

THE STORY THUS FAR: Adam Drew, PR operator, on a trip to his old home, one rainy late afternoon, discovers Tope Jim Tope, Tope found a man murdered at a gate entrance to the Hannis. Mrs. Tope said the man was Mr. Ledlerge, head of New England utilities. Holden, friend of Ledlerge, was found unconscious in hospital. His papers, but had disappeared. Tope believed Mrs. Kell's body would be found in autumn of preceding in Holden's car. Ledlerge was said to be off-duty to be in New York. Friends, who worked at the casino, came running in and said that there was a man in the cabinet—Tope and Adam found Kell looking where the murdered man was found.

CHAPTER VIII

The big man looked from one to the other. "Why—you, sir," he said abstractly at last. "My nerve's Kell."

"That's much better." Tope nonchalantly. "Where's the Holden Insurance?"

But Kell responded with a counter question, his cheek suddenly purple, his whole body shaking with a sort of passion.

"Where's my wife?" he cried. "Where's Mrs. Kell? Where is she? What have you done with her?"

Tope said simply. "We haven't seen her, Kell. Was that why you came here? To look for her?"

"She's gone!" Kell cried deeper shrilly. "She's gone! I heard in the village that there was some one staying here. I thought it might be her—"

The inspector looked at Kell's face, and he demanded:

"Let me see your shoes—the bottoms of them."

Kell, after a moment, lifted one foot, standing on the other; and Tope turned the lifted foot with his hand to look at the sole. Kell toppled and almost fell, and Tope released his ankle, caught his arm, steadied him. Then the old man asked:

"Do you ever wear bedclothes?"

Kell's eyes flickered. "No sir!"

"Sure?"

"Why—I've got an old pair of shoes with pickle on them."

"Worn them lately?"

"No sir."

Tope nodded; and he said: "Kell, there were some things in the pockets of those overalls this dead man wore, a valve-clearance gauge, and a knife with a steel handle marked in a scale, inches and centimeters. Did you ever see a knife like that?"

Kell shook his head stubbornly.

"Well, that's funny." Tope protested. "That's queer! You work for Holden, you're his chauffeur. You live over his garage. Well, his dog blanket came from his garage; and the overalls and sweater came out of the machine shop behind the garage, where you keep your work clothes. I think they are yours. They're big enough to fit you. You're an Englishman. That knife came from England. I never saw one like it in this country."

"I heard that the coupe came here," Kell muttered. "And she was in it. She drove it away from the house."

"Well," said Tope, "I don't know where she is, but I can tell you where the car is. It's in the quarry hole, up in the mountains above the Holden place. We're lifting it out tomorrow."

Kell uttered a low, startled ejaculation; and Tope stopped, expecting the man to speak. When Kell did not, the Inspector demanded:

"Have anything about that?"

"Sir?" The answer was prompt. "I suppose you didn't put it there?"

Kell cried harshly, on the verge of hysteria: "No!"

"All right." Tope said sharply, grinding his advantage. "Why didn't you bring Holden and Ledlerge up here to their house last Friday?" And, quickly: "Now, don't lie. We know you left New York, with them in the car; and we know you got home alone. What did you do with Ledlerge and Holden on the way?"

After a moment Kell answered: "Why—I had engine trouble, sir. It looked like a long job to fix it, so they hailed a car and got a ride to Springfield, told me they'd come up home by train. I got the car fixed quicker than I expected, and came on, and met the train at Mechanicsburg, but they weren't on it."

"Huh!" said Tope incredibly. "Took you long enough to think of that! Where have you been since then?"

"Looking for Mrs. Kell—places I thought she might be."

"Where?"

"Well, one was in Boston, and one in Worcester. Then Mr. Ledlerge had a lodge back in the hills where he sometimes went for a rest. I thought she might be there."

"Why?" Tope demanded; and Kell hesitated, did not answer. Tope urged: "Well, was she?"

