—THE— SLEUTH

A long breath escaped Neil. "Fate gives me one more chance!" he thought. He receipted for the message and carried it back into the living-room.

Under the gas light Neil read:

The fellows are on the way. They have the right address. Expect them at nine-thirty. Look sharp. George.

"What is it?" Blackader demanded.

"From my partner," said Neil. "The police will be here in ten minutes. Write quickly, and we'll make a get-away."

"It's a trick!" whined Blackader.

Neil forced him to read the message. "Be quick!" he said, "or it's all up with both of us—maybe all three," he added in an undertone.

Blackader sprang to his feet. "Come on!" he said tremulously. "There's no time to write now. I'll go with you anywhere you want. I'll write it later. Oh, come on, for God's sake!"

"Not a step!" said Neil grimly. "Until you write."

Blackader, though his hands trembled as if palsied, and his face worked like a hysterical woman's, would not give in. He raved and pleaded with Neil, and sought to pull him toward the door. Neil flung him off, and stood like a rock with his watch in his hand, counting the minutes

Blackader, in an abandonment of brutish terror, flung himself down and knocked his head on the floor. Even in extremity he was the spoiled child.

Finally they heard rapid feet mounting the stairs outside. Some one knocked on the door, and rattled it.

Blackader with a cry: "They're here!" sprang to the sill of the open window. For an instant he faced Neil, looking scarcely human.

"Go to the chair, damn you!" he stuttered. "You'll never get her now!"

Neil leaped, but he was over the sill. A terrible cry rang over the back yards, and there as a sickening soft crash on the cement pavement below—then silence. Neil stood rooted to the floor with horror.

The rattling at the door recalled him to himself as from a hideous dream. He heard Archie's voice calling to him softly and urgently: "Jack, Jack!"

In a daze Neil went and opened it. Archie was panting for breath.

"The police!" he gasped. "Right behind me. Quick! Over the roof and down through the next house. Where's your hat? Never mind it, take mine. For God's sake wake up! What's the matter with you?"

"Blackader," muttered Neil. "Jumped out of the window. Dead in the yard."

Archie fell back, but instantly recovered himself. He urged Neil with his hands. "Well—you can't help that. They're at the door now. Up with you! Linger in the next house a minute or two. I'll take care of everything. For her sake, kid!"

That was sufficient. Neil came to life again, and sprang up the single flight of stairs to the roof. Already he could hear tramping in the lower halls. Doors were opening throughout the house.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LAURA EXPLAINS.

It was a hot night and there were people taking the air on the roofs of both houses; consequently Neil's appearance up there excited no remark. Everybody was hanging over the parapet at the back, and though the horrible sounds had been self-explanatory, each was asking his neighbor what was the matter.

Several asked Neil. His subconsciousness answered involuntarily:

"I don't know. I came up to see."

There was a general movement on both sides to go below. Neil attached himself to the party of the house next door. Mindful of Archie's instructions he loitered down, lingering on each landing. Knots of people stood at the doors talking excitedly while they awaited the return of emissaries sent out for information.

Finally a man came running in from the streets. Heads craned over the bannisters and the news buzzed up from floor to floor:

"There's a man murdered his wife next door, and jumped out of the window, and killed himself. The police have come."

Such was the first version of the story. Neil joined in the general rush to the street. Instead of turning to the right where already a crowd reached half way across to the opposite sidewalk, he made his way quietly in the other direction, and turned the first corner. Half a block from the scene life was going on as usual. He lost himself in the maze of Greenwich village streets.

The sound of that wild cry still rang in his ears. He was full of the old, old thoughts of death, still fresh and terrible to each one of us when they are forced home. He could think almost kindly of Blackader now.

"Poor devil! He's paid! All his shifting and twisting does him no good now. Now he's got to face things. . . . But has he got to? Maybe everything's ended for him, good and bad. Maybe there's nothing left for him but dead flesh. That wouldn't be paying if death were the same for all. Surely he must be forced to face the truth for once—somewhere. Or else there's no justice."

