIRITUALISM. HE IS A WELL-EDUCATED MAN, AGED ABOUT SIXTY-FIVE; VERY SHORT; HAS ENCYCLOPAEDIC KNOWLEDGE OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY. THINK HE IS IN SPAIN, BUT AM INQUIRING.

Peter looked from the cablegram to the ceiling and from the ceiling to the cablegram, and a slow smile dawned on his face.

CHAPTER XII.

PROFESSOR CAVAN was cleaning Apostle spoons. He was in his shirt sleeves, which were pulled up, exposing his skinny arms. A big white apron was tied about his waist, and he was reciting to himself in a reedy whine the speech of the blind Oedipus. His good-looking English butler sat on the edge of the table, pulling at a large cigar. His footman, who was smoking a rank pipe, was busy at the table repairing a rubber stamp.

"Rosie," said the butler, "if you don't stop that infernal row I'll give you a crack on the head."

"Let him sing," said the footman, "let him dance; let him do anything but talk."

The professor smiled.

"You boys would be in trouble if I couldn't talk," he said. "I doubt if there's any man in this dam' city who has my line of conversation."

"And ain't they proud of it!" growled the butler through his cigar. "Rosie, you've got a pretty good opinion of yourself and your oratory. If you were as clever as you think you are, you would never have seen the inside of an English jug."

"If I'd never seen the inside of an English jug," said Cavan, or Cavanagh, "I should never have met you, my lad. If we hadn't sat together on the same bench, sewing mailbags for the honour and glory of the King of England, you would have been breaking safes at a hundred pounds a time, and been pinched twice out of every three times."

"It's very likely," said the butler carelessly. "What would Sam have been doing?"

Sam, at the table, looked up.

"I should have been faking old masters and selling them," he said. "It's a nice, quiet way of earning a living, and I wish I'd never seen any other."

"You've a lot to growl about. How often have I told you that if you want to make big money you must take big risks?"

"Not the kind of risks you take, Tommy," said the other, and he shivered. "I'll never forget that woman Laste."

A frown gathered on the butler's face.

"It was her own fault," he said. "If she had pulled off my handkerchief she'd have recognised me. It was me or her. What do you say, Rosie?"

The professor viewed a glittering spoon critically.

"Well," he said, with some caution, "I'm such an old gentleman that really it doesn't matter to me what happens. I'd as soon go to the electric chair—a novel and a scientific method of dispatch which is wholly painless, according to such information as I can secure—as I'd spend the rest of my life in an American gaol. If I may say so, Tom," he said apologetically, "you're precipitate."

"The whole thing was your fault," interrupted the butler violently. "Didn't you tell that fool banker to hide his money and the gods would take it and give it to the poor?"

Rosie nodded. "I didn't tell him to put it between the leaves of his daughter's books," he protested. "I didn't know that she was sending the books back to the store, did I? You should have let it go—there was plenty more coming."

"We've all muddled it a bit," said the man at the table gloomily. "It wasn't Rosie's idea that the money should be shot through the air from a bow —it was yours, Tom."

"It was my idea that you should be there to get it," said the other grimly.

"I'd have been there if I'd known where it was falling," said the other, calmly resuming his occupation, "and I was on to the man as soon as I saw him running."

The professor chuckled.

"A very good joke," he said. "Deelightful! A person who trafficked in counterfeit bills. Very reprehensible!" He put down the spoon suddenly and looked up at the butler, twisting his head like an inquisitive hen.

"Do you know that I nearly got into very serious trouble? I only discovered it the other day."

"What was that?" asked the butler, stifling a yawn.

"Miss Bertram asked me to change a thousand-dollar note, and I changed it, giving her—"

"Not the phoney money?" said the man on the table sharply. "You old fool, you didn't do that?"

"Quite an accident, my dear boy," said the professor airily, resuming the polishing of his spoons. "I explained it away satisfactorily."

The man at the table rose.

"What you guys have got to understand," he said, "and what doesn't seem to have penetrated the bone under your hair, is that there's a time to finish everything and clear out. I've seen some of the best men at the game caught by going after a little too much."

Tom Scatwell looked at the other through narrowed eyelids. "I haven't got what I want," he said quietly, "and there's no backing out till I get it. We've money—yes. It cost a devil of a lot to get it, but the money was worth spending. We've sunk thousands in financing Rosie and setting him up in his position as a society man—that limousine cost five thousand and the furniture in this apartment cost twelve—but that's beside the point. We have the money, but there's a bigger thing still. The old man is getting nervous—isn't he, Rosie?"

The professor nodded.

"Sceptical, is a better word," he said sadly. "He is uneasy and worried. He asked me last night if the gods did not interest themselves in anything except the spending of money. That was bad."

"Some day he'll open his mouth and blow the gaff," said Tom Scatwell, "and then it'll be home, dearie, home, for all of us. We must shut his mouth unless we all want to go to the chair. Oh, you needn't look like that," he went on, "we're all in it."

"My dear Thomas," said the professor, "I am not in it, if you are referring to the crime of wilful murder. Violence is contrary to my principles and methods. Any split will tell you that I have never given the slightest trouble to any representative of the law, that I have not so much as hurt a child in

the pursuit of any graft which attracted me. I am a faker," he said with modest pride; "I admit it. I make money out of the occult, because the technicalities of the occult are at my finger-tips. I had not the slightest idea two years ago, when George Bertram and I discussed the possibilities of the old gods exercising influence upon the modern world, that it would turn out as big a thing as it has."

"Is he mad?"

It was the man at the table who asked, and the professor stroked his straggly beard.

"I don't think so," he said; "he is just impressionable—out of business hours."

Tom Scatwell laughed quietly.

"Is a man who works a system at Monte Carlo mad?" he asked. "Are people who believe in 'hunches' mad? Are fellows mad who won't sit thirteen at table, who refuse to go under ladders, or who cross themselves when they see a piebald horse? Maybe it's madness of a kind. No, he's not mad, but he's got his soft side. With most men the soft side runs to women. Look at the hundreds of well-conducted, nice-looking, clean-talking business men who come into town every day, who discuss religion and art and all that stuff as sanely as Rosie would—and then get some woman or other to tell you the truth about them. And you'll think they're madder than Bertram. I know a man in this city"—he paused and shook his head regretfully— "if I wasn't in a hurry I'd make him pay for my knowledge—a respectable half millionaire, with a wife and family, who is stark, raving mad over a flat-footed manicurist with a face that would stop a clock."

There was a ring at the bell, and the man at the table rose, slipped on his brass-buttoned jacket and went out. He came back in a few minutes.

"The janitor's brought the window man," he said, and, as Rosie began to slip off his apron in a hurry: "Don't worry—he's a dago, he doesn't count."

