CRUCIBLE

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

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SYNOPSIS

Barbara Sentry, seeking to sober up her escort, Johnnie Boyd, on the way home from a party, slaps him, and attracts the attention of a policeman, whom the boy knocks down. As he arrests him, Professor Brace of Harvard comes to the rescue and drives Barbara home. On the way they see Barbara's father driving from the direction of his office at 12:45, but when he gets home he tells his wife it is 11:15 and that he's been playing bridge at the club. Next morning, while Barbara is telling her mother about her adventure, an urgent phone call comes from Mr. Sentry's office after his departure. Arriving home in the late afternoon, Sentry reports his office has been robbed and a Miss Wines, former temporary employee, killed. The evening papers luridly confirm the story, and Sentry takes it hard. Mary, elder daughter, in love with Neil Ray, young interne at the hospital where she works, goes off to dinner at Gus Loran's, Sentry's partner, with Mrs. Loran's brother, Jimmy Endle. Mr. and Mrs. Sentry call on old Mrs. Sentry, and Barbara, alone, receives Dan Fisher, reporter, who advises her not to talk. Phil Sentry, son at Yale, is disturbed at the possible implications and suspicion of Miss Wines' absence from her rooms for three days during August.

CHAPTER III—Continued

—6—

He decided to go home for a day or two; to surprise them. He dressed, packed his bag, had breakfast, and took a train for Boston. If he had sent word ahead, old Eli would have met him; but since Phil did not do so, there was no one at the station. A taxi would have taken him quickly home, but as though he had himself been guilty of some misdemeanor, he was suddenly reluctant to face them all. To put off the hour of that encounter, he walked over to Trinity Place and waited for a suburban train that would deposit him near his home. He remembered that his grandmother, old Mrs. Sentry, always came out for Sunday dinner and stayed through the afternoon and for supper, and he was glad she would be there. She was always sensible and shrewd.

The train arrived and he got aboard, and after the short run alighted. It was dusk when, bag in hand, he set out to walk to his home, his feet lagging miserably. Then a car pulled in at the curb beside him, and someone called in a laughing tone; "Carry your bag, Mister? Taxi, Mister?"

It was Linda Dane. There had been comradeship between them, a real affection, since they were children. He tossed his bag into the rumble, climbed in beside her.

"Hullo, Lin," he said, gripping her hand. "Gosh, I'm glad to see you!"

"Me too," she agreed. "Where've you been? Where you going? What are you home for?" She hesitated. "Oh, this beastly thing in the papers, of course. Isn't it rotten! I hope they get whoever did it and just—just skin him alive. But it's a shame you all have to be dragged into it!" She touched his hand. "Never mind. It won't last long. I'll take you home. How's Joe?"

"Fine," Phil told her. "Saw him yesterday."

"Wasn't it wonderful that you won? The game must have been just thrilling." She turned into his street.

"Drive around a while, can you?" he asked. "I don't want to go in yet."

She looked at him quickly. "Phil? Are you in a jam?" She laughed softly. "Is it something disgraceful? Shouldn't I be seen with you?"

"Oh, no. I just want to—"

They passed his home without stopping and went on. "Where shall I drive?" she asked.

"Around the park, James!" he told her, grinning; and he asked, "Lin, how are they all taking it?"

She hesitated. "Pretty hard, I'm afraid."

"How's Barb?"

"I was with her when she first saw the papers. She was scared, Phil. But she's trying to—keep them cheered up now."

"Sure! She would!"

"I went home with her. She hoped you would come."

"I thought I'd better." He said: "You and Barb and I will have to stick together. We always have, haven't we?"

"Always have," she agreed. "Three Musketeers."

"You always were the level-headed one. I'm glad I ran into you now. I'll be needing you, Lin."

"I'll be around. But I've got to take you home, now, Phil. I'm due for supper."

"Right! Sorry if I've made you late. I was sort of scared to go in. As if it were my fault."

"Everybody's that way. When anything happens, you always want to say, 'I didn't do it!' "

He chuckled, clasped her hand where it lay on the wheel. "You're a good kid, Lin," he said, a little surprised at himself, wondering why he said this, glad he had said it.

"You used to call me a brat!"

"You used to be one," he retorted. "But you're outgrowing it. I've had my eye on you. Oh, you play around with the crowd, and you can be the life of the party and all that; but I've noticed you keep your head, too. When the ocean waves dash high, you're the stern and rock-bound coast. You'll do to take along!"

She looked straight ahead, smiling faintly. "You need someone to take along, Phil," she said gently. "You're not a very steady craft, yourself, when high seas are running."

"I know. A good time is apt to go to my head. You've brought me down to earth more than once."

She chuckled. "Both feet on the ground?"

"Funny," he reflected, "that you and I have never been—sentimental about each other. I kid around with other girls, and probably you have your moments too. But we don't get that way. I wonder why."