Neil, wandering aimlessly down one street and back through the next, was not insensible to his surroundings. On the contrary he could never afterward forget the impressions of that hour. Men may be roughly divided into the convex and the concave natures. Men of action present a convex surface to the world around them, artists a concave. Men keyed up to concert pitch do not change their ordinary natures, but intensify them. The roused man of action feels the impressions of the moment more completely; the roused artist gathers and stores them more deeply.

To Neil, tramping the streets, quite ordinary sights and sounds assumed an exquisite poignancy. The city this hot night affected him like a terrible poem, like a compelling, dissonant symphony; or, since he was a sculptor, most like a superhuman figure, ugly and strong, wise and childlike, bestial and dreamy.

By and by he found himself in City Hall Park. He was brought sharply to earth by hearing his own name shrieked the night hush of the business streets. He was amazed and outraged by the sound. A flight of boys issuing from Newspaper Row was spreading out fanwise over the park fluttering papers in stead of wings.

"Wuxtra! Wuxtra!" they yelled. "Neil Ottoway—!" here an indistinguishable gabble. "Wuxtra! Wuxtra!"

Neil had a little silver coin ready for the first boy that reached him. He did not ask for any change. Surely he of all the world had the most interest in this edition.

He did not have to read far. It was spread across the top of the paper in two-inch type.

NEIL OTTOWAY COMMITS SUICIDE.

Neil gasped, and turned red with anger. It affected him like an intolerable insult. But he soon reflected that it was not his real name after all, and his sense of humor came to his aid. He laughed.

Under the caption was a brief bulletin:

At 9.15 to-night Neil Ottoway killed himself by leaping from a fifth-storey window in Waverly Place. The police were about to arrest him. Identification of the body was made by his friend Archie Tinling.

Neil's breast rose on a prayer at the suggestion contained in the last words. But was it possible that Archie with all his cleverness could get away with a stroke as bold as this?

It suddenly occurred to Neil that the extras was spreading all over town, like a swift tide. What if Laura should hear the cry and buy? The thought of the possible consequences made his heart contract. He ran for the subway station.

The papers had aircady gone uptown by the same route. Quick as Neil was, he heard the echoes of the vendors' raucous cries down the side streets up-town. He rang Mrs. Colliflower's bell as it had seldom been rung. She was slow about opening the door. Finally the thick glasses appeared as the door opened a crack. She had it on a chain.

"Miss Folsom, is she at home?" demanded Neil.

"Yes—no! I don't know as you can see her!"

"I must see her!" cried Neil.

The note of desperation in his voice somehow overcame the little body's fears. She opened the door. "She—she just came in," she faltered. "With her little purchases for breakfast. She looked so strange. She didn't answer me when I spoke. And she's gone in and locked her door."

"Good heavens!" cried Neil. "Which door? Quick!"

"I—I don't know as I ought to tell you," stammered the distracted landlady. "I don't know what to do!"

Neil's stretched nerves could stand no more. "Laura!" he cried. "Where are you?"

There was a sound down the narrow hall. A door was unlocked and thrown open. Neil ran to meet the sound. She was in his arms.

"My darling! My darling!" she whispered. "Oh, thank God!" A shower of tears intervened.

The instinctive embrace justified and explained all. A great, calm happiness filled Neil's breast. He comforted her. Mrs. Colliflower looked on horrified, shamefaced, yet delighted, too.

Finally Laura drew a little away. "That terrible story—what does it mean?" she asked.

"Come away," he said gravely. "I'll tell you."

She led him into her little room and closed the door. She clung to his arms, trying to read his news in his eyes. She guessed it before he told her.

"It was he," said Neil. "The other one."

A little cry of pain escaped her. She drooped. "Oh, poor Ken!" She was silent, and Neil shrank from intruding on her painful thoughts. Finally she raised her eyes, glistening with fresh tears and craving reassurance like a child's. "Oh, do you think there is mercy for him anywhere? I couldn't be merciful. I—I hated him! And now—it hurts so!"

"Tender heart," murmured Neil. "Old scores are all paid."

"Maybe—I drove him to it," she whispered.

Neil smiled. "That's silly, dear. Nothing ever got under his skin. It was the police at the door."

"Now I shall tell you the truth," she said.

"Never mind that now," said Neil quickly. "You've had enough to bear. Some other time—or never. I'm satisfied."

