FIVE CROOKED CHAIRS

By FAREMAN WELLS

SYNOPSIS

Adam Meriston, a farmer's son, articled to a solicitor, makes a brave but unsuccessful attempt to thwart three thieves in a bag-snatching raid. The bag was torn from the hands of a girl who afterwards explains to Adam that it contains the day's takings of her father's shop.

He attempts to track the thieves and reaches an old warehouse. Adams enters the building while the girl watches the door. Suddenly he hears footsteps.

The man turns out to be Adam's employer—Corville Perkin.

Adam, in his private hours experiments with short-wave wireless.

Walking homeward, Adam is nearly run down by a large swift car.

He calls on Priscilla Norval.

Her father recounts the history of five antique chairs he possesses.

"NORVAL'S A FOOL"!

It had come at last. All this lying talk of Mr. Montada's interest had been leading directly up to it. Adam could now see a plan of campaign in the apparently casual approach. "I'm afraid Norval's in a very difficult position as far as disposing of his chairs goes," he remarked.

"Difficult. How do you mean?"

"Well, he is under a promise that prevents him from selling without first giving an option to the original vendor."

"Well, why doesn't he make the original vendor an offer and get it over?"

"He can't manage to locate the man."

Mr. Perkin seemed annoyed at this unbusiness-like position. "What on earth does he propose to do then?" he asked. "Wait until the chairs fall to pieces or the vendor turns up, whichever happens first?"

"He seems at a loss how to proceed, sir. I am sure he would be delighted to sell if he could see his way to doing so without breaking his agreement."

"What sort of an agreement is it? Have you managed to get a look at the document?"

"As far as I know there isn't any document. It seems to have been just a verbal agreement."

"Then for practical purposes it doesn't exist. You ought to know that much."

"Legally, of course, that no doubt is the case, but Norval seems to feel that he is very strongly bound by his promise even if it was only a verbal one."

"Norval's a fool, obviously. Of course, if he's so comfortably off that he can afford to be quixotic that's his own affair. But I should hardly have thought that things were so good with him as all that."

"They certainly are not. He is, I happen to know, very hard-pressed at times. So much so that I have even suggested to him that he should offer to sell to the new purchaser under a similar condition, so as to safeguard the rights of the original vendor under his promise."

Mr. Perkin's face lit up. "Excellent!" he cried. "We shall make a lawyer of you yet, I can see. I daresay, too, Montada would be prepared to purchase under those conditions—you know what these Spaniards are, patriotic to a degree we can hardly appreciate in this country. Just because those chairs are supposed to be a unique example of ancient Spanish workmanship he is prepared to go to almost any length to get them. At the same time, if the original owner did at any time appear, I have a feeling that he would feel it a duty to see that his ancestral property was returned to him, a sort of noblesse oblige, if you understand what I mean."

Adam nodded acquiescence. He was not altogether disposed to apply such a quality to Mr. Montada as nobless oblige denotes, but one cannot say all that is in one's mind when one is on the mat in the office of one's employer.

"Of course," Mr. Perkin resumed, "the fact of there being such a condition must be expected to reduce the amount Montada would be prepared to pay. I must see him and find out how he views the matter. You had better tell Norval that I am seeing my client—don't mention Mr. Montada's name, of course. I must rely on your discretion there — and that I shall put before him your suggestion. You be prepared to do business at a somewhat reduced figure, and see how he takes it."

Adam could not see Norval taking it at all well. He thought it would be best to prepare Mr. Perkin for opposition. He said: "Very well, sir. But I think I ought to say that Mr. Norval—or rather it was his daughter, sir—did not view my suggestion very hopefully. The condition actually seems to have been that he should not let the chairs go out of his possession without treating with the original vendor."

The solicitor threw up his hands as if in despair. "How can anyone argue with such a man?" he cried. "A man that apparently wants to quibble about the exact wording of a verbal promise that has no legal existence whatever!"