"How did those windows get broken, Rosie?" asked Scatwell.

It was evident that he was the real boss of the household.

"Boys!" said Rosie briefly. "Three in one afternoon—it is disgraceful. And yet they say that New York is the best policed city in the world."

"It took a pretty hefty boy to reach a third-storey window," growled Scatwell. "I suppose the young devils used catapults."

"It was an extraordinary occurrence," said Rosie. "I was sitting at my table reading for the third time, that delightful volume of Gibbon's— you should read it, Tom—the style is limpid, the construction faultless—when crash! went the window. I immediately leaped to my feet—"

"Oh, be short!" snarled Tom. "Nobody expects that you would leap to your head. Did you see the boys that did it?"

"I did not," said Rosie, his dignity offended.

Scatwell slipped from the table and walked into the big sitting-room. A lean, dark-skinned man, with a mop of black hair and a chin which apparently had not felt a razor for a week, was working at the broken window. Scatwell was not easily shocked, but he could only look at the man in speechless amazement, so extraordinary was his resemblance to the man whom above all others he regarded as his most dangerous enemy. Presently he spoke.

"Hullo, Wopsy!" he said. ""How long are you going to be?"

The man grinned and shook his head. Fumbling in his blouse, he produced a stained and soiled card and handed it to the other. Scatwell read "This man does not speak English."

"Italian, eh?" said Scatwell in that language. He had lain hidden for four long years in Naples and had not wasted his time. "Yes, signor," replied the man instantly, "I have only been in the United States for a month. I came straight from Strezza to my brother, who has good work here. It is beautiful to hear my language spoken again. My brother mostly speaks American, and all his friends are the same."

"You would like to make plenty of money?" asked Scatwell. The idea that had come to him was little short of an inspiration. "

"Yes, signor, I would like to make very big money and go back to my own home at Strezza," said the man. "My wife has not come to this place, and I promised her I would go back to her in three years. Yes, I would do anything for money if it were honest, signor. You understand that I come of a very respectable family."

"Have no fear about that," said Scatwell in Italian. "But I would like to play a joke on a friend, you understand, and perhaps you could help me."

He left the man at his work and walked quickly back to the pantry, where his two companions were, and shut the door behind him.

"Have you seen the dago? Have you had a good look at him?" he asked eagerly.

The other was surprised at his excitement.

"Yes, I saw him."

"Did you notice anything about him?"

Tom hesitated.

"Nothing particular. Go and look at him, Rosie."

The professor did not trouble to pull off his apron, but went out of the room and presently came back.

"Well?" asked Scatwell.

"Well," answered Rosie, "I don't see anything remarkable about him. Really, I don't, my dear fellow."

"Then look at him again, you bat," said Scatwell. "Why, the man is almost the double of Correlly."

"Correlly! Do you think it is Correlly?" asked Rosie in alarm. "Perhaps he's come here disguised."

"Don't be a fool; I merely said he was like Correlly."

"What if he is?" asked Sam.

"He'll be very useful to us, and to me in particular," said Scatwell. "Suppose we got him to cut that hair of his and doll himself up? Why, he'd pass for Correlly even at Headquarters."

Mr. Samuel Featherstone put down his rubber stamp and strolled into the professor's study to give the smirking workman the once over. He returned full of praise for Scatwell's scheme.

"I don't say that this fellow is like Correlly," he said, "because I haven't seen Correlly close enough to swear to him feature by feature. But" —he faced Scatwell squarely— "what is the idea?"

"Yes, that's it," said the professor. "We want to know what's the idea, Tom. We don't care to risk anything new—we've had enough and too much of this funny business, and I agree with Sam that the sooner we skip the better for us."

"You can skip if you want to," said Scatwell, "but you don't skip before you've seen this through. I tell you that I'm out for the biggest stake of all, and I've half won."

"There will be certain difficulties with the girl," said the professor. "She won't accept without hesitation the command of the—er—gods."

"She'll accept the command of her father," said Scatwell, "and if I can get this Wop to work with me, it's as good as done. Suppose she knows that her father's mixed up in this Golden Hades fake, and that we can put him in the pen as an accomplice to murder? What do you think she's going to do to shut our mouths, eh?"

"Where does Correlly come in?" asked the footman. "You'll find out all about that," replied the other vaguely. ""The point is, will the dago take on the job, and will you all stand by me if he does!"

"What the hell's the good of asking a question like that?" snarled Featherstone. "We've got to stand by you, haven't we? Go and put it up to him."

The window repairer expressed his doubt—indeed, his suspicion.

"It may be a joke, signor, but in my country it is the sort of joke that would put me in the hands of the caribinieri. I do not like that kind of joke. I am a stranger to your country, but I know that your police would be very angry."

"You're not asked to do anything illegal, you boob," said Scatwell. "You've nothing to do but to dress yourself in fine clothes and be seen about. If

anybody speaks to you, don't answer them. There's a thousand dollars for you in this."

Still the man shook his head.

"I don't like it at all. Perhaps it would be better if you got somebody who speaks your language," he said.

At fifteen hundred dollars, however, he wavered, and at two thousand he fell. He was quick enough to take up the idea once Scatwell had propounded the details. He listened and asked intelligent questions, but to the suggestion that he should live under the same roof as the three he turned a deaf ear.

"I see very well, signor," he said, "that I cannot return to my brother's house, because that would excite comment, and the people would talk. Maybe you could get me a little place to sleep, but here I would not stay, nor is it wise. Your joke would be no joke if I were seen to leave here."

"He's right," said Rosie, "perfectly right. He could have the room that we hired for Sam when he was playing cabman for Wilbur Smith."

Guiseppe Gatti—such was the name he gave—was conducted to the lodging, and the professor, having secured a photograph of Peter which was printed in a newspaper in the previous year, took the man's measure with his own hand and procured the clothes.

Guiseppe insisted upon having his own barber, a compatriot whom he could trust, and when at ten o'clock that night there came a knock at the door, Featherstone opened it and nearly collapsed.

"Why, why!" he stammered. "Mr. Correlly!"

But the newcomer answered in Italian, and the dazed Featherstone led the visitor to Scatwell's room.

"Say, look at him," he said. "Rosie, who is this?"

Scatwell jumped up, his eyes shining.

"I knew I was right," he said. "Why, that would deceive the police and even Smith himself. Stoop, Guiseppe, so. Hunch your shoulders over like this" —

he gave an imitation—"and when you walk you've got to drag your feet a little."

For two hours they coached him in the manners and mannerisms of Peter Correlly, and at the end of that time Scatwell pronounced him perfect.

"Suppose anybody speaks to me?" asked the man. "What shall I say?"

