CRUCIBLE

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

© Ben Ames Williams.

CHAPTER XI

—23—

Mrs. Sentry went to see her husband on the morning after the jury's verdict was returned. Phil drove her to the prison, but she would not let him come in.

"Not this time, Phil," she said, and she was smiling, something in her eyes which he had never seen there before. "Not this time," she repeated. "This is for Arthur and me. A reunion, Phil."

And she got out of the car and walked almost proudly toward the forbidding door; and Phil watched her, wondering at the change in her in these recent days. She seemed increasingly frail; but also she seemed somehow younger, and there was a quality in her countenance he found it hard to name, a sort of translucent clarity, as though all confusion was gone out of her and her heart was quite serene.

When she came out, not long after, she wore radiance. She got in beside Phil, and she leaned suddenly and kissed him and said, "You look as he did when we were young, Phil."

He set the car in motion. "How is he?" he asked.

"I left him fine."

He nodded. "Did you make any plans? About the appeal, or anything? Or about buying out Mr. Loran?"

She even laughed a little. She said: "Heavens, no! We just talked about each other." And after a moment she told him, "Phil, everything he said about what happened that night was true."

"I believe him," he assented. "But of course what we believe doesn't help much."

"It helps me much," she confessed. "It helps me. So long as I know—I can manage not to mind so much what others believe. Whatever happens."

They came home thus, and went up to see Barbara; and Barbara watched her mother and seemed in some way to be better suddenly. And the days went on.

It was Mr. Sentry himself who presently assumed the decisive voice in the matter of buying the business from Mr. Loran. Phil and his mother were still uncertain what to do about this, when Mr. Hare came to the house a few days after the trial ended to say that Mr. Sentry had sent for him, had discussed the question.

"I told him Mr. Loran's proposition," he explained. "He feels that the valuation set up by Mr. Loran is too low, and so he believes it is better to buy than to sell."

Mrs. Sentry said: "What about payment? I should not care to buy on anything but a cash basis."

Hare assured her: "That can be managed. I went over it with Mr. Sentry, and later with his brokers. His investments are in good shape."

"I prefer not to see Mr. Loran myself," Mrs. Sentry remarked. "It would be painful to him and to me."

"Of course," Hare agreed. "But I can handle the whole transaction, under proper powers."

She asked, after a moment, "Has Mr. Sentry talked with Mr. Falkran about the appeal?"

"No. Falkran is to see him tomorrow morning."

"Mr. Falkran was here yesterday," she explained. "To discuss it with me. To explain some of the things—" And she said: "I did not always understand him, the technical points. I told him we wished to take every proper measure. But I warned him that we did not want any tricks, evasions, miserable meaningless delays." She asked suddenly, "What do you think, Dean?"

Hare hesitated. "Well, it's possible he might get a new trial."

"Do you feel that Mr. Sentry had a fair trial?"

The lawyer hesitated. "I'm not experienced in criminal cases," he said evasively.

Mrs. Sentry nodded. "I see. You think he did."

Phil urged, "But Mr. Hare, another jury might believe father; might believe it was an accident." Then he was silenced; for the postman had just rung, and Nellie came in with letters for Mrs. Sentry. She glanced at the topmost.

"Oh!" she whispered. "It's from Mary!" And instantly her eyes were fountains.

Dean Hare rose quickly to depart. Phil went with him to the door, and he asked the older man, "What do you think about an appeal, sir, honestly?"

Hare said after a moment: "Well, Phil, there's always a chance. Falkran is clever. But—I doubt if a new trial would help, unless some new evidence turns up. A commutation by the Governor—that's a more hopeful possibility, later on."

And he departed; and Phil went back to his mother and Mary's letter.

Since Mary's marriage to Jimmy Endle, they had had news of her only indirectly, through Mrs. Harry Murr, who knew everything; and through that encounter with Mrs. Loran, Endle's sister. Phil was bitter toward Mary; but Mrs. Sentry would hear no word of criticism.

"You mustn't blame her, Phil," she insisted. "When a ship is wrecked, people have to — snatch at anything!"

Now he came back into the living-room to find his mother sitting with streaming eyes, the letter in her nerveless hands. She extended it to him; and he read it in slow rising rage.

Dear Mother and the rest of you:

Well, I've been following the fortunes of the grand old family name in the home papers. Stout fellows, all of you, to stick with the sinking ship; but even a rat knows enough to leave on such occasions I'm the rat! Sorry, but there it is.

I've got a sinking ship on my own hands, but there will be plenty of salvage. After we left home, we honeymooned as far as New York, and by that time, being mutually bored, were ready for company Picked up half a dozen oh such congenial spirits, and a hundred cases of ditto, tried Jamaica, Havana, Bermuda, and other places too numerous to mention. Finally drifted back here to get rid of our sea legs and pink elephants and red, white, and blue mice.