"No sir," said Kell, and Tope demanded sharply:

"But you found some one there?"

"Mr. Eberly was there. But he hadn't seen her."

"Eberly?" Tope looked at Adam. "He's down now?"

"Yes sir. He and Mr. Ledlerge sometimes went there together."

Tope frowned, started and dismissed. "Did Mr. Eberly know Mrs. Kell?"

"Oh, no sir, but he said no one had been there."

And Tope suddenly was calm. "Well," he said. "I'm sorry about your wife. Don't think she—hoped—[illegible]. Not—had she any trouble? Were you jealous of her?"

"She was all right, sir," Kell protested. He added: "But I couldn't help being jealous of her. She'd go away, week-ends when I'd be at home, and when I couldn't go with her, with Mr. Holden keeping me busy all the time."

"Where would she go?"

"She always told me where she was going, but—I tried to telephone her, sometimes, and she wasn't where she'd started for." He wiped his brow heavily. "It made me crazy, sir," he confessed.

Adam realized—and his hair prickled at the thought—that Kell spoke of Mrs. Kell in the past tense, as though she were dead.

Tope asked: "Where were you last week-end? Ten days ago? Up here, or in New York?"

"In New York, sir. Mr. Holden couldn't get away."

"Mr. Ledlerge in New York?"

"I don't know, sir."



"Sorry, Kell, but I am acting for the law in this matter."

"Mrs. Kell?"

"I went to Boston to see her cousin."

Tope nodded; and he went on, insistently: "You used to work for Mr. Ledlerge. How did you happen to leave him?"

"Mr. Holden wanted me."

"Did Mrs. Kell approve of the change?"

"You see. She didn't like my working for Ledlerge."

"Did you? Was he a good boss?"

"You could never tell about him," Kell explained, almost cheerfully. "One day he might be as friendly as you could ask; and the next day he might not speak to you at all, sir. You wouldn't know him for the same man."

Tope stared at the big man for a long time. Then he asked casually: "Mr. Holden?—are you all right, did he?"

"You sir!" The big man was at ease now, quite off guard.

And Tope asked sharply: "Then why did you hit him over the head and leave him beside the road down near Hartford Saturday morning, unconscious, with a fractured skull?"

Kell stared, where he stood, and his ruddy cheeks drained white. "Why did you?" Tope insisted. "Why, Kell?"

There had been no warning in his manner, nothing to shatter Kell to uncertainty. And the man stammered now:

"He told me to, sir! Made me!"

Adam, at this admission, whistled soundlessly, and grinned with delight at Tope's shrewd guess so incredibly confirmed.

"Ledlerge?" Tope said curtly. "You mean to say he told you to hit him?"

"No, sir. Just to hit him," Kell urged, almost pleadingly. "He turn over his head. He told me to hit him and leave him."

He stopped suddenly, and Tope prompted: "Go on! Go on!" And when Kell was silent, Tope said harshly: "Come, Kell! Was Mr. Holden because he told you to. What's the rest of it?"

But Kell, a new strength in him now, put on a mask of courtesy, of surveillance surprise.

"I, sir?" he said. "I don't know what you mean, sir. Mr. Holden sent! Not badly, I hope, sir!"

Tope grinned, and he looked at Adam. Adam, in turn, looked at him. "The man's my match for me, Adam," he said. "I guess he could help us if he wanted to. I judge he doesn't know that Mrs. Kell really spent last week-end—"

Kell said furiously: "Keep your hot guns off her!"

Tope smiled on him. Having goaded Kell to anger, he was about to press his advantage; but he saw to Kell's eyes an insane fury which checked him. It was not fear that restrained him, but rather a relentless consideration for this harried man, and something like sympathy.

He said straightforwardly: "Sorry, Kell! But I'm acting for the law in this matter; and Mr. Bruce here represents the Federal Government, Department of Justice. I suppose you know that you're involved in a serious affair. Kidnaping is serious, Kell. And so is—murder. I won't press you; but if you told us a little more, it might help in straightening things out, and—in finding your wife."