"Nobody will speak to you," said Scatwell. ""If they do, you must not reply. Very soon I will take you to a young lady, and then to every question I ask you, you shall answer 'Yes—y-e-s.' "

"Yis," said the man. "

"A little more practice," said the exultant Scatwell, ""and half of Bertram's roll is as good as in my pocket."

CHAPTER XIII.

IT was on the next afternoon that Peter Correlly came face to face with Jane Bertram. She was her old self, bright and tantalising; she showed no trace of the grief which had crushed her on the previous day, and Peter marvelled not a little.

"How do you do, Mr. Correlly? I saw you this morning walking on Broadway, but you took no notice of me."

"On Broadway?" said Peter. "I was not on Broadway this morning. In fact, I have scarcely left my office since last night."

He observed that the professor was eyeing him with unusual interest.

"What is the matter, professor?" Peter smiled and put his hand to his chin, which was ornamented by a small square of sticking plaster.

"I cut myself this morning—is anything wrong with it?"

"No, no, Mr.—I've forgotten your name already. No, no, Mr. Correlly, I was merely looking at you but thinking of something else, something entirely different."

Peter smiled and turned to the girl.

"I suppose you're a very busy man, Mr. Correlly," she said. "Not too —not too busy, I hope," and there was a significance in her words—almost an appeal. Peter shook his head.

"Not so busy that I cannot interest myself in the affairs of my friends," he said. "You will remember—"

"I remember," she said hurriedly. She thought he was going to quote his telephone number, but in this she was wrong. There was nothing more to talk about, and it seemed to him that she wanted to end the interview, almost as though she found the strain of acting a part too much for her endurance. But the meeting had given her strength, had endowed her with just the quality of courage she required. They left Peter and came to the portals of the Inter- State Bank, and here she stopped.

"I'm going in to see my father," she said, turning to her companion. "I do hope, professor, that you will add your voice to mine. You cannot believe—it

is impossible that an intelligent man like you can believe—such abominable things!"

The little fellow spread out his arms in a gesture of helplessness.

"I can only believe what I know to be true, my dear young lady," he said. "There are certain mysteries which are hidden from the ordinary human eye, which are visible only to those who are gifted ..."

"By the gods?" she suggested dryly.

"By the gods," he repeated in all solemnity.

She set her lips tightly.

"Then I take it that you will not help me cure father of these hallucinations?"

"If they were hallucinations, yes," he said. "But, my dear young lady, they are not hallucinations. Your dear father is specially favoured, I assure you. Why, I myself"— he spoke solemnly and deliberately—"heard Pluto speak—yes, speak in clear, unmistakable language—to your father."

She looked at him incredulously, and he met her gaze without flinching.

"Surely you're joking?" she said. "You have heard an idol—a statue—speak?"

He inclined his head.

"When did Pluto learn English?" she asked.

"The gods know all languages," replied the professor soberly.

With a shrug of her pretty shoulders she turned abruptly away, and the professor walked back to his apartments with a smile which did not leave his lips until he got home. He had much to report, and Scatwell listened with satisfaction to his subordinate's description of the interview with Correlly.

"You've got to be careful, though, boys," said the professor, pulling a short pipe from his tail pocket and lighting it. "If you make Correlly suspicious and his double is seen too much abroad, why, there'll be some inquiries made, and the Wop will be pinched. Where is he now?"

"Gone back to his lodging," said Scatwell. "He's been gone an hour or so."

"There's one thing I want to tell you," said the professor, remembering. "Correlly has cut his cheek, level with the left corner of his mouth, and he wears a small square of sticking plaster. You might put Tony on to that if you see him again. And what's more, he's much too well dressed. That fellow Correlly looks more like a tramp. You've got to be careful—a smart- looking Correlly will attract attention."

Scatwell nodded.

"Sam, go round to Guiseppe's lodging and tell him he's not to come out except at night. And say, tell him to put a bit of sticking plaster on his left cheek. Show Sam where, Rosie," and Rosie illustrated the exact position, size and shape of the patch.

Sam went forth on his errand to find Signor Guiseppe Gatti throwing dice against himself, wearing on his smooth face an expression of unutterable boredom.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL the day the girl had been nerving herself for her supreme effort. The afternoon had passed with painful slowness. She had tried in vain to read the hours away. She heard. the whir of her father's car and his light step in the hall, and went up to his room. How should she begin it? How much should she say? How far was he involved in this terrible business? She had rehearsed a dozen openings, but had rejected them all. George Bertram had been a good father to her. In his soft, amiable, vague way he had been all that a father should be, and she loved him dearly. He was a rich man and could afford many follies, but this was one he could not afford. She wondered if he were mad, and the thought made her wince. But there were other men who had ideas as strange, and they were sane enough.

She rang the bell, and Jenkins, her father's English servant, who had been in the family for twenty years, answered the summons.

"Shut the door, Jenkins," she said. "I want to ask you something about father."

"Yes, miss," said the man.

"You know I have never asked questions, about my father's life, and it isn't right that I should. But now, Jenkins, something very serious has happened, and I want you to help me. What is hidden in the inner park?"

The man shook his head.

"I'm sorry, miss, I can't tell you that, because I don't know," he said. "There isn't a servant in this house who has ever put a foot into the inner park. When Mr. Bertram bought this place nine years ago—that was a year before I came here—the inner park was all part of the estate. You could walk there—in fact, I've walked through it a dozen times. But two years ago, after we came back from Florida, where we had been for the winter, we found a high wall had been built right across the estate, and that's how the inner park came into existence. You were at college at the time."

The girl nodded.

"Mr. Bertram had the door put in, and since then none of us has ever entered the park to my knowledge. I believe he had a summer-house built, or something of the sort, miss," he went on, "but I haven't seen it, or anybody else—at least, nobody that I know."

"Did father forbid you to go into the inner park?"

The man nodded.

"Yes, miss, every servant in the house was threatened with dismissal; though Mr. Bertram is such a good master that he had only to say he didn't wish us to go, for us to have obeyed him."

"Don't any of the gardeners go there?"

The man shook his head.

"No, miss, there's about a hundred and fifty acres of land that just grows wild."

She sat, chin on hand. "What do the servants say about it?" she asked.

"Well, miss," said Jenkins reluctantly, "they say all sorts of things. Some of them say that Mr. Bertram has got—"

He stopped, more embarrassed than ever, and the girl laughed softly.

"That he has another establishment?" she said. "It's not an unusual sort of thing for a rich man to have, but I think we can exonerate my father from that weakness."

She learned very little that she had not already known, and went up to change for dinner.