Since then I've had some trouble finding places to lay my head, my own bed being so often occupied; but Florida has decided to go after the divorce trade in a big way, so I won't even have to go to Reno. It's hot here already, but I can stand it till my sentence is served. The lawyers say I'll get about a thousand dollars a month and found; and I've got another place in sight. Fine old Castilian family from Rio. The boy's only twenty-four, with no mother to guide him, and he can't resist my rapidly maturing charms. He counts his beef critters, I am told, in terms of light years. We shall probably live on the Riviera.

Give my dearest love to father. It's through him I have met so many charming people.

Your
Mary

She Murmured, "—Bite Off My Tongue."

Phil read, and his face was like ice. He crumpled the stiff notepaper in his hand and strode toward the fireplace, without looking at his mother, without speaking; but she said quickly: "No, Phil. You didn't read the last page."

Phil looked at her then, saw again her tears; but he saw too that they were not tears of anger, nor even of hopeless grief; and he smoothed out the wrinkled paper and read on the other side, like a belated postscript:

Mother, when I was little and terribly hurt, I'd run to you, crying, and kick your shins awfully, and then feel better. Remember? You never seemed to mind, seemed to understand.

He read these lines two or three times, and some faint understanding came to him. He said, half-relenting, "You want to keep it?"

"Yes."

"Going to write to her?"

"Just a line," she said. "Just three or four words. That's all she wants, all I can give."

He left her with the letter in her hands, smoothing it across her knees, stroking it almost caressingly. As he passed through the hall, he heard her deep inhalation, as though it were hard to fill her aching, empty lungs.

Mary was gone, he thought; lost to them. And Barbara too? She no longer showed a temperature every night and morning, yet except when Dan was with her she seemed weak and weaker, as though her life were draining slowly away. Phil went up to her now.

He found her lying relaxed, flat on her back, her legs straight, her hands at her sides; and near her head the clock ticked, ticked. The room was very still, and Phil looked at her and thought she was asleep, and then she spoke, as she sometimes did in her sleep, in almost natural tones.

She murmured, "—bite off my tongue."

Phil, remembering Doctor Mainton's instructions, asked softly: "Why? Why, Barb?" He came near her, sat close beside her.

"I won't tell!" she murmured. "I won't tell! I'll bite off my tongue!"

"You don't have to tell anything, Barb dear."

She said, in a dull fashion: "I don't want to go to sleep. I dream if I sleep. I'm not asleep, not asleep."

"No."

"They can't make me tell."

"Of course not, Barb."

She whispered, eyes tight closed: "But I saw him, saw him that night, down there. Mr. Flood knows I know, and he'll try to make me tell."

"It's all right, Barb."

"I can't tell if I can talk, can I?" She smiled in a sly, secret fashion.

"Asleep, Barb?" He was leaning near, close beside her, close above her, close, protecting her. "It's all right, Barb."

"No," she said. "No, I'm thinking."

"What are you thinking?"

"If I can't talk, they can't make me, can they? Because if I did, it would kill him. And he didn't do it, Phil!"

Phil touched her brow to see whether she was feverish. Her head was cool, yet at his touch she moved convulsively, like one awakening. Her eyes opened and she saw him, and she said quickly: "I wasn't talking. I wasn't talking. I can't talk."

"You're talking now, Barb. You're all right."

"Oh!" she whispered. "Was I?"

"Yes," he assured her. "You were talking as well as anyone."

"I heard myself," she admitted, and she said: "Phil, I'm better! I'm better, Phil!"

"You're fine," he told her. His own heart was pounding; he was glad for the drawn shades, the shadows in the room, so that she could not see his excitement. "You can talk, Barb. You can talk now."

"Yes," she said, wonderingly. "I can talk. Why, I am talking. Phil, I heard myself talking in my sleep."

"You're not asleep now. You're talking now." His pulse raced with the thought: She is better, better!

"I can talk to mother!" she cried. "Phil, I can talk to mother!"

"Yes, to anyone."

"To Linda?"

"Yes, of course."

"To Dan?"

"Yes, to Dan."

He saw color suffuse her white cheek. "To Dan," she whispered. "To Dan, to Dan." Murmuring, her eyes drooping. "Dan . . . Dan . . ." And quietly, she was asleep.

Phil saw her breathing ease to a regular and even beat. When he could leave without awakening her, he went in haste to tell his mother; and to telephone jubilantly to Doctor Mainton.

The doctor was delighted. "Fine!" he cried. "She may sleep twelve hours, twenty-four; but she'll wake as good as new."

He was almost right. Barbara slept till noon next day; and when she woke, she spoke easily and naturally. On the second day she was able to sit up; on the third, to get out of bed.

