

Misc and the Baby Orchid

By FRANK LOVELL NELSON

Carlton Clarke, Telepatho-Deductive Solver of Criminal Mysteries, Tries His Hand at a New Sort of Puzzle, Receiving Reward, Hon.

Bertie Hoppington Coming Into His Own and Chief Shipp Getting the Credit for the Feat.

N looking over my rather meager notes I often find it difficult to select among the countless cases in which I have been associated with Carlton Clarke the one that will best make you understand the reasons which caused this story to gain the fame as an outstanding mystery. It had gone far and wide and one day street corners presented a regular procession of clients as early and late as Clarke was willing to receive them.

Many of my readers doubtless will recall when the city was shocked by the mysterious murder of the Honorable Algernon Sidney Hoppington, such was the sensation at the time that it seems almost unnecessary now to go into the details. The crime, for crime it was upon the face, was discovered about four o'clock in the morning, and so great was the figure that the Honorable Algernon Sidney had cut during his three years' residence in Chicago, where he had come from England to claim the fortune running well into the millions, a fortune founded there on a great mine, that the newspapers held their entire mechanical force for a double-column extra.

I opened the door to admit our old friend, Inspector Wain Chief Shipp. It was not his first call at our humble quarters, for he had long since discovered where to come for a quiet tip that demanded none of the official credit in return, and many a stubborn case had he laid before Clarke.

He had him back into the dining room. Clarke merely nodded and continued to sip his coffee and puff at his cigarette, while he watched the chief and waited for him to speak.

"Well, Mr. Wizard, I suppose you know what I'm here for before I tell you," said the chief.

"Yes, I should say it is the Hoppington case. I am afraid I will have to revise the estimate of the affair. It was just delivered to me by the chief here. Not so simple as it looked then. Tell us about it. Haven't the servants put you on the right track?"

"Not within a thousand miles of the track. They don't know anything. Hoppington was writing in his library at eleven o'clock. He called the butler, Biffin, to get him a bottle of wine. Half an hour later he came out to the dining room, where Biffin was with Bryson, the other man servant, and handed them the bottle. Biffin told them to finish it. They did and that is the last they remember. Drugged, I suppose. I have the bottle with the few drops that were left and will have them analyzed. The three meals had been entertaining company, some of my men, it appears, in the kitchen. They had just let them out 'the back way' and had gone into the butler's pantry to get a bit to eat before going up to bed. Hoppington slammed and they heard the bolt shot and they were locked in. About an hour afterward, as near as I can gather from their hysterical memory of what happened, they heard a piercing female scream ring through the house.

"And look here! Found it on the lower step of the stoop," and the chief drew from his pocket a bundle and on unrolling it displayed a tiny white slipper, a No. 1 A. It was literally soaked in blood.

"A woman's work, you think?" queried Clarke.

"At the Hoppington number we found one of those square red stone mansions typical of the period immediately following the fire.

"Ah, he was a fanatic of orchids, I see," remarked Clarke.

"Humph!" snorted the chief. "I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about, but if you're looking for clues there are the knife and the slipper, that are worth more than all your old orchids put together for my purposes."

"Once out of the house Clarke exclaimed: "Quick, Boston, a cab. We'll beat the chief at that little game."

I hailed a passing hansom and Clarke directed the driver to get to the Auditorium hotel in the quickest possible time.

out some criminal design of his own or that he was tricked into doing it as a part of the plot that was his undoing.

"The knife thrust through the table seems to suggest either pure bravado or an excess of murderous passion that is not normal for any other design of struggle in the room. The satin slipper and the telephone call are the points of evidence added by the woman. She may have stepped into the blood and shaken off the slipper, not to avoid being tracked, for she thereby left a dangerous clue, but because it would be easier to explain a lost slipper than one soaked with blood. But here I was faced by a stone wall and I could go no further."

"Absolutely nothing," I said blankly.

"Of course not, but read this and see if it throws any light on it. I clipped it from this morning's paper."