"I want to tell you," she said simply. "I always wanted to. But I loved you. I was afraid of you. I fought against you blindly."

"You loved me!" murmured Neil. "How wonderful!"

"Come into the sitting-room," she said deprecatingly. "Mrs. Colliflower would be scandalised. She's a dear."

The affectionate little body was fluttering up and down the hall. Seeing by Laura's face that the crisis, whatever it was, had passed, she kissed her, and retired more contendly to the back of the apartment. Laura led him to one of the plush settees.

"Sit down and let me look at you," she whispered. "I never dared let myself before."

"Laura, if you say such things to me I shall—I shall cry!" he said whimsically.

"My love, you're tired!" she murmured. "What have you been through?"

He waved it away. "I shall never be tired again."

"I shall tell you everything," she said. "It's not because I fell any rancor to-wards the dead. I do not."

"Nor I," put in Neil.

"But it's your right to know. I was all aware of that while you reproached me."

"No apologies," said Neil. "I can't stand it."

"I married him four years ago," she began abruptly. "I was eighteen years old. That's all I can say in excuse for myself. He had a kind of power over women. I—I was no better than the rest. But I was so ignorant! He was the kind of man to take advantage of a girl's ignorance. I mean he could make hateful things appear in a lovely light. God help me. I thought he was a kind of god! He wasn't the same then as when you saw him. His health suffered later. Why, he was only twenty. My parents were innocent and old-fashioned. They suspected no harm.

"When we were married I began to learn fast enough. I nearly died—I died a thousand deaths, not of a broken heart, but of broken pride. Why, I found out at last that—that—other women—were supporting us. What could I do? My only clear idea was to keep my father and mother from suspecting the truth. They would have blamed themselves. It would have killed them.

"It lasted for neary three years. Then he was obliged to leave Baltimore. Some horrible scandal that was quickly hushed up. I never knew. I never wanted to know. I went on living there. It was given out that he was traveling on business. That's what my parents thought. But I had to have money to live. My parents were poor. I couldn't go to them without telling the truth. So I let it be known that I was going to join him in New York, and I came here to earn my living. Drawing was my only talent.

"I struggled along. It doesn't matter how. Finally, three months ago, I came to the house on Fourteenth street. I was at the lowest ebb. Mr. Tolsen befriended me. He never asked for the rent. Then, ever so slowly, I began to get a foothold. But my husband happened to see in a newspaper one of the first drawings I sold. It was one I had made long ago for fun. He traced me by it, and found me. That was the same day that I first talked to you.

"He was penniless, too, but he did not tell me that. He was always boasting. He seemed very friendly. He got my story out of me a little at a time. I was not on my guard. He said Tolsen must be paid his rent at once. He couldn't have me beholden to any other man, he said. I—I was so pleased! I never thought—

"So I telephoned Mr. Tolsen to come down, and I would pay him. As soon as he came my husband dropped his pretense of good humor. I—I can scarcely tell you what happened . . . . But I must! Bad as he had been, I was not prepared for it. He—he accused Mr. Tolsen. How can I tell you! He accused Mr. Tolsen—and me!"

"Oh, God!" whispered Neil.

She laid a hand on his. "Hush!" she said. "I am a fool to make so much of telling you. It is all over."

"Don't go on unless you want to," said Neil.

"I want to," she said simply. She continued in a stronger voice. "My husband threatened to expose Mr. Tolsen to his wife—unless he paid. I was like a stone woman. I never spoke but once. Mr. Tolsen asked me if the man was my husband, and I said yes. After that he thought I was a party to the scheme. He was a rough, vulgar man, but kind-hearted. They said unrepeatable things to each other. I listened. Finally Mr. Tolsen knocked my—knocked him down.

"Kenneth shot him from the floor. I watched from the window. He took the money and the diamond, and shut the body in my closet. He left me without a word. But he had told me before where he lived.

"I—I walked the streets all night. I was out of my mind. Then I met you. My one idea was to keep my father and mother in ignorance. You know all the rest. When I got your note I went to his room while he was out, and stole the clothes.

"Now," she said with a strange look, "do you want a woman who has been dragged through the mud like that?"

