

Carlton Clarke's Zinc Case

By FRANK LOVELL NELSON

Romance and Mystery Entwined in Master Mind's Coup

Telepatho-Deductive Solver of Criminal Mysteries Tackles a Problem Embodying Smuggling, the Fearful White Plague, and Two Lovers Are Brought Together in Grand Finale—Solution of the Complex Puzzle.

BODDY "Frank" began, Clarke. "But I'll skip the headline."
"Don't skip it," said the man in the box which they had pushed out at an unguarded moment. "Two young men, residing in Austin, were horrified yesterday to discover the body of a man, who had been killed in the case which was involved in a mysterious round-trip trunk, which in turn was packed in Austin, while the dry goods box. Considering the fact that the box had remained for three weeks and a half in the freight warehouse, the body was in a remarkable state of preservation, due probably to the manner of packing it. There is no clue to the identity of the body other than that it was killed at a fictitious address on South Jefferson street and was shipped from that Lake City, having been rebuffed there from 1920. Wash."

"That's the gist of it, but, of course, after the fashion of you reporters, this story is told from several angles in order to fill the column. It looks like a grumbling mystery."

"Yes, but one that probably is impossible of solution considering the length of time," I answered.
"I'm not so sure of that. Did it ever occur to you that any crime can be solved if someone is willing to expend money, time, and travel? Given unlimited resources, I believe I could organize a detective force which would make punishment a certainty for every criminal crime goes unsolved because the great capacity of doing effective work can make more money for either the cop, or rather like to look into this case. Does your influence extend to the county morgue?"

"Deputy Coroner McNally is in charge there is one of my particular friends. I am sure he will favor us."

"Suppose we call there this afternoon. If your engagements will permit."
I acceded, but shortly after breakfast something arose that put the matter entirely out of our minds for the moment. It was busy at my own devices, and Clarke was deep in a very arduous work on oriental mysticism when there was a violent tug at our door bell. I opened the door and admitted a handsome, athletic young fellow, square of jaw and keen of eye, but apparently laboring under the most intense excitement.

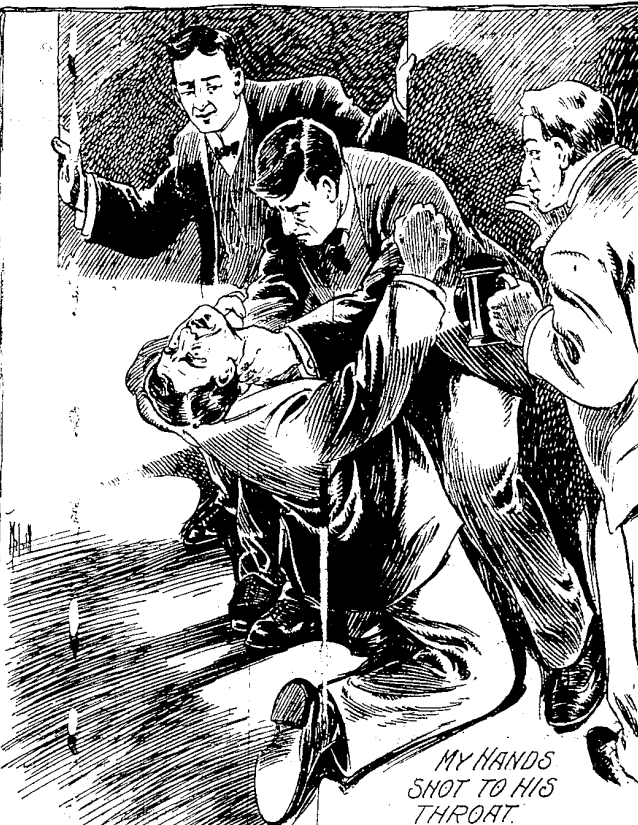
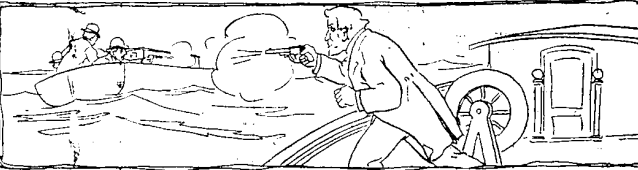
"Where is Mr. Clarke? I must see him at once," he gasped.
"Knowing Clarke's rules to see all callers when possible, I immediately ushered him into the library."
"Oh, Mr. Clarke," he began without awaiting an introduction. "I am sure if there is a word from her, I must have your help. The police will laugh at us but I feel it is a clue. I shall go mad if it fails. I know she is living. I have never given her up."