Kell stood grimly silent, twitching and shaking.

"Come on," Tope urged. "Independent the Ridgecrest police that the coupe had been stolen—telephoned from New York. You didn't do that, did you? You weren't in New York Saturday morning, were you?"

"No sir," said Kell.

Then they all heard a car on the drive, and Tope spoke to Adam. "That may be Mat," he said; and to Kell, while Bruce turned toward the door: "This is Mr. Cumberland, the District Attorney, Kell. I'm afraid he'll ask you, up." As Kell cried: "If we get any trace of Mrs. Kell, I'll let you know."

Then Cumberland came in, Mrs. Tope beside him. Adam admitted them both, shut the door.

Tope made explanations, summed up Kell's statements—and silences. Mrs. Tope spoke quickly.

"Inspector," she suggested. "Kell would know Mr. Ledlerge if he saw him."

Tope's eyes quickened. "That's right," he agreed. He chuckled. "Ma'am, I never thought of that. Of course he would." He spoke to Cumberland, eagerly. "Let's get up there—let Kell see him, see if he knows him."

A moment later they were all in Cumberland's car, and soon they turned into the byway that led to Arcana Stevens's farm. The widow Stevens of Will Benton, the quarryman, was backed up to the kitchen stove; a laden stretcher was just being wheeled out of the kitchen as they arrived. Arcana Stevens, heavy, gentlewise, stout, stood in the light of doorway.

They approached the stretcher; and Cumberland said to the under-taker: "Will, let this man see him?"

A sheet was turned back: an elderly bitch threw its head; on the dead man's white face. Tope and Adam found Kell forward.

"Look at him, Kell," Tope directed.

And Kell—though they could feel the muscles in his arms contracted behind steadily enough upon the dead man.

"Yes! Mr. Ledlerge!" Tope demanded.

Kell shook his head. In the waiting silence his hoarse tones were clear.

"No sir," he said sullenly.

When Will Benton heard Tope speak Ledlerge's name, he grunted nasally, incredulous, astonished. He cried:

"Ledlerge! The Utilities man?"

Mat Cumberland started to speak; but Tope interrupted him. "You're Will Benton?" he asked crisply.

"Yes."

"Well, I want you to forget what you've heard," Tope sternly directed. "This isn't Ledlerge. You heard Kell say so. Now get along to town, Doctor Medford here?"

"He's gone ahead, going to send one of my men. Reuben said somethin' up, and hitched to his tank. When the ambulance was gone, Tope spoke to Cumberland. "Mat, this young Dana?" he asked.

"Yes, to telephone awhile ago that Holden can make the trip in-surance. They'll be here by noon."

Tope nodded, and he spoke to Cumberland. "You'd want to lock Kell up, of course. Bring Mrs. Tope and me at the Will, and then you can take him along to town."

Back at the Will, they found Sid Quill talking at the door with Ben Devain. The trooper reported to Tope. "Well, sir, I've been up at the quarry. Got some workmen on the job. They say they can get the car out of there tomorrow morning."

Tope nodded, and he said: "Quill, this man is Kell, Holden's chauffeur."

"Sure, I know him," Sid agreed.

"We caught him in Fairway awhile ago. Tope explained. "He probably came in the limousine, but it turned near here somewhere. See if you can find it."

"O.K." Quill assented.

The District Attorney suggested, almost regretfully: "You know, Tope, if this had been Ledlerge, we could find plenty of people around that might have had a grudge against him. Most of us pay heavy into his generation. Arcana Devain, for one."

"Whoever killed the man, it wasn't anyone around here, Mat," Tope said shortly.

"How do you know?"

"Because some one from outside is checking up on it. I told you there were two cars here Monday night trying to trace the car—Whalen took and Neal. They stopped away early. I'd like to talk to them; but there's no telling where they are now!"