"That's not fair!" cried Neil. "You make my protestations sound futile! As if the mud could touch you!"

"I know, but I wanted to hear them," she whispered. "What's to be done now?" she asked presently.

"I have no money," said poor Neil.

"That's not what I meant," she said quickly. "I have lived in a garret alone. How gladly I would share yours! But I have something to ask you."

"What?" said Neil vaguely, alarmed by her tone.

"Let me go away for a while."

"Laura! Don't you love me?"

"I adore you," she said simply.

"Then why—?"

"Just for awhile," she pleaded.

"Oh—conventions! Surely you owe his memory nothing."

"I thought you would say that," she said. "That's not it. Please—please, I am not ready. I cannot fight you any more. I will go with you—as women do, if you make me, and be happy too, as women are—but if you would let me be myself—if you would not smother poor me with your love, you'd win my soul too, and I'd be as happy as women seldom are."

"My darling!" he said, deeply moved. "I can wait!"

"You shall not lose by it," she promised.

"What are you going to do?" he asked anxiously.

"I'll have to lie once more, and for the last time," she said. "To my people, I mean. I'll say he died in the west. I will live and work at home for awhile."

"I may write to you?" he pleaded anxiously.

"Surely!" she said. "And often. But—don't misunderstand me, only friendly letters, please. If you should—well, make love to me— I know myself!—it will make me self-conscious and perverse and hateful. Just be my friend for the present."

(To be continued.)

Pass a Law.

Are your neighbors very bad?
Pass a law!
Do they smoke? Do they chew?
Are they bothering you?
Don't they do as you would do?
Pass a law!

Are your wages awful low?
Pass a law!
Are the prices much too high?
Do the wife and babies cry
'Cause the turkeys roost so high?
Pass a law!

When M. D. finds new diseases,
Pass a law!
Got the mumps or enfermitis,
Measles, croup or "expertitis"?
Lest we all should fly to pieces,
Pass a law!

Are the lights a-burning red?
Pass a law!
Paint 'em green, or paint 'em white,
Close up all them places tight!
My, our State is such a sight!
Pass a law!

No matter what the trouble is,
Pass a law!
Goodness sakes, but ain't it awful!
My! What are we going to do?
Almost anything ain't lawful—
And the Judge is human, too!
Pass a law!
—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

EVERY WOMAN'S RIGHT

To every woman belongs the right to enjoy a healthy, active, happy life, yet nine out of every ten suffer years of agony; usually from some form of bloodlessness That is why one sees on every side pale thin cheeks, dull eyes and drooping figures—sure signs of headaches, weak backs, aching limbs and uncertain health. All weak, suffering women should win the right to be well by refreshing their weary bodies with the new, rich, red blood that promptly transforms them into healthy, attractive women. This new, rich, red blood is supplied in abundance by Dr. Williams' Pink Pills which reaches every organ and every nerve in the body.

Through the use of these pills thousands of women have found a prompt cure when suffering from anaemia, indigestion, heart palpitation, rheumatism, general weakness, and those ailments from which women alone suffer. There is no part of this broad Dominion in which you will not find some former sufferer who has regained health and strength through the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and this is the reason why these pills have been a favorite household remedy for more than a generation. If you are ailing and will give the pills a fair trial you will find renewed health and happiness in their use.

You can get Dr. Williams' Pink Pills through any medicine dealer, or by mail, at 50 cents a box or six boxes for $2.50 from The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

GOT A WIFE

And Pioneer Did Not Forget His Promise.

In a new settlement in the thick forest, 20 miles or more from a city and ten miles from a railway, were located a sawmill and a few scattered homesteaders who worked at the mill when it was running and attended their little clearings at other times, relates a writer in the Chicago Tribune.

One day in the cook's camp, connected with the mill, the man and his wife in charge began joking the homesteader about being the only settler in the whole community without a wife and family.

"How can I help it?" said he. "There are no marriageable women that I know."

"Oh, there are lots of them that would be glad of a good home such as you could furnish," said they.

"Well, you just find me one," said the homesteader, "and I will make you a present of the best cow on the place."

