# 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 explains that it contains the day's takings of her father's shop.

He attempts to track the thieves and reaches an old warehouse. Adam 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.

Adam is extremely puzzled over the connection of Corville Perkin and Montada who wants the antique chairs. Then Priscilla is spirited away.

EXIT MONTADA

Against Adam's determination Montada and his weapon were no more than a threat to be swept aside. As they talked he had rested his knee against the edge of the table. It was an old rickety table and he had felt it sway between the opposed pressures of his knees and of Montada's leaning body. When he had suddenly threw his weight forward he was able to drive the opposite edge violently into the little man's chest.

Montada fired as the table caught him. The shot went crisply over Adam's head and the whole place seemed to swell with the explosion. He crashed over even as he fired and almost immediately there was another rendering explosion. This time he had fired from the floor and not at Adam.

He, too, had had an idea in his head, the idea of firing twice, once for Adam and once for himself, and in the shock of the unexpected assault had acted on his idea automatically.

As if in answer to a signal there came a quick scurry of feet. The door burst open. Lights flashed everywhere. The little room seemed crowded with men.

There was no need to speculate on the identity of these new arrivals. The Inspector stood with his torch turned towards Montada on the floor, while one of his men expertly turned the little Spaniard over.

"Well, that one's done for," he said with cool professional certitude. "Is the other fellow hurt?"

Two beams from torches converged to show Adam standing with the hand of a policeman gripping each shoulder. "Good thing you managed to dodge that one. I take it was meant for you," remarked the Inspector companionably. "It's all right," he told his men. "You needn't hang on to him. We know all about Mr. Meriston."

It was nice to feel a free man again after even so short a detention. "I'm glad you were on the spot," said Adam, with a momentary clear vision of the dangers of his position. "Anybody might have thought he was shot by me."

"Not much fear of that, luckily. He's still got his hand on the gun. Anyway, we'd been listening to you for the last half hour. Interesting conversation, too."

"Then you knew he was here all the time?"

"Not till this afternoon we didn't. To tell you the truth the man we've been hoping to catch here for weeks is your Mr. Corville Perkin. We knew he'd a reason for wanting to get here, though we hadn't guessed it was to see Montada."

"Well, he was here less than an hour ago. I reckon so, at least, for I believe it was him I saw getting away."

"The devil you did! How did he manage that? We reckoned to have all the approaches watched. How did you get here yourself, for that matter?"

"I came down the river in a sort of boat. I'm afraid I borrowed that without permission. Do you call that stealing?"

"Sounds like it, but I doubt if it matters much. The point is did Mr. Perkin come by boat too?"

"No, I should imagine he came the same way that he went, and that was across the river by some kind of bridge."

"A bridge?"

"Yes, there seems to be some sort of mechanical bridge. I could not see very well in the darkness, but someone let it down over my head and hoisted it up again when he'd gone over."

"I remember now, sir," interposed one of the constables. "There's an old loading arrangement back of the premises on the other bank. They used to use it in the old days when there were barges starting from Menston. I should have thought it would have been all rusted up by now."

"Sounds as if thats how he got in and out all right," agreed the Inspector. "There we were, watching the street, and the bloke walking in and out as cool as you like behind the scenes! Doesn't say much for the intelligence of some of you." He cast a withering glance round. "Ah well," he said after a pause that let his condemnation sink in effectively. "It's no use crying over spilt milk. One of you better go up the street and get them to send a stretcher and a surgeon. Better have him examined just as he lies, even if there isn't anything the doctors can do for him. Poor little chap! A proper toff, he was, when he was driving round in his big car and spending his money. There's worse than him left alive, I shouldn't wonder. Why on earth a fellow like that with lots of money should want to go crooked beats me."

"Any objection to telling me what brought you into the building just at that moment?" asked Adam.

"We got information," the Inspector told him. "Information from someone who professed that he'd put you on to Montada. He seems to have been uneasy about you, as he reckoned the little man'd have a gun and be desperate, and that you were half off your head and not properly capable of looking after yourself. We'd seen you come down the street and try to get in, but we thought that you'd given it up. We knew too that Perkin was on the prowl, but he seemed to be safely employed in that business of his across the river. We never realized that that was the back door to this place, though it seems obvious enough now. Anyway, in case something unpleasant did happen, we thought it would be as well to locate Mr. Montada, so we worked our way in quietly and the two of you were talking so loud we could have heard every word on the next floor. That's about all there is to it."