"But calm yourself, my dear sir, and let me have your story connectedly," said Clarke. "Remember, I am ignorant even of your name."

"Pardon me, I forgot. I am so full of this new clue. My name is Richard Dudley."
He needed to say no more to Clarke or myself. The name recalled instantly the disappearance, six months before, of Evelyn Mason. The country had rung with it. The papers had been filled with it. The best detectives in the country had struggled with it. Clarke himself, though not called in by the family had taken a deep interest in the progress of the case. A note of romance had been added to the affair by the recently announced engagement of the iron mine owner's daughter to Richard Dudley, Harvard's old crack half-back who, at the time she so mysteriously dropped out of sight, was traveling in the west. He had hastened home as fast as a steamer and train could carry him and had taken up the thread, where the police had dropped it in despair.

"Then you have a clue, Mr. Dudley?" asked Clarke, when he had inquired of the caller that his trouble was well known to us.
"I think so. Here is what I received this morning. I hurried to you at once."

And Dudley handed Clarke a slip of paper.
Clarke read the paper and handed it over to me. It contained but one word, "Osette," written in a sprawling hand.
"Where did you get this?" asked Clarke.
"It came slipped under my door last night. I have no idea by whom. I found it there this morning. Oh, Mr. Clarke, tell me what you have hope and that we will find her. What particular importance do you attach to this paper?"
"Oh, can't you see? But I forgot. No one knows it but myself and her husband's name. Why, what that's Evelyn's middle name! Evelyn Osette. She never used it. No one knows it. Don't you see she must have sent this?"
"In that case, Mr. Dudley, you have found a most valuable clue," more val-



MY HANDS SHOT TO HIS THROAT.

uable, I trust, than you suspect. It will however take time and labor to develop it. I imagine it may take us to the Pacific coast. Are you prepared to take such a trip?"
"At once, if necessary. Oh, we shall find her, shall we, Mr. Clarke?"
The badger already had been prepared for burial, and Clarke did not ask to see it. The pine box he glanced at just long enough to read the fictitious address. The trunk also he passed with a look. When he came to the zinc case, however, it riveted his attention. He examined closely every seam and corner of it.
Clarke decided upon a trip to the Pacific coast.
When we finally reached the end of our long journey and succeeded in locating the firm of Ettes, we found a little hamlet numbering about 500 souls. Across a snug harbor stood the broad expanse of the Pacific.
After some search we located the private sanatorium of Dr. Clinton Witherbee, man known to Clarke to be a villain of the deepest dye. We entered a room in Witherbee's asylum.

"What I have next to relate has been placed together out of a jumble of memories. I am not aware just whom I lost consciousness. My first sensation was that some one was looking intently at the back of my head."
Then a soft, purring voice said: "Mr. Carlton Clarke, Mr. Richard Dudley and Mr. Paul Sexton, I believe. Dr. Witherbee is at your service."
When I awoke to consciousness some one was alternately snapping his fingers in my face and roughly shaking me. I was in pitchy darkness, and the air was chill and clammy.
"Sexton, I'm ashamed of you," said Clarke's voice through the gloom. "You are a particularly easy subject. I should have given you some lessons in resistance."
"Where are we? What has happened? Where is Dudley?" I asked, in a breath.
"Dudley is here. He recovered before you did," answered Clarke, a fact which Dudley's voice confirmed. "We seem to be in some sort of an oubliette, of that kind. Dr. Witherbee?"
In a single flow we made the round of our dungeon. We found it to be about 12 feet square, walled with masonry which dripped dampness and flooded with cement. Opposite side we came upon