Not to be bluffed, they accepted his proposition. Then they got busy, running over their list of acquantances in the city, finally selecting, for their matchmaking expedient, an estimable lady of their acquaintance, living with her married sister in the city.

The victim selected for the sacrifice had reached that age when unmarried women cease to celebrate birthdays and begin to regard the tapering end of statistical possibility with more or less concern. The homesteader was about the same age, and, evidently, just as much concerned about his future on earth. A friendly invitation was forthwith extended to the lady to spend a week with the cook's family at the camp. It was innocently accepted.

The homesteader was conveniently invited to a Sunday dinner with the cook's family, and the tragedy was staged.

A case of love and desperation at first sight. In the afternoon, chaperoned by the cook and his wife, the party casually strolled over to the homesteader's bungalow, where they found everything "spick and span," with just enough incongruity in the arrangement to make the fingers of an orderly housekeeper tingle with ambition to put things in their proper corners.

A few months later the records in the county clerks' office gave a hint of further developments, which were staged at the sister's home in the city. The happy couple at once settled in their new home "and lived happily ever afterward."

In the excitement the poor cow was crowded off the stage and forgotten by the matchmakers, but a short time later, looking out one morning, they saw Mr. Homesteader driving a cow into camp—as good as his word.

SWORD BRETHREN.

Home of Cult Was in Wenden, in Livonia.

The town of Wenden, one of the oldest in the province of Livonia, is situated a few miles by rail northeast of Riga. It is a picturesque place, built two miles from the left bank of the River Aa. The Aa flows in a southwesterly direction from this point through that portion of Russia known as the Livonian Switzerland, not on account of the height of mountains—the highest hill is only 265 feet—but because of the charm of the landscape with its well-wooded slopes bordering the river valley.

The story of Wenden goes back seven centuries to the time when the Brethren of the Sword, recognized by Pope Innocent III. in 1202, made this place their headquarters in the campaign inaugurated by them to disseminate Christianity among the heathen Livonians. A castle was built here in 1210, and though it is now scarcely more than a crumbling ruin, as it was never restored after the destructive fire of 1748, around it cluster many romantic and fascinating stories.

One of the most celebrated grand masters of the Brethren of the Sword was Walter von Plettenberg, who rose to power during the closing years of the fifteenth century, and was finally recognized as a prince of the empire by the Emperor Charles V. in 1527. Plettenberg also built the castle of Riga (1494-1505), which has fared better than the Wenden stronghold, for it is still used as the seat of the Russian authorities or rather, was used up to the time of Riga's fall.

The most tragic chapter in the history of Wenden was enacted in 1577 when the members of the garrison of the castle, besieged by the forces of the implacable Ivan the Terrible, blew themselves up rather than fall into the hands of the czar. The castle was soon repaired, however, and a short time thereafter was the residence of Patricius Nidecki, appointed bishop of Wenden in 1583 by Stephen Bathory, King of Poland.

TO PURIFY WATER.

Two Safe Ways by Which Typhoid Germs May be Destroyed.

One cannot judge the purity of water by its looks. Things visible to the naked eye are usually harmless. The invisible germs of disease are by far the more injurious to human beings.

Most people feel that drinking water is safe to use if it is cool, clear, sparkling and free from color or odor. Such is not the case. Even the sparkle may be due to decomposition products. The babbling brook usually contains more dangerous bacteria than standing water. Streams do not purify themselves by flowing over their rocky beds. The mistaken notion that they do is responsible for a great deal of vacation typhoid fever.

The safest method of destroying disease germs in water is by actual boiling. Boiling the water for five minutes will kill the germs of typhoid and allied diseases. Chlorine may also be used to disinfect the water.

A stock solution is made by taking a level teaspoonful of full strength chloride of lime and rubbing is up to a thin pasto free from lumps in a teacup with a little water. This should then be made up to a cupful and diluted with three more cupfuls of water and then poured into a bottle and tightly corked. Add a teaspoonful of this stock solution to each two gallon pail of drinking water, thoroughly mixing it and allowing it to stand for ten minutes. This will give about one-half part of free chlorine to a million parts of water, which will destroy all typhoid or dysentery producing germs.

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The Ointment to Soothe and Heal

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