"I wonder," she echoed, eyes on the road.

"We're just darned good friends. But whenever I've got anything on my mind, I like to talk it over with you."

"Me too," she agreed, and swung into the drive in front of his house. "Here we are, Phil." She stopped the car and looked at him, waiting for him to get out; and he looked at her, and hesitated, and after a moment she laughed softly and asked, "Is this what you're thinking?" And leaned toward him.

He kissed her. "Thanks, Lin," he said. "That helps a lot. I dread going in."

"Poor Phil. Keep your chin up," she bade him. "And—come see me, 'bye!"

She drove away, and he carried his bag up the steps and—since the door was always locked—rang. Oscar and Nellie were out on Sunday evenings, so it was Barbara who came to the door.

"Phil!" she cried.

She caught him and kissed him. He felt her tremble and held her and whispered:

"Hey, Barb! You're shaking."

"Oh, I'm so darned glad you've come, Phil," she murmured. "Today's been awful!"

Mrs. Sentry called from the dining room, "Is that you, Phil?" He winked at Barbara reassuringly, and went in.

His mother said, "We're just sitting down." She looked at him searchingly. Phil saw that his father was almost haggard; thought these last two days must have been a strain. "We didn't expect you," his mother added. "Is anything wrong, Phil?"

"Gosh, no," he protested. "I saw the papers, thought you might need me."

"Isn't it exciting, Phil?" Barbara cried.

Mrs. Sentry said sharply, "Barbara! Don't talk like a shop girl!"

Barbara hesitated; she said almost pleadingly: "I'm sorry, mother! I'm just trying to—be the comic relief or something. We're all so gloomy. Can't we be a little cheerful, please?"

"It's hardly a time for cheerfulness," her mother retorted.

Phil, beginning to eat, said hurriedly: "I've only seen the papers. Is there anything that isn't in them?"

Mrs. Sentry answered him. "No, Phil. At least, nothing that we know. Of course the police are doing everything they can. Inspector Irons was here this afternoon to see your father. Something about the key, wasn't it, Arthur?"

Mr. Sentry nodded. "She had a key to the back door, Phil," he explained. "They found it in her pocketbook. The Inspector wanted to know whether I gave it to her, but I couldn't help him. I suppose she stole it while she was working for us."

Mary asked suspiciously, "Phil, why did you come home?"

"Oh, I'm just celebrating," he assured her. "That was some game, yesterday! The best I ever saw. I'm still hoarse from it."

"You look as though you had celebrated all night!"

He grinned in an irritated fashion. "Since you took up nursing you're keen on symptoms! No wonder doctors' families always have something the matter with them, with someone like you around."

There was a moment's silence; and then Mr. Sentry asked quietly, "Sure there's nothing wrong, Phil?"

"No, father. I just felt like seeing you all."

And Grandmother Sentry demanded, "Why shouldn't he come home if he wants to, Arthur?"

Mr. Sentry said, "Well, after all, college is his job right now." The doorbell rang, and Barbara went to answer it. "But of course we're glad to see you, Phil."

There were voices in the hall. They watched the door. Then Barbara came back, pale terror in her eyes. "Father, it's Inspector Irons," she said in low tones, "He—"

The Inspector, without waiting, came in past her; and a second man followed him. Mr. Sentry stood up, holding to the back of his chair. The second man stopped at his elbow. Mr. Sentry said, "Good evening, Inspector."

The Inspector said, "Mr. Sentry, I'll ask you to come along with me."

Phil stared at his father, felt his own cheeks stiffen. Mr. Sentry licked his lips. "Where to, Inspector?" he asked, in a hoarse voice. "After all, it's Sunday evening—"

The Inspector hesitated uncomfortably. "I'd rather talk about it at Headquarters," he said. "That will be easier, all around."

Then the other man touched Mr. Sentry's arm.

For a moment after the man in plain clothes touched Mr. Sentry's arm, the room was still as ice. Then Mr. Sentry nodded, almost with relief; and he said quietly to Mrs. Sentry, "I'll have to go, Ellen." To Phil: "You can take mother in town when she's ready."

Phil nodded, and looked toward old Mrs. Sentry, and he uttered a low ejaculation. Her head had dropped forward, her chin was resting on her chest, and her eyes were closed. At his exclamation, Mary went quickly toward the older woman, and Mrs. Sentry without moving said, "Barbara, get my smelling salts!" Barbara darted up the stairs.

Inspector Irons spoke to Mr. Sentry; they moved away. Mrs. Sentry tried to follow; but she seemed to stumble, and stopped. Only Phil went with his father out into the hall; and, standing in the open doorway, he saw Mr. Sentry get into the police car, into the rear seat. Inspector Irons sat on one side of him, the man in plain clothes on the other. There were policemen in uniform in front, and Phil noticed abstractedly the radio antenna, like an old-fashioned buggy whip, projecting above the roof. He thought in a dull way that his father must be crowded in the narrow seat; since the Inspector was a big man, and so was his companion. The car drove away.