"I am afraid that he thinks that his honor is involved. He has a very strong sense of honor. And even if he wanted to himself, I don't think his daughter would let him."

"Ah, his daughter. So we are up against petticoat influence, eh? Do you know the lady?"

Adam nodded. Somehow he preferred not to answer verbally.

"What's she like? Good-looking, eh?"

"Er ..... beautiful, I should say sir." He had to speak out on a matter that touched him so deeply as did this.

"Beautiful ,eh? Well now, you're not such a bad-looking fellow yourself. What do you say to making up to her a bit, getting on her soft side and bringing her round to our point of view, eh? It ought not to be an unpleasant adventure, and it might prove to be a profitable one for you, eh?" Mr. Perkin leered knowingly across the broad surface of the intervening desk.

"I'll be damned if I do!" shouted Adam, losing control at last.

"—— THREE'S NONE."

Mr. Perkin was too long experienced in cross-examinations to allow Adam's outburst to upset him. He waited with astonishing patience until the youth had simmered down.

Adam found himself stammering out a garbled mixture of explanation and apology which to his relief his employer took in exceptionally good part.

"All right, Meriston," he said gently. "There's no harm done. If I had realized that you were already, er—interested in the lady I should have been more careful. Still, one should never lose sight of the business side, least of all in affairs of the heart, and I feel I ought to be able to rely on you to use your influence to overcome an opposition to what are as much her father's best interests as her own. In other words see if you can make them understand on which side their bread's buttered, my lad."

He made a gesture of dismissal, and the dejected clerk, red with annoyance at having so far given himself away, made his escape. He was the more humiliated in that he knew himself to be in the right, and yet to have climbed down. The suggestion was an insult that any decent man would have resented, and yet Mr. Perkin had contrived to give him the impression that he had behaved abominably. For the rest of the morning he tried to lose the memory of his humiliation in a determined application to his work.

For days after that affairs seemed to be at a standstill. The office routine went on unchanged, and his valve development had assumed in the skilful if prankish hands of Professor Starling the aspect of a prolonged and intricate scientific investigation in realms far in advance of his own attainments. He paid regular visits to Cavendish Street, and his friendship in that quarter grew with every occasion more assured and binding.

(To be Continued.)

EARLY HATS

Startling Models Are Worn At Unique Angles

"Irregular" is the word that best describes the midseason hats smart women are buying these days. When you throw your winter bonnets on the back of the highest shelf in the least-used closet, replace them with startling models that are made to be worn at unique and unexpected angles.

You may like something which slants down in front and up at the back. Or, being guided by reports of Agnes' (that Paris couturier who always does such interesting hats) recent collection you may go in for a model that's just the reverse—off-the-face and down in back. Some of her creations are cut so far back in front that a band of ribbon is fastened across the forehead not only to add a decorative touch but to make the hats stay on.

FRILLY FEMININITY

Other Agnes types include bonnets, reminiscent of the Regency era, and enormous brimmed hats, trimmed with bands of flowers and fruit. There's an air of frilly feminity about practically all of them.

No less intriguing however are the semi-spring hats that are being created. Nicole de Paris has outdone herself this season. She sponsors the irregular theme also, showing bonnets that completely bewilder you when you try to figure out how on earth the things stay on.

Nicole does a black felt that makes you think of a tricorne until you notice a band of self material running across the forehead in front. To give it a final touch of fascination there is a pheasant quill stuck through the peak which slants down over the right ear.

"Procrastination is hardly more evil than grasping impatience." — Kant.

* * *

"We waste the power in impatience which, if otherwise employed, might remedy the evil."—Willmott.

What Does Your Handwriting Reveal?

GEOFFREY ST. CLAIR
(Graphologist)
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(Editor's Note: — If you have any problem that is worrying you, or if you would like to find out the truth not only of your own character but that of your friend, take advantage of the author's invitation to you, given at the close of this article. He may be able to help you, as he has helped many others.)

I have recently had some very interesting letters from readers who would like to know something about different phases of handwriting analysis. I am therefore going to deal with a few of these inquiries in this article, because I am sure that they will interest a large number of my readers.