It was an item from the personal intelligence column and it said: "Capt. Fitzhugh Graham, the famous English ocean lion, arrived in the city yesterday after a six months' stay in the Philippines and registered at the Auditorium Annex."

"What Fitzhugh Graham," said Clarke to the clerk at the desk, tendering our cards.

The captain hastily cleared two chairs for us. "Mr. Clarke understands that is a fancier of orchids," he said as his eyes wandered longingly from one to the other of us.

"The captain hangs over the back of his chair with boredom written on his face. There was no flaw in his acting, if acting it was, as he carelessly remarked:

"You have been well informed, Mr. Clarke, but I forget to say that the Odontoglossum stood the trip badly, as you know they nearly always do. It was not such a specimen as I would care to offer. In fact I had determined not to spoil Hoppington's collection with one if he had been murdered, and this morning I had the slave throw it out. If that is all you will kindly excuse me and I will continue my journey, I am leaving for London this afternoon."

"Clarke glanced quickly from Graham to me, and I thought I detected wariness in his eyes. The captain watched him with apparent nonchalance, but there was something in his attitude which suggested the crouch of a tiger ready for the leap.

"Clarke suddenly reached over and threw open the door of the humidor. Within there was an orchid of surprising beauty.

"Yes, there are three, and Captain Graham, you have lied."

The metamorphosis to the tiger was sudden and complete. Half half the length of the room the captain leaped, knocking over two chairs in his flight through the air, while his long sinewy fingers clutched at the throat of Clarke. It was so sudden that I could not seem able to gather the thought necessary to bring my finger to the trigger of my revolver. A look of intense pain crossed the captain's face, the arm became nerveless and in a moment more his huge bulk of a body hung over and Clarke bore it easily and gently to the floor, then reaching for the other hand, clicked on the beautifully carved pair of nickel-plated handcuffs, daintily at a lady's knee, that he always carried in his hip pocket.

"On the coming of the chief relieved a situation that was becoming tense.

Clarke stood haughtily at the head of the room, and in the auditorium evidently had ended in mastery, for he quietly interposed.



His long sinewy fingers closed about the throat of Clarke.

our bill and hurried out. It was plain as day. At the opera together at eleven, to Hoppington's by cab between that hour and midnight. The captain, whoever she might be, was too closely connected with the action of the night before to not know something at least.

"When we reached the Victorian we were aware of unwanted excitement in the neighborhood of that usually quiet street. A police ambulance and a patrol wagon, led by the door discharging their load of blue-coats. Several active young men whom I immediately spotted as reporters were hurrying into the lobby. One of them whom I knew, Nevins of the Globe, I gripped by the shoulder and asked for an explanation.

"Countess of Serrynour, or something committed suicide in her room. Come on with me."

"The woman who had been learned now five minutes before and with whom that every moment. She was fully dressed, about thirty years of age and beautiful even in death, with her deep olive complexion, her features of a mind evidently had been raging in his mind evidently had ended in mastery, for he quietly interposed.

"Clarke, Clarke, I've got her," I almost shouted, thrusting the paper at him.

The item was prowling under the head of Secty Notes and it said: "Among the occupants of the boxes at the performance of Alda by the Metropolitan Opera last night were Captain Fitzhugh Graham and Countess Evelyn Serrynour of London."

"Quickly a telephone," ordered Clarke, and the obsequious waiter set an instrument on the table and connected it with the wall switch. He soon had my own newspaper office and asked for the society editor.

ness the letter and I'll let you in on the biggest story you ever pulled off. Trust me and you'll go into the office with the full story of the Hoppington murder."

This was bad enough and he took the letter from his pocket. I glanced at the address. It was "Captain Fitzhugh Graham."

"We've got it, quick! Out of here!" I whispered, catching Clarke's eye and beckoning him to follow.

A few minutes later we were at central station and with the chief in Graham's cell.