But before that, another thing had happened to bring them something like peace. Mr. Falkran saw his client; Mr. Sentry directed him not to appeal.

After it had been determined to buy out Mr. Loran, Phil accepted the decision almost gratefully.

The dissolution of the partnership was arranged to take place as of April 1. During the interval before that date, Phil went daily to the office. Mr. Loran, as he had expected, received him with restraint. Phil saw that Loran, too, had suffered from the ordeal they had all endured; and when their first talk of business matters was done, the boy said apologetically:

"Mr. Loran, I want to tell you. Mother and I didn't know—what was going to happen at the trial. I mean, about mentioning you."

"Forget it," Mr. Loran told him. "Damned lawyer's trick, that's all; to throw mud at random and try to make it stick. Falkran knew that. Just dragging a dead herring across the trail." And he said: "I'm going out of town tomorrow. Be back April 1 to clean up the whole thing here. You can be learning the ropes. And of course, Miss Randall has been here nearly twenty years. She could run the business alone if you let her. You'll get along."

Phil had his misgivings; but when after the first of April he took full charge, matters went—to his own surprise—very well. On routine matters, Miss Randall could advise him; and the momentum of the business would carry it for a while. There were resignations, but none that were sufficiently important to cripple the organization. And those major decisions, in which a mistake in judgment might have proved costly, did not crowd upon him.

But despite this, his world was suddenly awry. From the day the papers had been signed, he saw little of Linda. She sometimes came to the house, and he had glimpses of her; but she never stayed long, and Phil missed her, and one evening told her so.

"I don't blame you, of course," he said reluctantly. "After all, you've given us a lot of time, been wonderfully generous. I can understand that you have other things—"

She smiled secretly. "I'm very busy just now, Phil," she admitted.

He had, during April, other concerns. Three times he saw his father, going to the state prison with Mr. Hare. It was necessary for Phil to acquaint himself with every detail of the family affairs. In lieu of a will, Mr. Sentry made deeds of gift; and arrangements were concerted to meet gift or inheritance taxes without a sacrifice of assets. Also, he set up a trust for Mr. Wines, the father of the dead girl, so that the old man's remaining years of life might be secure.

At the end of the third occasion, all was done; and then, under the guard's eye, Phil and his father bade each other good-by.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Lost Tribe of Apache Indians Found by an Explorer on a Tour of Mexico

An explorer's story of a lost tribe of Apache Indians, mostly women and children clad in buckskins and fighting with primitive bows and arrows for existence in the mountains of Mexico, saddened the office of Indian affiairs, states a writer in the Washington Star.

Commissioner John Collier writes of "this strange and sad account" given the Indian office by Dr. Helge Ingstad, Norwegian ethnologist, in a recent issue of Indians at Work.

Doctor Ingstad, formerly governor of Greenland and Spitzbergen, proved that the "Lost Apaches of Mexico" are not a myth when he sought them last year, Mr. Collier said.

"There is a vast mountain," the commissioner wrote, "150 miles below Douglas, Ariz., in Mexico. It rises to 13,000 feet and is cleft with huge canyons.

"There, on ledges such as mountain lions or eagles might occupy, or constantly moving from place to place, sometimes, afoot, sometimes on stolen horses, and weaponless except for bows and arrows, and living on desert wild plants; there, Doctor Ingstad states, are the Lost Apaches.

"Most of the survivors are women, with a few children. Doctor Ingstad never talked with them face to face, but saw them at distances of 100 yards, clad in buckskins, fleeing on.

"The ancient Apache-Mexican feud carries down, and 'Kill them on sight' is the rule toward Apaches, he says.

"Their extinction could be prevented if they could be reached and led back to the United States. Possibly Doctor Ingstad will try again, next year. He is returning to Norway, leaving this strange and sad account with the Indian office."

While the Chief Slept

That tragical Black Hole affair of Calcutta, enshrined in English history, would probably never have occurred if the Subah of the country had not fallen asleep. For, as history tells the story, the cries of the 150 miserable Englishmen, crowded into a narrow space without ventilation and in danger of suffocation, touched the hearts of the Hindus who were guarding them, but their chief, the Subah, was asleep, and no one in Bengal dared to disturb his slumbers and request an order for the relief of the sufferers!

HOW TO SEW

by Ruth Wyeth Spears

THERE is an amusing story about the mittens and scarf shown here. They were not hand knitted. They were purchased rather hurriedly and sent to a young miss who was away at school. She had wanted something rather gay and a bit foreign looking to wear for skating and these were perfectly plain and pretty drab. She didn't take her disappointment lying down, but decided to brighten up that scarf and mitten set and make it speak a foreign language as well! She found the Swedish cross-stitch design shown here and copied it in all its gay colors on the ends of the scarf and backs of the mittens.