It was not often that they dined together without company. Usually the professor, or one of her father's business friends, had been invited. Of late, however, the latter seldom found a place at George Bertram's board. Throughout the meal Bertram was preoccupied and nervous. Once he caught his daughter's eye fixed on him, and dropped his own in confusion, as though he had been detected in an act of which he was ashamed.

There was scarcely any conversation, and after the meal was finished he was rising, as was his wont, to go to the study for the rest of the evening, when she stopped him.

"Father, I want to talk to you before you go off tonight," she said.

"With me, my dear?" he said, in mild surprise. "Is there anything you want? I thought your account at the bank—"

"It isn't money," she smiled, "or clothes or parties or anything so feminine. It's you, daddy."

"Me, my dear?" He went very red. There was something remarkably childlike in this grown man. It was this quality that she had so often remarked which puzzled and distressed her.

"I want to talk about the Golden Hades," she said calmly, feeling herself mistress of the situation.

"The—the—Golden Hades?" he stammered. "My dear, surely that is a matter—um—that is a matter which is a little beyond your range."

"I think it is a matter which is also a little beyond your range, darling," she said gently.

He never got angry with her. The worst that could happen happened now. He was reduced to that condition of mind which lies midway between righteous anger and self-pity, and which is graphically described as huff. He was never more than huffy with her, but huffy he was now.

"You are going against my wishes, Jane," he said, with a bold but unimpressive attempt at sternness. "Yes, you really are. The other night I thought you were so sweet, I really thought the gods had spoken to you as they have spoken to me."

A look had come to his face which made his hand some features almost ethereal. The girl watched him, her lips parted in speechless amazement.

"It is difficult for you to believe that the gods have chosen a husband for you, and that in your happiness I shall find my reward for my gifts to Pluto's poor, but—"

"Wait, wait!" she interrupted. "The gods have spoken to you? Daddy, don't you realise what you're saying? You shocked me terribly when you told me so casually the other night that the gods had chosen a husband for me. When I asked you the next morning, and you spoke so seriously, so simply, about the tremendous sums of money you were throwing away—"

He laid his hand on her arm.

"By the dispensation of Pluto that money devolves into the hands of those whom the gods favour and who have most need," he said, with rising enthusiasm. "Sometimes the money is given to the poorest of the poor; sometimes a messages comes that it must go into the hands of the tenth man I meet after the clock strikes a certain hour; sometimes it is shot to the heavens from a bow and falls wherever it listeth."

She rose and., passing round the table, sat on his knee, her arm about his neck. "Yes, yes, daddy," she said; "you told me something of that, and how the god has ordered you to leave a great sum at Philadelphia station."

"No, no—not that. The god spoke of the seventh street —"

She could have laughed, but she could have cried as readily. "It was on the seventh street," he went on solemnly, "in the temple of Mercury, the palace of Speed, where men are carried to the ends of the earth by fiery horses."

"Yes, yes, I know, dear," she said practically. "Philadelphia answers more or less to that description, and I know money was to be left there. What miracle was that money to perform?"

He looked at her doubtfully, as though he were not certain of her mental attitude, for he was childishly sensitive to ridicule. "It was to fall into the hands of one who needed it very greatly," he said shortly. "Please do not interfere in these matters, Jane."

"And yet it fell into my hands," she interrupted quietly, "and I do not need it—not yet."

"Into your hands?" He stared at her. She nodded. "I saw the money left. I was watching your messenger, and I took the packet from the man to whom it was given."

"But—but," he said, "I don't understand."

"It fell into my hands, and so far I have escaped with my life. Look!" She walked to the sideboard and opened a little box she had brought in with her when she came from her room. From this she took a thick bundle of bills and laid them on the table before him. "

"Surely the gods make no mistake?" she said. "They could not have come to me unless they were intended for me?"

His face flushed now with anger at the irony in her tone.

"Why did you take this money?" he asked harshly. "To save the life of the man it was intended for," she said.

"To save—"

"To save the life of the man it was intended for," she repeated.

George Bertram gazed at her in amazement. He was so astonished that his momentary spasm of anger was forgotten.

"Will you please explain yourself, Jane?" She stood by the table, her hands resting on its polished surface, and looked down at him.

"Father," she said quietly, "I do not wish to be flippant, but there is a saying that those whom the gods love die young. It is certain they die quickly. Have you ever heard of a crime called the Higgins murder?"

He frowned.

"I remember the case," he said. "Yes. But what has that to do with this matter?"

"It has this to do with it," she said, "that that woman was murdered to secure the money which you sent out on its errand of mercy."

"Impossible!" he gasped. "I—"

"A detective who secured another batch of your money was half murdered and robbed. I tell you this, that the money you sent out under the inspiration of Professor Cavan has left behind it a trail of brutal crime. Men and women have been murdered, beaten, and kidnapped, burglaries have been committed —in the name of the gods!"

He jumped up.

"I don't believe a word of it," he said, a little wildly. "You cannot shake my faith, Jane. These are things which are beyond your understanding."

"I—" she began.

"Not another word!" he stormed. "You shall not shake my faith," and he almost ran from the room.

CHAPTER XV.

THE girl followed more slowly, but by the time she reached the hall her father had disappeared. She went up to her room, locked the door, and changed from her dinner gown into a dark wool dress. The mystery of the inner park she was determined to solve. From a drawer in her dressing-table she took a little revolver, threw open the breech and loaded it.

With this in her pocket she turned out the light, opened the French windows of her bedroom and stepped out on to the balcony. There was a possibility that her father might remain at home, and the light was showing in his study when she began her vigil. She had waited an hour when it was extinguished. A few moments later she saw his dark figure traversing the path which led to the inner park. Swiftly she passed through her bedroom, down the stairs and out through the front door, keeping to the grass, which deadened. the sound of her footsteps and also brought her to the cover of the bushes.

She lost sight of him against the foliage, which hid half the wall, but heard the sound of his key being inserted in the lock of the door. Presently the door slammed, and she could walk boldly forward. She had already made many inspections of this barrier, but never before had she thought of disobeying her father's injunction.

The wall was at least twelve feet high, and the door through which he had passed was small and narrow. However, she had, already made a reconnaissance and her preparations. Some fifty paces to the left of the door was a thick clump of alders. From this she drew a light ladder of ash and, setting it against the wall, reached the top without difficulty, pulling the ladder up after her and lowering it down on the other side.

Before she continued her search she made a survey of this unknown ground and came to the inner side of the door. From the door a path led into the unknown. This was all the information she wanted. It was very necessary that she should be able to find her way back to the ladder, and, once this was assured, she could go forward on her exploring expedition without trepidation.

The path was well defined, and the moon shed just sufficient light to enable her to find her way without the aid of the small torch she carried. She came upon the temple unexpectedly and was brought to a standstill by the sight of it. It was a perfect little building, evidently a replica of the Temple of Athene, and much more beautiful than she had ever imagined.