Clarke handed him the letter. His face blanched as he glanced at the address, but he pulled himself together, broke the seal and read the contents. Then, not for Clarke catch him, he would have fallen lifeless to the cell floor. We laid him on the bunk and the jail attendants rushed in and applied the usual restoratives.

The chief had picked up the letter which had fallen from Graham's fingers. He read it and passed it to us. I give it verbatim.

"Beloved, Kismet is too strong for us. There is but one way out and I shall take it for the sake of your life. You only have to read this and you will see how I give it verbatim.

deeply in love with her at first sight and he laid siege to her heart as persistently as ever he followed a rare specimen of orchid. That she returned his love he was sure, but there was a restraint in her relations with him that he could not fathom. Finally when riding to hounds they found themselves far from the track. Night was coming on a beautiful moonlight night that to lover could resist.

They leaped their horses side by side along the hidden path he took her in his arms across the middle. She struck and freely yielded and their lips met in one long, passionate kiss. At last she freed herself and told her pitiful story. She could not marry him. She could not in honor say that she loved him. She was already the wife of another, wedded before the registrar, although she did not tell him this man was the Hon. Algernon Sidney Hoppington. The marriage must be kept secret because if Hoppington married against the wishes or without the knowledge and consent of the husband, the marriage would be void all right to his vast estate. Yes, she had thought she loved him, but now— but she might not say, though sealed her lips.

This honor Graham respected, and he accepted his fate like a man and sought to forget his long journey attendant upon his chosen vocation. But Kismet was too strong for them. Hoppington came into his fortune and a woman's curiosity to know what was going on got the better of her, and she determined to go to Chicago secretly, and, if necessary, fight it out there to the conclusion of a recognition of her rights or an absolute divorce.

Kismet brought Capt. Graham to Chicago at the same time to sell to Hoppington the baby orchid. Kismet placed them in hotels but a black apart and Kismet engineered their meeting on Michigan boulevard.

Would she share his box at the opera that night, yes, she had nothing to object to. She was to be assumed of, and a neglected wife's right to do as she pleased. If her husband was aware of her presence in the city, he had not intended to do so. It would be sufficient excuse for my visit."

"Hang it, let's have it over with tonight," the captain blurted. "I'll go out there with you. Hearty hour to call, but I have the orchid, and that will be sufficient excuse for my visit."

So she yielded to his plan and they took a carriage and drove out to Hoppington's home, laying their plans on the way. They drove past the house once before stopping, as there already was a carriage at the door. As they did so they saw the door open and Hoppington in his nightgown and an over-affected good light to a rather flashy dressed young woman, who then flew down the steps, jumped into the cab, and was driven quickly away.

"And that," Lady Evelyn had said, laying her hand on Capt. Graham's arm, "is why I am cast off."

"And that," again interrupted Clarke, "is why he dragged his servants and locked up his maid."

Then they executed their coup. Capt. Graham went in first, leaving Hoppington returning to find his wife's face to face with his wife. The orchid seller was gone.

High words followed after his first surprise was over, bitter words that coupled the name of the countess with that of the captain in a way that made Graham clench his fists and grit his teeth to keep from dashing from the dark corner looting the stairway where she had his promise to remain no matter what happened short of actual violence.

Then she charged him with the woman they had seen leaving the door.

"And you know that, you she devil," he snarled, rushing upon her with uplifted fist.

He halted to notice that she was toying with a keeponed hunting knife in an ornamental box. The captain rushed out, but he was too late. Involuntarily, Graham maintained, and for the sake of the head and neck of his wife, he had to let us believe so, she had raised the knife, the whole force of his body came against it, and it sank into his chest.

The countess gave a piercing scream, and then the house was still. They were alone with the dead. When the horror of the deed had settled upon her for them to think of the future, Graham drew the knife from the wound, and lifting it high over her head, brought it down with all the power of his muscular right arm. The blade sank through the wood up to the hilt.

"There," he said, "no matter what comes, darling, no woman's hand did it."