Is a signature alone sufficient for you to analyse my character from?

Well, if you went to a photographer to get your photograph taken, and he only 'snapped' your feet, you would wonder what was the matter with him, wouldn't you? This may seem a trifle ridiculous to use as an analogy to your question, but there is a resemblance. However, the question you ask is quite justifiable, because many people do believe that a signature alone will reveal their character. However, a signature alone is NOT sufficient to analyse the writer's character. Very often, a signature is more what the writer thinks he is, or what he would like to be, rather than what he actually is. Not frequently, indeed, you will notice that a person's signature is quite different from the remainder of the writing, and I have seen some of the most ordinary, conventional writing, revealing a very unassuming character, and then the signature has been a mass of whirls and twists. The reason for this is simply that the writer puts all his repressed desires to "be someone" into his signature. With the whole of the writing before one, it is not difficult to see the real character behind the writing, but signatures are so often deceptive that I do not like to analyse a person's character merely from a signature.

Does handwriting disclose health symptoms or ailments?

This is one of the phases of graphological work on which there is some considerable controversy. There are handwriting experts who claim to be able to discern ailments from handwriting, and I recall that the late Mr. Jacobs of Ottawa claimed that his personal researches had led him to make some astounding discoveries in the realm of health and sex from handwriting. He claimed that he could discover the sex of an unborn child from the handwriting of the mother.

And recently, I am informed, some French graphologists have discovered some remarkable data on this same phase. But there is by no means unanimity of opinion as to the extent to which handwriting is a reliable indication of health symptoms, and this phase of graphology is undergoing a good deal of research, and must remain indefinite for some time to come. However, some ailments do show very clearly in handwriting. Heart disease and nervous troubles are two of these.

But, taking the subject of health generally, it is unsafe to lay down any definite claims as to what handwriting will reveal.

Next week's article will be devoted to a particularly interesting problem that a reader referred to me for my advice. It is in the form of a letter from a fairly young woman who is in love with a man whose wife wishes to return to him, although the man has instituted an action for divorce. There are some very interesting angles to this case, and it will be discussed fully and frankly in next week's article. Even if the problem raised is not YOUR problem, you perhaps know someone who is similarly perplexed, and in any case, as a practical modern problem you will find it of intense interest.

Would YOU like to have a personal character analysis from your own handwriting? And have you any friends or sweetheart whose writing you would like to have analysed? You may be astonished at the revelations. Send specimens of the writings you wish to be analysed, stating birthdate in each case. Send 10c coin for each specimen, and enclose 3c stamped, addressed envelope to: Geoffrey St. Clair, Room 421, 73 Adelaide Street West, Toronto, Ont. Letters will be treated confidentially, and replies will be forwarded as quickly as possible.

First Woman Radio Announcer Tells Of Early Experience

Mrs. G. A. Donisthorpe, of London, England, who is believed to be the world's first woman radio announcer, went to the microphone recently and told about her early experiences.

She explained that she first spoke into the microphone in 1917, when she and her husband, a captain in the Royal Engineers and a pioneer in wireless experiments, started broadcasting in Worcestershire to amuse the troops at training centres in the district. "My first broadcast took place in a bell tent in the middle of a large field," she said, contrasting her luxurious surroundings at the British Broadcasting Corporation headquarters with the studio she used in 1917. "I sat on a rickety sugar box." She also said that in those early days she used an ordinary telephone microphone.

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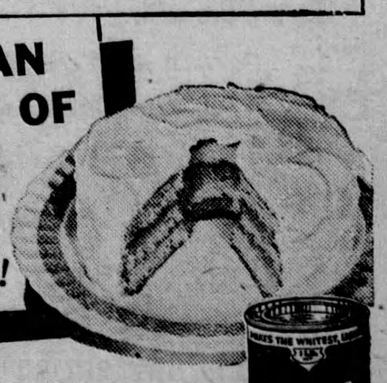

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