"Poor Pluto!" thought the girl, with the one gurgle of amusement she had indulged in since this grisly business had begun. "To be worshipped in the temple of Athene!"

There was nobody in sight, no light shone in the building, and apparently no guard was deemed necessary. She made her way noiselessly across the grass and up the shallow steps that led to the columned portico.

The big wooden door, big in relation to the size of the building, was ajar, and she tiptoed. her way in. She was fronting a heavy velvet curtain, but light came over the top. She stepped dose to it and pulled aside a fold.

She found herself looking up an aisle of pillars to an altar, where blazed a golden statue; but her eyes were fixed rather upon the two men who stood in adoration before the image. There was no difficulty in recognising the little man by her father's side, despite the weird cloaks they wore. There was a beautiful, rich quality to his voice which would have distinguished him even in a crowd.

"Oh, Hades, Giver of Wealth!" he cried, his arms outstretched in supplication. "Give a sign to this waverer! Speak, thou Pluto, lord of the Netherworld, Patron of Fortune!"

The girl strained her ears, but no sound came, and the silence was oppressive. Then unexpectedly came a voice—a hollow, booming voice, which seemed to proceed from the statue itself. "Oh, stranger, remember thy promise! Thou hast vowed before me and before Proserpine that thou would'st give thy daughter to my chosen. The hour is at hand. Prosperity and happiness shall shine upon thee. There shall be a place at the table of the gods for thee, my servant."

The girl's heart was beating fiercely. She felt that if she did not get into the open air she would choke, and even as she moved her head swam. She tumbled down the steps and fell full length on the ground.

So this was the secret, this was how the inspiration came! Jane dragged herself to her knees, and though her legs were trembling under her she ran to the other end of the building. She expected to see the man whose voice had come from the Golden Hades, but there was nobody in sight. She stood, puzzled, and in the problem forgot the panic into which she had fallen.

If she had known that in one corner of the building, behind the plaster caryatides, was a ventilating shaft up which Alwin had climbed, she might have accepted the existence of that chamber as an explanation. But in truth the shaft had nothing to do with the phenomenon.

She thought quickly. There was something in the quality of Pluto's voice which seemed familiar. It had sounded as though—as though ... Then in a flash it came to her—it was the sound of a voice through an amplifier! But where was the microphone—it might be in the building but more likely it would be concealed outside—nearby was a small thicket. She decided to investigate it.

Cautiously she moved forward, taking care to make no sound, and, arriving at its outskirts, she slipped from tree to tree nearer into the heart of the plantation. She stopped every now and again to listen, but there was no sound; and then, just as her foot was raised to make another advance, she heard a loud buzz which so startled her that she nearly uttered an exclamation.

It was almost at her feet and was much too noisy for even the angriest and. biggest insect to have made. It was a signal. She caught her breath as this simple explanation came to her. Of course, the man in the temple would have to signal when his confederate was to speak, and in proof of her theory a voice quite close boomed "Thus said the Lord of the Netherworld—"

She had taken out her little torch, and now she flashed it in the direction of the voice. By a hollow tree stood a man, his back was towards her but she could see the wire from the microphone which he held. A twig snapped beneath her foot and with an oath the man thrust the instrument into the tree and turned to face her.

"Am I speaking to Pluto or to one of his satellites?" asked the girl ironically.

"Miss Bertram!" cried the man, and she recognised him.

"I see," she said, "you are the professor's butler, aren't you?"

She still held him in the light. There was something about the calmness of this man, caught in the act of his treachery to her father, which brought a sense of dismay to her heart.

"Well, it's no use bluffing," he said; "you've caught me with the goods. Miss Bertram, I think now you know all there is to be known about the Golden Hades."

"I know all there is to be known about you," she said, "and tomorrow, if there is any law in this country—"

"Don't let's talk about the law," he said coolly. "It won't do any of us much good, especially your father."

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "Just be a sensible girl and think you've dreamt all this," he said; "and just go along as though you had never been behind the scenes. Carry out the instructions of the god."

"And marry his chosen, I suppose?" she said, with a lift of her eyebrows.

"And marry his chosen," he repeated with a nod, "which happens to be me." She looked at him, speechless. "It will save you a lot of trouble and save your father worse," he went on. "Now, Miss Bertram, you be sensible. You'll have to be sensible, because you're the only person who can keep your father out of this, and keep us out of trouble."

"Even if I wanted to—and I don't," she flamed, "I would not help you—not any of you. My father is innocent of any of the crimes you have committed."

"That you'll have to prove, and you'll find it difficult," said the man.

"Even then I couldn't save you," she said. "There is a man on your track who will never let up until he has put you where you belong."

"There is a man on your track," drawled Tom Scatwell, with a little sneer, "who will never let up till he gets you. I am thinking of the same man—Peter Correlly."

She peered at him through the gloom; she had long since switched off the light of her torch.

"But I don't understand."

"You don't, eh? Oh, Rosie isn't a fool!"

"Rosie?" she asked, puzzled.

"I'm talking about the professor. He isn't a fool, I say, and although he is a mighty bad crook, he's a great reader of men's minds and the finest psychologist that you're likely to meet. Rosie just saw how Correlly looked at you and diagnosed the case."

She went hot, and was grateful for the darkness which hid her face.

"You're mad," she said. "You're trying to insult me—I'm going back to my father."

"One moment, Miss Bertram." He laid his hand on her arm. "Whether Peter Correlly is in love with you or not makes no difference. That's his business, and I guess I can attend to him—after we are married. Marry me you will, and marry me you must, whether you like it or not, unless you're prepared to see your father in gaol, charged with murder. There will be a run on the bank when it gets out that be has thrown away the greater part of a million dollars on this tomfoolery—you understand me?"

"I understand," she said, and turned back to the house.

Scatwell did not attempt to stop her.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT was one o'clock in the morning when, summoned by telephone, Peter Correlly presented himself at the Bertram mansion. The girl opened the door to him, and after a glance at her white, set face, he knew that something unusually serious had happened. She took him not to the drawing-room, but to the library, and as he passed through the hall he saw a man descending the stairs whom he recognised as one of the foremost physicians of the city.

"My father has had a stroke," she said quietly, "and the doctors think it may be months before he is well again." Her eyes were red, her lips trembling as she spoke.

There was little that Peter could do save to murmur conventional regrets, so he said nothing.

"And I—I am in trouble, in great trouble, Mr. Correlly," she said.

She seated herself in a low chair, crouching over the little fire which burnt on the hearth, and never once did she meet his eyes.

"You once told me that if ever I was in trouble I was to send for you, and that you would help me."