"I'm very grateful to you. Is there any reason why I should not go home now?"

"Better come along with me to the station first. We shan't keep you long this time, but we've got to have everything cleared up ready for the inquest. He didn't seem to know much about your girl, did he?"

"Not a word. I don't think he even knew she'd been kidnapped until I told him."

"You seem pretty confident that she has been kidnapped," commented the Inspector. "Ever occur to you that she might have gone off on her own account?"

"She'd never do that," answered Adam confidently.

"Well you never know with young females. That's what it looks likely to turn out as so far."

Adam had no patience with that suggestion. He shook his head angrily, at which the Inspector smiled. "You come along with me," he said. "I want you to tell me what all that he was saying about some chairs was meant to be."

Adam told him as they sought the police station, but the information only seemed to puzzle him. It bore out what Norval had told the police about the operations of what he called his enemies, but he could not imagine anyone going to such lengths to secure a few mouldy old chairs.

Neither could Adam for that matter.

(To Be Continued)


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Issue No. 20—'35

## Rapid Growth of Canada Predicted by Statistician

Montreal—The United States is fast approaching a stationary population, George W. Hodges, executive of the Standard Statistics Company of New York and former president of the Investment Bankers' Association of America, told a service club here recently.

Immigration is restricted and births are only exceeding deaths by a narrow margin, he said. On the other hand, he declared, possibilities of population and industrial progress of Canada cannot be charted. "The Dominion's growth during the next few decades will be comparable with that of the United States during its greatest expansion period," he prophesied.

## SAYS WOMEN TODAY EAT TOO LITTLE

### And Smoke Too Much; Still Superior To Her Ancestors

New York.—Women are eating too little and smoking too much, in the opinion of Mrs. Anna Steese Richardson, 70-year-old associate editor of a woman's magazine.

But despite the modern young woman's over-fondness of cigarettes, said Mrs. Richardson, "she is superior in almost every way to the girl in my own day.

"She is healthier, she dresses more sanely, she is a more intelligent reader. Above all, she has social consciousness. She thinks of something besides, dress, dancing and marriage.

"When I was a girl, that was all we had to think about. One's whole duty was to get the right man and marry him."

Mrs. Richardson returned recently from a 13,000-mile tour of the country—its purpose to find out what women are doing and thinking. She said she noted a decline in religious faith.

"Young people want it but can't find it," she said. "I think the church leadership is at fault. Young people don't want to hear politics in the pulpit, and they get their science in school—they don't want it in church".

Girls, she said, "don't seem to realize that there's a time and a place for smoking—men would be afraid to smoke as much as some women do.

"And girls often do things when they smoke that men don't like. For example, some have a cigarette after each course when dining. A man would call that economic waste."

Working for a living has improved girls' health, said Mrs Richardson. "They know they must keep well to keep their jobs."

In Oklahoma there is a bill to tax bachelors over 28 years of age. That is the nearest to an official ruling we have yet seen regarding when a man becomes a bachelor.

## WHAT DOES Your HANDWRITING REVEAL?

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Geoffrey St. Clair
Graphologist

(Editor's Note: Here is another of those human interest problems with which this well-known writer has to deal in the course of his work. It will, we believe, interest many of our readers. Can this writer help YOU as he has helped so many others? See the close of this article for his invitation to YOU).

I am giving part of a letter which I have received from a young lady of 28 years of age. Not for a long time have I received a letter which presents such a vital problem, having in it all the elements of romance, pathos, unhappiness, and in essence, generosity of heart. It goes as follows:

"My problem is one which may be more prevalent than is thought nowadays. I have for about eight years been living with a man who loves me devotedly and whom I love with all my heart. His wife gave him a lot of trouble and unhappiness, finally leaving him to go abroad. She consented to divorce him, but when it came to the final point she refused. Now she is back again and wishes to resume her life with him. In the meantime, he and I have been living as husband and wife, and we have one child of whom we are both passionately fond. My "husband" does not want to have anything to do with his wife, and insists on a divorce, and he now has evidence which will enable him to obtain a divorce, if she will not do so herself. The point that I would like to have your opinion on is whether this woman or myself would make the better wife to him. As I have said already, I love him with all my heart, but if I thought his happiness depended on this other woman, I would leave him, despite all there has been between us, and in spite of our boy. Please give me your frank opinion, and whatever the cost, I will carry out what I decide is my duty to him."