a door the height of my head, I believe the tallest of the party. From the rivet heads we judged it to be of plate steel and it closed into a steel frame set into the masonry in a manner which offered no chance for the point of a pick had we had one, or the absence of any keyhole, bolt or lever showed that it was never intended to be opened from the inside.
At last, after a wait which seemed an eternity, I heard a soft footfall outside of the door. Then iron bars clanked and grated. I heard the hinges creak and the door swung slowly open. A dark form framed in the doorway was outlined through the gloom. Then it stepped into our midst. My hands shot to his throat, which was cold and clammy as that of a corpse. There was no resistance. I heard Dudley wrenching the lantern from his belt. At Clarke's command I released him. "Dudley" was about to strike the light when Clarke shouted: "Quick, Dudley, the door!"
We emerged on the rugged side of a hill overlooking the broad expanse of the bay.
Lying flat on my back on the sand, my heart tugging and thumping, my

breath coming in rasping gasps which seemed to sear my throat, I waited, I know not how long.
At last I was crossed by a soft "hallo," and the nose of a swift gasoline launch shot into the creek.
We had not long to wait. Clarke lifted his eyes from his intent watch on the shore line and said: "Here's coming!"
I knew who "he" meant and I shivered at meeting Witherbee on those black waters. Then my ear caught the "putt-putt" of a launch.
"Down in the net fellows, he's going to fire," shouted Clarke. Dudley and I dropped. Six times in rapid succession his revolver cracked. But a swiftly flying launch is not easy to hit and we heard the bullets whistle overhead.
Witherbee's boat was almost upon us when Clarke gave the wheel a quick twist and our pursuer shot past within three feet of our gunwale. As he threw the wheel Clarke's right arm shot into the basket at his side. I saw his hand come out holding a writhing black object. He swung it about his head once and let go. I saw it burdle through the air and strike the doctor full between the shoulders. Witherbee dropped the wheel and stood up trying to fight the thing off while his boat, free of her helm, swung round in circles.
Suddenly he sprang to the gunwale of the boat, threw up his arms and with a piercing, terrified shriek disappeared in the blue waters of the bay.
Clarke shot the boat over to the staggered doctor, reached over her side and stopped her engine. I held the gunwales together while Dudley leaped into the doctor's boat at a bound and returned bearing in his powerful arms the unconscious form of a young woman.
Dudley swiftly cut the ropes which bound her. "It's she. It's she," he muttered. Clarke led her pulse. "She's chasing her wraith and Dudley scooped up a handful of sea water and washed her brow.

At the tavern, after Miss Mason had been safely stowed away in a clean warm bed by the mystery handiwork we patched together the ragged threads of the story over the bar of the landlord's cellar.
"First, said Clarke, "if you are Oliver Dixie, whose was the body that Dr. Witherbee shipped to Chicago in an opium case?"
"He was another attendant, a young fellow by the name of Frank Williams. We were very similar in appearance even to the fillings in our teeth."
"I didn't worry much about her for he treated her well and she seemed to be in no danger from him, and I had seen so many terrible things in cases where he didn't want to marry them that I was sort of hardened to it any way. I was the watchman of the whole place after Williams disappeared and the only white man about the institution, all the rest being Chinese," I talked with Miss Mason on the slip sometimes but I paid no attention to her appeals until one day she mentioned the name of Mr. Dudley here. He was one of my boyhood football heroes and I determined to do something.

"But, Clarke, how did you see through all this when we were in Chicago?" I asked.
"I didn't see through it by any means. Only I saw some things which you didn't. Part of it you know. Then a connecting link was the zinc can which I recognized at once as one used in smuggling opium. I picked up the threads of Miss Mason's case where I had dropped them before, and the list of guests confirmed my hazy recollection that there was one man named Bates. The name of the town did not strike me the first time, of course, but the name of the doctor did while turning the case over in my mind I thought of something which I should have remembered the first time. It was that once in a dark street opium den I had heard a whisper, 'Witherbee' in a cautious whisper. My visit to Chilpatown confirmed this. I have a Chinaman there that I depend on a good deal, and in reply to my question of who was the greatest dealer in smuggled opium in the country he, whispered 'Witherbee,' swearing that he would never live to see another day for having told."