When Phil went back into the house, into the dining-room, old Mrs. Sentry was herself again. He asked, "All right, grandmother?"

"All right? Of course I'm all right," she said sharply. "I was all right all the time. I just did it to give you all something to think about. You were standing around like a lot of statues, scared silly!"

"Your color's come back," Phil commented.

"It was never gone," she insisted.

Mrs. Sentry rose, and she said in a low tone, thinking of the servants, "Come into the living-room."

They followed her quietly, not speaking, not daring to speak. The others sat down, but Phil remained standing. His cheeks were still stiff; his lips felt thick and clumsy. Yet—here were four of them, four women, his sisters, his mother, his grandmother. He was the only man; he must do something, say something . . .

He said, groping: "How about a rubber of bridge You don't want to go home yet, do you, grandmother?"

Old Mrs. Sentry said sharply: "Don't be an idiot, Phil! Don't try to stick your head in the sand. All our heads. Face the fact! They think your father killed that girl!"

Barbara gasped, looking from one to another, her eyes beseeching them to deny this. Mrs. Sentry made an indignant sound; and Phil argued unconvincingly: "Oh, I don't think so! They probably just want some more information or something. Maybe they've arrested someone and want father to identify him."

"Nonsense! I'm too old to fool myself, or to be fooled!"

Barbara's eyes were streaming, yet she made no sound. Mary was red as flame. Mrs. Sentry said resentfully, "But mother, you surely don't believe—"

The older woman said curtly: "The police aren't fools! If they have arrested Arthur, be sure they had good reason!"

"I hope you won't talk like that before outsiders!"

"Outsiders!" Grandmother Sentry snorted. "Ellen, you're a plain snob!"

"I have some pride!" Mrs. Sentry said composedly.

"This will shake it out of you!" the old woman predicted, almost with a relish. "I don't know whether Arthur killed this girl or not; but it wouldn't surprise me! It's a wonder to me he hasn't got mixed up with some woman long ago. I don't know how he lives in the same house with you and your pride!"

Mrs. Sentry smiled patiently, thinking: She was always a scold, a harridan. I suppose she was pretty, and Arthur's father lost his head and married her. Then she saw Barbara staring at them both through tears, and she protested, "Really, mother!"

Grandmother Sentry said more gently: "There, Ellen, I'm sorry! We can't mend the past now, I suppose. After all—"

She stopped, for tires hissed on gravel, in the drive outside, and while they listened rigidly, someone came up the steps and rang the bell. Phil cried in a great relief, "There, he's back already!" He went to the door, the two girls on his heels.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"Don't Be an Idiot, Phil!"

Noted Inventor Points Out Helicopter Value in Warfare, Should It Be Needed

The helicopter would prove invaluable as a war defense machine should the United States enter armed conflict, Ivan Eremeeff, Philadelphia inventor, believes, writes a Philadelphia correspondent in the Los Angeles Times.

Eremeeff said the vertical-ascending craft "is ideal for observation purposes, for it is not nearly so easy to see from a distance as an observation balloon."

The War department has a complete record of the development and design of the helicopter, the inventor said, and in event of war probably would immediately begin perfection of the peculiar ship.

Pointing out the benefit of the craft's vertical lifting power—it has whirling horizontal blades in place of the conventional wings—Eremeeff said it "can land anywhere, even on a house roof, or in the branches of a tree, and ascend vertically from the same spots."

Because of its ability to ascend straight up, field hospitals could use the helicopter extensively, mainly by picking up dead and wounded from battlefields, Eremeeff said.

The inventor, who supervised the construction of the first successful helicopter for the United States army eighteen years ago, believes that the big problem in helicopter design lies in control. He said as long as the craft remains level, it is under perfect control, but a steep incline will send it crashing to earth.

Eremeeff said he is planning to design a blade for the helicopter which will control the ship as well as propel it.

The Great Pyramid of Egypt

It is believed that the Great Pyramid of Egypt was built by King Cheops in 4700 B. C., and that 100,000 men were employed for ten years in making a causeway 3,000 feet long to facilitate the transportation of stone from adjacent quarries and the same number of men worked 20 years more to complete the pyramid.

WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK

By LEMUEL F. PARTON

NEW YORK.—Of wide public interest is the pressing problem of who's going to enjoin or restrain Joe Louis. It has seemed that all they could do would be to match him against a threesome — possibly Farr, Pastor and Baer. But now there is actually serious consideration of launching him against the huge, bulbous two-ton Tony Galento, the Orange, N. J., pub keeper who trains on beer and hot dogs. Tony has never been knocked down, but neither has a hippopotamus or a steam shovel.