"I'm glad you did."

He stood leaning against the chimney-piece, with one elbow upon the mantel, and looked down at her.

"Tell me just what you can, and let me guess all that you don't want to say. When did his seizure occur?"

"Nearly two hours ago," said the girl in a low voice. "I think he was worried about—about me. You see, I had to tell him something tonight, Mr. Correlly, and it wasn't easy for him or for me."

"Had he been to the temple?" asked Peter.

She looked up quickly.

"You know of the temple, then?" she asked, and he smiled.

"I didn't know it was here, but I guessed as much," he replied.

She inclined her head slowly.

"My father has been in the hands of this gang for two years," she said. "I—I had to tell him all I had learnt. There was a terrible scene."

She did not particularise the gang, but he knew to whom she referred.

"Poor father! He has always been interested in the occult, and has written a little book on the subject. Did you know that?"

"I knew that," said Peter simply.

"It was called The Underworld," she went on. "I think it was this book which must have attracted the attention of the gang, and, through the professor, my father was entangled in this awful business. I don't know who the professor is—to me he was always an amusing, simple-minded, somewhat vain little man, repulsive in many ways, but the very last man in the world I should have associated with anything crooked. I knew that father and he were very good friends, because he used to dine here almost every night, and I was rather glad, because father had very few friends and no hobbies. It gave me a sense of relief to know"—she smiled faintly —"that he was off my hands. They must have met when I was still at school, for when I came back here they were already inseparable—and the great wall across the park had been built."

"I see," nodded Peter.

"That's how it came about that you had no knowledge of its building. That puzzled and worried me a little. I presume the temple is on the other side?"

"Yes, I had no idea of its existence," she said, "nor had any of the servants of the house. It was built under the direction of the professor or of his fellow conspirators, and none but foreign workmen, were employed. I have only learnt this since—since I took the trouble to inquire."

"Have you any idea how your father's affairs stand?" asked Peter gently, and it gave him pain to see the girl wince.

"I don't think that is a matter for anxiety," she said. "I do know that father is enormously rich. When mother died she left me nearly a million dollars, which is in the hands of trustees, so I am not worrying about the finances of

the bank. Father could afford all the money he has thrown away on these villains."

Strangely enough, this news brought a sense of the greatest relief to Peter, who had worried more about the condition of George Bertram's fortune than about any other aspect of the case. Somehow it seemed to him that the name of Bertram, honoured for three generations, had better be associated with murder than with bankruptcy, and a bankruptcy which would drag thousands down to ruin with him.

"There is one thing I want you to tell me to relieve my mind," he said, "and that is that the absurd suggestion that you should marry the chosen of the gods has been entirely dismissed from your mind with these revelations."

To his surprise she did not immediately answer, nor did she meet his eyes.

"You don't mean—" he said in astonishment.

"I mean that that marriage may have to go through," she said, with a catch in her voice. "Mr. Correlly, don't you realise that the idea of the marriage came from the gang, and that from among these the most presentable was chosen."

"That I can guess," he said, "but there are ten thousand reasons why any promise you or your father may have given should not be fulfilled. Good Heavens! It is an appalling idea!" Still she did not look up. "I shall need your help," she said. "Tell me, is there any way by which my father's name can be kept out of this terrible business?"

It was his turn to be silent. He knew that no pull was big enough to keep the name of George Bertram from the case, and she read his silence rightly.

"Don't you see, Mr. Correlly, that I am entirely in the hands of these three men? It is my father's word against theirs, and they can put him —oh, it's terrible!"

She covered her face with her hands. "They can implicate him in the murders, if that's what you mean," said Peter, and she bowed her head in assent. "

"And you think if you marry one of them, I suppose the leader of the gang, that they will let up on your father? Why, Miss Bertram, you don't know that gang of crooks! Anyway the matter isn't in your hands, it's in the hands of

the authorities. It isn't a question of the gang giving one another away, or being in a position to say whether or not they shall make a disclosure to the police. We have sufficient evidence—"

She shook her head, and for the first time met his eyes and looked him straight in the face.

"You're wrong, Mr. Correlly," she said quietly. "You have no evidence, you have only theories. Only my father can prove that they defrauded him and he —he—"

She stopped and brought her handkerchief to her lips. Two curiously unhappy figures they were—Peter, hunched up over the fire on one side, the girl with her chin on her hands on the other—and the thoughts of both followed identical lines.

"There's a lot in what you say, Miss Bertram," he said at last, "and it's been worrying us. It is an amazing fact that up till now we have no evidence. Nobody saw Mrs. Laste shot, nobody saw the man who beat up Wilbur Smith or kidnapped Frank Alwin. There is a strong supposition, but that supposition will not carry us very far towards a conviction."

He puffed away at his cigarette for five minutes, and there was no sound but the tick of a French clock on the mantelpiece.

"There's a lot of truth in what you say, Jane."

The girl started, and stared at him. Evidently he was unconscious of his lapse, and he went on. "We have known the difficulties all along—ever since we were fairly certain that we had the gang at our mercy. We've been hoping against hope to get the right kind of evidence, but so far the only person who is immediately under suspicion—is you."

"Me?" she said, startled.

"I have evidence sufficient to convict you three times over," he said, "and I know you were a perfectly innocent instrument in the hands of bad men. I know, too, that if it comes to a showdown, and unless they have some strong inducement to keep silence, the whole gang will implicate your father in the murders, and implicate him in such a way that it will be practically impossible to prove his innocence."

Another silence, and then the girl rose.

"So you see," with a gesture of despair, "for father's sake I must further the interests of these men even if it means—marriage."

She got the word out with difficulty.

Peter came up to his feet slowly. There was a smile on his lips, but a hard glint in his eye which fascinated her.

"Well, Miss Bertram," he said, "I guess there are going to be a few more tragedies added to the credit of the Colden Hades."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean just this," said Peter slowly. "There are three men in this gang—Rosie Cavan—that's the professor; Tom Scatwell, another English crook, and Sam Featherstone. Maybe they had assistance to hold up Wilbur Smith and pressed a little local talent into their service, for Wilbur isn't exactly popular with the criminal classes, but outside of these three there is no gang. Three men," he said deliberately, "and unless matters take a much brighter turn than they promise, I am going to add three tragedies—three irreparable disasters—to the tale of devil work."

For the moment she did not understand, and then with a little "Oh!" she stepped forward and laid both her hands on his arm, lifting her pale face to his.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," she said in agitation. "Do you hear? I won't have you do it! I would rather stand the trial myself, I would rather my father took the responsibility, than that you should do such a wicked thing."

In that instant she caught a glimpse of his mind and she knew its deadly purpose.