Ben Devain said triumphantly: "Oh, yes, Jerry is. Independent! They're back—came back a few minutes ago. Mrs. Priddy's giving them supper right now."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL
SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson

Lesson for January 20

LESSON SUBJECT AND SCRIPTURE

THE LAWS OF A PEOPLE

LESSON TEXT—Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 22:34-40.

GOLDEN TEXT—I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.—Psalm 119:47.

Law is necessary to order. Ruskin's laws have been laid down by God for the orderly administration of His universe.

Physical laws are of great importance, but of even deeper significance are the moral and spiritual laws which control the human life. There is in the world a moral law—a distinction between right and wrong—which man may ignore only to his own sorrow, and which he cannot abrogate or destroy. All laws of men which are true and right are founded on this underlying moral law, and they are in reality simply a development and interpretation of "God's Code of Morals"—the Ten Commandments.

These fundamental laws were given to Israel at Mount Sinai, but they speak to us with remarkable freshness and directness. They merit more extensive study than we can give them in this limited space, but we can note their broad outlines and certain practical applications. There are two divisions—our supreme duty in his relation to God, and the other in his relation to men. We have:

I. A Right View of God (vv. 1-11). The first and most important question to be asked regarding any law is, "By whom was it established?" Legislation by an unauthorized person or organization has no power over others. Who gave the Ten Commandments? Verse 1 tells us God spoke all these words."

How true must at theology as being unfounded, but the fault is that Unitarian doctrine is the only safe foundation for Christian character.

1. Whom to Worship (vv. 3-6). There can be but one true God, and He alone is to be worshiped. He is a personal being, ready to enter into communion with each one of us. No image or likeness can take His place. Bowing down before idols, no matter what they may be called, is expressly forbidden by God.

2. How to Worship (vv. 4, 7). We are to love Him and to keep His commandments. There is in be no share about this, for no matter how sweet and pious may be the praise and prayer of man, he take when the Lord's name in vain unless he keeps the Lord's commandments by holy living.

3. When to Worship (vv. 8-11). God has ordained that man should not incessantly bear the burden of toil. He is to have a day of rest and a time for worship, unhurried by the duties and responsibilities of daily life.

America needs a mighty stirring up about the desecration of the Lord's day. The pioneers of the last generation fought a valiant battle against a rising tide of secularism and worldly pleasure. Now no one seems to care. Do you? "Six days shalt thou labor." Give God one day out of seven.

II. A Right View of Man (vv. 12-17).

To be right with God means that we will also be right with our fellowman. Conversely, the man who is manifestly wrong in his relation to his fellowman is either not right with God at all, or he is not living out his Christian life to its proper extent. This should show in:

1. Family Life (v. 12). The fifth commandment has to do with the relation between child and parent. There is a plain and direct command that father and mother should be honored. Only in respect and obedience to parents can the child possibly find true and proper development.

Parents who have permitted children to go astray during the war years will need to stress anew the God-required obedience to their authority.

2. Physical Life (vv. 13, 14). God is interested in our bodies. Already we have noted His provision for a day of rest each week. Now we are reminded of the sanctity of human life. "Thou shalt not kill," and remember there are many other ways to kill a man other than shooting him.

Let us be sure that we are not a party to the destruction of anyone's life either by reason of carelessness or greed.

Note the emphasis on adultery. Moral uncleanness, which is as serious a crime in our day, is one of the most effective methods of destroying the body even while degrading and defiling the soul with sin.

3. Social Life (vv. 15-17). "Thou shalt not steal"—and remember and remember appropriation of what does not belong to you is stealing, call it what you will. And "false witness"—how it has transpired our very civilization! Not a little of it is found within the church, even among those who call themselves "evangelicals"—which has been called one of the "respectable sins of nice people." It is subtle and often hidden. Let us seek it out of our own lives by God's grace.

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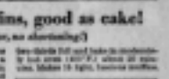
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