Louis to Fight 2-Ton Galento?

Built like a couple of hogsheads, he is a morass in which assailants get swamped, like Japan in China. He fights with his mouth open, as if he were catching flies, which is disconcerting to his opponent, as is his flailing, free-style, generally scrambled attack. His defense consists mainly in his absorbent qualities. They cut him to ribbons, but never cut him down.

He has had about 70 fights. Dumping Nathan Mann marked his heaviest scoring in the ring. He has flattened Al Ettore, Leroy Haynes, Charley Massey and quite a few not altogether negligible fighters, but, as yet, no maulers of championship specifications. For some of his fights he trained on applejack, but now says he has found beer is best.

Trains on Applejack And Beer

In the little family gin mill and spaghetti palace, down by the railroad tracks, he shadow boxes for the customers and yells for a match with Louis. He says he would like to have it barehanded in the cellar, with $10,000 on the doorstep for the man who comes out. They have a two months' old baby, who, says his father, never will be a fighter or a barkeeper.

"Me—" says Tony—"they had to burn down the school to get me out of the fourth grade. I didn't know my strength and one of my spitballs knocked a teacher unconscious. I'll make this new guy behave and he'll grow up to be a professor or doctor."

* * *

Sir Patrick Hastings, counsel for Countess Barbara Hutton Haugwitz-Reventlow in her elaborate and complicated disagreement with her husband, is one of the most interesting front-page lawyers of London, usually a contender in any exciting international wrangle in which London's West End or New York's Park Avenue might be interested. He represented Mrs. Joan Sutherland in the slander suit which grew out of gossip about the Wallis Warfield Simpson divorce suit. It was he who got thumping big damages for Princess Youssoupoff, in the suit over the Metro-Goldwyn Rasputin picture. He won the fight for the Warner Brothers to keep Bette Davis from appearing without their consent.

Lawyer for 'Babs' Wins Big Cases

In court, he has alluded to an episode when, hungry and footsore, he was turning his back on London, but was somehow flagged back again by an indulgent fate. He was trained as a mining engineer, fought in the Boer war and returned to London to precarious years in which he sparred for an opening. He was a journalist, a "leg man" around the grubbiest of the police courts. In his attic lodgings, he studied law and was admitted to the bar—with nice going thereafter. He now has one of the largest professional incomes in England. He was knighted in 1923 and was attorney general in 1924.

He is widely and intimately known in social and literary circles, but draws no class lines in his professional work. One of his most spectacular cases was his defense of the Welsh miners in 1925. He moves into his middle sixties with no letdown in mind or person.

* * *

Sir Robert M. Hodgson is a shadowy but noteworthy figure in Europe's diplomatic underground, about whom a book may some day be written. He is Britain's go-between in delicate negotiations with Generalissimo Franco of Spain about the bombing of British ships. When he is on a government mission, it is an indication that some subtle business is on.

Cagey Job Handed Sir Robert

He had retired in 1936, but Neville Chamberlain called him back as a diplomatic pinch-hitter in this ship-bombing embarrassment. He is the son of an arch-deacon, of somewhat clerical mien, and was in the consular and diplomatic service for many years. From 1924 to 1927, he was British charge d'affairs at Moscow. He is usually working quietly off-stage, never in the spotlight.

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Grandmother's Prize Silk Patchwork Quilt

IT WAS a great day on an upstate New York farm more than a half century ago. The biggest pumpkins, the finest apples and the sleekest live stock were being loaded to take to the Fair. Grandmother announced that she was taking her silk crazy patchwork quilt.

All that winter the red ribbons

and blue ribbons, won by prize pumpkins and apples and farm animals adorned the mantel shelf. But Grandmother, placidly stitching away in her rocking chair, had tucked away in the pocket of her voluminous skirt, the only cash prize that anyone brought home from the Fair. Her crazy patch quilt is still a thing of beauty and a center of interest. It is perfectly at home in a modern living room today. Here is a corner of it and the leaflet offered herewith tells you how to make this kind of quilt and gives detailed instructions for dozens of stitches and combinations of stitches to be used for embroidering crazy patchwork.

NOTE: If you wish to use these weekly articles for reference paste them in a scrapbook, as they are not included in either Sewing Book No. 1 or 2. Book 1, Sewing for the Home Decorator, covers curtains, slipcovers, dressing tables; Book 2 illustrates 90 embroidery stitches with numerous applications; doll clothes and gift items. Order by number, enclosing 25 cents for each book desired. If you order both books, leaflet on making crazy quilts will be included free. For leaflet only send 5 cents in stamps to cover cost and mailing. Address: Mrs. Spears, 210 S. Desplaines St., Chicago, Ill.

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In Retrospect

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