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.

PERKIN UNDER THE RAY

Norval seemed glad to have someone to dictate to him just then.

And Adam was for once in a mood to dictate. The fact of Perkin's offer had made him certain of success on the morrow.

He refused to explain his plans to Norval, but succeeded in securing his promise that on no account would be hand over the chairs for another twenty-four hours. He went to bed worn out, but tingling with suppressed excitement, and hardly knowing how he should live through the next day until the evening when, after the clerks had gone, he meant to make his crucial experiment.

There was so much that might go wrong. Mr. Perkin might leave the office early, as he sometimes did. He might have a client with him. He might after all not know anything about the disappearance of Scylla. The effect of making such an assault would be worse than disastrous unless it forced such a confession as would tie the victim' hands.

At times during that night of fitful dozing is seemed madness to pursue his plans, at times he felt confident of success.

Daylight renewed his determination, and in due course he bore the heavy suitcase to the office.

The long hours dragged past somehow until 5.30, when the clerks began to move off, and Mr. Brewster, who was always the last to leave among the staff, to sort his papers. Mr. Perkin was still in the office, and no client had so far arrived to engage him. Everything seemed in Adam's favour. He put on his hat and then stooped over the suitcase.

"What on earth are you doing, Meriston? You can't play about with wireless here, you know," said Mr. Brewster a few minutes later as he struggled into his coat.

"Shan't be a minute," Adam answered as he removed a bulb and plugged in on one of the electric light sockets. Then by way of a preliminary try-out, he switched on.

"But I really can't allow this, I am willing to overlook a good deal in view of. . . ." began Mr. Brewster in his most officious voice. He stopped, goggled stupidly for a moment, fumbling with his coat buttons. Then he shot out of the place.

Half-way along the corridor he pulled up, collected his thoughts, and with a puzzled but determined expression, strode back to the office door. He did not cross the threshold, but stood wavering there while his determination faded. Then he scurried off along the corridor and out of the building. He said afterwards that he was convinced Adam meant to blow up the building.

No sooner had he disappeared than Professor Starling arrived. As he passed the door he politely removed his hat. A moment later he clapped it on his head again. "Good Lord," he said, "I quite forgot! That's working rather well I should imagine, Meriston. Did you note the reactions of the tall gentleman who has just left? He seemed to have become completely bloodless. I hope his heart is not affected. We ought to have the assistance of a first-class clinician on these matters."

Adam was busily arranging his apparatus outside Mr. Perkin's door. He was pale enough himself, and his hands were clumsy with the tension of his nerves, a condition from which the Professor's matter-of-fact absurdities did a great deal to restore him. He turned to the Professor. "About ten feet. It's as near as I can get," he said.

"Reaction of normal subject about 10 seconds. Extra cold-blooded, determined type about 15, eh?"

"Will you regulate the dose while I go in and talk to him? We don't want him to be too frantic to be persuaded."

"Very good. When you're ready," said the Professor.

Adam knocked. A voice called "Come in." He flung the door wide open and entered.

"Oh, it's you is it, Meriston?" said Mr. Corville Perkin. "Perhaps your business will wait for the morning. Afraid I can't spare you any time at the moment."

Perkin's eyes took in the scene beyond the open door. He stared haughtily at the intruder, ignoring the Professor. His face was more lined and severe than usual, and he looked as if he had known an unusually disappointing day.

"Another thing, Meriston," he continued in his severe tones, pointedly ignoring all beyond the door, "no one was more pleased than I to see you take to wearing a hat, but I should none the less prefer you to remove it when entering my office."

Instinctively Adam raised his hand to his hat.

"Don't be a fool!" hissed the Professor as he gave the earth-shield a fractional turn. "Keep it on for heaven's sake."

"Who on earth is that?" snapped the lawyer irritably, abandoning unconsciously his post.

"A friend of mine. Professor Starling of the Menston Technical College."

"Take him away!" screamed Mr. Perkin hysterically. "I can't stand him. I can't!"

The Professor calmly shifted the earth-shield again. "You are looking very unwell, Mr. Perkin," he remarked suavely. "I sincerely hope you aren't going to die."

"Die? Why should I die?" Mr. Perkin was recovering slightly under the reduced exposure. I, er felt a little queer, but it's passing off. Enough to make anyone feel queer to be interrupted this unmannerly way. What's that he's got at the door? Meriston please leave my room. I'll deal with you in the morning."

"I still think you look as if you might die." The Professor was skilfully making another adjustment as he spoke. " I wonder if you would mind my counting your pulse? Here, you look after this, Meriston."

He moved quickly into the room and Adam obediently took his place as the solicitor, throwing himself back in his chair, emitted a high shill whine, and pressed his hands against his face.

"Now clam yourself, calm yourself," pleaded the man of science. "I won't let you die if you do exactly what I tell you."

"A little less, Meriston, a very little less," he instructed as he reached for the trepid wrist of the victim and flourished a large gold watch in his free hand.