Dudley and Miss Mason were married the next spring and Clarke and I are contented at their beautiful Lake Forest home. Witherbee's so-called asylum, from which, added by the powerful Chi ese tongue in which he wielded great influence, he conducted his opium trade, was an operating opium store for his past sins as one of the principal opium joints in the west, the 'The Great White Plague.'"
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SOAP ECONOMY DRIVES MAN TO LIFE IN CAVE

HERMIT VOWS NEVER TO WASH OR WORK AGAIN BECAUSE HE WAS REFUSED CLEANSER.

Hazleton, Pa.—Because my boarding house mistress refused me soap, I have vowed never again to wash or work."
Thus did John Posar warn disciples of politicians and pruners of the effect of practicing too rigid economy as to the bath, when he was found living as a hermit in a cave.
Posar was discovered by four West Hazleton young men, while walking along the railroad between this city and Black Ridge.
The cave was about 5x10 feet and six feet high, in a lonely spot in the woods a short distance from the



He Looked Like a Typical Man from Berne.

cracks. At the entrance a wood fire was burning. The big man within said he had been the lone occupant of the strange place for the last six months.
Posar added that he took to the wild life because half a year ago when he returned to his boarding house at West Hazleton from the Black Ridge colliery, where he worked, the boarding house mistress refused to give him soap with which to wash himself. Leaving the house, he vowed he would never wash or work again. He looked like a typical man from Berne. He said he was 35 years of age and had a wife and child in Hungary.
The man's clothes were in rags and his hair long. His shoes were nearly worn off his feet.
The cave was devoid of cooking utensils, except a dinner pail and a wooden bottle that Posar carried with him to work the last day he labored in the mines. Not a morsel of food was found in the cave, the pail and bottle being filled with water. Posar told the men who came across him that he lived on water and berries which he cut in the woods.

Chief of Police Turback, the United Christian and Post-Dispatch Local were notified of the man's manner of living. They captured him and took him to his former boarding house.

FRANCES DEATH IN A MILE RIDE.

With Unconscious Girl in Arms, Conductor Clings to Narrow Perch.

Cedarville, Va.—A perilous ride over a mile on the narrow platform of a freight car, which was traveling at high speed, with an unconscious woman in his arms, was the experience of Freight Conductor A. J. Frances of the Norfolk & Western railway. While Frances' train was at Shenandoah Junction a young woman, in her haste to reach a passenger train, attempted to climb over the freight, disregarding the protests of Frances.
While she was midway between the cars the train started, throwing her off her feet. She would have been crushed to death beneath the wheels had not Frances sprung to the rescue and caught her in the act of falling. She promptly fainted in his arms and throughout the run the train accomplished before stopping Frances clung to his precarious position, holding the unconscious girl.

Fish Splits a Man's Arm.

South Mills, Conn.—Louis Helm of Danbury was injured and John Stone was knocked into Long Island sound by a man-of-war shark, a species of shark which Helm caught while fishing for black fish.
The slinkster weighed 60 pounds and it took several men to land him. The tail is covered with poisonous prongs, and Helm, one of whose arms was laid open with a swab of the tail, is giving the wound very attentive care.
The party was out in William B. Unholtz launch when the catch was made. The shark was the largest ever caught in the sound.

Child Dies from Eating Hair.

New Orleans—After being a hospital inmate for two weeks death came to the relief of Pearl Fleming, eight years old, of Nicholson, Miss., whose illness was unique in medical annals. An autopsy revealed that her stomach was distended to twice its normal size and was filled with matted hair. She was suffering from ulcerosis, or "hookworm" disease, and her perverted appetite was for hair. She had eaten nearly all the hair from her head, and all the other hair she could lay hands on.