Hand knitted mittens and other knitted things in plain colors may also be decorated with this pert flower pattern. Start at the upper right corner of the large flower and make the cross stitches as at A and B. This flower is a brilliant red, the small flowers bright blue and the stems jade green.

NOTE — Mrs. Spears' Sewing Book 2—Gifts, Novelties and Embroidery—has helped thousands of women to use odds and ends of materials and their spare time to make things to sell and to use for gifts and church bazaars. If your home is your hobby you will also want Book 1—SEWING for the Home Decorator. Order by number enclosing 25 cents for each book. If you order both books, a leaflet on crazypatch quilts with 36 authentic stitches will be included free. Address Mrs. Spears, 210 S. Desplaines St., Chicago, Ill.

Uncle Phil Says:

And Keep Their Sorrows

Many of the world's greatest men are unknown to fame. They are great because they share their joys with others.

Conservatism is marked by deliberation, which is a recommendation in itself.

Out of His Shape

We generally find the all-round politician isn't entirely square.

To push or to be pulled—that is the question every traveler on life's highway ought to ask himself.

Rooting for money is the root of most evil.

Isn't That Enough?

A cross man, like a cross baby, is not well. That's about all that ails him.

Gratitude costs no more than politeness. Use both liberally.

After all of one's plans have gone to smash, one does not want his own way so persistently.

Just Charlie

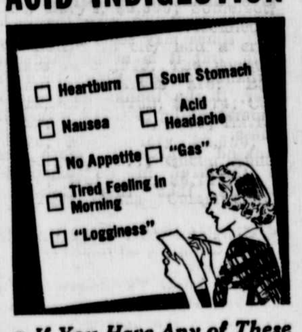
Charles M. Schwab, the American millionaire, was very fond of farce, and one day he asked his secretary to get him two tickets for "Charlie's Aunt."

The secretary called a messenger and said: "Go round to the theater and get two tickets for 'Charlie's Aunt.' "

The messenger hesitated, then said: "Hadn't I better say for Mr. Schwab's aunt, sir?"

CHECK YOURSELF

FOR THESE COMMON SIGNS OF ACID INDIGESTION



• If You Have Any of These Symptoms — and Suspect Acid Indigestion as the Cause — "Alkalize" the Quick, Easy "Phillips'" Way. If the Trouble Persists —See your Doctor.

Now there is a way to relieve "acid indigestion" — with almost incredible speed. You simply take 2 teaspoonfuls of Phillips' Milk of Magnesia 30 minutes after meals. OR — take 2 Phillips' Milk of Magnesia Tablets, the exact equivalent.

Results are amazing. Often you get relief in a few minutes. Nausea and upset distress disappear. It produces no gas to embarrass you and offend others.

Try it—Get *liquid* Phillips' Milk of Magnesia for home use and a box of Phillips' Milk of Magnesia *Tablets* to carry with you.

PHILLIPS' MILK OF MAGNESIA

★ IN LIQUID OR TABLET FORM

Call for Strength

Patience and gentleness is power.—Leigh Hunt.

BE KIND!

TRADE MARK

Be considerate! Don't cough in public places. Carry with you Smith Brothers Cough Drops. (Two kinds—Black or Menthol, 5¢.)

Smith Bros. Cough Drops are the only drops containing VITAMIN A

This is the vitamin that raises the resistance of the mucous membranes of the nose and throat to cold infections.

A Trade Mark Is an Honor Badge *and* Newspaper Advertising the Sentinel

Substitutes today are the illegitimate children of business. They are fatherless and unknown and they come to the consumer with a "Just as good" label on them which indicates clearly to the thinking buyer that she is buying something which is only "Just as good." The unknown product, the substitute parasite, has no reputation at stake. It is merely advertised for sale on a price basis and if the consumer does not like the quality, the manufacturer has suffered no injury because he is unknown and because he rarely links his name with a product as a standard of quality and a measuring stick of buying. It merely competes on a "take a chance" basis.

The manufacturers of well-known quality merchandise today place their names upon it and advertise it as the best they can offer to the consumer. The name of a manufacturer on an advertised product says this: This is the best product I know how to make. It is pure, good and worthy of your purchase. I think so well of it that I place my name upon it as a guarantee to you of its goodness. If it does not fulfill your wants I will gladly make good its failure.

There is no good reason why you should accept the unknown instead of the known; the untried instead of the tested; the doubtful instead of the sure. To refuse unknown substitutes is a guarantee to yourself of positive satisfaction in buying. If every purchaser will confine his or her purchases to known, advertised quality merchandise there will be little cause for complaint. Trade mark products tell their own story. It pays to look before you buy. Reading the advertisements in the newspaper, looking at trade marks, labels and names on products has purse interest.

W. E. MOFFETT