A RECKLESS RIDE

"Try to keep him like that while I make a note or two, Meriston" was the next instruction. By now Mr. Perkin was leaning far back in his chair as if in a cringing effort to evade his benevolent-seeming tormentor. The light glinted from little wet beads on his forehead. His eyes rolled in a manner that was horrifying, and his mouth sagged.

Presently the Professor shut his notebook and turned to his victim with a satisfied air. "Now don't be afraid," he recommended somewhat superflously. "Just sit still and answer my questions. If you answer them correctly, you will not die, just yet. If you don't, you will die very nastily and within ten minutes. Understand?"

Mr. Perkin nodded. "What do you want to know?" he murmured abjectly.

"We want to know where Miss Norvall is."

The victim made a great effort. "I shall not tell you," he gasped.

"Make it a bit stronger, Meriston."

There came a heart-rending shriek, and the man in the chair sprang to his feet. The hair rose visibly on his head. His teeth were audibly chattering.

"Ease off, Meriston. Now, Mr. Perkin, for the last time, where is Miss Norval is."

'Cardus Holt, Moorside." The words were mumbled.

"Say it again, please."

"Cardus Holt, Moorside."

The Professor looked enquiringly at Adam. "Know where that is?" he enquired.

Adam nodded confidently. There was a new light of enthusiasm on his face.

(To Be Continued.)

"Change is not necessarily calamity. It may be adventure." — Bruce Barton.

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WHAT DOES Your HANDWRITING REVEAL ?

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Geoffrey St. Clair
Graphologist

(Editor's Note:— The author of these interest'ng articles invites YOU to ask for his help. He has already helped many of our readers, and renews his offer following this week's article).

* * *

Should a girl who is engaged to a likable young man make a practice of going out with another man? This poser is put to me in the following letter I received from a reader:

"I am 24 years old and am engaged to be married to a boy of 26 and we are both very much in love. We are to be married late this summer. A few months ago I met another young man and he appeared very interested in me from the start. He asked me several times to go out with him, and finally I did so. Since then we have been out quite a number of times. I didn't tell my fiance anything about this, because at first it didn't seem worth while, and now I am rather afraid of what he may think, although there is really nothing between my new friend and myself apart from a little companionship. I should mention that my fiance is out of town for long periods, and sometimes I do get awfully lonely. The trouble now is that my new friend tells me that he is very fond of me and says that he doesn't care for any other girl. What do you think about this matter, Mr. St. Clair? I am sending you specimens of each of our writings so that you can delineate our characters accordingly."

To deal firstly with the handwriting specimens. Your own writing shows you as having an extremely affectionate nature and you are quick to feel for others. You are straightforward enough, but the danger is that you may be influenced to easily by your emotions. That, in other words, your present feeling of friendship for No. 2 young man will develop into something stronger and really endanger your love for your fiance.

Both the young men are apparently clean-cut, self-reliant and decent. There is a slight difference in their temperaments. Your fiance is more reserved than your other friend, not so expressive of his feelings, but he is just as capable of emotional feeling; that is, his love will be just as strong and perhaps more enduring.

However, on the whole, there is no great basic difference between these two young men. You could do a whole lot worse than marry either of them.

I do think, though, that you have not been entirely "playing the game" with your fiance. I don't for a moment suggest that you have been underhanded in any deliberate way, for I believe you were entirely genuine in seeking a little companionship.

The trouble arose in keeping it a secret from your fiance. It is in that angle that there appears some vestige of deception, inadvertent perhaps, but nevertheless present.

And there is the danger that your relationship to your new friend will take on a more ardent form. You are naturally generous and warm-hearted and are capable of responding to emotional appeals.

I suggest that you endeavour to discontinue meeting No. 2 young man. After all you are, in a measure, being unfair to him too in giving him hope that he may be more to you than he has been in the past. And you are certainly walking on thin ice so far as your engagement is concerned.

* * *

Have you any problem that Mr. St. Clair can advise you upon? Would you like his help? Have you any friends whose true characters you would like to know? Perhaps you merely wish to know what YOUR handwriting reveals of your own character. Send specimens of the writings you wish analysed, stating birthdate in each case. Send 10c coin for each specimen, and include with 3c stamped addressed envelope, to: Geoffrey St. Clair, Room 421, 73 Adelaide St. W., Toronto, Ont. Letters will be confidential and will be answered as quickly as possible.

ONTARIO FORCE CUT BY HALF

Only Eight On Police Staff; Score In Rum Running Days

Windsor—Although there has been no reduction in the provincial police staff here in the past year, the Windsor force is reported to be less than half of what it was when liquor smuggling across the Detroit river was rampant several years ago.

There is said to be only eight men stationed here now as against 18 or 20 some years back. Only three of the present force is here at present, the other men being in the Crowland strike district on special duty.

The freer sale of beer and wine under the amended Liquor Control Act and the repeal of the American prohibition laws is given unofficially as the reason for the reduction.