I am going to refrain from dealing with the moral angle of this case, because these people are living and carving out their own lives—and I am going to confine myself to the question of compatibility of temperaments.

I am profoundly happy to be able to say at once to this correspondent that, in my opinion, judging from the various characteristics revealed to me in the specimens of handwriting she sent to me, she is the one who will make the man happy. She is of a warm-hearted and affectionate nature, sympathetic and generous, and has a very even temperament. She will, I am convinced, make a companionable wife and a good mother.

The other woman's writing shows that she has a very strong temper, is of a markedly self-centred type, and has very little time or inclination to study the interests of others. She is nrarow-minded and selfish, and undoubtedly through all this affair she has been actuated solely by her own desires and self-interests.

I say advisedly that my correspondent should encourage the man to insist on a divorce, and if this other woman will not go ahead herself, then it is up to the man to do so. This is not the time to "beat about bush"—it is essential that you be in a position to marry the man you love and who loves you—and with all my heart I wish you success and future happiness.

I am writing at greater length direct.

**Do YOU wish to know what YOUR character is from your writing? Have you any problems that are perplexing you? The writer of these articles can help you just as he has been able to help so many other readers. Perhaps you wish to find out the truth about your friends, too? Send specimens of the writing you wish to be analysed, enclosing 10c coin for each specimen, and stating birthdate in each case. Enclose with a 3c stamped, addressed envelope to,: Geoffrey St. Clair, Room 421, 73 Adelaide St. West, Toronto, Ont. All letters are confidential and readers may be assured that they can write on their personal problems with complete confidence. Letters will be answered as quickly as possible.**


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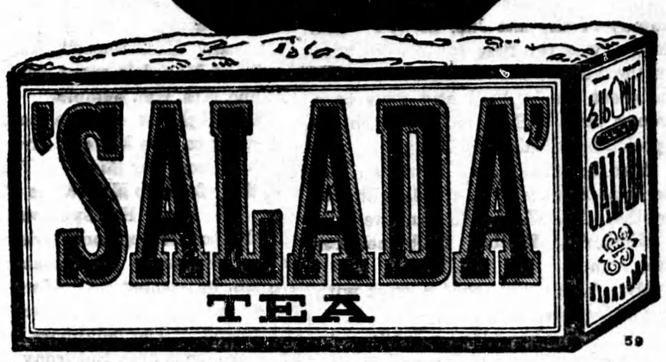


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## Lobar Pneumonia Preventive Vaccine Ready for Human Use

Philadelphia. — Discovery of a vaccine against lobar pneumonia was reported by Dr. John A. Kolmer recently before the 19th annual clinical meeting of the American College of Physicians.

The physician, who gained prominence through his discovery of an infantile paralysis vaccine, said the new serum was the result of three years' investigation at the Research Institute for Cutaneous Medicine.

"So far we have had a very large degree of success in the treatment of dogs, monkeys and other animals," he said. "We feel that the time has now come when the vaccine can be used successfully on human beings, particularly those who are exposed to pneumonia because of their occupations."

He said the group included such outdoor workers as policemen, firemen and others.

"The vaccine is purely a preventive one," he said.

Dr. Kolmer said the vaccine was made from five types of germs which cause the disease. He added that it had been successful in from 80 to 85 per cent of the cases in which it was used.

## Unemployment Among U.S. Women Waning

Washington—Asserting that her mail reflects decreasing unemployment among American women, Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt said recently, women were showing great ingenuity in solving depression problems.

Among her 2,000 weekly letters, however, there is an increasing proportion from "white collar" women seeking help on individual problems rather than just any kind of a job.

"While there is a decrease in the number of people who want jobs, there is a change," Mrs. Roosevelt said. "Their problems cannot be fitted easily into categories because the individual requests are more for some specific thing that will help them get back on their feet, some way to carry on a business they have started, or help them get something they need on the farm, or find ways to educate their children. To many of them, these things seem the last jump over their difficulties."

Each request is investigated, she said, and some way usually is found to aid those who really need it.


## A Boon To All Who Use YEAST

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2. Send as many as you wish; contest closes midnight June 29, 1935.
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