"You are not to do it," she said. "Promise me you will not do it, please! Please!"

He laid his big paw on her two small hands and smiled down into her face.

" 'It is a far, far better thing I do now'—"

The little hand shot up to his mouth and stopped him.

"Peter!" and the word electrified him and left him breathless. "Unless you really want to break my heart, to fill me with everlasting shame that I was responsible for your risking your career and your life, you will put this thought out of your mind. Let them stand their trial."

He could not speak, and she misunderstood the cause of his silence, and shook him with all the strength she could muster.

"There must be another way," she said. "Please, please, for my sake! You called me Jane just now, and I know you like me."

Suddenly she was gripped in his arms. "Like you!" he said huskily; "My dear, if they set your statue in the temple I would worship you."

She laughed—a nervous, tearful laugh, and struggled to escape.

"You would be a devil worshipper, if you did that—Peter, won't you promise me? Peter dear—"

He took the girl up in his arms and pressed his lips to her hot cheek.

"Maybe I'll not shoot 'em," he mumbled in her ear, "maybe I'll just poison 'em," and she laughed again, a little hysterically, for she knew she had won her battle.

CHAPTER XVII.

TOM SCATWELL dressed himself with unusual care, rejecting waistcoat after waistcoat which the anxious professor brought. He was a good-looking man of thirty-nine, powerfully built. That he was not in the best of tempers, the conciliatory attitude of Rosie showed. Even the sombre Mr. Featherstone, who never shrank from an encounter with his superior, made himself scarce.

What time will you be back, Tom?" asked Rosie.

"Mind your own business," growled the man.

"Sam and I wanted to know," said the professor apologetically, "because we have an engagement this afternoon at three, and we shouldn't like to be out when you come in."

"I'm not likely to be back before three or four," said Scatwell.

"You have all the baggage packed?"

"Every bit of it," said the professor. "When do you think we shall make the getaway?"

"Don't worry about that," replied the other.

"I'll give you plenty of notice."

"There's a boat sailing today," suggested Rosie.

"We shan't take that—maybe we will go to Canada."

Rosie watched him brushing his hair and brushing it again, changing and re-changing his tie.

"Tom," he said presently, "I'm short of ready money. Could you give me a cheque?"

"How much do you want?"

"Oh, I don't know," said the professor in his vague way.

"Well, make up your mind," growled Scatwell, looking at his watch.

"Are you expecting anybody, Tom?" asked the professor.

The man turned on him in a fury. "What's worrying you, Rosie?" he snarled. "You're as jumpy as a cat. Why the devil do you want to know? You go on like a man who's expecting to be doublecrossed."

The professor laughed, a tittering little laugh of amusement.

"Oh, no, Tom, not that," he said. "That's the last thing one would expect from you. If anybody dared suggest such a thing about you, Tom, I'd— I'd strike him down at my feet."

"A hell of a lot of striking you'd do!" said Tom contemptuously. "If you want to know, I'm waiting for that dago—there's the bell. Show him in here and leave me alone with him."

He had put on his coat and was surveying himself in a long mirror when the visitor came in.

"Sit down, Guiseppe," he said, in Italian. "You are late."

"I had to wait for a taxi," said the other in the same language. "I find it very difficult to have the courage."

"Courage for what?"

"To call a taxi," said the man. "I fear they will detect me and say: 'Who is this poor Italian man who begs rides in my taxi?' "

"You've got the money, haven't you?" said Scatwell. "Now listen. I am taking you away to a, big house in the country. There you will see a lady who will mistake you for somebody else."

"This is a joke, yes?" demanded the other.

"This is a joke," said Scatwell grimly.

"What shall I do?"

"You'll sit quiet and say nothing," answered Tom Scatwell. "You have merely to be seen and no more. If the lady speaks to you, you will say 'Yes'."

"Yes," said the other mincingly in English.

Tom nodded his head, satisfied.

"Now, Guiseppe, my car's at the door and we will go. In the car keep your face out of sight. You understand, I do not want you to be seen."

"I understand perfectly, signor," said the other, and led the way from the room, Scatwell followed. In the lobby the professor was waiting, an ingratiating grin on his face, an open cheque-book in his hand.

Scatwell hesitated. "

"Can't this wait?" he asked. "How much do you want?"

"Make it a hundred dollars, Tom," pleaded the professor.

"Fill it in," said Scatwell, and scrawled his name at the bottom of the cheque.

The door banged behind him, and presently they heard the whine of his car as it sped on its way. The professor watched the car out of sight, craning his neck through the window; when it had disappeared he took up the telephone and called a number.

"In twenty-five minutes," was the message he sent. He went out into the hall and called "Sam!"

Mr. Featherstone came immediately. "

"What time does that boat leave?" asked the professor.

"At half-past eleven," replied the other.

"Good! We've plenty of time. Have you booked the stateroom?"

"Of course I've booked the stateroom," said the other, aggrieved. "I booked it with the Boston Agency in the name of Miller and Dore. Here are the tickets." He produced a leather pocket-book.

"That's all right," said the professor quickly. "Now just fill up that blank cheque."

"How much shall I make it for?"

"What is his balance?" asked the professor.

"About fifty thousand dollars."

Make it about forty-five and be on the safe side," said the professor. "I hate to leave the swine anything, he asked for trouble. Oh, the greed of these low crooks!" he deplored.

While Featherstone was filling in the cheque the professor was busy clipping his spidery whiskers.

"You've never seen me clean-shaven, have you, Sam'! I'm some sight— but you'll have to endure me." Featherstone went out with the cheque, and was back in twenty minutes with a roll of bills. "

"What about the safe deposit?" he asked, and the professor's chin, covered with lather, shook.

"No, thank you," he said. "That stuff has got the Golden Hades printed on it, and that's the totem I don't want to carry around just now. Forty-five thousand dollars is a lot of money, Sam. It ain't all we deserve, but it's enough to get away on, with the stuff we've sent to England. How do you like me?"

He turned a tiny, rosy face to the other.

"Good God!" said Sam, genuinely shocked. "So you look like that? Gee! I'll never say a word against whiskers after this."

The professor looked out of the window.

"There's our taxi," he said. "Where are the suitcases?"

"Ready," said the other promptly. "Get 'em down; I'll follow you."

He had a last look round, a regretful look as he surveyed his by no means modest library, for Rosie Cavanagh was a genuine book lover. Then he too left the apartment, closing the door behind him. Five hours later, as the ship dropped over the eastern horizon with Sandy Hook a faint blur on her port quarter, the professor remarked, scratching his chin regretfully ,"I ought to have left a note for Tom."

"You can carry politeness too far," said Sam.