There have been no layoffs in effecting the gradual reduction, it is understood, the men being transferred to other posts in the province.

17 Casualties Every Hour

(Municipal Journal, London.)

It is to be hoped that dangerous and inconsiderate motor drivers will take heed of the warning given by two judges of the High Court recently.

In sentencing a man convicted of manslaughter at the Old Bailey, Mr. Justice Macnaghten declared that the judges had taken the view that, "if this slaughter on the road continues, penal servitude must be the punishment awarded to those who so offend." In another case Mr. Justice Atkinson said it was no use Parliament imposing penalties if they were not put into effect.

The returns of road accidents for the first week of the operation of the new speed limit afford little, if any, ground for the optimistic view that there will be a sensational drop in the accident rate. Throughout the country during that week 2,951 people were killed or injured on the roads, a figure which compares with 3,474 in the corresponding week of last year.

When account is taken of all the efforts made by the Ministry of Transport, the extent of the decline is disappointing. It is little wonder that in the face of a casualty list which involves more than 17 persons per hour, the demand is becoming intensified for the imposition of much heavier penalties on offenders.

"You can generally get success if you do not want victory." — Dean Inge.

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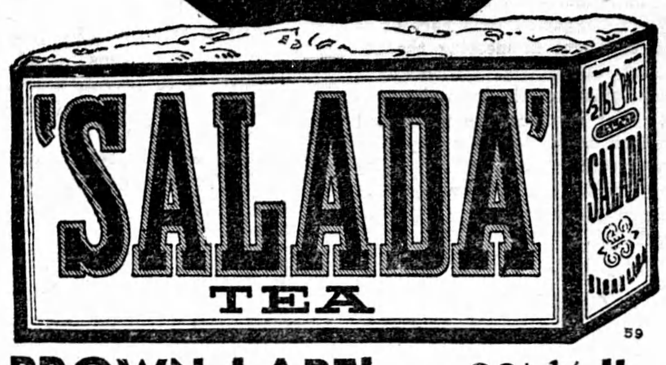

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"This England"

New Statesman and Nation (London)

It is nearly 550 years since the tomb was built, yet it could scarcely be more beautiful if it had been made last week.—Sunday Express.

* * *

A blind man was chosen by the Cressing Silver Jubilee committee to be the judge of a woman's ankle competition.—Glasgow Daily Record.

* * *

About 30 city workers who were waiting on Hassocks (Sussex) station recently, saw their usual train pass through at about 40 m.p.h. The driver of the 7.19 a.m. from Brighton to London Bridge had forgotten to stop. He stopped the train about 100 yards beyond the station. The driver was not able to reverse his train as a form has to be filled in before this can be done. A porter ran to the nearest signal box for the necessary form, but by the time he obtained it an official had decided that the train should continue on its way. — Evening Standard.

* * *

"He did not appear to be normal," continued the coroner. "He spent a lot of his time writing poetry." — Evening Standard.

* * *

. . . I am, on the whole, a Liberal with leanings towards a steadying Conservatism on the one hand and a slightly radical, but not rash, Socialism on the other, and a great admirer of Sir John Simon, Sir Herbert Samuel, and Mr. Lloyd George, in any order, for their efficiency. — Letter in Sheffield Telegraph.

* * *

Having travelled for several thousand miles in every continent, Mrs Frank Fisher, who was Miss Violet Cressy-Marcks, has the original idea of choosing names for her children, which remind her of the wide open space and her travels. Her first son was named Ocean, and now the baby boy born last November is to be christened by the unusual name Forest.—Daily Telegraph.

* * *

After all ear-rings were orginally worn by men and not by women. If every boy had his ears pierced and wore gold circlets from, say, the age of 10 or 12, few, if any, would require glasses. Of this I am certain.—Letter in Western Mail and South Wales News.

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Follow this inexpensive Phillips 3-Fold way to health. 15 days' supply (in granules of pleasing taste), 50c; 45 days' supply for $1.00 at your druggist's.

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HENHOUSE VENTILATION

The removal of moisture is a major problem in poultry houses. Poultry have no sweat glands, but they give off relatively large amounts of vapour in respiration and through the skin. It was found at one experimental station that the maximum egg production was obtained when temperatures were not permitted to fluctuate widely. A henhouse temperature at 50 degrees F. is too high to be maintained on most farms in winter without artificial heat. Hence, a lower temperature held uniformly would be desirable. Increasing numbers of poultrymen have had success with artificial heat properly regulated, but failure has commonly resulted when temperatures were allowed to go too high or to fluctuate widely.

"For the most part we do not do things because we have reasons for them, but we find reasons for them because we want to do them."—Will Durant.

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2. Send as many as you wish; contest closes midnight June 29, 1935.
3. 1,000 prizes will be awarded on the decision of the judges, which will be final. Whether you win a pair of silk stockings or not, we will mail to all entrants free of charge, our famous booklet—"The A.B.C. of Home Rug Making".