"Though innocent in everything, the very manner of their being in the house was against them. They planned to return to their hotel, keep close for a day to avoid the suspicion of a quick departure, and then leave Chicago for some quiet place to live. But the lost slipper on the stoop, the baby orchid and Kismet willed otherwise.

And who sent the telephone message to the police? Was it the woman as they had seen who later returned and discovered the crime? Was it the countess who shuddered to think of the man she once thought she loved, and whose name she had a right to bear, lying there dead and alone? Graham did not know, and we did not.

I have no doubt but that Graham's story, told as we heard it to the coroner's jury would have set him scot-free but some complication, some fever doubtless that he had picked up in the tropics, set in and proved too much for his weakened body. The law had no chance to correct the error of his arrest.

Syrup of Figs and Elixir of Senna. Cleanses the System Effectually, Disperses Colds and Headaches due to Constipation; Acts naturally, acts truly as a Laxative. Best for Men, Women and Children—Young and Old. To get its Beneficial Effects Always buy the Genuine which has the full name of the Company.

CALIFORNIA FIG SYRUP CO. by whom it is manufactured, printed on the front of every package. SOLD BY ALL LEADING DRUGGISTS, one size only, regular price 50¢ per bottle.

NOT DOLLARS, BUT EGGS.

First Theoplian—When I was playing in Kansas City and getting my 200 a night—

Second Ditto—Hold on, there, Mott; make that five!

First Theoplian—No, Jack; you my honor—200 a night regular. Eggs are cheap there.

A BOON TO SUFFERERS. Attention is called to the "Miraculous Cures Remedies" of Dr. Robert Gray of Pichucaco, Chiapas, Mexico, which is advertised on another page of this paper. Dr. Gray is a very old American physician who for the past forty-two years has been engaged in tropical practice. He is no quack and he has no medicine to sell.

It is well known among the members of the medical profession in the United States, where he has attained an enviable reputation as a talented writer on medical subjects, many physicians sending him money to secure one or another of his special systems of treating diseases. Hence it is certain that his scientific and professional reputation would not permit him to issue a prescription not having a high grade of merit.

Push-and-Pull exercise. One of the fat-limbed men of New York has a novel method of keeping himself in fine fettle. It is a push-and-pull exercise. In the basement of his home, which has a covered concrete floor, he has installed several wheeled objects. One is a safe weighing two tons. Another is a box of chains that used to belong to a Stateside steam ferry boat as a ballast; it weighs 9,000 pounds. Still another is a cast-off balloon cart that used to do duty in the assay office. It weighs 1,000 pounds, but may be loaded with pig iron to 15,000 pounds. The exercise consists in pulling and pushing these vehicles over the floor, and judging by the development of our friend, it is effective. His general strength is prodigious, and there is no muscle-binding.—New York Press.

Head of Firm to Old bookkeeper—Henry, you've kind for me for 30 years, and during that time you have been faithful and your work has been satisfactory. But you are now so old that we must replace you with a younger man. We are very grateful to you, Henry, and of course, we'll do the right thing. Have you saved?

Henry—I couldn't, sir, with my large family.

One of the sisters of a Chinese mission in Philadelphia became interested in two Chinamen who, she found, owned a flourishing laundry business. She looked in once in awhile to see how things were going with them, and one morning found Sam snuffed and cheerful, as usual, but John was missing.

"Where is John this morning?" she asked.

"Oh," answered Sam amiably, "Christian gentleman hit him in the head with a brick, and he all same in hospital."

NO GUSHER. But Telling Facts About Postum.

"We have used Postum for the past eight years," writes a Wis. lady, "and drink it three times a day. We never tire of it."

"For several years I could scarcely eat anything on account of dyspepsia, bloating, after meals, palpitation, sleeplessness, and in fact was in a wretched and distressful condition on hot water and doctors for nearly a year."

"I had quite enough of the cause of my trouble, and was using hot water, but this was not mending. I was drinking Postum in the morning and evening, and it was doing me good. I was drinking Postum both before and after eating, while yet drinking coffee. My husband was a great coffee drinker and suffered from indigestion and headache."