WHATEVER may be said to the discredit of Tom Scatwell, this credit is his, that he played big and played boldly. He was a man without pity, but ruthlessness calls for a certain kind of courage, which he possessed to the full. He had a premonition that the net was closing round him, that only by one master coup could he save all his carefully conceived plans from utter ruin.

Whilst his companion chattered incessantly all the way out to Bertram's house, hailing such sights as might be novel to a friendly alien, or speaking of Italy and the life he had left behind him, Scatwell was silent, answering only in monosyllables. The talk of the man neither disturbed nor irritated him. It was empty, but soothing, and gave him a background against which he could work out his own designs.

As the car turned into the drive he gave his last instructions.

"You will stay in the car, which I shall stop at some distance from the house. When you see me coming back with a lady, you will get out of the car and stand near the door, but you will not speak or smile or do anything but stand where I tell you. You understand?"

"Yes, signor."

Less than fifty yards from the house the car was stopped. Usually its driver had been Sam Featherstone, but today Scatwell had hired a man from the garage, and for him also he had instructions.

"Son," he said, "you get down and stroll back to the gate. When I want you I'll send for you."

"You want me to leave the car here?" asked the man in surprise. "Suppose you need me—"

"Don't argue, do as you're told," said Scatwell, "and if I'm wearing out your shoe leather you can put it in the bill,"

The man touched his hat. "Remember, Guiseppe, if you see me with a lady you step down."

"Yes, signor," said the man again.

JANE KNEW—but how she knew she could not tell —that Scatwell would call that morning. Since breakfast time she had been pacing the long portico before the house, and she had heard the sound of the car's wheels long before Scatwell came into sight. Now she walked slowly to meet him.

"I thought you would come," she said, with self-possession at which he marvelled.

He stood, hat in hand, before her, a trifle nervous for the stake he played for was a big one.

"How is your father?" he began.

She stopped him with uplifted hand.

"Please do not talk about my father," she said.

"This is hardly the time for polite inquiries, Mr. Scatwell. What is your proposition?"

He was embarrassed, and showed it.

"Shall we go into the house?" he said.

"We will talk here," she replied. "What is your proposition?"

"It is a very simple one, Miss Bertram," he said after a pause. "The game is up as far as we are concerned, and we want to get out of our trouble —and to avoid worse. I believe that the police are on to us, and I reckon I have forty-eight hours to get across the Mexican border. In fact, I'm on the way there now."

"With your friends?" she asked.

He laughed. "In a case like this," he said, "it's every man for himself. I am going back to New York to draw my money from the bank, and then —"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"And then?" she said. "Everything depends upon you, Miss Bertram," he said. "It is not my intention or my desire to go alone. In fact, I do not think I should get away alone. With you as my wife, it would be easy. I think you

are the only person who has any real evidence, and, frankly, marriage would deprive the State of its principal witness if it came to a trial."

"That I can see," she said. "But supposing I agree, what other reward do I have than the dubious honour of bearing the name of a crook?"

He made a little grimace, as though her cold scorn had hurt him.

"I clear your father," he said. "Miss Bertram, there is no evidence at all, either for or against him. If you will do as I wish, if you will promise to marry me, I will make a statement before a mutual friend of ours, which will exonerate your father—"

"A mutual friend of yours?" she said suspiciously. "Who do you mean?"

"I mean Peter Correlly," he said. "I have brought him with me."

He expected this statement to create a mild sensation, but he was unprepared for the effect of his words upon the girl. Her hand went up to her mouth, as if to check her cry of amazement. She went red and then white.

"Mr. Correlly?" she said unsteadily. "

"I don't understand."

"He's here," said Scatwell, well satisfied with the impression he had made. "But how can he take your statement and not arrest you? It isn't true; this is a trap." He half turned away from her.

"Come with me," he said. "You needn't be afraid. I won't take you out of sight of the house. How Peter Correlly and I have fixed things doesn't concern anybody but ourselves. As you are probably aware, the police of New York are not exactly angels."

She was white with anger now.

"What do you mean?" she demanded. "Do you suggest that Mr. Correlly can be bribed? That is a lie, and you know it is a lie."

"I suggest nothing," he said hastily. "I am not giving you theories but facts."

A wild panic seized her. Perhaps Peter would betray his service and help this man escape. That would be worse than the other dreadful remedy he had suggested, and she shook at the thought.

Then they came in sight of the car and the man stepped out.

"Who is that?" she whispered. Her eyes never left the face of the man by the car as the distance between them lessened.

"Peter!" she breathed, half to herself.

Thus they stood, the man by the car, the white-faced girl, and Tom Scatwell, eminently satisfied with the success of his plan.

"Now, Miss Bertram, in the presence of Mr. Correlly, I am keeping my promise. You know the statement I am going to make?" he said, turning to the man.

"Yes," replied the other. It was like Peter's voice and yet it was not, she thought. But she could swear to him—the tan of his face, the stoop of his shoulders, the humour of his eyes.

"I'm saying this," Scatwell went on, "that Mr. Bertram had nothing to do with any of the crimes which were committed in the name of the Golden Hades. He is as innocent as his daughter. It was I who shot the woman Laste, it was I who kidnapped Frank Alwin, the actor, and then Wilbur Smith. In all three acts I was assisted by Rosie Cavan and by Sam Featherstone. Does that satisfy you?"

He turned to the girl. She could not speak. Her eyes were fixed on Peter's face and she could only nod her reply.

"Now, Miss Bertram, are you prepared to carry out your contract?"

"Yes," she said in a low voice, but could not take her eyes off Peter. How strange it was that he could stand listening unmoved to all this!

"In ten minutes I will have the car waiting for you," said Scatwell.

"Why not now?"

Scatwell wheeled round, staring at Guiseppe Gatti.

"Why wait ten minutes?"

"Who—who are you?" asked Scatwell hoarsely.

"What a question to ask when you've just introduced me! I'm Peter Correlly."

"Where is Gatti?" whispered Scatwell.

"There never was a Gatti," said Peter calmly. "I came to your apartments to mend the windows I smashed the day before, because I wanted to see what you looked like when you were all at home. Anybody in New York will tell you that Italian is my long suit. I—"

He flung himself aside as a gun appeared in Scatwell's hand. A bullet sped through the bushes, and before Correlly could pull his own gun the man had plunged through the hedge which fringed either side of the drive, and was lost to view.

Peter made no attempt to follow.

"I hope—" he began, and then three shots rang out in rapid succession, and he drew a long breath.

"Unless Wilbur Smith has lost his nerve," he said soberly, "we ought to have heard of the Golden Hades for the last time."

The girl collapsed into his arms. He was holding her, his cheek against hers, when Wilbur Smith and Alwin came slowly through the plantation, their smoking revolvers in their hands.

THE END